

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11

Paper 11 (Open Books)

## Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language, particularly in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation as appropriate
- well-structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well-chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

## General comments

As in previous sessions, some very commendable work was seen and the enthusiasm of candidates and their teachers communicated itself. Many candidates were well prepared and had a good level of understanding of the texts and their key issues. While their knowledge of the text was often comprehensive, some candidates would have benefited from organising *relevant* knowledge more selectively. Indeed the most frequent observation by Examiners was that marks would have been raised by sharper focus on the terms of the questions in many scripts. This was particularly true where the wording of a question asked for examination of a very specific aspect of the text, for example 'the passing of time seem so central to life' in Question 17. It is good practice to identify and underline the key words of the question and to construct a brief plan before starting to write. (In order to avoid digression, some candidates might find it helpful to allude briefly to the question at the beginning of each paragraph.)

All questions at this level require more than narrative and paraphrase responses, and the little word 'how', directing candidates to consideration of writers' methods, was frequently missed. Phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal' and words such as 'vivid' and 'powerful' have the same purpose, and candidates need to be aware of their importance. Many candidates had clearly been encouraged first and foremost to respond personally and to follow their own trains of thought wherever possible. This is to be applauded of course, but while no-one would want candidates simply to devour teacher notes and reproduce them slavishly, it is important that candidates use *supporting evidence* from the text at all times to support their interpretation. The most successful answers responded relevantly to the tasks set, created a convincing argument and supported it with detailed reference in the form of quotation or close echo of the text.

Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Biff and Happy for Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.

here was some 'device spotting' where candidates correctly identified a literary technique, illustrated it, but failed to explore just *how* the language/technique created its effect. There is no excuse for the absence of any quotation, given that the passage is printed on the examination paper. It should be noted too that the ends of extracts may contain important content and candidates should be sure to have read the whole passage.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, and in so doing revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

There were not many cases of rubric infringement. Where this happened, it usually entailed candidates not attempting an essay based question. Generally time seemed to be well managed, although there were a few candidates who had clearly spent too long on the first two questions with a consequentially negative effect on answering the third question. The importance of candidates being taught examination technique and rubric cannot be overstated.

### **Section A: Drama**

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

The range of response was wide but, for higher marks some engagement with Miller's language and its dramatic effect was expected. It was a popular question and generally well done though some candidates spent too much time putting the extract into context.

This extract is particularly revealing of the two brothers' characteristics: both of them think big dreams without most of the qualities to translate them into any sort of reality. At times it is a truly sad spectacle of two youngish men who like children think they deserve better. At other times, particularly in regard to Happy and his philandering and misplaced conceit, the picture could be said to be a profoundly dislikeable one. The best responses focused on feelings for Biff and Happy 'at this moment' and felt the excitement Biff generated, which most felt could result in success until he comments on having to borrow the money. Biff was admired by most, with Happy coming in for much criticism especially for his treatment of women and his competitive nature. A number of candidates clearly detested Happy and felt he was not interested in anything but money and showing off, thereby being his father's son, a victim of the 'American Dream' mentality- anyone can make it but without putting in the effort, summed up by his 'The only thing is – what can you make out there?', always finding some excuse not to try to make a success of his life. Weaker responses tended to work through the extract, retelling it rather than analysing, and to focus on the importance of brotherly love and discuss that broadly, rather than exploring the depths of the scene.

##### **Question 2**

This was a totally open question and elicited different responses, though good answers attempted some balance. Some candidates thought that Willy does not amount to much, that he is in truth little more than deluded, whining and deceitful with very few of the finer human traits. Conversely, many saw him as an idealistic victim of America's love of individualism and material success, fatally unsuited to the life he has pursued and therefore fated to fail. Simple character sketches did not achieve high marks; focus on the parameters of the task was required, supported with detail. The best answers attempted a balanced response exploring Willy's failures, e.g. his lying, cheating on Linda, delusions regarding his sales and his brother, Ben, being known and liked wherever he travelled, poor parenting and unfair treatment of both Biff and Happy especially poor Happy. His suicide and being sacked by Howard rated highly amongst his failures demonstrating just how poor a salesman and judge of character/situations he was as he could not even get the insurance money for sure. These were balanced by some admiration felt for his constant travelling (though risky with his lack of concentration while driving) and appearing not to give up by at least trying to get Howard to give him an office job. A few argued that he did try to inspire his sons and initially had Biff's love and admiration. Linda's love and caring of him was also argued as an aspect to admire in him. However, most saw him as an abject failure and evidence that the 'American Dream' was just that - an unattainable dream.

### Question 3

As ever with empathic questions, the quality of the voice determined the mark and the best answers produced a quite definite and moral voice rejecting Ben's macho world.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

#### Question 4

There were some excellent responses engaging with the scene and clearly understanding the wickedness of Don John from his opening words. The hypocrisy of Don John is breathtaking in this extract, shown by his sycophantic attitude towards his brother, whom we know he hates, and his supposed concern for Claudio, whom he also hates. Even worse is his preparedness to defame Hero, a completely innocent victim in all this. Claudio and Don Pedro are completely sucked in by his lies. Prior knowledge of the character was helpful in this question as was understanding of the change from the usual relationship between him and his brother and Claudio. There was some good understanding of the dramatic irony and impact on the audience. The language, especially the line 'Even she – Leonato's ...', was well analysed as was the implication of the word 'Plague' to describe Hero. Weaker answers worked through the extract with little focus on the question.

#### Question 5

This was an open question and there were different approaches, but mere narrative did not take candidates very far. Apt selection was crucial; the scenes concerning the gulling of Beatrice and Benedick and those involving Dogberry and the Watch were fruitful and obvious choices. As expected, most candidates focused on Dogberry but could choose specific 'moments' (without going through the plot) and explain why they were amusing. Favourites were the attempt to tell Leonato about the capture of Boracchio and Conrad and, indeed, any moment where Dogberry could use his malapropisms. Other moments of amusement were those between Benedick and Beatrice. Most candidates could engage with the humour and clearly savoured the moments chosen. Good answers sometimes touched on the underlying seriousness of some of the comedy.

#### Question 6

Good answers made Leonato incensed at Don Pedro and Claudio's lack of concern and their arrogance, especially since to all intents and purposes Hero is dead. It was understandable if he was feeling slightly satisfied at his own performance and thankful for the support of Benedick and his brother. Often he was reflecting on his earlier relationship with Don Pedro and Claudio and his mistaken perception of them. He was often made to speculate on how to handle the eventual revelation that Hero is alive. Successful answers were characterised by a believable voice and tone; it was not believable for him to be less than furious with the insolence of Claudio in particular.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar***

#### Question 7

The best answers probed the extract thoroughly and systematically. They did not merely paraphrase but brought out Antony's manipulativenness, his genuine emotion and the power of his effect on the crowd. Some made useful comments about the way in which he is speaking over Caesar's dead body. However, while this was a popular question, in general it was not tackled as well as expected. This must be one of the best known speeches/parts of the play, yet there were few really solid answers where the oratorical skills were fully explored and appreciated. Little more than the inclusive opening, 'Friends, Romans, countrymen...' and the repetition of 'noble Brutus' and sarcasm in describing him as 'honourable' tended to be analysed. Some commented on the dramatic effectiveness of introducing Caesar's will and the fact that he was successful as the Plebeians were won over and wanted to hear the will. Rhetorical questions were identified but little more. The 'powerfully dramatic' was seldom explored.

### Question 8

There were differing responses to this question and they were assessed according to the degree of conviction with which candidates put their case. Points to consider were how solid is the evidence in the play that Caesar was 'a tyrant'? Cassius makes a telling argument but how convincing and evidence-based is it? Antony makes a very different case. Clearly, a very detailed knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare's text was crucial here if candidates were to score highly.

### Question 9

Appropriate feelings attributable to Brutus were satisfaction at the way his speech has been received and lack of concern about Antony, whom he does not see as a threat. Some candidates focused on his sense of honour and made him suffer some pangs of remorse thinking about Caesar and his friendship. He was sometimes thinking about Caesar's final words, and his anguish and sleeplessness as he turned over in his mind the assassination plan. Portia's concerns also featured in some answers.

### R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 10

Candidates had no difficulty in selecting shocking features in this scene, where Stanhope comes close to losing all control and Raleigh is portrayed as a young man who is still having great difficulty in coming to terms with the way human beings cope with things like the trauma of Osborne's death. But many candidates seemed to be completely unaware of the effect of this event on both characters and this obviously limited their marks on the basis that their understanding of what is going on in the scene was only partial. The words of the question 'this moment in the play' imply a connection with what has gone before and what comes after. It was impossible to answer it competently without referring to Osborne's death, which intensifies all the emotion. Candidates were able to focus on 'the moment' but to do so exclusively led to many narrative responses which sometimes discussed social and hierarchical issues such as Stanhope being annoyed at Raleigh for not attending dinner as Stanhope was in charge and he expected obedience. This missed the response of both men to the death of Osborne and how feelings of grief and shock were exhibited by both characters. The psychological motivation of the key characters in this scene was largely unexplored. The other issue which inhibited high order responses concerned candidates' understanding of some of the language involved. The dialogue involving Stanhope and Raleigh was often misinterpreted or the nuances missed. For instance some suggested the phrase 'damn prigs' was significant but were unable to discuss the impact of this language. Clearly, seeing the play in performance even if only on DVD might have helped candidates with these issues.

### Question 11

This task hinged upon the choices made by the candidate. There are a number of moments in the play which would come into the category of comic as the soldiers attempt to keep the horrors of war at bay. The greater that enjoyment communicated with the text and its comic possibilities, the greater was the reward. Most of the comic moments selected involved Trotter and Mason and were well explained but very few understood the concept of black humour as a coping mechanism. What was required was some attempt to engage with the humour rather than simply to describe the episode.

## Question 12

For most candidates the situation spoke for itself. Stanhope has been told to send both his right-hand man in the company and the brother of the woman he loves to their very possible deaths on a raid which is hardly likely to yield much, even if successful. There is evidence in the conversation with the Colonel that Stanhope thinks it is a pointless waste of life. However, he has not been able to reveal his personal feelings since he has his military duty to carry out and that is next to inform both Osborne and Raleigh of what they have to do. A clear sense of the situation and Stanhope's likely personal feelings were expected and in good answers his anguished voice was communicated.

## SECTION B: POETRY

### ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems*

This text was considerably less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who had studied it showed enjoyment and enthusiasm for the poems.

## Question 13

This poem was mostly understood quite well, with the exception of a few very literal-minded candidates who thought the Pilot was a real aviator. Good answers looked in detail at Tennyson's choice of extended metaphor and poetic form, and located religious faith securely in textual details. Some candidates, however, used biographical information to assert that Tennyson foresaw his own death (in specific terms rather than simply as a future certainty) when he wrote the poem.

## Question 14

Many of the answers depended on limp assertions about a romanticised love narrative in the poem, or, alternatively, bold assertions about its trenchant critique of female oppression, neither of which were afforded much textual support. Better answers looked at mood and characterisation of the Lady. There was still, however, little attention to poetic form and language in general.

## Question 15

This question also attracted some biographical responses, with weaker candidates who wanted to focus on the poem's origin as an elegy for Hallam choosing from its more personal and biographical stanzas, such as 7 ('Dark house, by which once more I stand'). Better answers chose 50 ('Be near me when my light is low') and some achieved a really effective analysis of how this is moving.

### SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 3*

## Question 16

There was some misunderstanding of the question and the wonder/amazement of the scene was not always interpreted. Some read the question as 'wonder/think' about the scene which made for very limited responses. There was a good deal of misreading, especially of 'A dark river of blood', 'unspilled milk' – linking this to the background knowledge of Hughes and Plath and her suicide etc. By contrast, there were some excellent, sensitive responses to the delight father and daughter experience in this magical evening where all is focused, 'shrunk' to the senses – the noise of the dog and bucket. Close detail to language ('shrunk' and 'clank') appealing to hearing, intensified by 'And you listening', were features of the best responses. These understood Hughes is directing his words to Frieda and his 'wonder' is in her attentiveness to what she could see in her surroundings. Elements analysed included the 'spider's web', 'dew' and the full pail mirroring 'a first star'. One candidate saw Frieda as her father's 'star' this evening as she cried 'Moon!'. This may not be one of her first words as many candidates tend to think but the 'wonder' she experiences was clearly understood. Nevertheless, even the best responses did not fully explore the mutual appreciation of the child and moon, or indeed the wonder the poet/father feels towards the scene.



### Question 17

'Time' was a very popular choice. Most candidates tended to work through this poem explaining what they thought it meant with only tenuous links to the key words of the question. Some focused on the 'passing of time' whilst others tried to explain how it was 'central to life' – the routines of work and school etc. There were some excellent, analytical responses exploring fully the concept of Time in our lives and the religious connotations: like God, Time is the 'Beginning' and the 'End'. Or as one candidate succinctly put it, "*Time is an extended metaphor for God*". Details of the structure, number of lines per verse, verses etc. were sensibly linked to time – hours in a day, days in a week etc. Only a few wrote on Sonnet 29 and they were generally narrative in their approach.

**Question 18** was generally very popular and well done. There were many 'particularly powerful' lines chosen and analysed. The key distinguishing factor was the extent to which candidates were able to assess the impact of their chosen lines. Some simply repeated the word "powerful", without really thinking about "why (they found) the lines so powerful", whilst the more able explored factors such as Cheng's direct address or use of omnipotent figures or Clarke's use of images to convey the full impact of man's actions on the environment. Close detailed attention to language was a feature of the best responses.

### SECTION C: PROSE

#### EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

### Question 19

Here the reader gets a rare glimpse in the novel of a wider community and its views of the lives of the main protagonists. This is a conversation between those who serve, except that Kenneth is a vivid portrait of an independent man who can afford to speak his mind gruffly, and does. His disapproval of so much to do with the attitudes he sees in those who are his patients, his even wondering whether Linton will be that sorry to lose such a burden as Catherine speaks of a totally different and sceptical world. It is almost comic that it has to be his intelligence that alerts Nelly Dean as to what is going on with Isabella and causes yet another problem for this long suffering woman. Some grasp of this with pertinent support was enough for adequate reward but in better answers the candidate was responsive to the various tones in the writing. The question led a number of candidates to explore what was revealed about all the 'characters' mentioned (Linton, Cathy, Isabella and Heathcliff) and not just what was revealed of the 'characters of Mr Kenneth and Ellen. Best responses understood perfectly this no-nonsense approach of a country doctor and the loyal but opinionated Ellen. A number of candidates thought that Miss Linton was in fact Cathy (Mrs) and this resulted in some misreading of the passage e.g. the words about Miss Linton walking out were about Cathy's behaviour.

### Question 20

Candidates had a considerable choice here, extreme and brutal emotion very often of course being associated with Heathcliff, Catherine Earnshaw and Hindley. The most popular choices were when Hindley held Hareton over the banister and the moment when Hindley tries to lock Heathcliff out. Differentiation was a matter of the degree to which the candidate managed to probe the ways in which Bronte's writing shocks the reader. This was the centre of the task.

### Question 21

An acceptable approach was to portray Catherine as a touch frightened, finding herself in such strange conditions, particularly after the terror of the original incident with the dog and without her beloved companion Heathcliff. Better answers went on to portray her as on the way to being entranced by the strange comforts and pleasures of the genteel world of the Lintons and the way in which its women are pampered. The discriminator was the degree to which candidates were able to communicate in her voice something of Catherine's capacity for almost breathlessly instant feeling and enthusiasms.

**KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard***

**Question 22**

The details which attracted candidates were not prescribed but for good marks evidence of real engagement with the hilarity was looked for and an understanding of the way Desai's words create the laughter.

**Question 23**

The officials in Shahkot such as the DPS, the CMO, the DC and the Brigadier, exhibit various degrees of sloth, incompetence, self-importance, fear of doing anything definite which might have consequences, self-aggrandisement and at times corruption. The inhabitants of the town clearly cannot expect much from them as is shown at the end of the novel when these people try to decide what to do about the monkeys. Differentiation came from the degree to which candidates were able to understand Desai's view of officialdom and respond to the gentle satire.

**Question 24**

It was expected that Mr Chawla would be portrayed as being beside himself with rage. Sampath has just ruined all his father's carefully laid plans for his future in the public services. He has been trouble right from the beginning, not at all like his father, and the family's reputation has been ruined. Good answers conveyed something of Mr Chawla's self-important, energetic voice.

**F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.**

**Question 25**

Thus there was much in the extract for candidates to discover. The best responses engaged fully after brief introductions to contextualise the passage, then worked through it with the question firmly in mind. Well selected references were used. Weaker candidates did not comment on Daisy at all and there was misunderstanding of Gatsby's offer to Nick. Some thought him extremely arrogant and condescending as he was 'bragging' about how rich he was and a very few launched into an attack of the wicked American society and failure of the 'American Dream' with this conman. Not surprisingly many candidates offered both the Miller and the Fitzgerald so no doubt would have spent much time on American society. The differentiator was the extent to which candidates responded to the skilful means by which the author communicates with the reader.

**Question 26**

Good responses explored closely the way in which Fitzgerald handles Daisy's relationships with Tom and Gatsby, how she uses them to satisfy her own selfish desires. It was essentially a straightforward question but for many candidates 'sympathy' tended to be only partially understood. The word is frequently used in these papers and candidates should be prepared for it. Most found little reason to sympathise due to her preference for money and security in staying with Tom, treatment of her daughter, failure to attend Gatsby's funeral and to take responsibility for Myrtle's death. Some did sympathise as she did try to get out of the wedding, was badly treated by Tom (her adultery was forgotten) and was browbeaten by all including Gatsby. Better answers attempted to balance their response to her and to try to find extenuating circumstances for her behaviour. The best examined the words that Fitzgerald uses to describe her.

**Question 27**

Better candidates sometimes thought about how Gatsby came on the scene and about his earlier relationship with Daisy. Gatsby's corrupt money-making deals also figured strongly. The best answers conveyed the arrogance and contempt of Tom's voice.

**BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather***

**Question 28**

This was not a very popular text this session. It was expected that there might be some reference to the earlier prickliness of the contacts between these two characters, and to the way in which the tone is much more mellow in the extract. Paulina is not sure of her ground, but she is still attracted to and intrigued by Makhaya. She does not make the mistake of presuming too close an acquaintance, however. We see a softening in Makhaya, even the suggestion that he craves 'the warmth and love' of Paulina, but there are still issues between them and his advice about selling the cattle does not go down well. She does not yet see that the advice comes out of concern for her son and is in fact very sensible. They still have a way to go. Good answers looked closely at the language of the passage and show how Head creates changes in pace and in tone.

**Question 29**

There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate.

**Question 30**

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**EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome***

**Question 31**

Differentiation resulted from the degree to which the candidate managed to probe each small detail in the extract. The more evidence there was of this close engagement with the writing, the higher the reward. As so often in Wharton's writing, the small things are what reveal significant thought. Here in a passage that is an ostensibly dry description of Ethan's working day, she shows how his mind keeps coming back to Mattie and the impending ending of their brief time on their own. Almost all saw some of the reasons for his happiness and fears about Zeena (always lurking in the background).

**Question 32**

The most popular choices were the meal Ethan and Mattie have together and their return from the dance that evening. A few thought there were moments of happiness sledging together before their ill-fated suicide attempt. Apt choice was clearly important for success but after that the main consideration was the extent of exploration of the vividness of the writing, as the task demands.

**Question 33**

Ethan is worried to distraction about the state of his finances. In the forefront of his mind without doubt will be the way his life is one continual struggle against the odds to make ends meet within a community which has seen the modern world pass it by and with it any hope of economic prosperity. On a different scale Hale is also feeling the pinch. As a proud man Ethan feels the humiliation of having asked, only to be refused. Candidates conveyed some of these points and also aspects of Ethan's dismal personal life, such as details like Zeena's medical bills. The ability to convey Ethan's gruff despair in the voice brought high reward.

**Stories of Ourselves**

**Question 34**

The obvious reaction expected to the passage is to the irony of an alien describing our world as alien – and in miniature. The setting is described vividly and it takes a little while to register what the detail refers to. The different perspective, for example the cat being seen as a huge monster, adds some humour, but the seriousness and dignity of the tone of the narrator makes one sympathise with the Onns and fear for them. Though there was no need for external reference, a sense of the context enhanced an answer. Some candidates misread the question as being about the Onns' emotions and their performance was therefore limited. The main focus needed to be on the vividness of the writing.



**Question 35**

There are two lots of powerful emotions in both stories: the fury and grief of Mr Wills and the guilt of the boy in *the Taste of Watermelon* and the repressed emotions of anger and betrayal in the Aunt and of guilt again in the boy in *Secrets*. The focus of the question is on how these emotions are transmitted, however, and viewpoint was a vital consideration. *The Taste of Watermelon* is told by one of the protagonists and the reader is carried along by his perception of events and affected very directly by his expressions of regret and remorse at the end, especially since he sees Mr Wills almost as a joke to begin with. The emotion is less direct in *Secrets*, being told in the third person. The reader has to draw inferences, which makes the description of the Aunt's fury much more powerful, perhaps. In any event more than narrative and explanation was expected; well selected references and comment on the language was essential to a good answer.

