LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0992/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

Successful responses:

*   show a detailed knowledge of texts
*   tailor their material to the specific demands of the question
*   use relevant textual references to support their arguments
*   engage with the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

*   have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
*   include extraneous biographical material
*   make assertions which are not substantiated
*   merely label and list writers' techniques
*   offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than personal responses to the question.

General comments

There was some evidence of outstanding work this session, which offered engaging personal and evaluative engagement with the texts that candidates had studied. There were very few rubric infringements, and the majority of candidates divided their time well across their two answers for the paper.

Textual knowledge

The strongest answers showed an impressively detailed knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully integrating both concise quotation and indirect textual references to support their ideas. In answers to extract questions, these candidates used the detail of the extract to support their ideas and to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects. The strongest responses to general essays also showed an extensive knowledge and included much direct textual reference. Less successful responses were often characterised by an uncertain grasp of relevant supporting reference.

Focus on the question

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question. Less successful answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the text but without tailoring their material to the specific demands of the question. Detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward. Some candidates embarked on a description or sketch of characters or an explanation of themes regardless of what the question asked for. Poetry responses often worked their way, sometimes exhaustively, through the poem without selecting relevant material with which to answer the actual question.

Writers' effects

The most convincing responses sustained a critical engagement with the effects achieved by writers' use of form, structure and language. Those who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were unsurprisingly better able to explore closely the effects of the writing, and for this reason tended to produce more successful general prose essays. The strongest responses were able to link their comments on writers' effects to the ideas and impressions conveyed by the writer. Less successful responses often commented discretely on effects without relating them to the content and meaning, sometimes simply logging features such as alliteration, anaphora and hyperbole in poetry essays. This simple kind of labelling was often evident in general comments about ABAB rhyme schemes.

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Personal response

There was in the strongest answers much evidence of informed and sensitive personal responses to texts which focused directly on the key words of questions, exploring with perception a wide range of detail from the texts, and showing insight and individuality. These responses addressed directly those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'powerful', 'vivid', 'striking', 'memorable' and 'moving'. Less successful responses made either cursory reference to these words or no reference at all.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most responses addressed the question with enthusiasm and focused from the outset on the contrasting features of the two birds. Successful candidates explored the effects of phrases such as 'dips his wing / in the orange sun's rays' and 'can seldom see through his bars of rage.' They were also able to develop their responses through a series of contrasting ideas, such as ease of mind versus anxiety and free movement versus physical restriction. Less successful responses offered overly assertive readings of the poem which strayed from the detail of the actual poem, with the result that opportunities to engage with images and aural effects of the poem were lost.

Question 2

Most candidates recognised the father's love for his family and how he expressed this through actions rather than words. They were also able to write sensitively about the difficult conditions he faced, both at work and home, during the week and also on Sundays, and to make a tentative link between this and the 'chronic angers' mentioned in the second stanza. Phrases such as 'blueblack cold' and 'the cold splintering, breaking' were explored with imagination and empathy. Candidates also recognised the retrospective perspective which comes to the fore in the final stanza. Some parts of the poem presented difficulties. Few candidates noted the plural and ambiguous quality of 'chronic angers', asserting that this plainly referred to the father alone. The last line, referring to 'love's austere and lonely offices', also posed a problem: many candidates ignored it altogether, and some interpreted it literally, writing that the father was lonely in his office at work. More successful responses were able to relate this phrase to the father's character and sense of responsibility; some candidates wrote movingly about the loneliness of the father as he went about his early morning duties, unobserved and unappreciated.

Question 3

Most responses were able to comment on the depth at which the Kraken sleeps, the murky light and the creatures surrounding him. More successful responses used the details of the poem to illustrate the idea that the Kraken has been there for an enormous length of time and the apocalyptic vision of the Kraken's waking and demise. The strongest responses explored Tennyson's use of language, structure and form. Less effective responses described the rhyme scheme and made general comments about the poem being almost a sonnet, though without developing these points and linking them to the question. Less successful responses lacked a clear understanding of the words 'sponges', 'polypi' and 'winnow' as used in the poem, and this led to some misreading. Other responses described the content of the poem without explicitly addressing the focus of the question. Some candidates wrote that global warming had killed the Kraken.

Question 4

Most candidates showed an understanding of the poem and its implications. In many cases, this was evident in a working through the passage in order, explaining and occasionally exploring the poem's detail. Comments were made about the location of the encounter, the speaker's surprise at the bird's song and appearance, and the time of year. Only the most successful responses selected relevant details from the poem that addressed the key words of the question: how Pitter 'uses words and images to communicate her feelings about the bird'. Less effective responses explored some of the description of the bird without linking it directly to Pitter's feelings about the bird. Stronger responses explored Pitter's feelings of amazement, awe and excitement with suitable references to the bird's singing and appearance. Some considered how the bird touched something deeper inside this solitary person and made the encounter a religious experience for her.

Question 5

The more successful answers clearly focused on 'moving' and on 'how' Duffy achieves her effects, commenting on the sense of separation between mother and child, the purity of the child and her lack of 'history', and the almost religious feeling of the mother's worship of the child. In these stronger responses, candidates explored the presentation of the maternal voice and the effects of the natural imagery and the mood of quietness and reflection. Less effective responses revealed a basic understanding of the parent watching over her sleeping child and what she imagines the child is dreaming about, though these responses needed more detailed exploration of Duffy's language and effects.