**Question 36**

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/12

Paper 12 (Open Books)

## Key messages

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- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
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## General comments

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There were not many cases of rubric infringement. Where this happened, it usually entailed candidates not attempting an essay based question. Generally time seemed to be well managed, although there were a few candidates who had clearly spent too long on the first two questions with a consequentially negative effect on answering the third question. The importance of candidates being taught examination technique and rubric cannot be overstated.

### **Section A: Drama**

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

It was expected that most candidates would know the basic significance of this moment, the way it shatters for all time Biff's heroic image of his father. Though not specifically required, some contextualisation was useful in order to make that clear. Differentiation came from the degree of response to the immediate drama of the moment, in the way Miller orchestrates Willy's panic turning to bluster, the coarseness of the woman and Biff's shock becoming angry contempt. Candidates might have focused more strongly on 'dramatic' and significant'; many answers merely traced through the passage explaining the action and leaving it at that. Often the 'stockings' were mentioned but nothing much was made of their wider significance. The discovery of the woman and the charade Willy goes through with Biff, and his changes in tone etc. – might have been addressed more fully.

##### **Question 2**

As so often with this play, the audience is given a wide range of possibilities of response, even with such a potentially moving and admirable figure as Linda. It is made clear that without her love and endurance the Loman family, and Willy in particular, would have completely disintegrated far earlier. At times in the play she receives outrageously little credit for it so that often the audience's compassion for her is overwhelming, particularly after the Boston incident. However, it is also possible to see her as almost encouraging Willy's delusions. She rarely questions his actions and she seems to allow her sons to be brought up with the same flawed view of life. For all the brutality of Biff's verbal assault on his mother, the audience might think he has a point. Some candidates took this line and repeated the idea quite frequently during their answers, but might have provided more close detailed support. Some candidates merely said that Linda was a faithful wife and Willy was totally responsible for his own failure.

##### **Question 3**

There should have been little difficulty here for candidates to find suitable content for this empathic response task. Willy is desperate. The scene with Howard shows that all too poignantly. All his illusions have been brutally exposed. He is a failure and the firm for which he has worked for so long wants rid of his embarrassing presence. It was expected that Willy might swing from whining self-pity to anger that he has been so treated. Importantly candidates needed to recognise that he never entirely escapes from his dream even here. Some convincing grasp of his state of mind was enough for reasonable reward but those candidates who authentically captured his voice achieved very good marks

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

**Question 4**

While it was very difficult for candidates to answer successfully without referring to Claudio's outburst immediately preceding this and to the famous 'rotten orange' accusation of Hero, some candidates' answers suffered by spending a long time discussing the general situation and delaying starting on the printed passage. Good answers examined the words in some detail and considered the pace and tone. Some responses were under-focused on 'dramatic'.

**Question 5**

The focus here is on 'admirable' so a strong personal response was looked for supported by close consideration of the ways in which Shakespeare presents Beatrice, not merely a prepared character sketch. Most candidates were aware of Beatrice's feisty nature and her wordplay, though they might have made it more relevant to her being, because of this, an 'admirable' heroine. Usually answers made general remarks about her character and some compared her favourably with Hero.

**Question 6**

By this stage Leonato has changed his tune and is convinced of Hero's innocence. He is also enmeshed in the strategy of keeping her existence a secret. He has been humiliated by Claudio and Don Pedro and Dogberry has given him the news of the flight of Don John and the capture of Borachio. He will be enraged, relieved, self-righteous. He may also be thankful that his honour is now untarnished as his concern for his good name has seemed at time to be his prime consideration. Candidates had a rich seam of emotions to draw on. The voice of Leonato proved elusive for some and this effectively restricted the quality of response.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar***

**Question 7**

This passage-based question was popular but candidates were too often intent on describing the action of the passage at the expense of exploring how Shakespeare makes it powerfully dramatic. Few so much as remarked that a brutal multiple stabbing was powerful or dramatic. Most commented on the ending of the scene and better answers were able to illustrate the drama of the betrayal as presented. Many were able to discuss Caesar's god-like utterances but only the best of these answers discussed or implied the dramatic irony of the situation.

**Question 8**

There was some detailed knowledge of the part played in the text particularly by Portia and some good close reference, but sometimes this was let down by the level of emotional response offered. Many candidates wrote of how they pitied Calphurnia's shabby treatment by Caesar in the opening scene where her barrenness is insensitively broadcast to all, but the details of her dream and the desperation she shows to prevent her husband from walking to his death were barely discussed. Often Portia, who was mostly the more pitied, was pitied for her husband not treating her as an equal in the marriage, ignoring the later material, and sometimes missing her tragic end altogether. Indeed, some candidates expressed sympathy for Portia because Brutus's suicide made her a widow. Again, the irony of Portia's desire to be treated as a strong woman but ending up consumed by anxiety and fear was something which a good answer might have looked at in some detail. Sometimes answers, ostensibly about Calphurnia or Portia, got side-tracked and spent most of the time discussing Caesar or Brutus, with self-limiting consequences.

**Question 9**

The voice of Cassius was sometimes difficult to find for candidates, but overall most answers were successful. Candidates knew well enough Cassius's feelings about Antony, and – indeed – about Brutus's tolerance of his presence at the funeral, let alone his willingness to allow Antony access to the volatile crowd, and so forth. Better answers were able to range over a wealth of relevant textual detail and incorporate it using a little textual echo into the thoughts of the character here.

**R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

**Question 10**

As so often in this play the writing exists on a number of levels. Through the extract there is a layer of the mundane detail of life and soldiers' preoccupations in the trenches. Here it is food, culminating in Mason being admonished for failing to pack the pepper. However, this serves to heighten the contrast with the drama of Stanhope's tense and shocked reaction to the arrival of Raleigh. Some awareness of the audience's ignorance of much this early in the play was expected and some attempt to bring out how Sherriff makes the audience aware that there is a great deal to be explained. Stage directions are revealing here and candidates rarely made sufficient comment on how they support the tense atmosphere which is at the heart of the drama.

**Question 11**

There is ample evidence for either proposition. There are moments, particularly in regard to Raleigh and perhaps Hibbert, where Stanhope's ingrained habits of command tip into something profoundly cruel and bullying. However, since much of the play is about the terrible pressures of command in war, many answers were expected to qualify such a judgment. There are a number of moments when he shows quite clearly why he is in command. Good answers were able to see the harshness of treatment (the threat to 'accidentally' shoot Hibbert between the eyes, for instance), yet also realised that Stanhope was able to galvanise him, and were able to quote sensible material to illustrate Stanhope's far from bullying team ethic. The weakest answers merely argued Stanhope was an excellent and inspiring leader who did not bully anyone (and conveniently forgot episodes such as that with the revolver and Hibbert).

**Question 12**

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

**SECTION B: POETRY**

**ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems***

The Tennyson selection was less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who offered it, frequently showed strong engagement with the poems; they had clearly enjoyed them.

**Question 13**

Some responses to this traced through the extract but were largely explanatory. 'In what ways' is a classic opening to a question and requires the candidate to discuss language and technique. Most could see the change in attitude, the new and the old, but struggled to get beyond that. Some candidates repeated the ideas in the poem without understanding what they were. All knew about Hallam.

**Question 14**

*The Lady of Shallott* was the more popular and there were a few excellent answers, thoroughly immersed in myth, and a few very weak answers, not mentioning Lancelot. There was a tendency for narrative to feature heavily in answers to this question; the words 'how' and 'so intriguing' were often missed or addressed in cursory fashion.

**Question 15**

There were some excellent responses, showing detailed understanding of Ulysses' strengths and desires. Some candidates found giving their own feelings difficult and though they knew the poem, they did not explore deeper meanings. Occasionally there were indications of lack of clear understanding of the poem.

**SONGS OF OURSELVES: From Part 3**

**Question 16**

This poem was clearly popular and much enjoyed. Candidates were keen to explain about the moon making amends for the damage done in various ways during the day but often there was little focus on 'how' the words used 'convey the power of the moonlight to penetrate...' In other words, answers tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. However, better answers were able to select some of the language and make an attempt to evaluate how it helps to create an effect.

**Question 17**

Most answers looked at Hardy. There always seemed to be a clear understanding of the poem, but rarely a genuine response to what the actual question asked for: how a 'vivid feeling of sorrow' is created by the poet's words. Answers very often asserted things were 'vivid', e.g. 'much' in 'much missed' without in any way arguing how and why they were so. Often really striking language was either paraphrased (translated, almost) or merely ignored. This approach was equally apparent in the responses to Arnold, where candidates spent quite a lot of time saying what they thought the poet was 'saying'.

**Question 18**

The poems that featured most were *Lament*, *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes*, *Report To Wordsworth*, *Marrysong* and *Sonnet 43*. There tended to be little focus on why the words of the poets were 'memorable' and far more insistence on telling what the poet was 'saying'. There was also a tendency to write on the whole of the poems not merely on the openings.

**SECTION C: PROSE**

**EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights***

**Question 19**

Candidates were generally able to enter into the way the writing is full of the most violent images and probe what these images show of Catherine and Heathcliff's emotions.

**Question 20**

Candidates were asked at least to consider both views of Nelly Dean. Successful answers went beyond a character sketch and kept in mind the parameters of the task. After that the balance of the argument was up to the candidate, although it was expected that most would lean quite reasonably towards the first description. There were many testimonies to Nelly as a loyal, loving (and long-service) servant and the names of those she 'was there for' were often listed, but there was little detail, and less still when candidates tried to discuss Nelly as 'an interfering gossip'. They sometimes found some instances of interfering, but were never at all convincing on 'gossip'.

**Question 21**

Most candidates got a little way to producing something like an appropriate voice once they got into their memories of how Heathcliff supplanted him in his father's affections. Better answers mentioned Frances, his wife. A few mentioned his feelings for Catherine. The more one was made to feel Hindley's rough and unpleasant tones in the voice, the more successful the answer.

**KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard***

**Question 22**

Candidates tended to respond in general terms to the amusing qualities of the extract, conveying their enjoyment of the text, but often not attending to the details of the writing.



### Question 23

Both these propositions were arguable. The task does encourage both judgments to be examined but it should have been perfectly possible to write a good answer coming down firmly one side or the other. Probably the easier option was to highlight how Sampath's fame as a holy man is so easily achieved in such a gullible society, where Desai suggests that anyone plainly eccentric or odd can make the leap to the status of a guru whose most meaningless statements then take on the aura of the profoundly philosophical. However, there is also a strand of imaginative fantasy in the novel which never quite allows that satire full rein and perhaps proposes that there are more things in heaven and earth. Answers which attempted to weigh that possibility in relation to Sampath and advanced detailed support for it received high reward.

### Question 24

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.

### Question 25

Successful candidates saw the grotesque nature of the situation and explored thoroughly Fitzgerald's writing to bring out the reactions of the rivals.

### Question 26

There were strong responses to this question, based on a thorough knowledge of the text and the place Fitzgerald assigns to Miss Baker in this pleasure-seeking society.

### Question 27

Many candidates conveyed their understanding of the immediate situation, although Gatsby the dreamer was not particularly evident in many responses, and Gatsby's voice proved surprisingly elusive for some. Candidates sometimes made Gatsby appear more hysterical than is warranted, to judge by his conversation with Nick.

### BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather*

### Question 28

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 29

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 30

Generally the fact that Makhaya and Gilbert were on friendly terms was made clear, and there was evidence of some understanding of the situation which had led to Gilbert's hasty marriage-proposal. Some thoughtful and extended responses revealed the yearning within Makhaya, the possible tinge of jealousy, and the hopes for a brighter future involving a wife and family of his own.

### EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome*

### Question 31

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 32

Answers showed strong engagement with the way the writing conveys her personality so powerfully.

### Question 33

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### *Stories of Ourselves*

### Question 34

The descriptive qualities of the writing were central to a successful answer and candidates did not achieve the higher bands unless they explored the imagery and diction carefully. Many answers showed an ability to comment on how the atmosphere created is sinister, and some commented on how the description is symbolic of the situation that the captive is in. Answers also covered the anonymity of the characters and both the overt and suggested violence. The passage drew out some very sensitive responses.

### Question 35

This was a significantly less popular task, and answers seemed to find little to say. Very little interesting was found about Victor in *On Her Knees*; the narrator of *The Taste of Watermelon* was interesting because he was a typical teenager, or – sometimes, a little better – because he matured during the story; the narrator of *The Signalman* was interesting but it was never really made clear why. A few answers misidentified the narrators of the stories altogether.

### Question 36

Good answers brought out the boy's fascination with his Aunt, and also with her story. Other candidates often did not see or take enough heed of the 'moment' at which they were supposed to be writing. Hence some wrote from the time they started visiting Aunt Mary, and some wrote at the point Aunt Mary returns and catches him having read a number of letters. There was little close reference to the letter candidates should have just read.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/13

Paper 13 (Open Books)

## Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language, particularly in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation as appropriate
- well-structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well-chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

## General comments

As in previous sessions, some very commendable work was seen and the enthusiasm of candidates and their teachers communicated itself. Many candidates were well prepared and had a good level of understanding of the texts and their key issues. While their knowledge of the text was often comprehensive, some candidates would have benefited from organising *relevant* knowledge more selectively. Indeed the most frequent observation by Examiners was that marks would have been raised by sharper focus on the terms of the questions in many scripts. This was particularly true where the wording of a question asked for examination of a very specific aspect of the text, for example 'the passing of time seem so central to life' in Question 17. It is good practice to identify and underline the key words of the question and to construct a brief plan before starting to write. (In order to avoid digression, some candidates might find it helpful to allude briefly to the question at the beginning of each paragraph.)

All questions at this level require more than narrative and paraphrase responses, and the little word 'how', directing candidates to consideration of writers' methods, was frequently missed. Phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal' and words such as 'vivid' and 'powerful' have the same purpose, and candidates need to be aware of their importance. Many candidates had clearly been encouraged first and foremost to respond personally and to follow their own trains of thought wherever possible. This is to be applauded of course, but while no-one would want candidates simply to devour teacher notes and reproduce them slavishly, it is important that candidates use *supporting evidence* from the text at all times to support their interpretation. The most successful answers responded relevantly to the tasks set, created a convincing argument and supported it with detailed reference in the form of quotation or close echo of the text.

Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Willy in Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.

here was some 'device spotting' where candidates correctly identified a literary technique, illustrated it, but failed to explore just *how* the language/technique created its effect. There is no excuse for the absence of any quotation, given that the passage is printed on the examination paper. It should be noted too that the ends of extracts may contain important content and candidates should be sure to have read the whole passage.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, and in so doing revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

There were not many cases of rubric infringement. Where this happened, it usually entailed candidates not attempting an essay based question. Generally time seemed to be well managed, although there were a few candidates who had clearly spent too long on the first two questions with a consequentially negative effect on answering the third question. The importance of candidates being taught examination technique and rubric cannot be overstated.

## **SECTION A: DRAMA**

### **ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman***

#### **Question 1**

The crucial words here were *disturbing and moving*. It should have presented no problem to most candidates to explain some of the significances of this extract, the way in which it reveals Willy's delusional state of mind and his misplaced values which he is desperately trying to convince himself have been proved the right ones. He is a man on the brink of disintegration, desperately seeking a solace that nobody in the real world, not even Linda, can give him. What was needed was some personal response to the way Miller makes this such powerful and poignant drama, with some grasp, for instance, of such things as the way the rapid changes of time and between reality and illusion convey Willy's unbearable confusion. Candidates were generally happier discussing 'disturbing' rather than 'moving' and so a lot of responses were quite imbalanced. The best were able to understand how the structure of the play and the flashback worked, the less successful simply retold what happened with a little comment. Willy's relationship with Ben seemed understood by most but few candidates commented on the combined moving/disturbing effect of the closing lines of the extract – Biff's questioning of his mother and her responses.

#### **Question 2**

One hardly needs here to rehearse the material beloved of study aids regarding Miller's attack in this play on the American Dream. Such a rehearsal of the well-known features of this attack, on the way American society has seemed to laud entrepreneurial success even at the expense of moral conduct, should set the candidate on the path of tackling the task. However, the key word in the question was *memorable*, in conjunction with the requirement to make contact with the writing. This is a highly effective drama and not a tract, even if once or twice it might be thought to get perilously close to becoming one. Evidence of engagement with the power of the drama was therefore expected in the best answers. It was quite a popular question and most answers showed some general knowledge and understanding of the American Dream but for higher reward many needed to focus specifically on how the play was a 'memorable attack' – strong words which were often ignored.

#### **Question 3**

For the highest marks the voice was expected to reveal moments of the old confident assertive Biff and the present rather defeated man who is still at the age of 34 unsure of who he is or what he should be. Some candidates captured Biff's voice extremely well, but a significant number ignored the rift between him and Willy, instead believing that it would be a happy family reunion.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

**Question 4**

This question was a popular choice, and usually tackled well or fairly well. Good responses understood Beatrice's feisty and unconventional attitudes and banter on marriage and men, and the ways she challenged contemporary views on men and women's lives. They could respond to the tone and humour, as well as the irony of all she says in the light of future outcomes in the play. Most managed to comment on both Beatrice's liveliness as well as her attractiveness, and the best engaged with Shakespeare's use of witty language and her dominance.

**Question 5**

This was generally less well tackled than Question 4. Success depended on suitability of choice. Some candidates chose inappropriate 'moments' or merged generalised moments together. Scenes involving Dogberry, especially the questioning of Borachio, were popular but the comedy was sometimes asserted or outlined, without being fully understood. It was rare for 'serious' to be fully understood or developed. Some candidates relied heavily on the passage printed in Question 4, which though permissible was self-limiting.

**Question 6**

This was generally done well. The situation and overall reasons for outrage were grasped but there was a tendency to drift into caring psychotherapeutic support of Claudio which jarred with era and character. Some weaker answers did not address Don Pedro's social standing so his reaction was not fully in keeping with his rank or his relationship with Claudio.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar***

**Question 7**

Most candidates could reveal something about the weather and the unnatural happenings. Not all related these to the context of Caesar's imminent assassination, but where this was the case they often went on to explore the striking and violent language, and the effects Shakespeare intended for the audience. The use of the supernatural, involvement of gods and all implications of these were there for the picking. Some were unclear about the role of Cicero and his allegiances, but candidates who considered the different reactions of the three characters involved in this part of the scene were able to deepen their responses. There were, however a significant number of answers which retold or paraphrased the extract with limited explanation of *how* Shakespeare made this so 'strikingly dramatic'.

**Question 8**

This was a very popular choice. It produced a wide range of answers and reactions to the character. Generally the task was well approached, and most seemed to have a grasp of the ambivalence in Shakespeare's portrayal. Better responses developed a balanced answer, and addressed both propositions. They also moved on through the play to comment on Antony's later actions, either to support a chosen view or to develop a different one. Less successful answers took a generalised approach. The play and Mark Antony's role were known and understood but more detailed supporting evidence was needed in these.

**Question 9**

Those who captured the voice of 'the noblest Roman of them all' and whose responses show a detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant sections of Shakespeare's text in support merited the highest reward. Some candidates found the voice difficult to really pin down, it seemed, but there were others who captured a reflective and regretful tone, balanced with some justifications of actions and references to honour, and then resigned themselves to the brutal truth and ending.

**R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

**Question 10**

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 11

This was the question that the vast majority of candidates who prepared this play chose. Some provided a generalised character study of Osborne and his role but most managed a reasonably well-focused attempt. All understood his caring relationship with everyone, and the best showed a very good knowledge of the events immediately afterwards and the impact his death had on Stanhope.

### Question 12

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

## SECTION B: POETRY

### ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems*

The Tennyson selection was less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who offered it, frequently showed strong engagement with the poems; they had clearly enjoyed them.

### Question 13

This question was generally well done. Candidates who were insecure on the context, or did not comment on it put themselves at a disadvantage, although those who focused on the language closely could still achieve a reasonable mark. There were some good responses to the flower and nature imagery and its implications of renewal, life and hope. Candidates generally found it easy to identify the use of language though there were those who gave a run-through of the poem's ideas and ignored the actual focus of the question: how Tennyson 'at last finds hope'.

### Question 14

Some candidates described those qualities they admired (with some textual support) but did not necessarily explore how the writing made them admire him. However, most were able to write something that was relevant.

### Question 15

Most of the responses were able to tap into the richness of the descriptions of the setting and background to the poem. Some merely retold the poem, picking up on the descriptions of the characters (especially Lancelot) without mentioning the 'setting'.

### SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 3*

### Question 16

A number of candidates found it difficult to express themselves clearly in writing about this poem, but those who read it carefully and attended to the language could and did achieve good marks. By supporting ideas carefully, they could offer a variety of interpretations and there were some very perceptive responses, though there were some odd interpretations, some focusing entirely on its being an anti-war or anti-industrialization poem. Some interpretations focused on the 'collapse of the English Empire'. All too often the last stanza was totally ignored and so the importance of Arnold's appeal to his wife 'to be true /To one another' was not understood or commented on.

### Question 17

This question prompted some very good answers. With regard to Scott's poem, many were able to capture the way the use of imagery and tone contribute to the poem's portrayal of human love. There were some sensitive and engaged answers that were a pleasure to read. Those who chose Byron struggled more to understand the meaning and tone of the poem, and to identify with the voice. There were some competent answers, getting the main gist of the ideas, but very few good ones. Most just found one main point and reiterated it.



### Question 18

This was a much less popular choice. Some candidates selected appropriate poems and wrote convincing personal responses to the uses of sounds in both chosen poems. These included *The Voice* and *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* among others, where the sounds were effectively linked with interpretation of meanings. In general, many candidates this session did pay more close attention to the way language is used to form the music of the poetry, and the quality of answers was thereby improved.

### SECTION C: PROSE

#### EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights*

### Question 19

It was hoped that most candidates would detect in this passage how much Heathcliff's temperament as an adult is already revealed in the child. The prompt to 'suggest the course of events in the novel' worked well in enabling candidates to spring from phrases/hints in the passage to expand on their understanding of Heathcliff. There were many good and varied responses.

### Question 20

Differentiation came from how well the candidate ranged over the detail of the novel. The question seemed to encourage candidates to take a fresh look at the two characters and avoid a more standard character assessment. There were interesting answers arguing both likenesses and dissimilarities with a variety of justifications and reasoning, all acceptable with the right support.

### Question 21

The voice of Nelly did not seem too difficult to identify, though the moment challenged a few candidates.

#### KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

### Question 22

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 23

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 24

Those answers that caught the woman's new found fierce energy in the voice and even touched upon the fantasy associated increasingly with the character achieved high reward.

#### F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.

### Question 25

There were many very good answers where it was understood how the writer developed the tension through the episode from grief and shock, through brooding and speculating, to menacingly arriving at the accusations and intention for revenge. Explorations of the language were well developed in many answers.

### Question 26

The best answers appreciated Nick's dual role and showed how Fitzgerald makes him stand out like a beacon of sanity amongst the other characters. Not all candidates focused on his being a 'likeable' character but all had something to say about him. The strongest answers were able to back up views on him as both a character and the narrator with specific textual details. Weaker answers made a few generalised points, such as his being a loyal friend who organized/went to Gatsby's funeral, but this was as far as they got in terms of detailed support.

### Question 27

Although it seemed hard for some to pin down Daisy's voice exactly, better answers achieved this and conveyed some of her carelessness, and unbelievable ability to justify her thoughts and actions though some made her too guilty/grief-stricken/lovelorn to be credible, even though most conveyed some knowledge of her character.

### **BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather***

#### Questions 28, 29, 30

There were too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate..

### **EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome***

#### Question 31, 32, 33

There were too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate..

#### Question 32

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate..

### ***Stories of Ourselves***

#### Question 34

The most successful answers commented on the structure of the story and showed an awareness of the power of the extract in relation to the pathos of the actual death of this formerly dignified and loved woman. Those who really focused on what exactly makes it moving - the impossibility of ever being given forgiveness - did better than those who just explained the outcome. Most candidates were able to comment on why and how the ending was moving. The best commented on how the mother's ignorance of what had happened, combined with her almost careless sorting/burning of the cards, reducing them to ashes contrasted so movingly with their significance to the boy and his aunt. Less successful answers retold the extract but still managed to make something of the boy's tears, and his failure to be forgiven.

#### Question 35

This was a very open question and allowance was made for whatever warning candidates liked to identify. It was not an excuse for generalised polemic on the evils of modern society, however. Arguments needed to be carefully developed and well supported from the chosen story. Some candidates were not really secure on these stories, however. Those who chose the Bradbury tended to fare better, understanding something of his purpose, though often restricting their answers to showing how nature will outlive technology. Few really understood the Wyndham – surprisingly, candidates seemed to believe the warning was about the dangers of space travel. Very few really understood the writer's use of irony.

#### Question 36

There were some very good, suitably arrogant, chauvinistic voices but quite a few candidates thought John would be guilt-ridden and had him begging his wife for her forgiveness.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/02

Coursework

## Key Message

- The framing by teachers of appropriately worded assignments, encouraging and requiring candidates to fulfil all assessment objectives to the best of their ability, remains vital to success in this component.

## General comments

As in previous sessions, each Centre entering for this coursework component receives an individual report on its work and its assessment. These have been intended in the vast majority of cases to congratulate individual Centres on the work presented and for their careful presentation and moderation of the folders. In a minority of cases they are intended to bring to the Centres' attention features of their assessment and presentation which need addressing and to offer advice how that can be achieved.

This year the internal moderations carried out by the Centres were almost all excellent. It is clear that Centres now fully understand the revised generic bands. In particular, there was general understanding that Band 3 and not Band 2 now represented 'notional' Grade B and so on down the range. Also all Centres now realised that each assignment had to be awarded a mark and that the total was a simple aggregate of the two marks awarded.

It was noted that there was not much variety of text choice within Centres, a few of whom continue to require their candidates to write on two texts which have featured in their coursework for years. There is, of course, some teacher input that is desirable and choosing suitable texts is clearly part of that. (Ideally, though, there is still room for wider reading in the submissions as a whole.) It is recognised that candidates need guidance and often will thrive on it. However, in a few Centres that guidance did seem to have reached a level where the resulting candidate assignments were very similar in content. Centres must remember that they are validating work as the candidate's own and that can hardly be the case if a candidate assignment becomes effectively the result of group work.

Teachers are reminded that assignments on poetry and short stories must cover (at least) two poems/stories.

The quality of work was in many instances high. Once again many assignments were clearly the result of enthusiastic and thoughtful engagement with literature. Occasionally there was writing which was of a quality which once upon a time would have been thought to be beyond the compass of a 16 year old. At the other end of the scale, it was also encouraging to find very few folders which suggested that the candidates had not at least tried to do as good a job as they could.

Sometimes the framing of a task might not have encouraged candidates to fulfil their full potential, even though there was widespread recognition of the need to encourage candidates to explore a text as something created in words, not as merely something to be decoded or reduced simplistically into 'themes' and 'messages'. However, there were instances when the task set offered little if any stimulus in this direction. As has often been the case in the past, tasks on *Animal Farm*, for example, were sometimes a particular casualty in this respect, being treated as if they were simply an exercise in decoding its relation to the Russian Revolution. In tasks like one which asked the candidate to examine the significance of the title of the book it is difficult to see in what way any candidate could bring out the power of Orwell's *writing*. This in turn effectively prevented the work from satisfying the top Band descriptors. The styles of question on past set text papers can be a significant help in devising suitable tasks which give candidates every possibility of revealing their true potential and satisfying those descriptors.

Overall, Centres' coursework administration was done with efficiency. In most cases the commentaries on the Candidate Record Cards focused on the band descriptors in justifying the mark awarded. Sometimes they were rather cryptic or too brief; one sentence, however much to the point, can hardly show fully why two assignments have been given particular marks. (There were also occasional lapses into candidate biography which cannot have any weight in the final moderation.) The amount of annotation on the assignments varied greatly. Annotation should appear on the original assignment presented to the teacher for final assessment. The teacher's annotations help to validate the work as the candidate's own, besides showing the external Moderator how the Centre has arrived at the mark.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/31

Unseen

## Key Messages

- Candidates might helpfully be guided to write stronger introductions, giving a personal overview of the whole text and addressing the question and bullet points instead of repeating them.
- While comment on language has improved, there is scope for better comment on form and structure. Candidates might begin by addressing genre, and the forms of both poetry and narrative.
- They might address structure by looking at paragraphs or stanza form and evaluating the overall direction of a piece of writing before selecting passages for detailed analysis.
- Sentence structure (syntax) often helps readers to interpret poems; it is better to have a confident understanding of the literal meaning of a text before advancing a more adventurous metaphorical reading.
- Nevertheless, texts aim for a response from the reader which goes beyond the surface meaning, so a good, analytical answer needs to explore what is implied or suggested, and should not simply create a paraphrase of the narrative of the text.
- A good conclusion will make a personal response to both the text and the question, without moralising or generalising.

## General Comments

Centres should be congratulated on their increasing success in preparing candidates for this optional component. Close reading of unseen literature is a challenging but very rewarding way in which candidates can demonstrate the strength of the reading skills which they have acquired throughout the course, and especially their progress in meeting the more challenging Assessment Objectives. AO2 asks more able candidates *to explore texts beyond their surface meaning*, so the best answers always need to go beyond the surface narrative to look at the implications of a text, not only how it has been written but *why*. AO3 asks for the appreciation of *ways in which writers use language, structure, and form to create and shape meanings and effects*, so good answers need detailed appreciation of the writer's choices not just of individual words but also patterns of expression and decisions over genre and the shape of the writing. AO4 asks for the communication of a *sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts*; a response is sensitive when it is based on verbal detail and informed when it shows a full understanding of the text's meaning based on a sustained engagement with the ways in which that meaning develops in the course of making sense of the extract. While the stem question will always encourage candidates to address AO4, the bullet points can be invaluable in helping candidates to achieve a careful and detailed approach to AOs 2 and 3, helping them to see the way the extract develops and drawing attention to important features of language.

Attention to the AOs, to the centrality of the question in leading a candidate towards informed response and encouragement to use brief quotation in order to comment effectively on language have all led to an improvement in the overall level of response. Relatively few scripts were awarded low marks and plenty of candidates are now beginning to respond in a literary way to unseen texts, thus achieving marks in Band 5 and above. Nevertheless, there are some general targets for further improvement in response to Unseen literature which Centres could pass on to candidates in order to help them improve. Changes which these reports have encouraged in recent sessions have seen much more planning of responses (over-length answers were rare in this session) and greater focus on the question. Nevertheless, some plans are now becoming too elaborate and restricting scope for a good final response, while the question, bullet points and sometimes even the introductory rubric are not best answered by copying them out. Candidates preparing for the examination might practice the art of a good introduction. The best candidates give an overview of the whole text, giving an initial response to its genre, mood and tone. Instead of using the same words as the question, they reflect on those words to begin to make a personal response to the purpose and impact of the whole piece of writing.

A good introduction might then be followed by some appreciation of how the text is organised. Examiners noted that although candidates now have a lot more to say about language, often highlighting individual words or images, they say a lot less about form or structure. Some initial comment on genre or overall style can help to position a critical response, and avoid treating all pieces of writing as 'story' or narrative. Is the text reminiscence, autobiography, elegy, lament, character sketch or encounter? - to take examples from this session's questions across Papers 31, 32 and 33. Attention to the structure and development of a passage can also help to give shape to an answer, especially if there is clear understanding from the beginning of how texts develop and change. Weaker responses tend to demonstrate less attention to later parts of the poem or prose, and yet this is often what the final and most demanding bullet point asks stronger candidates to concentrate on. In the case of prose passages, structural understanding will require an appreciation of the narrator's point of view and the ways in which readers are encouraged to focus on particular characters and the ways in which they see the narrative. Dialogue needs careful reading in order to understand the dynamics of conversation, with appreciation of changes in tone or dominance. Poetry texts are not just shaped by stanza form or the more obvious poetic conventions. More modern poems, in particular, and all the poems in this session were late twentieth-century texts, demand attention to syntax (or sentence structure) as well as diction (word choice). Sentences often run over line- and stanza-endings. Without this technical understanding, it is easy to make mistakes in the literal appreciation of the poems: the quotations of many candidates suggested they did not fully grasp this requirement.

Quotation technique might also benefit from more attention. Stronger candidates certainly make good use of frequent, brief quotation, but they use quotation to advance and develop arguments of their own. It is only weaker candidates who begin sentences or paragraphs with quotation and then comment on no more than the literal meaning of the language. Large-scale lifting of chunks of text or paraphrase have become rare, but really focused comment on the *effect* of word choice or of patterns of sound and image, rather than just spotting such devices, remains rarer than it should be. It is much more effective to comment on the impact of words and images on the reader's feelings and imagination than to list devices or simply to refer to the existence of a 'semantic field'. Candidates are responding well to sound effects and images in verse, but have less to say about argument, or patterns which allow a reader to respond to a poem's symbolic meaning or deeper reflections, so they tend to write about the immediate drama and action indicated within a poem rather than its underlying meaning.

All of the poetry questions set this year required candidates to work hard to find the initial, surface meaning, often by working at the syntax and pushing beyond the simpler constructions of short lines and brisk rhythms towards the deeper reflections which emerge when a reading goes beyond the poem's lineation and apparent narrative. Perhaps as a result, more candidates than usual chose the prose, and in Centres overall the numbers choosing Question 2 were comparable to those choosing Question 1 and sometimes they exceeded them. It was good to read a variety of different answers and to see that the prose provided just as many opportunities for discrimination and for interesting individual answers as Examiners are used to in response to poetry. However, the need for overall understanding, appreciation of structure and well-selected quotation with focused commentary is even more likely to lead to high reward in answers to Question 2, as the danger is otherwise one of simply treating the prose as a 'story' and constructing an illustrated narrative response, without considering the writer's purpose and creation of memorable effects. Prose passages are chosen for this paper because they are well-shaped, contain striking uses of language or literary technique and have a lasting impact on the reader by giving pause for thought and reflection. It therefore follows that a good answer cannot linger too long on every narrative detail: there needs to be time at the end to reflect on the overall effect. This means looking at what is suggested or hinted by the narrative – why are these characters, encounters or experiences memorable and significant? – as well as describing what happens. Before writing a conclusion to their answers, candidates might be advised to look back at the original question. Have they reached a better understanding of how to answer it succinctly and clearly? How have their observations while reading closely helped them to attain a better understanding of the writer's purposes and the impact of the writing on the reader? A personal response might contain words such as 'perhaps' or 'this might suggest'. However, there will not be speculation which goes beyond the information in the text, nor should there be personal comments about experiences or reactions which are not responses to how the text has been written. Instead, there should be reflection on the ways in which a reader's response to a text might change or develop through deeper and more sensitive engagement with both its surface language and its deeper, and implied, meaning.



## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

Candidates responded well to the detailed textures of John Cassidy's poem 'Frozen Canal'. Taking up the question's invitation to focus on the writing and the ways in which it brings a very particular scene to life, they wrote encouragingly about language, especially the choice of words and descriptive detail. While many candidates may have needed their imaginations to work strongly to imagine this scene, they used the introductory rubric sensibly to help them to picture the drama of this moment. Only the stronger responses began to see the significance of the poem's contrasts, between the ice and the ice-breaker, between the sounds of play and the drumming sound of 'the spoil-sport barge, between the children's anarchic sense of fun and adult notions of safety and between the fun on the surface of the ice and the ominous images of danger and death lurking beneath it. Only a response alert to these details, and perhaps also to the effect of the poem's pattern of full- and half-rhymes and the sense of fate which they hint at, could reach a full interpretation of the significance of the boys' reaction to the helmsman and what he might represent. The bullet points should have helped candidates to work their way through the way in which the poem progresses, but only the very best answered saw the importance of the suggestions that are made by the symbolism of the later parts of the poem and the possibilities of personal response to the image of the boys as both 'saved' and 'desolated'.

It was nevertheless possible for many good candidates to work their way towards an allegorical understanding of the poem's deeper implications through a closer look its surfaces. Many appreciated the daring quality which the writer gives the young boy who 'daringly' first proves the 'black/Top of the iced canal', although some struggled with the syntax here. Good answers saw the visual qualities of the scene the vigour with which he dodges and 'spins', followed by his companions and enjoyed the alliterative links between words and the ways in which the internal rhyme and repetition give vitality and continuous action to the description of how they 'ride and skitter and glide'. Fewer noticed the more ominous and troubling suggestions of the 'iceberg tyre one-ninth out' or the 'bottle buried to its snout', although some noticed that the scene is actually rather dirty and dangerous and the banks of snow 'off-white' and 'old', not really attractive. Most enjoyed the image of the 'hissing crown of this new road' and noticed the auditory effect of the boy's 'Indian whoop' and, probably rightly, saw the poet as on the side of the boys.

Differentiation between weaker and stronger answers came through the treatment of the ice-breaker. Its 'heavy drumming' and 'butting shoulders' personify it as the bullying destroyer of the boys' fun. Good candidates noticed its heavy labour and the aggression of its 'thump' and 'crack'. A few very strong answers even saw the 'brick-sized ice-blocks' as a reflection of the dull conformity and rigidity of the adult world in contrast to the 'slick' highway of the children's enjoyment, living in and for the moment without thought of safety. Many candidates responded to the details of language and their effect and there was certainly appreciation of the forms of expression and a sense that these made the poem memorable. However, there was less sense of the significance of language in shaping meaning and interpretation. Features of language were too often seen in isolation, instead of related to one another and there was therefore too little appreciation of meaning which went beyond surface description.

In the eighth stanza, for example, there was little clear understanding of just how much danger and the threat of death lie beneath the surface, partly because this requires carrying the meaning through into the next three stanzas. The poet begins 'Deliberate this.' Does this brief sentence contain an imperative or an adjective? The first is surely more likely, in which case this is an invitation (indeed a command) to think. More deliberation would certainly have helped candidates here, as many thought the 'shocked face' here referred to the action of the boys in the present moment which the poem captures through its tenses, instead of the ever-present risk which we are told 'happens – often enough for a barge to be sent/Whenever the ice will hold a footstep'. This shows the need to read the whole text carefully before isolating details. The water is personified as sepia and waiting: the full meaning of this depends on context, which shows that this is something dark, dirty and threatening, waiting to throttle the breath. The image of water filling a child's mouth 'with sludge to silence' should explain the 'blunt prow' of the ice-breaker 'pushing the games away' and shows that the poet's sympathies are more balanced and measured than the early stanzas suggest. Good candidates are always aware that texts develop and change their perspectives, and that meaning can be complex.

The best candidates not only picked out, identified and commented on specific features but made connections or established contrasts between, for example, the lighter, higher sounds of the boys and the deeper, aggressive sounds of the barge. Many good candidates were confident and thoughtful enough to offer allegorical interpretations of the games-breaking scenario: one thought that there was a "dichotomy at the centre of the poem: the struggle between civilization, logic and reason (the barge), and fun, passion and

living-in-the-moment (the boys); others saw an eco message with the diesel-burning barge piloted by “Man” who is wholly indifferent to the pollution and destruction of a beautiful and joyful natural scene; others saw the barge as representing the inexorable passage of time and spoiler of fun. Those who used their analysis of details to support interpretation were especially highly rewarded.

The end of the poem focuses on the figure of the helmsman ‘indifferent’ to the shrill cries of the ‘desolated’ boys and the devastation that the passage of the ice-breaker has left in its wake. The best answers took up the invitation of the bullet points to consider the kind of image of fate or the adult world which he might represent, both well-meaning but apparently lacking in understanding and empathy, his back ‘crouched’ as he sticks to his task, his ‘ordered track’ a sharp contrast with the free-wheeling anarchic spinning of the boy at the beginning of the poem. Meaning can be constructed by pairing, contrasting and comparing images and sounds, instead of just seeing them in isolation.

## Question 2

This passage from close to the beginning of E. M Forster’s *A Passage to India* showing the first meeting of Dr Aziz and Mrs Moore, gave candidates plenty of interesting description and dialogue to explore. Most responded well to the question’s focus on the ways in which the writer engages and sustains the reader’s interest and used the bullet points to chart Dr Aziz’s dramatically shifting moods and changing reactions to Mrs Moore. Stronger candidates paid some detailed attention to the way Mrs Moore responds to him too, moving from nervousness to humour, and therefore to ways in which the writer has interested readers in this unusual relationship, crossing boundaries of colonial society to show a connection between different cultures and different generations. Much of the text is dialogue, so it was important to pay careful attention to tone and implication as well as content, and to appreciate that the jokes and exchanges of personal information by the characters show a developing friendship and confidence, as they find that have much in common and perhaps are even ‘in the same box’.

Description in such passages defines a mood as well as setting a scene, although in this case it is a mood which is abruptly broken. Most noticed how being in the mosque has helped Dr Aziz to find calm and contentment, but it was only the stronger candidates who saw that the references in the inscription and in the description of Dr Aziz’s thoughts to ‘the secret understanding of the heart’ might be preparing the reader for the nature of the relationship between the Indian doctor and the English lady. Some struggled with the impressionistic image of the pillars of the mosque appearing to quiver and sway. Better candidates were able to relate this to Dr Aziz’s feelings and instinctive superstitions, or to the fact that he was repeating the key phrase ‘with tears in his eyes’.

Most candidates understood both the initial anger of Dr Aziz and the way he swiftly needs to apologise. For higher marks, it was also important to comment on the writing here and how this engages us with his powerful and volatile emotions and beliefs, and reaction to outsiders. The abrupt sentences and expression, and the description of Mrs Moore ‘keeping the ablution-tank between them’ suggest that he is slightly alarming, while his response to her statement that ‘God is here’ explains why he now becomes so impressed by her and wishes to so her ‘some service now or at any time’. Many observed the change of tone here, but were not quite so sure about where this comes from, perhaps because it requires looking back at why the peace of the mosque was so important to him. In prose responses, too, the ability to make cross-reference and not just to work through the passage sequentially, tends to distinguish the stronger answer. It was important to notice that Mrs Moore remains shocked and hesitant at first, turning down Dr Aziz’s offer of help and making as if to go. When she tells him his name this is doubly significant: it is not only an indication that she is beginning to trust him, but also shows her age and introduces the idea that she is a widow. Some misunderstood the nature of the relationship between Dr Aziz and Mrs Moore, thinking that they had met before or that they were lovers attracted physically. The passage describing the moment when he realises that she is an old woman is very important, as it is here that ‘a fabric bigger than the mosque feel to pieces’ as her looks do not seem to him to match her voice. However, Dr Aziz’s next responses show even more respect, concern and care for someone he finds worth telling his community about: these are very clear clues to the nature of the friendship which now develops. Not all understood this. What should have been clear is that neither character is behaving conventionally.

Many candidates understood that mutual understanding is developing here through the exchange of information and details, which show they have much in common, as well as much that divides them, and that the information becomes increasingly intimate: details of their lives, the names of their children and their personal beliefs. They saw a dramatic contrast with the doctor’s earlier hostility and defensiveness, and his assumption that the English do not understand his culture. Stronger answers also appreciated the developing mood of the conversation, and noticed its humour, not least the joke about snakes. The exchanges of dialogue become more extended and less closed and abrupt, showing increasing warmth and

trust. The best answers noticed that the two characters laugh together at the comment on snakes, and just a few noticed the physical proximity of the description of them both slipping on their evening shoes, in contrast to their earlier distance and wariness. There are other references to 'smiling', delight and amusement, and the doctor gets clear answers to his questions with no sense that he is being intrusive, to show the tone of their talk, just as the differences between their children's names is seen as a source of amusement. The writer would have been pleased to have seen just how many candidates used the term 'connect' to describe the ways in which these very different characters find mutual companionship and overcome cultural difference through lively communication. Most candidates made good use of the text to support their responses and showed overall understanding. The implications of the passage demonstrate how initial prejudice and mistrust can be overcome, and these were explored by stronger candidates. They looked at how the writing creates a sense of good humour and lively exchange of opinions to replace the earlier mistrust and shock. Returning to the stem question, the strongest were able to map the reader's interest in a swiftly changing relationship, which quickly becomes deep, trusting and intimate, and were able to make their own responses to how this change is shown to come about.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/32

Unseen

## Key Messages

- Candidates might helpfully be guided to write stronger introductions, giving a personal overview of the whole text and addressing the question and bullet points instead of repeating them.
- While comment on language has improved, there is scope for better comment on form and structure. Candidates might begin by addressing genre, and the forms of both poetry and narrative.
- They might address structure by looking at paragraphs or stanza form and evaluating the overall direction of a piece of writing before selecting passages for detailed analysis.
- Sentence structure (syntax) often helps readers to interpret poems; it is better to have a confident understanding of the literal meaning of a text before advancing a more adventurous metaphorical reading.
- Nevertheless, texts aim for a response from the reader which goes beyond the surface meaning, so a good, analytical answer needs to explore what is implied or suggested, and should not simply create a paraphrase of the narrative of the text.
- A good conclusion will make a personal response to both the text and the question, without moralising or generalising.

## General Comments

Centres should be congratulated on their increasing success in preparing candidates for this optional component. Close reading of unseen literature is a challenging but very rewarding way in which candidates can demonstrate the strength of the reading skills which they have acquired throughout the course, and especially their progress in meeting the more challenging Assessment Objectives. AO2 asks more able candidates *to explore texts beyond their surface meaning*, so the best answers always need to go beyond the surface narrative to look at the implications of a text, not only how it has been written but *why*. AO3 asks for the appreciation of *ways in which writers use language, structure, and form to create and shape meanings and effects*, so good answers need detailed appreciation of the writer's choices not just of individual words but also patterns of expression and decisions over genre and the shape of the writing. AO4 asks for the communication of a *sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts*; a response is sensitive when it is based on verbal detail and informed when it shows a full understanding of the text's meaning based on a sustained engagement with the ways in which that meaning develops in the course of making sense of the extract. While the stem question will always encourage candidates to address AO4, the bullet points can be invaluable in helping candidates to achieve a careful and detailed approach to AOs 2 and 3, helping them to see the way the extract develops and drawing attention to important features of language.

Attention to the AOs, to the centrality of the question in leading a candidate towards informed response and encouragement to use brief quotation in order to comment effectively on language have all led to an improvement in the overall level of response. Relatively few scripts were awarded low marks and plenty of candidates are now beginning to respond in a literary way to unseen texts, thus achieving marks in Band 5 and above. Nevertheless, there are some general targets for further improvement in response to Unseen literature which Centres could pass on to candidates in order to help them improve. Changes which these reports have encouraged in recent sessions have seen much more planning of responses (over-length answers were rare in this session) and greater focus on the question. Nevertheless, some plans are now becoming too elaborate and restricting scope for a good final response, while the question, bullet points and sometimes even the introductory rubric are not best answered by copying them out. Candidates preparing for the examination might practice the art of a good introduction. The best candidates give an overview of the whole text, giving an initial response to its genre, mood and tone. Instead of using the same words as the question, they reflect on those words to begin to make a personal response to the purpose and impact of the whole piece of writing.

A good introduction might then be followed by some appreciation of how the text is organised. Examiners noted that although candidates now have a lot more to say about language, often highlighting individual words or images, they say a lot less about form or structure. Some initial comment on genre or overall style can help to position a critical response, and avoid treating all pieces of writing as 'story' or narrative. Is the text reminiscence, autobiography, elegy, lament, character sketch or encounter? - to take examples from this session's questions across Papers 31, 32 and 33. Attention to the structure and development of a passage can also help to give shape to an answer, especially if there is clear understanding from the beginning of how texts develop and change. Weaker responses tend to demonstrate less attention to later parts of the poem or prose, and yet this is often what the final and most demanding bullet point asks stronger candidates to concentrate on. In the case of prose passages, structural understanding will require an appreciation of the narrator's point of view and the ways in which readers are encouraged to focus on particular characters and the ways in which they see the narrative. Dialogue needs careful reading in order to understand the dynamics of conversation, with appreciation of changes in tone or dominance. Poetry texts are not just shaped by stanza form or the more obvious poetic conventions. More modern poems, in particular, and all the poems in this session were late twentieth-century texts, demand attention to syntax (or sentence structure) as well as diction (word choice). Sentences often run over line- and stanza-endings. Without this technical understanding, it is easy to make mistakes in the literal appreciation of the poems: the quotations of many candidates suggested they did not fully grasp this requirement.

Quotation technique might also benefit from more attention. Stronger candidates certainly make good use of frequent, brief quotation, but they use quotation to advance and develop arguments of their own. It is only weaker candidates who begin sentences or paragraphs with quotation and then comment on no more than the literal meaning of the language. Large-scale lifting of chunks of text or paraphrase have become rare, but really focused comment on the *effect* of word choice or of patterns of sound and image, rather than just spotting such devices, remains rarer than it should be. It is much more effective to comment on the impact of words and images on the reader's feelings and imagination than to list devices or simply to refer to the existence of a 'semantic field'. Candidates are responding well to sound effects and images in verse, but have less to say about argument, or patterns which allow a reader to respond to a poem's symbolic meaning or deeper reflections, so they tend to write about the immediate drama and action indicated within a poem rather than its underlying meaning.

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## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

Weaker candidates did sometimes struggle with the literal meaning of the Tony Harrison's 'Background Material' (one of a series of elegies for his dead parents), while nevertheless finding plenty in the poem's language and imagery to engage with. Stronger responses were focused, as encouraged by the question and bullet points, on the photographs themselves and what they revealed about the poet's love for his parents and their continuing presence in his lives. The poem yields plenty of very specific and moving description and gains power from its simplicity of description and from its elegiac concentration on what changes and what remains the same. This also explains the title: the poet looks at the background images rather than the faces of his parents, and comes to realise that not only are they his background, but also that he is himself in the back ground of the photographs and that they therefore provide a direct link between his past and his present. They are also a lingering presence on his 'writing desk' and a constant background to all he writes.

While the poet's father and 'his background', the man-made scene of the 'pub' are gone, the rural cottage in the background of the photograph of his mother is still there and so are the 'same greens', pointing out nature's ability to renew itself and bring fresh life, eight years on, when the parents are no more. The best responses realised that this is the crucial difference between the two photographs, and that this perhaps just hints at differences between the two parents or how the poet thinks about them. Careful readers also noticed that the 'blur' and 'shadow' are comments on the quality of the photographs not on the quality of the poet's relationship with his parents, although they might be a comment on his difficulty in accurately capturing images of who they are. The poet makes all clearer in the final two stanzas: what would 'mar each shot' if the photographs had been taken by a professional photographer are what make them for him. Each photograph reveals evidence of the photographer's presence: there is a flash from the flashbulb in the indoor photograph, reflected in the father's glasses which reveal a minute image of the poet himself. Similarly, in the background of the photograph of the mother is a shadow of a man holding a camera to his eyes, which is the poet himself. Both photographs therefore show the poet's close relationship to his parents and show how he is their background, as well as the fact that they are his background. They are also both pictures of the artist recording an image, however imperfectly, and therefore relate to the poet's task as a writer.

Weaker answers saw little of any of this, and often showed a refusal to take the poem at face value and explore its surface in detail. They searched for deeper meaning not in the implicit emotional depth of the poet's feelings, hinted at not only in the words but in the syntax, especially of the final sentence, but through a narrative of their own invention. These responses were very speculative, seizing on individual words and phrases out of context and attempting to construct a narrative of relationships which was often far from the poet's original tone and purpose. This might have been avoided had candidates paid more careful attention to the question: the rubric, stem question and each bullet point all make it clear that the poem is about the photographs and not about the parents' relationship with each other. However, weaker answers constructed elaborate theories about the parents, perhaps beginning from the line 'Neither one a couple and both bad', which was misread as referring to the parents, or the poet's feelings about them, rather than to the two photographs. The mistake was to take the line out of context, and to assume that the poem says something quite different from what it appears to say on the surface – after all, the previous line had referred to a celebration of the parents' fortieth wedding anniversary. The reference to 'our favourite pub' was also misread and misunderstood by many candidates, who constructed elaborate narratives of alcoholism and abuse from this suggestion. Similarly 'blur' and 'shadow' were taken as referring to darkness and difficulty in the relationships of parents or of poet to parents, which, while perhaps hinted at, are not the primary focus of this poem.

Stronger answers focused on the poet's use of the continuous present tense to celebrate the continuing presence of his parents, and on the ironic contrast between the imperfect photographs and the careful construction of the poem. To understand the latter, a concentration on form and structure is important. The poem is an extended or imperfect sonnet, full of connections made by rhymes and half-rhymes, and this relates both to the imperfect photographs and to the complex relationships and connections celebrated in the poem. Good answers highlighted particular rhymes, for example 'same' and 'frame' or 'light' and 'write' and considered how they might be linked. This is a much more effective technique than simply listing rhyme schemes. Candidates might also be encouraged to pay much more attention to syntax (sentence construction) when writing about poems. In the first stanza, sentences are very short and give a bald and unelaborated description. Some saw this as expressing choked emotion, or a difficulty in recapturing powerful feelings about the parents, which showed sensitivity of response to detail. Certainly the poet appears to be struggling to make out what the photographs describe, what they mean to him, or what they



express about his 'background'. However, the next sentence takes up the whole second and longest stanza and suggests that he quickly makes sense of the 'blur'. Simple, verbless sentences have opened out into a deeper and more detailed appreciation of the 'background'. Here the two photographs are linked, albeit by the word 'but', and contrasted, in order to see what is 'gone for good' against what has 'stayed the same'. The father seems to be a link with a vanished social world, the mother with nature and with the way it surrounds the cottage from which the poet writes now. The focus is on loss, but also on memory and on what continues to be present.

The final sentence is the longest of all. It stretches across three short stanzas, which form the second half of the poem, almost the sestet of the sonnet. As in sonnets, there is a change of subject and tone: at this point the poem becomes less elegiac and more celebratory. This was only realised by the stronger candidates in this paper, although the word 'Though' is a clear indication of a change of mood. Punctuation as well as syntax really help to shape appreciation of meaning: the colon here comes before an explanation, which suggests that what 'for photographers would mar each shot' is here something which links them – a link made by a hyphen at the end of line 14. Here the emphasis is very much on what links the photographs, rather than on their difference. What links them is celebrated by the emphatic italics '*me*', reinforced by the excited, almost breathless syntax of 'in his, if you look close, the gleam, the light'. Only stronger candidates looked closely enough to see the significance of the light here. While a pleasing number understood the literal meaning of the way in which the photographer has accidentally placed himself in the photograph, too few saw the flash as enlightenment and celebration, some feeling the 'minute size' of the image was some comment on how unimportant he had been to his father, or finding something sinister in the contrast between this 'light' and the 'shadow' cast in the final two lines. The latter surely refers more directly to the continuities between the view from the cottage shown in the photograph of the poet's mother and the writing desk in the same cottage from which the poet is now writing, reinforcing his choice of the present tense to bring these images to life for the reader. Careful, attentive and sensitive reading, instead of over-imaginative speculation, brought all these connections out in the best answers, and appreciated the ways in which the poet pays homage to his parents' continuing presence in his elegy.

## Question 2

This extract from Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, a text made up of a series of such 'vignettes', concentrates on the act of reading and the lasting impression it leaves, and focuses on two very different styles of writing and their lingering influence. Stronger responses showed how candidates realised that the style of writing in the extract is strongly influenced by what it describes and that the writer is imitating, and eventually merging, these two ways of seeing the world through imaginative or expressive prose. While one piece of writing is highly emotive fantasy, the other is concerned with the minute and sensitive representation of the truth: as the passage is autobiography, this is a strong hint of the writer's future allegiance, so those candidates who merely dismissed the second piece of writing as 'boring' had not understood its true impact. The question asked about the impression made by the two very different styles of writing, and many candidates were better at analysing the more spectacular excitement of *The Shan Van Vocht* than the quieter virtues of the 'model essay' written by the Schoolboy. Some misjudged the question by becoming confused over who wrote what, although a close look at the bullet points should have helped here and clarified that the novel about the rebellion was the first book the narrator had read and that the essay had been recommended to his class by his English teacher, and made him think again about what good style really is. The third narrative voice is the writer's own, no longer imitating or remembering what he has read but writing down his own memories of childhood, both his day dreams and the more mundane reality. This is especially present, as the very best candidates realised, in the final sentence which combines elements of both styles, but is there throughout the extract, accurately recording the facts about his past and skilfully imitating the language and style of pieces of writing which have made such a deep impression.

Most candidates found the first section of the extract immediately accessible and understood the idea of how the writer 'recaptures the excitement' of the novel through faithful imitation. While almost all noted how faithfully he remembered facts like the number of pages, the colour of the cover and the names of the characters, stronger responses noted that phrases like 'talking in whispers' and 'wild night of winter rain and squall' recreate the breathless excitement which the novel communicated, and show that he still remembers the warmth and savagery of the writing. Adjectives are piled high: there are repeated references to 'danger' and to emotive words such as 'great...wild...exquisite...dark...deep...beautiful.' Descriptions of nature or the environment all seem to invoke the pathetic fallacy, with proleptic storms without and warmth within, graveyards foreshadowing death. A number of good responses realised how funny the boy's relationship with the heroine, Anne, really is: not only is he in love with a fictional character, but he works up his jealousy over having to share her with the hero, Robert. Some astutely pointed out that the young boy does not really understand the novel and its political themes: it is the passion and the physical descriptions of Ann which attract him most, and he grows obsessed with 'her dark hair and her deep golden brown eyes and her olive

skin'. The writing is heavily adjectival and piles on drama and excess through polysyndeton and clichéd expression. A word like 'exquisite' shows the boy revelling in the extravagance of language and vivid imagination; his brother's rude interruption is a funny moment as it reveals the truth. He is not really reading but 're-imagining', inventing a story rather than following exactly what is there. This is most obvious in the final sentence of the first paragraph when he imitates the passion and also the macabre Gothic imagery of the original, while urging Ann to turn away from the rebellion and towards him, and 'the endless possibilities in the dark' which suggests that the reality of the plot held less interest for the young boy than his thoughts about its heroine. The writer admits that his approach to reading was highly imaginative, and he imitates an exaggerated and extended form of writing in his choice of words, but also in his syntax through the long sentences of the first section.

By contrast, the language as well as the content of the second section is very different indeed. Good responses noticed that here too the writer is communicating the style as well as the content of what he has read. Sentences are shorter, adjectives are fewer and verbs more precise. The style is almost as plain as the straightforward homely scene described, although it is no without its imaginative flourishes, such as seeing the two china dogs 'looking as ever across at one another'. However, the concentration here is on truth and accuracy, not the wild and windy atmosphere around the historical 'open-hearth' fire. Moreover, as many noted, the talk is much less and is of local news, the return of father and homework or learning, as opposed to love and rebellion. It is a world more real to the Schoolboy, although at first he rejects its plainness. 'Everything was so simple...' was his first reaction, although he also begins to feel embarrassed about his own tendency to reach for the dictionary and describe things he 'had seen only with the Ann of the novel', which were his fantasies, not reality. Stronger candidates looked at the structure of the passage (and the bullet points) and realised that the grown-up writer gives as much space to this essay as the famous novel, showing that he values it just as highly. Again he not only remembers precise details of the contents, which show how much it remained in his memory, but he also imitates its style, with its focus on precise and realistic recapturing of genuine experience. Each piece of crockery is carefully preserved and so is the talk of the boy's mother, with its focus on real emotions and pleasures, rather than those of a wild imagination. Sounds as well as sights are also recalled to suggest that realism can be just as memorable as romanticism. Instead of passion and rebellion, this writing highlights domesticity and family loyalties, grounded in contentment and ritual. The narrator says that he is 'embarrassed', so most candidates felt that he agreed with the teacher that this was good writing, although some felt that the boy still rebelled against such dull and familiar fare.

The last paragraph is the key to answering the final bullet point and therefore to evaluating the direction of the whole text, so once again this was a text which required good understanding of the ending in order to put the rest into context. On the surface, the writer may seem to be dismissive of 'such stuff' and 'ordinary life' without rebellions, love or danger and feel it is not worth writing about. However, not only does he tell us that the memory of the essay remained with him, but he has proved this by the precise way in which, as an adult writer, he reproduces its details in the paragraph which describes it. Good answers benefited from an awareness of the narrative voice, of who sees the events in the prose passage and how this influences the way he or she tells the story. As is so often the case in retrospective narrative or memoir, the writer is much older and looking back at his childhood and childish emotions. This explains why he brings in humour when describing the young boy's passion for the imaginary heroine and why he contrasts the boy's initial dismissal of the 'model essay' with the way it lingers on in his memory. Answers in the top bands usually saw that the final sentence actually combines elements of both worlds. As the passage is a memoir or autobiography, we must assume that it is influenced by the teacher's recommendation of 'just telling the truth', in other words giving the plain facts without embarrassment. Some noticed that this was even the case in the precise description of the places and colours of *The Shan Van Vocht*, or the accurate description of the scorn of the narrator's brother. Nevertheless, the final sentence of the passage suggests that the novel's romantic style and commitment to rebellion and yearning remains present, even as a ghost. Strong responses noted the poetry of the final phrase, showing that 'behind and above' the realism of the 'Dutch interior' are the sibilant sound effects of the alliterative language and adjectival abundance of the wild nights, the rebels and their passions: 'those wispy, shawly figures from the rebellion, sibilant above the great fire and below the aching, high wind'. They rightly noticed that the high style remains there alongside the realism and that perhaps both are needed to capture what writing means to this writer. Certainly both styles shape his writing here, and a good answer balanced out analysis of both influences and paid due respect to the influences and characteristics of each, appreciating that good analysis of prose should focus as much on style as content.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/33

Unseen

## Key Messages

- Candidates might helpfully be guided to write stronger introductions, giving a personal overview of the whole text and addressing the question and bullet points instead of repeating them.
- While comment on language has improved, there is scope for better comment on form and structure. Candidates might begin by addressing genre, and the forms of both poetry and narrative.
- They might address structure by looking at paragraphs or stanza form and evaluating the overall direction of a piece of writing before selecting passages for detailed analysis.
- Sentence structure (syntax) often helps readers to interpret poems; it is better to have a confident understanding of the literal meaning of a text before advancing a more adventurous metaphorical reading.
- Nevertheless, texts aim for a response from the reader which goes beyond the surface meaning, so a good, analytical answer needs to explore what is implied or suggested, and should not simply create a paraphrase of the narrative of the text.
- A good conclusion will make a personal response to both the text and the question, without moralising or generalising.

## General Comments

Centres should be congratulated on their increasing success in preparing candidates for this optional component. Close reading of unseen literature is a challenging but very rewarding way in which candidates can demonstrate the strength of the reading skills which they have acquired throughout the course, and especially their progress in meeting the more challenging Assessment Objectives. AO2 asks more able candidates *to explore texts beyond their surface meaning*, so the best answers always need to go beyond the surface narrative to look at the implications of a text, not only how it has been written but *why*. AO3 asks for the appreciation of *ways in which writers use language, structure, and form to create and shape meanings and effects*, so good answers need detailed appreciation of the writer's choices not just of individual words but also patterns of expression and decisions over genre and the shape of the writing. AO4 asks for the communication of a *sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts*; a response is sensitive when it is based on verbal detail and informed when it shows a full understanding of the text's meaning based on a sustained engagement with the ways in which that meaning develops in the course of making sense of the extract. While the stem question will always encourage candidates to address AO4, the bullet points can be invaluable in helping candidates to achieve a careful and detailed approach to AOs 2 and 3, helping them to see the way the extract develops and drawing attention to important features of language.

Attention to the AOs, to the centrality of the question in leading a candidate towards informed response and encouragement to use brief quotation in order to comment effectively on language have all led to an improvement in the overall level of response. Relatively few scripts were awarded low marks and plenty of candidates are now beginning to respond in a literary way to unseen texts, thus achieving marks in Band 5 and above. Nevertheless, there are some general targets for further improvement in response to Unseen literature which Centres could pass on to candidates in order to help them improve. Changes which these reports have encouraged in recent sessions have seen much more planning of responses (over-length answers were rare in this session) and greater focus on the question. Nevertheless, some plans are now becoming too elaborate and restricting scope for a good final response, while the question, bullet points and sometimes even the introductory rubric are not best answered by copying them out. Candidates preparing for the examination might practice the art of a good introduction. The best candidates give an overview of the whole text, giving an initial response to its genre, mood and tone. Instead of using the same words as the question, they reflect on those words to begin to make a personal response to the purpose and impact of the whole piece of writing.

A good introduction might then be followed by some appreciation of how the text is organised. Examiners noted that although candidates now have a lot more to say about language, often highlighting individual words or images, they say a lot less about form or structure. Some initial comment on genre or overall style can help to position a critical response, and avoid treating all pieces of writing as 'story' or narrative. Is the text reminiscence, autobiography, elegy, lament, character sketch or encounter? - to take examples from this session's questions across Papers 31, 32 and 33. Attention to the structure and development of a passage can also help to give shape to an answer, especially if there is clear understanding from the beginning of how texts develop and change. Weaker responses tend to demonstrate less attention to later parts of the poem or prose, and yet this is often what the final and most demanding bullet point asks stronger candidates to concentrate on. In the case of prose passages, structural understanding will require an appreciation of the narrator's point of view and the ways in which readers are encouraged to focus on particular characters and the ways in which they see the narrative. Dialogue needs careful reading in order to understand the dynamics of conversation, with appreciation of changes in tone or dominance. Poetry texts are not just shaped by stanza form or the more obvious poetic conventions. More modern poems, in particular, and all the poems in this session were late twentieth-century texts, demand attention to syntax (or sentence structure) as well as diction (word choice). Sentences often run over line- and stanza-endings. Without this technical understanding, it is easy to make mistakes in the literal appreciation of the poems: the quotations of many candidates suggested they did not fully grasp this requirement.

Quotation technique might also benefit from more attention. Stronger candidates certainly make good use of frequent, brief quotation, but they use quotation to advance and develop arguments of their own. It is only weaker candidates who begin sentences or paragraphs with quotation and then comment on no more than the literal meaning of the language. Large-scale lifting of chunks of text or paraphrase have become rare, but really focused comment on the *effect* of word choice or of patterns of sound and image, rather than just spotting such devices, remains rarer than it should be. It is much more effective to comment on the impact of words and images on the reader's feelings and imagination than to list devices or simply to refer to the existence of a 'semantic field'. Candidates are responding well to sound effects and images in verse, but have less to say about argument, or patterns which allow a reader to respond to a poem's symbolic meaning or deeper reflections, so they tend to write about the immediate drama and action indicated within a poem rather than its underlying meaning.

All of the poetry questions set this year required candidates to work hard to find the initial, surface meaning, often by working at the syntax and pushing beyond the simpler constructions of short lines and brisk rhythms towards the deeper reflections which emerge when a reading goes beyond the poem's lineation and apparent narrative. Perhaps as a result, more candidates than usual chose the prose, and in Centres overall the numbers choosing Question 2 were comparable to those choosing Question 1 and sometimes they exceeded them. It was good to read a variety of different answers and to see that the prose provided just as many opportunities for discrimination and for interesting individual answers as Examiners are used to in response to poetry. However, the need for overall understanding, appreciation of structure and well-selected quotation with focused commentary is even more likely to lead to high reward in answers to Question 2, as the danger is otherwise one of simply treating the prose as a 'story' and constructing an illustrated narrative response, without considering the writer's purpose and creation of memorable effects. Prose passages are chosen for this paper because they are well-shaped, contain striking uses of language or literary technique and have a lasting impact on the reader by giving pause for thought and reflection. It therefore follows that a good answer cannot linger too long on every narrative detail: there needs to be time at the end to reflect on the overall effect. This means looking at what is suggested or hinted by the narrative – why are these characters, encounters or experiences memorable and significant? – as well as describing what happens. Before writing a conclusion to their answers, candidates might be advised to look back at the original question. Have they reached a better understanding of how to answer it succinctly and clearly? How have their observations while reading closely helped them to attain a better understanding of the writer's purposes and the impact of the writing on the reader? A personal response might contain words such as 'perhaps' or 'this might suggest'. However, there will not be speculation which goes beyond the information in the text, nor should there be personal comments about experiences or reactions which are not responses to how the text has been written. Instead, there should be reflection on the ways in which a reader's response to a text might change or develop through deeper and more sensitive engagement with both its surface language and its deeper, and implied, meaning.



## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Question 1**

R. S. Thomas's late poem 'No Jonahs' shows that short poems can sometimes be very dense and packed with meaning. Those candidates who did choose it generally made a good attempt and certainly showed commitment to making sense of its images and ideas. Many were intrigued by the title and explored ways in which the whales might or might not be lucky or the bringers of luck. This certainly made an interesting way into the text. It is deliberately ambiguous whether the title refers to the whales or to human beings, and understanding of the text requires the reader to see the parallels which are made by the poet between the different mammals, and how he traces their troubled history and relationship. The question highlights both the portrayal of this relationship and the language, form and structure of the poem (implicit in the term 'writing'). It is helpful to see the poem as two questions followed by answers and statements, but then ending in a further question, based on the parallels between whales and humans. The strongest candidates realised this and saw that the final question is unanswered.

Weaker responses often showed a struggle to find a purchase on later parts of the poem; stronger answers often came from those who appreciated how strongly humans and whales are related. Even the less strong responses showed some understanding of the 'whale music' and ways in which it is portrayed and interpreted. There was widespread appreciation of the pun on 'wave-lengths' and understanding of marine communication. Most appreciated that the call of the whales might well be a cry of distress. The image of 'pain searching for/ an echo' was widely appreciated; some candidates made a connection with the legend of Echo and Narcissus portrayed in an earlier session's Unseen paper by an extract from Ted Hughes's *Tales from Ovid*. Candidates understood the whales' loneliness and isolation picked up the poem's elegiac note of loss and mourning. They also understood the poet's suggestion that the whales are bitter that they live in a human world, where they have been hunted down and become rare. Fewer commented on ways in which the poet is interpreting a very real 'music' made by the whales but impossible for us to interpret. There were interesting comments on the idea that whales are weightless 'shadows', some feeling that they cast a dark shadow over human cruelty and some that they were weightless in their element, shadows of their great (and vulnerable) bulk on land. All appreciated the destructive idea of their bleeding 'their litres to the harpoon', as an image of the ways in which man has used his technology to destroy elements of creation. There was widespread appreciation of both the tone and the mood of the poem.

More detailed understanding required more attention to the poem's questions and answers and to the ways in which syntax took meaning across the line ending of the short verse lines. The short lines create emphasis on particular words and ideas and a slow deliberate rhythm, which therefore requires slow, attentive reading. The poet creates a verbal music to match the whale music, which depends on long vowel sound such as 'say/wave', 'pain/weight', and 'drawn/drown'. There are many hints at rhyme, such as half-rhyme and assonance to suggest painful and troubled sounds of mourning. The poet provides his own strong interpretation of what the music means, 'It is...it is...'. Developed analysis of language and effects here allowed candidates to begin to construct an appreciation of how the language of the poem works and to begin to hint and its deeper implications. Many responded immediately and personally to the idea of the pain of the natural world, issuing a lament, and the indifferent destructiveness of mankind.

Nonetheless, a full understanding of the poem does depend on grasping the central idea that the whales have 'reversed human history' i.e. they have moved from land to sea and from success to decline, just as humans, perhaps once insignificant aquatic apes, have moved the other way and come to dominate the planet. The poet asks the reader to reflect on a world which perhaps did not have humans in it, or a future world where we might be as obsolete as our mammalian cousins. This poem clearly hints that the whales are doomed, and are as threatened by the land as we are by the sea, so it asks a final question about the future of the human race. Pain is personified in the poem and the ponderous rhythm supports the hints of tragedy and the unanswerable nature of the questions which the poet asks. Strong candidates enjoyed engaging with the more scientific and philosophical aspects of the poem, and this was a piece of writing which encouraged genuinely personal reactions. Some appreciated that the story of the whales might be understood as a parable and picked up the poem's religious echoes, beginning with the title and following through to look at how the poet ponders the fate of mankind.

Surprisingly few candidates picked up the idea of man using his brain to launch into 'fathomless altitudes' which suggests that the vastness of space might mirror the depths of the ocean, and that both could become the last refuge for a dying species. Those who understood the concept of extinction, and that immense brains and technological success might not prevent eventual destruction were those who wrote most successfully in response to the poem, some taking the analogies between whales and humans further to suggest that both are doomed. Certainly the poet's unanswered final question leaves man's final fate

uncertain. Most appreciated, nevertheless, the image of whales drowning on land, as men do on sea, and were able to see the vulnerability of all creation, and were able to pick up the tone of lamentation, even if they differed in their ability to analyse exactly how this is communicated through the verse. Strong, intelligent overall understanding was most likely to be rewarded when accompanied by sensitive, detailed reading of the verse. While less able students were able to explore the surface meaning of the poem, stronger readers were able to explore its oceanic depths and produce interesting interpretations of their own engaging with environmental, religious and evolutionary ideas. Candidates included stimulating personal responses to the poem's ideas and images, such as 'we won't be saved next time...inter-dependency replaced by conflict...the irony of butchering our saviour...the self-inflicted bad luck dooming us to extinction'. Subtle thinking and depth of reflection were in evidence in many responses.

## Question 2

A larger number of candidates chose the extract from Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*. It was encouraging to see how easily they engaged with both the characterisation of Aunt Helen and the voice of the narrator, even though the latter has a number of archaisms which show its age and the society portrayed is a very traditional and conventional one. Candidates were quick to understand the pressures and prejudices which claim Aunt Helen, and there was appreciation of how this may have influenced her rather cynical view of love. Once again, better answers came from those who had read the whole passage first and formed a view of its ending before beginning to sketch out an answer which evaluated the characterisation of the aunt. It was a concern that even good answers did not pay enough attention to the language, as opposed to the content, of the text or show sufficient awareness of the writer at work, shaping and influencing the way the reader sees the character. The strongest answers not only noted that we see Aunt Helen through Sybylla's impressionable and hero-worshipping eyes, but that this style of narration continues to influence her portrayal as 'one of the most estimably lovable and noble women' she had ever met. Indeed, good answers brought out the evidence which shows how Sybylla is determined to see Helen's kindness and sympathy towards her as lovable, and her sad awareness that even good looks cannot guarantee love as 'noble'.

When writing about narrative it is important not to drift into paraphrase. Candidates often managed to produce a detailed assessment of Aunt Helen and to gauge reader response by working thoughtfully through the bullets. They looked at the kindly but stern way in which she calms Sybylla down and why her advice is timely for the girl and well-chosen, and her experiences sad and easy to sympathise with. Many candidates adopted Sybylla's point-of-view entirely and wrote convincingly and uncritically about Helen's admirable qualities with good support. The first bullet, in particular, tended to stimulate a very full response and a clear understanding of Sybylla's appreciation of her aunt, but the more direct portrayal of aunt Helen through her dialogue, unmediated by Sybylla's commentary, proved more difficult for candidates to address. The language here might make Sybylla appropriately ashamed of her 'selfish conceited egotism' but it is also quite abstract and philosophical, and its distinction between different kinds of love rather old-fashioned. As a result some candidates remained confused about Helen's views on love and relationships and the ways in which her attitudes have been moulded by experience; some felt that she had experienced similar difficulties to Sybylla because she was similarly plain – or the reverse – that they were both beautiful, and the links between love and looks, and love, passion and friendship, according to Helen's philosophy of life, often remained unexplored. The best answers gave a strong impression of Helen as a constructed character portrayed by an innocent narrator and managed to establish some critical distance; some even suggested that Helen is particularly interesting because of her highly unsympathetic cynicism about men and relationships. She speaks, for example, of 'the hot fleeting passion of the man for the maid...wrongly designated love', a one-sided view which is surely heavily influenced by her own unhappy experiences, and is not necessarily to be taken at face value!

Explicit attention to the writing in the passage tended to be rather rare in many answers, and it was a pity that they did not look more at the rather moralistic style of advice given, which while certainly not 'boreome' is perhaps not quite as 'sincere and real' as the narrator thinks, although 'brave and comforting' enough for her at the time. Many candidates appreciated the writer's use of delay in stimulating reader curiosity both about the nature of Helen's advice and about the nature of her past experiences. Some spotted that the narrator's own approach and language mirror Aunt Helen's own, based on patience and strong minded and decisive explanation. There is certainly a sharp contrast between the youthful gushing of Sybylla's talk and Aunt Helen's mature restraint, and Sybylla is unusually quick to abandon one for the other, as a result of the respect she has for her fascinating and beautiful aunt: after all, she says she 'controlled herself instantly'. Aunt Helen's advice is quite sententious – it would not be appropriate to the period for her to talk directly about her own experience. Her ideas are developed through a series of truisms: 'you must not be a coward', 'there is any amount of love and good', 'being misunderstood is one of the trials', 'the higher one's



organization the more one must suffer'. She speaks with command as well as control – 'you must curb and strain' ... 'you will find' – and all this might be as preachy as the advice of those Sybylla does not want to hear from, were it not supported by experience. The very best answers therefore had a sense of the theatricality of the whole exchange and noted the symbolism of the lamp-lighting, as the aunt brings light into the dark turmoil of the girl's tantrum, the contrast between high and low style in the young girl's own language – Helen is 'real' and 'nice' as well as noble and lovable – and noticed how the brief paragraph describing how Helen 'sighed and forgetful of my presence lapsed into silence' stimulated further reader interest in the background story.

Most understood that story and its implications, and also why it might make Aunt Helen warn Sybylla about the elusiveness of 'the other kind of love'. There was appreciation of the tragedy that in such a traditional society a woman could be blamed for the inconstancy of her husband, and that good looks alone were no guarantee of happiness, and there was sympathy for Aunt Helen's indeterminate status and that this was none of her own making. This certainly makes it easier to appreciate why she rejects 'the philosophy of the world'. Some able students realised this might account for her statement that 'the friendship love of your fellows – (is) the only real love there is'. The best kind of critical response not only looks at characters as constructed by the writer, but realises that this applies to narrators too, and that the author, even when writing about a version of her younger self, may not expect us to view her opinions uncritically. The question did ask candidates to look at 'the way' Aunt Helen gives her advice, and while this is partly based on her sympathy for Sybylla, it is also influenced by personal sadness, as that sigh and silence confirm. The stronger answers showed appreciation that the question also asked how Aunt Helen was *made* memorable, not just why she is memorable, so they provided detailed and sensitive engagement with the aspects of her history, language and advice which make her unusual. They did not see her as simply as Sybylla chooses to view her. Most candidates dealt well with this question and showed qualities of empathy and engagement and made thoughtful and sensitive comments on the development of the narrative and its implications.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/41

Set Texts: Closed Books-A

## Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language, particularly in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation as appropriate
- well-structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well-chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

## General comments

As in previous sessions, some very commendable work was seen and the enthusiasm of candidates and their teachers communicated itself. Many candidates were well prepared and had a good level of understanding of the texts and their key issues. While their knowledge of the text was often comprehensive, some candidates would have benefited from organising *relevant* knowledge more selectively. Indeed the most frequent observation by Examiners was that marks would have been raised by sharper focus on the terms of the questions in many scripts. This was particularly true where the wording of a question asked for examination of a very specific aspect of the text, for example 'the passing of time seem so central to life' in Question 17. It is good practice to identify and underline the key words of the question and to construct a brief plan before starting to write. (In order to avoid digression, some candidates might find it helpful to allude briefly to the question at the beginning of each paragraph.)

All questions at this level require more than narrative and paraphrase responses, and the little word 'how', directing candidates to consideration of writers' methods, was frequently missed. Phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal' and words such as 'vivid' and 'powerful' have the same purpose, and candidates need to be aware of their importance. Many candidates had clearly been encouraged first and foremost to respond personally and to follow their own trains of thought wherever possible. This is to be applauded of course, but while no-one would want candidates simply to devour teacher notes and reproduce them slavishly, it is important that candidates use *supporting evidence* from the text at all times to support their interpretation. The most successful answers responded relevantly to the tasks set, created a convincing argument and supported it with detailed reference in the form of quotation or close echo of the text.

Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Biff and Happy for Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.

here was some 'device spotting' where candidates correctly identified a literary technique, illustrated it, but failed to explore just *how* the language/technique created its effect. There is no excuse for the absence of any quotation, given that the passage is printed on the examination paper. It should be noted too that the ends of extracts may contain important content and candidates should be sure to have read the whole passage.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, and in so doing revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

There were not many cases of rubric infringement. Where this happened, it usually entailed candidates not attempting an essay based question. Generally time seemed to be well managed, although there were a few candidates who had clearly spent too long on the first two questions with a consequentially negative effect on answering the third question. The importance of candidates being taught examination technique and rubric cannot be overstated.

### **Section A: Drama**

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

The range of response was wide but, for higher marks some engagement with Miller's language and its dramatic effect was expected. It was a popular question and generally well done though some candidates spent too much time putting the extract into context.

This extract is particularly revealing of the two brothers' characteristics: both of them think big dreams without most of the qualities to translate them into any sort of reality. At times it is a truly sad spectacle of two youngish men who like children think they deserve better. At other times, particularly in regard to Happy and his philandering and misplaced conceit, the picture could be said to be a profoundly dislikeable one. The best responses focused on feelings for Biff and Happy 'at this moment' and felt the excitement Biff generated, which most felt could result in success until he comments on having to borrow the money. Biff was admired by most, with Happy coming in for much criticism especially for his treatment of women and his competitive nature. A number of candidates clearly detested Happy and felt he was not interested in anything but money and showing off, thereby being his father's son, a victim of the 'American Dream' mentality- anyone can make it but without putting in the effort, summed up by his 'The only thing is – what can you make out there?', always finding some excuse not to try to make a success of his life. Weaker responses tended to work through the extract, retelling it rather than analysing, and to focus on the importance of brotherly love and discuss that broadly, rather than exploring the depths of the scene.

##### **Question 2**

This was a totally open question and elicited different responses, though good answers attempted some balance. Some candidates thought that Willy does not amount to much, that he is in truth little more than deluded, whining and deceitful with very few of the finer human traits. Conversely, many saw him as an idealistic victim of America's love of individualism and material success, fatally unsuited to the life he has pursued and therefore fated to fail. Simple character sketches did not achieve high marks; focus on the parameters of the task was required, supported with detail. The best answers attempted a balanced response exploring Willy's failures, e.g. his lying, cheating on Linda, delusions regarding his sales and his brother, Ben, being known and liked wherever he travelled, poor parenting and unfair treatment of both Biff and Happy especially poor Happy. His suicide and being sacked by Howard rated highly amongst his failures demonstrating just how poor a salesman and judge of character/situations he was as he could not even get the insurance money for sure. These were balanced by some admiration felt for his constant travelling (though risky with his lack of concentration while driving) and appearing not to give up by at least trying to get Howard to give him an office job. A few argued that he did try to inspire his sons and initially had Biff's love and admiration. Linda's love and caring of him was also argued as an aspect to admire in him. However, most saw him as an abject failure and evidence that the 'American Dream' was just that - an unattainable dream.

### Question 3

As ever with empathic questions, the quality of the voice determined the mark and the best answers produced a quite definite and moral voice rejecting Ben's macho world.

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

#### Question 4

There were some excellent responses engaging with the scene and clearly understanding the wickedness of Don John from his opening words. The hypocrisy of Don John is breathtaking in this extract, shown by his sycophantic attitude towards his brother, whom we know he hates, and his supposed concern for Claudio, whom he also hates. Even worse is his preparedness to defame Hero, a completely innocent victim in all this. Claudio and Don Pedro are completely sucked in by his lies. Prior knowledge of the character was helpful in this question as was understanding of the change from the usual relationship between him and his brother and Claudio. There was some good understanding of the dramatic irony and impact on the audience. The language, especially the line 'Even she – Leonato's ...', was well analysed as was the implication of the word 'Plague' to describe Hero. Weaker answers worked through the extract with little focus on the question.

#### Question 5

This was an open question and there were different approaches, but mere narrative did not take candidates very far. Apt selection was crucial; the scenes concerning the gulling of Beatrice and Benedick and those involving Dogberry and the Watch were fruitful and obvious choices. As expected, most candidates focused on Dogberry but could choose specific 'moments' (without going through the plot) and explain why they were amusing. Favourites were the attempt to tell Leonato about the capture of Boracchio and Conrad and, indeed, any moment where Dogberry could use his malapropisms. Other moments of amusement were those between Benedick and Beatrice. Most candidates could engage with the humour and clearly savoured the moments chosen. Good answers sometimes touched on the underlying seriousness of some of the comedy.

#### Question 6

Good answers made Leonato incensed at Don Pedro and Claudio's lack of concern and their arrogance, especially since to all intents and purposes Hero is dead. It was understandable if he was feeling slightly satisfied at his own performance and thankful for the support of Benedick and his brother. Often he was reflecting on his earlier relationship with Don Pedro and Claudio and his mistaken perception of them. He was often made to speculate on how to handle the eventual revelation that Hero is alive. Successful answers were characterised by a believable voice and tone; it was not believable for him to be less than furious with the insolence of Claudio in particular.

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

#### Question 7

The best answers probed the extract thoroughly and systematically. They did not merely paraphrase but brought out Antony's manipulativenness, his genuine emotion and the power of his effect on the crowd. Some made useful comments about the way in which he is speaking over Caesar's dead body. However, while this was a popular question, in general it was not tackled as well as expected. This must be one of the best known speeches/parts of the play, yet there were few really solid answers where the oratorical skills were fully explored and appreciated. Little more than the inclusive opening, 'Friends, Romans, countrymen...' and the repetition of 'noble Brutus' and sarcasm in describing him as 'honourable' tended to be analysed. Some commented on the dramatic effectiveness of introducing Caesar's will and the fact that he was successful as the Plebeians were won over and wanted to hear the will. Rhetorical questions were identified but little more. The 'powerfully dramatic' was seldom explored.

### Question 8

There were differing responses to this question and they were assessed according to the degree of conviction with which candidates put their case. Points to consider were how solid is the evidence in the play that Caesar was 'a tyrant'? Cassius makes a telling argument but how convincing and evidence-based is it? Antony makes a very different case. Clearly, a very detailed knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare's text was crucial here if candidates were to score highly.

### Question 9

Appropriate feelings attributable to Brutus were satisfaction at the way his speech has been received and lack of concern about Antony, whom he does not see as a threat. Some candidates focused on his sense of honour and made him suffer some pangs of remorse thinking about Caesar and his friendship. He was sometimes thinking about Caesar's final words, and his anguish and sleeplessness as he turned over in his mind the assassination plan. Portia's concerns also featured in some answers.

### R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 10

Candidates had no difficulty in selecting shocking features in this scene, where Stanhope comes close to losing all control and Raleigh is portrayed as a young man who is still having great difficulty in coming to terms with the way human beings cope with things like the trauma of Osborne's death. But many candidates seemed to be completely unaware of the effect of this event on both characters and this obviously limited their marks on the basis that their understanding of what is going on in the scene was only partial. The words of the question 'this moment in the play' imply a connection with what has gone before and what comes after. It was impossible to answer it competently without referring to Osborne's death, which intensifies all the emotion. Candidates were able to focus on 'the moment' but to do so exclusively led to many narrative responses which sometimes discussed social and hierarchical issues such as Stanhope being annoyed at Raleigh for not attending dinner as Stanhope was in charge and he expected obedience. This missed the response of both men to the death of Osborne and how feelings of grief and shock were exhibited by both characters. The psychological motivation of the key characters in this scene was largely unexplored. The other issue which inhibited high order responses concerned candidates' understanding of some of the language involved. The dialogue involving Stanhope and Raleigh was often misinterpreted or the nuances missed. For instance some suggested the phrase 'damn prigs' was significant but were unable to discuss the impact of this language. Clearly, seeing the play in performance even if only on DVD might have helped candidates with these issues.

### Question 11

This task hinged upon the choices made by the candidate. There are a number of moments in the play which would come into the category of comic as the soldiers attempt to keep the horrors of war at bay. The greater that enjoyment communicated with the text and its comic possibilities, the greater was the reward. Most of the comic moments selected involved Trotter and Mason and were well explained but very few understood the concept of black humour as a coping mechanism. What was required was some attempt to engage with the humour rather than simply to describe the episode.

### Question 12

For most candidates the situation spoke for itself. Stanhope has been told to send both his right-hand man in the company and the brother of the woman he loves to their very possible deaths on a raid which is hardly likely to yield much, even if successful. There is evidence in the conversation with the Colonel that Stanhope thinks it is a pointless waste of life. However, he has not been able to reveal his personal feelings since he has his military duty to carry out and that is next to inform both Osborne and Raleigh of what they have to do. A clear sense of the situation and Stanhope's likely personal feelings were expected and in good answers his anguished voice was communicated.

### SECTION B: POETRY

#### ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems*

This text was considerably less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who had studied it showed enjoyment and enthusiasm for the poems.

### Question 13

This poem was mostly understood quite well, with the exception of a few very literal-minded candidates who thought the Pilot was a real aviator. Good answers looked in detail at Tennyson's choice of extended metaphor and poetic form, and located religious faith securely in textual details. Some candidates, however, used biographical information to assert that Tennyson foresaw his own death (in specific terms rather than simply as a future certainty) when he wrote the poem.

### Question 14

Many of the answers depended on limp assertions about a romanticised love narrative in the poem, or, alternatively, bold assertions about its trenchant critique of female oppression, neither of which were afforded much textual support. Better answers looked at mood and characterisation of the Lady. There was still, however, little attention to poetic form and language in general.

### Question 15

This question also attracted some biographical responses, with weaker candidates who wanted to focus on the poem's origin as an elegy for Hallam choosing from its more personal and biographical stanzas, such as 7 ('Dark house, by which once more I stand'). Better answers chose 50 ('Be near me when my light is low') and some achieved a really effective analysis of how this is moving.

#### SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 3*

### Question 16

There was some misunderstanding of the question and the wonder/amazement of the scene was not always interpreted. Some read the question as 'wonder/think' about the scene which made for very limited responses. There was a good deal of misreading, especially of 'A dark river of blood', 'unspilled milk' – linking this to the background knowledge of Hughes and Plath and her suicide etc. By contrast, there were some excellent, sensitive responses to the delight father and daughter experience in this magical evening where all is focused, 'shrunk' to the senses – the noise of the dog and bucket. Close detail to language ('shrunk' and 'clank') appealing to hearing, intensified by 'And you listening', were features of the best responses. These understood Hughes is directing his words to Frieda and his 'wonder' is in her attentiveness to what she could see in her surroundings. Elements analysed included the 'spider's web', 'dew' and the full pail mirroring 'a first star'. One candidate saw Frieda as her father's 'star' this evening as she cried 'Moon!'. This may not be one of her first words as many candidates tend to think but the 'wonder' she experiences was clearly understood. Nevertheless, even the best responses did not fully explore the mutual appreciation of the child and moon, or indeed the wonder the poet/father feels towards the scene.



### Question 17

'Time' was a very popular choice. Most candidates tended to work through this poem explaining what they thought it meant with only tenuous links to the key words of the question. Some focused on the 'passing of time' whilst others tried to explain how it was 'central to life' – the routines of work and school etc. There were some excellent, analytical responses exploring fully the concept of Time in our lives and the religious connotations: like God, Time is the 'Beginning' and the 'End'. Or as one candidate succinctly put it, "*Time is an extended metaphor for God*". Details of the structure, number of lines per verse, verses etc. were sensibly linked to time – hours in a day, days in a week etc. Only a few wrote on Sonnet 29 and they were generally narrative in their approach.

**Question 18** was generally very popular and well done. There were many 'particularly powerful' lines chosen and analysed. The key distinguishing factor was the extent to which candidates were able to assess the impact of their chosen lines. Some simply repeated the word "powerful", without really thinking about "why (they found) the lines so powerful", whilst the more able explored factors such as Cheng's direct address or use of omnipotent figures or Clarke's use of images to convey the full impact of man's actions on the environment. Close detailed attention to language was a feature of the best responses.

### SECTION C: PROSE

#### EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

### Question 19

Here the reader gets a rare glimpse in the novel of a wider community and its views of the lives of the main protagonists. This is a conversation between those who serve, except that Kenneth is a vivid portrait of an independent man who can afford to speak his mind gruffly, and does. His disapproval of so much to do with the attitudes he sees in those who are his patients, his even wondering whether Linton will be that sorry to lose such a burden as Catherine speaks of a totally different and sceptical world. It is almost comic that it has to be his intelligence that alerts Nelly Dean as to what is going on with Isabella and causes yet another problem for this long suffering woman. Some grasp of this with pertinent support was enough for adequate reward but in better answers the candidate was responsive to the various tones in the writing. The question led a number of candidates to explore what was revealed about all the 'characters' mentioned (Linton, Cathy, Isabella and Heathcliff) and not just what was revealed of the 'characters of Mr Kenneth and Ellen. Best responses understood perfectly this no-nonsense approach of a country doctor and the loyal but opinionated Ellen. A number of candidates thought that Miss Linton was in fact Cathy (Mrs) and this resulted in some misreading of the passage e.g. the words about Miss Linton walking out were about Cathy's behaviour.

### Question 20

Candidates had a considerable choice here, extreme and brutal emotion very often of course being associated with Heathcliff, Catherine Earnshaw and Hindley. The most popular choices were when Hindley held Hareton over the banister and the moment when Hindley tries to lock Heathcliff out. Differentiation was a matter of the degree to which the candidate managed to probe the ways in which Bronte's writing shocks the reader. This was the centre of the task.

### Question 21

An acceptable approach was to portray Catherine as a touch frightened, finding herself in such strange conditions, particularly after the terror of the original incident with the dog and without her beloved companion Heathcliff. Better answers went on to portray her as on the way to being entranced by the strange comforts and pleasures of the genteel world of the Lintons and the way in which its women are pampered. The discriminator was the degree to which candidates were able to communicate in her voice something of Catherine's capacity for almost breathlessly instant feeling and enthusiasms.

**KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard***

**Question 22**

The details which attracted candidates were not prescribed but for good marks evidence of real engagement with the hilarity was looked for and an understanding of the way Desai's words create the laughter.

**Question 23**

The officials in Shahkot such as the DPS, the CMO, the DC and the Brigadier, exhibit various degrees of sloth, incompetence, self-importance, fear of doing anything definite which might have consequences, self-aggrandisement and at times corruption. The inhabitants of the town clearly cannot expect much from them as is shown at the end of the novel when these people try to decide what to do about the monkeys. Differentiation came from the degree to which candidates were able to understand Desai's view of officialdom and respond to the gentle satire.

**Question 24**

It was expected that Mr Chawla would be portrayed as being beside himself with rage. Sampath has just ruined all his father's carefully laid plans for his future in the public services. He has been trouble right from the beginning, not at all like his father, and the family's reputation has been ruined. Good answers conveyed something of Mr Chawla's self-important, energetic voice.

**F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.**

**Question 25**

Thus there was much in the extract for candidates to discover. The best responses engaged fully after brief introductions to contextualise the passage, then worked through it with the question firmly in mind. Well selected references were used. Weaker candidates did not comment on Daisy at all and there was misunderstanding of Gatsby's offer to Nick. Some thought him extremely arrogant and condescending as he was 'bragging' about how rich he was and a very few launched into an attack of the wicked American society and failure of the 'American Dream' with this conman. Not surprisingly many candidates offered both the Miller and the Fitzgerald so no doubt would have spent much time on American society. The differentiator was the extent to which candidates responded to the skilful means by which the author communicates with the reader.

**Question 26**

Good responses explored closely the way in which Fitzgerald handles Daisy's relationships with Tom and Gatsby, how she uses them to satisfy her own selfish desires. It was essentially a straightforward question but for many candidates 'sympathy' tended to be only partially understood. The word is frequently used in these papers and candidates should be prepared for it. Most found little reason to sympathise due to her preference for money and security in staying with Tom, treatment of her daughter, failure to attend Gatsby's funeral and to take responsibility for Myrtle's death. Some did sympathise as she did try to get out of the wedding, was badly treated by Tom (her adultery was forgotten) and was browbeaten by all including Gatsby. Better answers attempted to balance their response to her and to try to find extenuating circumstances for her behaviour. The best examined the words that Fitzgerald uses to describe her.

**Question 27**

Better candidates sometimes thought about how Gatsby came on the scene and about his earlier relationship with Daisy. Gatsby's corrupt money-making deals also figured strongly. The best answers conveyed the arrogance and contempt of Tom's voice.

**BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather***

**Question 28**

This was not a very popular text this session. It was expected that there might be some reference to the earlier prickliness of the contacts between these two characters, and to the way in which the tone is much more mellow in the extract. Paulina is not sure of her ground, but she is still attracted to and intrigued by Makhaya. She does not make the mistake of presuming too close an acquaintance, however. We see a softening in Makhaya, even the suggestion that he craves 'the warmth and love' of Paulina, but there are still issues between them and his advice about selling the cattle does not go down well. She does not yet see that the advice comes out of concern for her son and is in fact very sensible. They still have a way to go. Good answers looked closely at the language of the passage and show how Head creates changes in pace and in tone.

**Question 29**

There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate.

**Question 30**

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**EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome***

**Question 31**

Differentiation resulted from the degree to which the candidate managed to probe each small detail in the extract. The more evidence there was of this close engagement with the writing, the higher the reward. As so often in Wharton's writing, the small things are what reveal significant thought. Here in a passage that is an ostensibly dry description of Ethan's working day, she shows how his mind keeps coming back to Mattie and the impending ending of their brief time on their own. Almost all saw some of the reasons for his happiness and fears about Zeena (always lurking in the background).

**Question 32**

The most popular choices were the meal Ethan and Mattie have together and their return from the dance that evening. A few thought there were moments of happiness sledging together before their ill-fated suicide attempt. Apt choice was clearly important for success but after that the main consideration was the extent of exploration of the vividness of the writing, as the task demands.

**Question 33**

Ethan is worried to distraction about the state of his finances. In the forefront of his mind without doubt will be the way his life is one continual struggle against the odds to make ends meet within a community which has seen the modern world pass it by and with it any hope of economic prosperity. On a different scale Hale is also feeling the pinch. As a proud man Ethan feels the humiliation of having asked, only to be refused. Candidates conveyed some of these points and also aspects of Ethan's dismal personal life, such as details like Zeena's medical bills. The ability to convey Ethan's gruff despair in the voice brought high reward.

**Stories of Ourselves**

**Question 34**

The obvious reaction expected to the passage is to the irony of an alien describing our world as alien – and in miniature. The setting is described vividly and it takes a little while to register what the detail refers to. The different perspective, for example the cat being seen as a huge monster, adds some humour, but the seriousness and dignity of the tone of the narrator makes one sympathise with the Onns and fear for them. Though there was no need for external reference, a sense of the context enhanced an answer. Some candidates misread the question as being about the Onns' emotions and their performance was therefore limited. The main focus needed to be on the vividness of the writing.

**Question 35**

There are two lots of powerful emotions in both stories: the fury and grief of Mr Wills and the guilt of the boy in *the Taste of Watermelon* and the repressed emotions of anger and betrayal in the Aunt and of guilt again in the boy in *Secrets*. The focus of the question is on how these emotions are transmitted, however, and viewpoint was a vital consideration. *The Taste of Watermelon* is told by one of the protagonists and the reader is carried along by his perception of events and affected very directly by his expressions of regret and remorse at the end, especially since he sees Mr Wills almost as a joke to begin with. The emotion is less direct in *Secrets*, being told in the third person. The reader has to draw inferences, which makes the description of the Aunt's fury much more powerful, perhaps. In any event more than narrative and explanation was expected; well selected references and comment on the language was essential to a good answer.

**Question 36**

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/42

Set Texts: Closed Books-A

## Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language, particularly in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation as appropriate
- well-structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well-chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

## General comments

As in previous sessions, some very commendable work was seen and the enthusiasm of candidates and their teachers communicated itself. Many candidates were well prepared and had a good level of understanding of the texts and their key issues. While their knowledge of the text was often comprehensive, some candidates would have benefited from organising *relevant* knowledge more selectively. Indeed the most frequent observation by Examiners was that marks would have been raised by sharper focus on the terms of the questions in many scripts. This was particularly true where the wording of a question asked for examination of a very specific aspect of the text, for example 'the passing of time seem so central to life' in Question 17. It is good practice to identify and underline the key words of the question and to construct a brief plan before starting to write. (In order to avoid digression, some candidates might find it helpful to allude briefly to the question at the beginning of each paragraph.)

All questions at this level require more than narrative and paraphrase responses, and the little word 'how', directing candidates to consideration of writers' methods, was frequently missed. Phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal' and words such as 'vivid' and 'powerful' have the same purpose, and candidates need to be aware of their importance. Many candidates had clearly been encouraged first and foremost to respond personally and to follow their own trains of thought wherever possible. This is to be applauded of course, but while no-one would want candidates simply to devour teacher notes and reproduce them slavishly, it is important that candidates use *supporting evidence* from the text at all times to support their interpretation. The most successful answers responded relevantly to the tasks set, created a convincing argument and supported it with detailed reference in the form of quotation or close echo of the text.

Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Willy in Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.

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There were not many cases of rubric infringement. Where this happened, it usually entailed candidates not attempting an essay based question. Generally time seemed to be well managed, although there were a few candidates who had clearly spent too long on the first two questions with a consequentially negative effect on answering the third question. The importance of candidates being taught examination technique and rubric cannot be overstated.

## **Section A: Drama**

### **ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman***

#### **Question 1**

It was expected that most candidates would know the basic significance of this moment, the way it shatters for all time Biff's heroic image of his father. Though not specifically required, some contextualisation was useful in order to make that clear. Differentiation came from the degree of response to the immediate drama of the moment, in the way Miller orchestrates Willy's panic turning to bluster, the coarseness of the woman and Biff's shock becoming angry contempt. Candidates might have focused more strongly on 'dramatic' and significant'; many answers merely traced through the passage explaining the action and leaving it at that. Often the 'stockings' were mentioned but nothing much was made of their wider significance. The discovery of the woman and the charade Willy goes through with Biff, and his changes in tone etc. – might have been addressed more fully.

#### **Question 2**

As so often with this play, the audience is given a wide range of possibilities of response, even with such a potentially moving and admirable figure as Linda. It is made clear that without her love and endurance the Loman family, and Willy in particular, would have completely disintegrated far earlier. At times in the play she receives outrageously little credit for it so that often the audience's compassion for her is overwhelming, particularly after the Boston incident. However, it is also possible to see her as almost encouraging Willy's delusions. She rarely questions his actions and she seems to allow her sons to be brought up with the same flawed view of life. For all the brutality of Biff's verbal assault on his mother, the audience might think he has a point. Some candidates took this line and repeated the idea quite frequently during their answers, but might have provided more close detailed support. Some candidates merely said that Linda was a faithful wife and Willy was totally responsible for his own failure.

#### **Question 3**

There should have been little difficulty here for candidates to find suitable content for this empathic response task. Willy is desperate. The scene with Howard shows that all too poignantly. All his illusions have been brutally exposed. He is a failure and the firm for which he has worked for so long wants rid of his embarrassing presence. It was expected that Willy might swing from whining self-pity to anger that he has been so treated. Importantly candidates needed to recognise that he never entirely escapes from his dream even here. Some convincing grasp of his state of mind was enough for reasonable reward but those candidates who authentically captured his voice achieved very good marks



**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

**Question 4**

While it was very difficult for candidates to answer successfully without referring to Claudio's outburst immediately preceding this and to the famous 'rotten orange' accusation of Hero, some candidates' answers suffered by spending a long time discussing the general situation and delaying starting on the printed passage. Good answers examined the words in some detail and considered the pace and tone. Some responses were under-focused on 'dramatic'.

**Question 5**

The focus here is on 'admirable' so a strong personal response was looked for supported by close consideration of the ways in which Shakespeare presents Beatrice, not merely a prepared character sketch. Most candidates were aware of Beatrice's feisty nature and her wordplay, though they might have made it more relevant to her being, because of this, an 'admirable' heroine. Usually answers made general remarks about her character and some compared her favourably with Hero.

**Question 6**

By this stage Leonato has changed his tune and is convinced of Hero's innocence. He is also enmeshed in the strategy of keeping her existence a secret. He has been humiliated by Claudio and Don Pedro and Dogberry has given him the news of the flight of Don John and the capture of Borachio. He will be enraged, relieved, self-righteous. He may also be thankful that his honour is now untarnished as his concern for his good name has seemed at time to be his prime consideration. Candidates had a rich seam of emotions to draw on. The voice of Leonato proved elusive for some and this effectively restricted the quality of response.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar***

**Question 7**

This passage-based question was popular but candidates were too often intent on describing the action of the passage at the expense of exploring how Shakespeare makes it powerfully dramatic. Few so much as remarked that a brutal multiple stabbing was powerful or dramatic. Most commented on the ending of the scene and better answers were able to illustrate the drama of the betrayal as presented. Many were able to discuss Caesar's god-like utterances but only the best of these answers discussed or implied the dramatic irony of the situation.

**Question 8**

There was some detailed knowledge of the part played in the text particularly by Portia and some good close reference, but sometimes this was let down by the level of emotional response offered. Many candidates wrote of how they pitied Calphurnia's shabby treatment by Caesar in the opening scene where her barrenness is insensitively broadcast to all, but the details of her dream and the desperation she shows to prevent her husband from walking to his death were barely discussed. Often Portia, who was mostly the more pitied, was pitied for her husband not treating her as an equal in the marriage, ignoring the later material, and sometimes missing her tragic end altogether. Indeed, some candidates expressed sympathy for Portia because Brutus's suicide made her a widow. Again, the irony of Portia's desire to be treated as a strong woman but ending up consumed by anxiety and fear was something which a good answer might have looked at in some detail. Sometimes answers, ostensibly about Calphurnia or Portia, got side-tracked and spent most of the time discussing Caesar or Brutus, with self-limiting consequences.

**Question 9**

The voice of Cassius was sometimes difficult to find for candidates, but overall most answers were successful. Candidates knew well enough Cassius's feelings about Antony, and – indeed – about Brutus's tolerance of his presence at the funeral, let alone his willingness to allow Antony access to the volatile crowd, and so forth. Better answers were able to range over a wealth of relevant textual detail and incorporate it using a little textual echo into the thoughts of the character here.

**R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

**Question 10**

As so often in this play the writing exists on a number of levels. Through the extract there is a layer of the mundane detail of life and soldiers' preoccupations in the trenches. Here it is food, culminating in Mason being admonished for failing to pack the pepper. However, this serves to heighten the contrast with the drama of Stanhope's tense and shocked reaction to the arrival of Raleigh. Some awareness of the audience's ignorance of much this early in the play was expected and some attempt to bring out how Sherriff makes the audience aware that there is a great deal to be explained. Stage directions are revealing here and candidates rarely made sufficient comment on how they support the tense atmosphere which is at the heart of the drama.

**Question 11**

There is ample evidence for either proposition. There are moments, particularly in regard to Raleigh and perhaps Hibbert, where Stanhope's ingrained habits of command tip into something profoundly cruel and bullying. However, since much of the play is about the terrible pressures of command in war, many answers were expected to qualify such a judgment. There are a number of moments when he shows quite clearly why he is in command. Good answers were able to see the harshness of treatment (the threat to 'accidentally' shoot Hibbert between the eyes, for instance), yet also realised that Stanhope was able to galvanise him, and were able to quote sensible material to illustrate Stanhope's far from bullying team ethic. The weakest answers merely argued Stanhope was an excellent and inspiring leader who did not bully anyone (and conveniently forgot episodes such as that with the revolver and Hibbert).

**Question 12**

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

**SECTION B: POETRY**

**ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems***

The Tennyson selection was less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who offered it, frequently showed strong engagement with the poems; they had clearly enjoyed them.

**Question 13**

Some responses to this traced through the extract but were largely explanatory. 'In what ways' is a classic opening to a question and requires the candidate to discuss language and technique. Most could see the change in attitude, the new and the old, but struggled to get beyond that. Some candidates repeated the ideas in the poem without understanding what they were. All knew about Hallam.

**Question 14**

*The Lady of Shallott* was the more popular and there were a few excellent answers, thoroughly immersed in myth, and a few very weak answers, not mentioning Lancelot. There was a tendency for narrative to feature heavily in answers to this question; the words 'how' and 'so intriguing' were often missed or addressed in cursory fashion.

**Question 15**

There were some excellent responses, showing detailed understanding of Ulysses' strengths and desires. Some candidates found giving their own feelings difficult and though they knew the poem, they did not explore deeper meanings. Occasionally there were indications of lack of clear understanding of the poem.

**SONGS OF OURSELVES: From Part 3**

**Question 16**

This poem was clearly popular and much enjoyed. Candidates were keen to explain about the moon making amends for the damage done in various ways during the day but often there was little focus on 'how' the words used 'convey the power of the moonlight to penetrate...' In other words, answers tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. However, better answers were able to select some of the language and make an attempt to evaluate how it helps to create an effect.

**Question 17**

Most answers looked at Hardy. There always seemed to be a clear understanding of the poem, but rarely a genuine response to what the actual question asked for: how a 'vivid feeling of sorrow' is created by the poet's words. Answers very often asserted things were 'vivid', e.g. 'much' in 'much missed' without in any way arguing how and why they were so. Often really striking language was either paraphrased (translated, almost) or merely ignored. This approach was equally apparent in the responses to Arnold, where candidates spent quite a lot of time saying what they thought the poet was 'saying'.

**Question 18**

The poems that featured most were *Lament*, *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes*, *Report To Wordsworth*, *Marrysong* and *Sonnet 43*. There tended to be little focus on why the words of the poets were 'memorable' and far more insistence on telling what the poet was 'saying'. There was also a tendency to write on the whole of the poems not merely on the openings.

**SECTION C: PROSE**

**EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights***

**Question 19**

Candidates were generally able to enter into the way the writing is full of the most violent images and probe what these images show of Catherine and Heathcliff's emotions.

**Question 20**

Candidates were asked at least to consider both views of Nelly Dean. Successful answers went beyond a character sketch and kept in mind the parameters of the task. After that the balance of the argument was up to the candidate, although it was expected that most would lean quite reasonably towards the first description. There were many testimonies to Nelly as a loyal, loving (and long-service) servant and the names of those she 'was there for' were often listed, but there was little detail, and less still when candidates tried to discuss Nelly as 'an interfering gossip'. They sometimes found some instances of interfering, but were never at all convincing on 'gossip'.

**Question 21**

Most candidates got a little way to producing something like an appropriate voice once they got into their memories of how Heathcliff supplanted him in his father's affections. Better answers mentioned Frances, his wife. A few mentioned his feelings for Catherine. The more one was made to feel Hindley's rough and unpleasant tones in the voice, the more successful the answer.

**KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard***

**Question 22**

Candidates tended to respond in general terms to the amusing qualities of the extract, conveying their enjoyment of the text, but often not attending to the details of the writing.

### Question 23

Both these propositions were arguable. The task does encourage both judgments to be examined but it should have been perfectly possible to write a good answer coming down firmly one side or the other. Probably the easier option was to highlight how Sampath's fame as a holy man is so easily achieved in such a gullible society, where Desai suggests that anyone plainly eccentric or odd can make the leap to the status of a guru whose most meaningless statements then take on the aura of the profoundly philosophical. However, there is also a strand of imaginative fantasy in the novel which never quite allows that satire full rein and perhaps proposes that there are more things in heaven and earth. Answers which attempted to weigh that possibility in relation to Sampath and advanced detailed support for it received high reward.

### Question 24

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.

### Question 25

Successful candidates saw the grotesque nature of the situation and explored thoroughly Fitzgerald's writing to bring out the reactions of the rivals.

### Question 26

There were strong responses to this question, based on a thorough knowledge of the text and the place Fitzgerald assigns to Miss Baker in this pleasure-seeking society.

### Question 27

Many candidates conveyed their understanding of the immediate situation, although Gatsby the dreamer was not particularly evident in many responses, and Gatsby's voice proved surprisingly elusive for some. Candidates sometimes made Gatsby appear more hysterical than is warranted, to judge by his conversation with Nick.

### BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather*

### Question 28

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 29

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 30

Generally the fact that Makhaya and Gilbert were on friendly terms was made clear, and there was evidence of some understanding of the situation which had led to Gilbert's hasty marriage-proposal. Some thoughtful and extended responses revealed the yearning within Makhaya, the possible tinge of jealousy, and the hopes for a brighter future involving a wife and family of his own.

### EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome*

### Question 31

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 32

Answers showed strong engagement with the way the writing conveys her personality so powerfully.

### Question 33

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### *Stories of Ourselves*

### Question 34

The descriptive qualities of the writing were central to a successful answer and candidates did not achieve the higher bands unless they explored the imagery and diction carefully. Many answers showed an ability to comment on how the atmosphere created is sinister, and some commented on how the description is symbolic of the situation that the captive is in. Answers also covered the anonymity of the characters and both the overt and suggested violence. The passage drew out some very sensitive responses.

### Question 35

This was a significantly less popular task, and answers seemed to find little to say. Very little interesting was found about Victor in *On Her Knees*; the narrator of *The Taste of Watermelon* was interesting because he was a typical teenager, or – sometimes, a little better – because he matured during the story; the narrator of *The Signalman* was interesting but it was never really made clear why. A few answers misidentified the narrators of the stories altogether.

### Question 36

Good answers brought out the boy's fascination with his Aunt, and also with her story. Other candidates often did not see or take enough heed of the 'moment' at which they were supposed to be writing. Hence some wrote from the time they started visiting Aunt Mary, and some wrote at the point Aunt Mary returns and catches him having read a number of letters. There was little close reference to the letter candidates should have just read.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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**Paper 0486/43**

**Set Texts: Closed Books-A**

## Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language, particularly in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation as appropriate
- well-structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well-chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

## General comments

As in previous sessions, some very commendable work was seen and the enthusiasm of candidates and their teachers communicated itself. Many candidates were well prepared and had a good level of understanding of the texts and their key issues. While their knowledge of the text was often comprehensive, some candidates would have benefited from organising *relevant* knowledge more selectively. Indeed the most frequent observation by Examiners was that marks would have been raised by sharper focus on the terms of the questions in many scripts. This was particularly true where the wording of a question asked for examination of a very specific aspect of the text, for example 'the passing of time seem so central to life' in Question 17. It is good practice to identify and underline the key words of the question and to construct a brief plan before starting to write. (In order to avoid digression, some candidates might find it helpful to allude briefly to the question at the beginning of each paragraph.)

All questions at this level require more than narrative and paraphrase responses, and the little word 'how', directing candidates to consideration of writers' methods, was frequently missed. Phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal' and words such as 'vivid' and 'powerful' have the same purpose, and candidates need to be aware of their importance. Many candidates had clearly been encouraged first and foremost to respond personally and to follow their own trains of thought wherever possible. This is to be applauded of course, but while no-one would want candidates simply to devour teacher notes and reproduce them slavishly, it is important that candidates use *supporting evidence* from the text at all times to support their interpretation. The most successful answers responded relevantly to the tasks set, created a convincing argument and supported it with detailed reference in the form of quotation or close echo of the text.

Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Willy in Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.



here was some 'device spotting' where candidates correctly identified a literary technique, illustrated it, but failed to explore just *how* the language/technique created its effect. There is no excuse for the absence of any quotation, given that the passage is printed on the examination paper. It should be noted too that the ends of extracts may contain important content and candidates should be sure to have read the whole passage.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, and in so doing revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

There were not many cases of rubric infringement. Where this happened, it usually entailed candidates not attempting an essay based question. Generally time seemed to be well managed, although there were a few candidates who had clearly spent too long on the first two questions with a consequentially negative effect on answering the third question. The importance of candidates being taught examination technique and rubric cannot be overstated.

## **SECTION A: DRAMA**

### **ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman***

#### **Question 1**

The crucial words here were *disturbing and moving*. It should have presented no problem to most candidates to explain some of the significances of this extract, the way in which it reveals Willy's delusional state of mind and his misplaced values which he is desperately trying to convince himself have been proved the right ones. He is a man on the brink of disintegration, desperately seeking a solace that nobody in the real world, not even Linda, can give him. What was needed was some personal response to the way Miller makes this such powerful and poignant drama, with some grasp, for instance, of such things as the way the rapid changes of time and between reality and illusion convey Willy's unbearable confusion. Candidates were generally happier discussing 'disturbing' rather than 'moving' and so a lot of responses were quite imbalanced. The best were able to understand how the structure of the play and the flashback worked, the less successful simply retold what happened with a little comment. Willy's relationship with Ben seemed understood by most but few candidates commented on the combined moving/disturbing effect of the closing lines of the extract – Biff's questioning of his mother and her responses.

#### **Question 2**

One hardly needs here to rehearse the material beloved of study aids regarding Miller's attack in this play on the American Dream. Such a rehearsal of the well-known features of this attack, on the way American society has seemed to laud entrepreneurial success even at the expense of moral conduct, should set the candidate on the path of tackling the task. However, the key word in the question was *memorable*, in conjunction with the requirement to make contact with the writing. This is a highly effective drama and not a tract, even if once or twice it might be thought to get perilously close to becoming one. Evidence of engagement with the power of the drama was therefore expected in the best answers. It was quite a popular question and most answers showed some general knowledge and understanding of the American Dream but for higher reward many needed to focus specifically on how the play was a 'memorable attack' – strong words which were often ignored.

#### **Question 3**

For the highest marks the voice was expected to reveal moments of the old confident assertive Biff and the present rather defeated man who is still at the age of 34 unsure of who he is or what he should be. Some candidates captured Biff's voice extremely well, but a significant number ignored the rift between him and Willy, instead believing that it would be a happy family reunion.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

**Question 4**

This question was a popular choice, and usually tackled well or fairly well. Good responses understood Beatrice's feisty and unconventional attitudes and banter on marriage and men, and the ways she challenged contemporary views on men and women's lives. They could respond to the tone and humour, as well as the irony of all she says in the light of future outcomes in the play. Most managed to comment on both Beatrice's liveliness as well as her attractiveness, and the best engaged with Shakespeare's use of witty language and her dominance.

**Question 5**

This was generally less well tackled than Question 4. Success depended on suitability of choice. Some candidates chose inappropriate 'moments' or merged generalised moments together. Scenes involving Dogberry, especially the questioning of Borachio, were popular but the comedy was sometimes asserted or outlined, without being fully understood. It was rare for 'serious' to be fully understood or developed. Some candidates relied heavily on the passage printed in Question 4, which though permissible was self-limiting.

**Question 6**

This was generally done well. The situation and overall reasons for outrage were grasped but there was a tendency to drift into caring psychotherapeutic support of Claudio which jarred with era and character. Some weaker answers did not address Don Pedro's social standing so his reaction was not fully in keeping with his rank or his relationship with Claudio.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar***

**Question 7**

Most candidates could reveal something about the weather and the unnatural happenings. Not all related these to the context of Caesar's imminent assassination, but where this was the case they often went on to explore the striking and violent language, and the effects Shakespeare intended for the audience. The use of the supernatural, involvement of gods and all implications of these were there for the picking. Some were unclear about the role of Cicero and his allegiances, but candidates who considered the different reactions of the three characters involved in this part of the scene were able to deepen their responses. There were, however a significant number of answers which retold or paraphrased the extract with limited explanation of *how* Shakespeare made this so 'strikingly dramatic'.

**Question 8**

This was a very popular choice. It produced a wide range of answers and reactions to the character. Generally the task was well approached, and most seemed to have a grasp of the ambivalence in Shakespeare's portrayal. Better responses developed a balanced answer, and addressed both propositions. They also moved on through the play to comment on Antony's later actions, either to support a chosen view or to develop a different one. Less successful answers took a generalised approach. The play and Mark Antony's role were known and understood but more detailed supporting evidence was needed in these.

**Question 9**

Those who captured the voice of 'the noblest Roman of them all' and whose responses show a detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant sections of Shakespeare's text in support merited the highest reward. Some candidates found the voice difficult to really pin down, it seemed, but there were others who captured a reflective and regretful tone, balanced with some justifications of actions and references to honour, and then resigned themselves to the brutal truth and ending.

**R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

**Question 10**

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 11

This was the question that the vast majority of candidates who prepared this play chose. Some provided a generalised character study of Osborne and his role but most managed a reasonably well-focused attempt. All understood his caring relationship with everyone, and the best showed a very good knowledge of the events immediately afterwards and the impact his death had on Stanhope.

### Question 12

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

## SECTION B: POETRY

### ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems*

The Tennyson selection was less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who offered it, frequently showed strong engagement with the poems; they had clearly enjoyed them.

### Question 13

This question was generally well done. Candidates who were insecure on the context, or did not comment on it put themselves at a disadvantage, although those who focused on the language closely could still achieve a reasonable mark. There were some good responses to the flower and nature imagery and its implications of renewal, life and hope. Candidates generally found it easy to identify the use of language though there were those who gave a run-through of the poem's ideas and ignored the actual focus of the question: how Tennyson 'at last finds hope'.

### Question 14

Some candidates described those qualities they admired (with some textual support) but did not necessarily explore how the writing made them admire him. However, most were able to write something that was relevant.

### Question 15

Most of the responses were able to tap into the richness of the descriptions of the setting and background to the poem. Some merely retold the poem, picking up on the descriptions of the characters (especially Lancelot) without mentioning the 'setting'.

### SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 3*

### Question 16

A number of candidates found it difficult to express themselves clearly in writing about this poem, but those who read it carefully and attended to the language could and did achieve good marks. By supporting ideas carefully, they could offer a variety of interpretations and there were some very perceptive responses, though there were some odd interpretations, some focusing entirely on its being an anti-war or anti-industrialization poem. Some interpretations focused on the 'collapse of the English Empire'. All too often the last stanza was totally ignored and so the importance of Arnold's appeal to his wife 'to be true /To one another' was not understood or commented on.

### Question 17

This question prompted some very good answers. With regard to Scott's poem, many were able to capture the way the use of imagery and tone contribute to the poem's portrayal of human love. There were some sensitive and engaged answers that were a pleasure to read. Those who chose Byron struggled more to understand the meaning and tone of the poem, and to identify with the voice. There were some competent answers, getting the main gist of the ideas, but very few good ones. Most just found one main point and reiterated it.

### Question 18

This was a much less popular choice. Some candidates selected appropriate poems and wrote convincing personal responses to the uses of sounds in both chosen poems. These included *The Voice* and *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* among others, where the sounds were effectively linked with interpretation of meanings. In general, many candidates this session did pay more close attention to the way language is used to form the music of the poetry, and the quality of answers was thereby improved.

### SECTION C: PROSE

#### EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights*

### Question 19

It was hoped that most candidates would detect in this passage how much Heathcliff's temperament as an adult is already revealed in the child. The prompt to 'suggest the course of events in the novel' worked well in enabling candidates to spring from phrases/hints in the passage to expand on their understanding of Heathcliff. There were many good and varied responses.

### Question 20

Differentiation came from how well the candidate ranged over the detail of the novel. The question seemed to encourage candidates to take a fresh look at the two characters and avoid a more standard character assessment. There were interesting answers arguing both likenesses and dissimilarities with a variety of justifications and reasoning, all acceptable with the right support.

### Question 21

The voice of Nelly did not seem too difficult to identify, though the moment challenged a few candidates.

#### KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

### Question 22

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 23

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### Question 24

Those answers that caught the woman's new found fierce energy in the voice and even touched upon the fantasy associated increasingly with the character achieved high reward.

#### F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.

### Question 25

There were many very good answers where it was understood how the writer developed the tension through the episode from grief and shock, through brooding and speculating, to menacingly arriving at the accusations and intention for revenge. Explorations of the language were well developed in many answers.

### Question 26

The best answers appreciated Nick's dual role and showed how Fitzgerald makes him stand out like a beacon of sanity amongst the other characters. Not all candidates focused on his being a 'likeable' character but all had something to say about him. The strongest answers were able to back up views on him as both a character and the narrator with specific textual details. Weaker answers made a few generalised points, such as his being a loyal friend who organized/went to Gatsby's funeral, but this was as far as they got in terms of detailed support.

### Question 27

Although it seemed hard for some to pin down Daisy's voice exactly, better answers achieved this and conveyed some of her carelessness, and unbelievable ability to justify her thoughts and actions though some made her too guilty/grief-stricken/lovelorn to be credible, even though most conveyed some knowledge of her character.

### BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather*

#### Questions 28, 29, 30

There were too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate..

### EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome*

#### Question 31, 32, 33

There were too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate..

#### Question 32

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate..

### *Stories of Ourselves*

#### Question 34

The most successful answers commented on the structure of the story and showed an awareness of the power of the extract in relation to the pathos of the actual death of this formerly dignified and loved woman. Those who really focused on what exactly makes it moving - the impossibility of ever being given forgiveness - did better than those who just explained the outcome. Most candidates were able to comment on why and how the ending was moving. The best commented on how the mother's ignorance of what had happened, combined with her almost careless sorting/burning of the cards, reducing them to ashes contrasted so movingly with their significance to the boy and his aunt. Less successful answers retold the extract but still managed to make something of the boy's tears, and his failure to be forgiven.

#### Question 35

This was a very open question and allowance was made for whatever warning candidates liked to identify. It was not an excuse for generalised polemic on the evils of modern society, however. Arguments needed to be carefully developed and well supported from the chosen story. Some candidates were not really secure on these stories, however. Those who chose the Bradbury tended to fare better, understanding something of his purpose, though often restricting their answers to showing how nature will outlive technology. Few really understood the Wyndham – surprisingly, candidates seemed to believe the warning was about the dangers of space travel. Very few really understood the writer's use of irony.

#### Question 36

There were some very good, suitably arrogant, chauvinistic voices but quite a few candidates thought John would be guilt-ridden and had him begging his wife for her forgiveness.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/51

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

## Key Messages

- Many competent answers to passage-based questions would achieve a higher mark if candidates paid attention to the language of the extract and used direct quotations from it.
- An awareness of staging and an appreciation of the conventions of drama are advantageous in answering the passage-based question on the drama texts.
- The strongest answers to discursive questions used supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of “the moment” and captured the attitudes and “voice” of the character.

## General Comments

Just four of the texts on Paper 51 received any significant take-up this session: *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

In answer to the passage-based questions, strong responses showed implicit knowledge of the context of the passage and used this knowledge when it was appropriate to the question. An ability to explore the passage in some detail and to comment on the writer’s use of language is the key to high marks. In response to drama texts an awareness of stagecraft and dramatic effectiveness would improve performance. Candidates who could comment appropriately on set, tone, action, climax and contrast, as well as on characterisation, reaped due rewards.

There were many strong discursive responses, especially to *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the most effective essays ranged widely across the texts with views supported by textual detail. Less successful answers tended to ignore the question set in favour of one they had done at some stage previously.

Responses to empathic questions were strong this session, with a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing. Less successful empathic responses misplaced the moment or mistook the character or gave characters knowledge that they were unlikely to possess.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*

There were far too few responses to **Questions 1-3** to make general comment appropriate.

### **Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems**

There were far too few responses to **Questions 4-6** to make general comment appropriate.



### ***Nineteen Eighty-Four***

There was some very strong work on this text in this session with candidates clearly engaging with both the characters and the political ideas in the novel. The whole concept of a futuristic totalitarian state seems to have resonated with candidates from all parts of the world.

#### **Question 7**

Most candidates could comment on the sadness of Winston and Julia's passionate affair being replaced by betrayal, contempt and indifference. More effective answers also explored how Orwell creates such a dismal setting replete with imagery of death and decay. Candidates revealed sound understanding of the context of the passage and a sensitive response to the pathos of the characters' situation.

#### **Question 8**

Candidates often chose one moment which was much more apt than the other choice in answering this question. The most effective choices were actual moments such as the Two Minutes Hate, Winston being attacked by the Parsons children, or his interrogation by O'Brien. General issues such as the amount of surveillance and loss of personal freedom, without specific examples, were less effective choices.

#### **Question 9**

This was answered well when candidates did not merely repetitively express terror and regret but reflected Parsons' pride in being betrayed by his daughter and belief that The Party was acting in his best interests. Those candidates with a really good understanding of Parsons and close textual knowledge captured his voice the most effectively.

### ***Brave New World***

#### **Question 10**

Candidates were able to place the passage in context and comment on why it was a powerful moment. The strongest answers gave detailed textual support.

#### **Question 11**

Most candidates found points to make about John's view of *Brave New World* society, but some listed them without a developed discussion. The strongest answers engaged with the "To what extent..." aspect of the question.

#### **Question 12**

There were some convincing empathic responses for Mustapha Mond in answer to this question.

### ***Romeo and Juliet***

#### **Question 13**

This question was answered well overall, with most candidates appreciating the Friar's caution versus the lovers' passion which lives in the moment. The language techniques such as the use of contrast, metaphor, irony, hyperbole and foreshadowing were identified and often explored very effectively. There was some misreading in respect of the Friar's advice, interpreted as opposition to the marriage and thus not fully appreciating the context of this wedding scene. Able candidates also noted that Romeo and Juliet's feelings also contrast: Romeo has hints of desperation whereas Juliet is calm and assured.

#### **Question 14**

Most candidates understood the Prince's role in plot terms and showed textual knowledge but no responses really probed the dramatic impact of his presence, authority (or lack of it) and decisions.

**Question 15**

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

***Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)***

There were far too few answers to **Questions 16-18** to make general comment appropriate.

***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof***

**Question 19**

Answers to this question showed good general knowledge about Brick's relationship with Big Daddy, the "mendacity" issue and the fact that Big Daddy is trying to get to the truth about Brick's drinking in the scene. Close reference to the passage itself and response to the power of the moment was executed less effectively.

There were far too few answers to **Question 20 and 21** to make general comment appropriate.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/52

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

## Key Messages

- Many competent answers to passage-based questions would achieve a higher mark if candidates paid attention to the language of the extract and used direct quotations from it.
- An awareness of staging and an appreciation of the conventions of drama are advantageous in answering the passage-based question on the drama texts.
- The strongest answers to discursive questions used supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of “the moment” and captured the attitudes and “voice” of the character.
- Retelling of the narrative as opposed to answering the question is not appropriate. This was particularly prevalent in some responses to *Romeo and Juliet*.

## General Comments

All the set texts on this session’s paper were well represented and answers were lively and varied.

In answers to passage-based questions the strongest responses made sure that they focused on all aspects of the question, especially if it had two elements such as “dramatic and moving” or “dramatic and significant”. Such answers showed implicit knowledge of the context of the passage and used this knowledge when it was appropriate to the question. In response to drama texts an awareness of stagecraft and dramatic effectiveness would improve performance. Candidates who could comment on set, tone, action, climax and contrast, as well as on characterisation, reaped due rewards.

There were many strong discursive responses, especially to *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* and the most effective essays ranged widely across the texts with views supported by textual detail. There is still a difficulty with questions which asked candidates to consider one moment or two moments in the text. This was more apparent in relation to novels than plays. Candidates often did not concentrate on particular episodes but wrote about the text in general. Less successful answers tended to ignore the question set in favour of one they had done previously.

There were some very narrative responses to the passage-based question on *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead of considering in detail the climactic, moving moment of Juliet’s death, candidates told the story of what led up to this moment and what happened afterwards. It is very difficult for candidates to achieve adequate reward if they take such an approach.

For the empathic tasks, many candidates showed a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing. Less successful responses misplaced the moment, mistook the character or gave characters knowledge that they were unlikely to possess.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### ***I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings***

#### **Question 1**

This was answered successfully when candidates explored the language of the passage to show *how* Angelou expressed her admiration for Miss Kirwin. Most could find many examples of relevant material and the best answers commented fully on the evidence they gave. More sophisticated responses explored how Miss Kirwin's fairness and lack of prejudice appealed to Maya's need for affirmation after the life experiences she had had up to that point in the autobiography.

#### **Question 2**

Successful candidates tended to choose the episode of Uncle Willie hiding in the vegetable box and his desire to hide his disability from the schoolteachers. Answers would have been more effective if a little context had been given and Uncle Willie's "double disability" explained more fully. Reasons for sympathy, however, were clearly outlined.

#### **Question 3**

Most candidates could place this moment and convey Momma's concern for Bailey in her characteristic "voice". The strongest answers were convincingly God-fearing and kind and knew that this was the moment where Momma decides to send the children to their mother to avoid the racism of the South. Some misplaced the moment as much later in the text.

### ***Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems***

#### **Question 4**

Most candidates who tackled this question could cite evidence for the pleasures of Mrs Tilscher's classroom by an examination of the style. They were less successful at examining the "growing up" occurring in the poem and the contrast in language at its end.

#### **Question 5**

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate

#### **Question 6**

There was a clear appreciation of the shortcomings of the Head of English in the poem. Better answers showed clearly how Duffy conveys these to us.

### ***Nineteen Eighty-Four***

There was some very strong work on this text in this session with candidates clearly engaging with both the characters and the political ideas in the novel. The whole concept of a futuristic totalitarian state seems to have resonated with candidates from all parts of the world.

#### **Question 7**

This question was answered with much personal engagement and insight. The best responses addressed "dramatic" and "significant" with equal thoughtfulness. More insightful candidates were aware of the entrapment here, gave evidence for it, and commented on its significance for the novel as a whole. The importance of the wine as symbolising the different nature of the Inner Party, the drama of O'Brien's catechising of Winston and Julia and of their responses featured in the strongest answers.

### Question 8

Most candidates could enumerate the physical discomforts in Winston's life with detail from the text. More insightful responses moved on to the conceptual deprivations such as the lack of freedom and constant surveillance as well as the general loveless and inhumane nature of the society. Specific textual reference was a feature of strong answers.

### Question 9

There were some extremely effective answers to this question capturing O'Brien's detachment, fanaticism and contempt for Winston or, alternatively, a pitying respect for his obduracy. Such answers showed complete awareness of how Winston's fate had been meticulously planned and that O'Brien embodied the party's chilling philosophy of power for its own sake. A few candidates misplaced the moment.

### *Brave New World*

### Question 10

Most responses to this question could outline the differences between the two worlds in terms of civilised versus primitive, different approaches to courtship, and religion versus state conditioning. The strongest answers selected material effectively and responded to how Huxley vividly conveys the differences in his style of writing.

### Question 11

The moments chosen were usually Linda's meeting Bernard and Lenina in the Reservation and her reunion with the DHC.

### Question 12

This produced some very effective responses. Helmholtz's tone ranged from ironic mockery of John and the absurd principles of the romantic world of Verona to wonder and awe at Shakespeare's gift of writing that he could never hope to emulate in a world of soma induced "happiness".

### *Romeo and Juliet*

### Question 13

This question was answered very well when candidates engaged with the dramatic tensions and ironies in the scene, the ominous setting, the Friar's cowardice and Juliet's moving response to the death of Romeo. Narrative responses were much in evidence, however, and there was often impatience with the "rashness" of the behaviour of the lovers, which mitigated against the candidates' responses to "moving". The strongest answers looked closely at the language, such as Juliet's oxymoronic "happy dagger," or commented on how this moment had been fated and foreshadowed from the beginning of the play. Some candidates thought that Balthazar had seen Romeo and Paris fighting and that he had gone to seek out Friar Lawrence.

### Question 14

The best answers to this question gave a balanced view of Mercutio. Candidates saw that he tried to cheer Romeo up but was also unsympathetic to the whole concept of love. They saw that he was willing to defend Romeo's honour but also provoked the fight in which he is killed, leading to Romeo's banishment and ultimate death. Weaker answers confused him with Benvolio and made hackneyed assertions such as "he was always there for Romeo", somewhat negated by his cursing of both Capulets and Montagues before his death.

### Question 15

The most convincing Princes took up a suitably authoritative tone, expressed anger and frustration at their decrees being ignored, professed some sympathy for Romeo, but put the needs of Verona first. There was an impressive awareness among candidates of what constitutes an effective leader and some statesmanlike and diplomatic utterances. The best answers showed close knowledge of the aftermath of the killing of Tybalt – Benvolio's evidence, Lady Capulet's pleas for retribution. Such answers understood clearly why the Prince had only banished Romeo and not had him executed. Less convincing responses made him too self-

doubting and tormented. Some mistook him for Paris and some had him wanting to marry Juliet or knowing about the relationship between Romeo and Juliet but such misguided answers were few.

### ***Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)***

#### **Question 16**

Candidates generally showed good understanding of Drayton's poem. Some had not quite grasped the extended personification of love as someone on their deathbed at the end of the poem which distorted their responses considerably. Others engaged with the depiction of the speaker's thoughts and feelings with enthusiasm and knowledge and noted the change of tone in the final lines. There was a tendency by some to go through the poem explaining its meaning line by line rather than responding to the question. This was often done well but lack of strict relevance prevented such candidates reaching the highest mark band.

#### **Questions 17**

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

#### **Question 18**

This was less well executed than Question 17. Often candidates could have chosen more appropriate poems in their answer. There was usually some implicit responses to the poets' appeal to the senses but a more direct approach was necessary. Some answers did not mention the senses at all.

### ***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof***

#### **Question 19**

Effective responses showed awareness of the drama of the physical movements, the entry of the no-neck monster, and the shouted lines, as well as grasping the scene as the climax of Brick and Maggie's incompatibility, childlessness and resulting loss of inheritance. Less effective answers ignored the drama and merely related the events or took lines such as "I tried to kill your Aunt Maggie," at face value. It would help candidates to act scenes out in class so that they are aware of the effectiveness of movement, off stage noises and the like.

#### **Question 20**

This was less successfully handled. There was a tendency to write about how Big Daddy embodies particular themes in the play rather than to focus on the question. His larger-than-life qualities, his characteristic speech patterns, his relationships with wife and children did not really feature in answers. "Mendacity" as a theme took precedence over the characterisation of this remarkable creation.

#### **Question 21**

Most candidates found a credible and creditable voice for Big Momma, aptly referring to Big Daddy's condition, his treatment of her, and her feelings about Brick, Gooper and Mae. The best answers avoided merely emoting repetitively in capital letters and considered what her main thoughts would be.



# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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**Paper 0486/53**  
**Set Texts: Closed Books-B**

## Key Messages

- Many competent answers to passage-based questions would achieve a higher mark if candidates paid attention to the language of the extract and used direct quotations from it.
- An awareness of staging and an appreciation of the conventions of drama are advantageous in answering the passage-based question on the drama texts.
- The strongest answers to discursive questions used supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of “the moment” and captured the attitudes and “voice” of the character.

## General Comments

Overall, answers were lively and varied.

In answer to the passage-based questions strong responses showed implicit knowledge of the context of the passage and used this knowledge when it was appropriate to the question. An ability to explore the passage in some detail and to comment on the writer’s use of language is the key to high marks. In response to drama texts an awareness of stagecraft and dramatic effectiveness would improve performance. Candidates who could comment on set, tone, action, climax and contrast, as well as on characterisation, reaped due rewards.

There were many strong discursive responses, especially to *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the most effective essays ranged widely across the texts with views supported by textual detail. The strongest responses made sure that they focused on all aspects of the question, especially if it had two elements such as “disturbing and entertaining” or “both amusing and sad”. Less successful answers tended to ignore the question set in favour of one they had done previously. They often wrote well and showed knowledge but answers must be relevant.

Work on poetry texts showed considerable improvement this session. There were some engaged and sensitive responses which showed clear critical understanding and an ability to analyse language in a clear and personal way.

Many of the empathic responses showed a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing. Less successful responses misplaced the moment or mistook the character or gave characters knowledge that they were unlikely to possess.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### ***I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings***

**Question 1** was answered successfully when candidates explored the language of the passage, such as the Reverend's lips flapping like "tired elastic," to show *how* Angelou made this episode so amusing. Most candidates could find many examples of humour and the best answers commented fully on the evidence they gave. More sophisticated responses explored how the mixture of reverence and irreverence in the church setting created the comedy and appreciated the slapstick element and the slow build-up of anticipation.

#### **Question 2**

Answers to this question often used pertinent quotation to explore both aspects of the question. There were many successful attempts to explore authorial methods such as authorial comment, dialogue, imagery, contrast and hyperbole. High achieving responses showed awareness of the poignant combination of two moods that Angelou achieves.

#### **Question 3**

There were several suitably nonchalant Bailey Seniors in response to this question, still with a hangover and admiring Maya for her initiative in taking the wheel.

### **Carol Ann Duffy: *Selected Poems***

#### **Question 4**

Duffy's poem *Stealing* elicited engaged responses. Many candidates picked up on the metaphorical coldness of the persona's tone and attitude towards his victims and then linked this to the literal "coldness" of the subject matter. Although most responses commented on the cruel side of the persona's nature, many candidates responded sensitively to Duffy's use of pathos in the speaker's need for a "mate". Less effective answers speculated as to the reasons for the persona's actions at the expense of looking closely at the language of the poem.

#### **Question 5**

The strongest responses to *The Dolphins* probed the imagery of confinement and circularity. There were some slight misreadings, such as "the other" referring to the speaker's former self rather than the other dolphin. There was some sensitive response to Duffy's style and to the subject matter of the poem. The despair felt by the dolphins was examined on phrases such as: "music of loss...", "turns my own to stone", and "there is no hope". The poem clearly prompted engagement and empathy.

#### **Question 6**

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

### ***Nineteen Eighty-Four***

There was some very strong work on this text in this session with candidates clearly engaging with both the characters and the political ideas in the novel. The whole concept of a futuristic totalitarian state seems to have resonated with candidates from all parts of the world.

#### **Question 7**

Most candidates could make well-evidenced points about the proles' dreary and debilitating life experiences and the significance of their lifestyle compared to that of the party members. The more insightful responses went on to consider why Winston believed the proles offered hope and explored the imagery of the passage in some detail. The strongest answers spotted the irony of the passage's ending. The proles are not planning revolution but arguing over lottery numbers. Less successful responses tended to be rather scathing about the squalor in which the proles live and their and lack of education, without any perception of Orwell's purpose in depicting them thus.

### Question 8

The focus ranged here from the disturbing nature of O'Brien's entrapment of Winston to the chilling nature of the interrogation, torture and horror in Room 101. Strong answers had a clear overview of O'Brien's role in the novel and could support this with textual detail. Less successful ones tended towards character sketch and lacked use of direct textual support.

### Question 9

This was answered well when candidates realized that Winston was far less suspicious of Julia by this stage and that he was keen to meet her. Some doubts and fears were acceptable but many candidates misplaced the moment entirely, some thinking that Victory Square was the meeting in the countryside. Less successful answers also focused on aspects of Oceania life in general rather than on Winston's thoughts about Julia.

### *Brave New World*

### Question 10

This question was answered well when candidates explored how the passage reveals the synthetic happiness created by Henry and Lenina's conditioning. This encompassed their "unnatural" attitude to death and their feelings about other castes. Insightful responses examined how any more normal emotional responses were thwarted by years of brainwashing. Less successful candidates wrote in general terms about happiness in the society without detailed reference to the extract and often referring to soma which does not feature in it. This was a question which invited personal response and many candidates felt pity for the lack of genuine emotions that the characters experience.

### Question 11

This question was answered well when candidates selected relevant episodes and saw why John and Lenina's affair was often amusing because of their incompatible upbringings, yet also sadly doomed. In less successful answers candidates either seemed to feel that they had to consider episodes which were sad and amusing at the same time or did not look at the interaction between John and Lenina in any detail.

### Question 12

There were some convincing Johns in response to this empathic task. Candidates captured both his rapturous enthusiasm for the world he has heard so much about and his Shakespearian terminology. Some spent a little too long talking about the sadness of his life on the reservation but many made this relevant to the moment. The strongest answers captured the naivety of his expectations.

### *Romeo and Juliet*

**Question 13** produced plenty of very engaged and informed responses. Most candidates kept to the passage but some made good use of the knowledge that Capulet's behaviour here contrasts markedly with his earlier playful mood and reluctance to marry Juliet in haste. Candidates discussed his more obvious insulting and threatening language but his words about Juliet's ingratitude and the extremity of his threats could have been explored in greater detail. The Nurse and Lady Capulet's responses to him and his treatment of them were considered in good answers. Some candidates still seemed to think that he knows about the relationship between Romeo and Juliet.

### Question 14

The best answers to this question saw that Romeo is very different at the end of the play than at the beginning or in his rage at Tybalt. Such answers considered Romeo's behaviour at well-chosen stages of the play. Many candidates ignored the Romeo of the end of the play and wrote in too much detail about his relationship with Rosaline. It is a common misconception that Romeo should have waited for Friar Lawrence to tell him about a plot of which he knows nothing and that he should have known Juliet was not really dead. The question required a clear focus on the end of the play and a significant number of candidates ignored this.

**Question 15**

The most convincing Juliets captured her anguished tones and reflected both her previous dialogue with Romeo and her upcoming soliloquy. The strongest responses showed appreciation of the seriousness of her break with family and childhood, rather than only considering her love for Romeo. They also did more than echo the balcony scene and expressed some doubt about Romeo's intentions and Juliet's thoughts about the feud.

***Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)***

There were far too few responses to **Questions 16, 17 and 18** to make general comment appropriate.

***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof***

**Question 19**

Answers to this question showed good general knowledge about Brick's relationship with Big Daddy, the "mendacity" issue and that Big Daddy is trying to get to the truth about Brick's drinking in the scene. Close reference to the passage itself and response to the power of the moment was less effective.

**Questions 20 and 21**

There were far too few responses to these questions to make general comment appropriate.