Question 6

Most responses were able to appreciate the magic of Mrs Tilscher's teaching and classroom where 'you could travel up the Blue Nile'. Many recognised the pupils' pleasure and enchantment at the magical place names and the joy at receiving gold stars for good work. In most answers, there was at least to some extent an attempt to comment on what the first two stanzas reveal about the experience of early school days. More successful responses selected carefully details that would address the question and explored with some success the deeper implications found in the third and fourth stanzas. Only the more confident responses drew the contrast between the innocent, safe world of Mrs Tilscher and the facts of life as a child learnt 'how you were born'. These more successful responses explored the change to a darker language as the poem progresses, the impact of the final line and the significance of 'the sky split open into a thunderstorm'.

Section B

Question 7

In the few responses seen, there was an awareness of Mrs Reed's desperate need to get rid of Jane whom she considers an unwanted burden. There was an understanding of Mrs Reed's shock and quiet anger at Jane's outburst and a recognition that Mrs Reed clearly does not know how to handle Jane. The most successful responses explored Bronte's use of language in 'memorably' conveying the conflict between the two characters, commenting on the vocabulary associated with ice that describes Mrs Reed, and the unctuousness of her attempts to calm Jane.

Question 8

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

In the relatively few responses seen to this question, candidates tended to work their way through the extract, commenting on Deven's memories and assessment of Nur and the realisation that he was custodian of Nur's poetry. Stronger responses explored the ways in which Desai conveys Deven's thoughts and the significance of the imagery of the night-time path and the water in the canal. There was generally a less clear focus on the extract's effectiveness of the extract as 'a satisfying ending to the novel'.

Question 10

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

Many candidates found this question difficult: they were aware of the humour, but they struggled to explain how it is created. For example, many were able to pick out the key opposing terms 'Bank Fairy 'and 'Bank Dragon', but only the more confident responses took the opportunity to explore these sharply contrasting and humorous images in the context of the extract and the wider novel. One candidate sensitively picked out all the words used to describe Mrs Sparsit – 'lady paramount', 'guardian' and so on – and explored these in succession, showing how the 'portrait' was drawn by adding detail upon detail throughout the extract. The most successful answers were based on a secure knowledge of Mrs Sparsit's role and character in the novel. They also identified features such as her piecing together torn-up pieces of paper in an attempt to find damaging information about those whom she disliked; her ignorance of the nature of the bank's 'treasures'; and her inflated sense of superiority and feminine grace.

Question 12

Most responses showed a secure knowledge of Mr Bounderby's character and role in the novel. They were also able to recall key textual references (such as 'the bully of humility' and 'That object is, to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon'), which offered valuable opportunities to explore Dickens' language and effects. Generally, candidates agreed that Bounderby got what he deserved, although one or two expressed sympathy for him because he married a woman who did not love him. Almost all appreciated the irony of his lecturing Stephen on the impossibility of divorce, when the same fate was to befall him; or dying in a ditch, after lying that he was born in one. One danger of the general essay question is that responses can become overly assertive where there is little reference to the author's methods and language. Better responses were able to support their arguments by pinpointing particular events and pertinent textual reference, which allowed candidates to explore Bounderby's language and Dickens' descriptions of him.

Question 13

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

Most responses focused with some success on Gene's first reaction on seeing Finny, Gene's general apprehension and his fear of Finny's possible suspicions. Stronger responses explored the detail of Knowles's portrayal of Gene's fear and guilt, contrasting this with Finny's general good humour. The most successful responses were able to pinpoint with accuracy the extract's position within the wider novel and to explore the underlying tensions in the boys' relationship, linking their points to the ways in which Knowles makes this such a memorable moment in the novel. The most perceptive responses demonstrated a clear and critical appreciation of the narrative viewpoint.

Question 16

Few candidates chose this question. Those who did were generally able to comment on the boys in the final year waiting to enlist and the war preparations in evidence in and around the school. There was reference to Leper's enlisting and his later dishonourable discharge, together with the impact of this on his mental wellbeing. More successful responses used pertinent detail from the text to explore more closely 'the ways in which Knowles conveys different attitudes to war', focusing on the debates between Finny and others about the war not existing and the presentation of the impact of the war (mainly on Leper).

Question 17

Most responses grasped the general dinginess of the setting, the impact of the old man's conversation with the barman, the barman's ignorance of the past, and the unease caused by Winston's arrival. Less effective responses worked through the extract, describing and explaining content rather than exploring the ways in which Orwell achieves his effects. More successful answers considered the significance of revealing textual detail (for example, the 'tired looking vegetables') and explored Orwell's use of description of the setting, the representation of the old man's speech and the potential for trouble of the dispute between the old man and the barman. The most successful responses explored the contrast between the sentiment that hope lies in the proles with Orwell's presentation of the proles.

Question 18

This was a less popular choice than the extract-based question and, overall, less well done. A few candidates were able to present convincing arguments which went beyond a character sketch. These stronger answers were characterised by their use of supporting textual reference. A more detailed knowledge of the text usually led to a more convincing and well-substantiated argument. Most candidates acknowledged Winston's role as the central character, his role in the Outer Party and his desire to rebel. More successful responses made reference to accounts of his behaviour as a child, the presentation of his betrayal of Julia, his desire to trust O'Brien and his awareness that he is 'the dead'. The strongest responses explored Orwell's use of narrative voice in providing insight into Winston's thoughts.

Question 19

Candidates were generally able to contextualise the passage: the father reading his son's manuscript after the funeral and the pain and grief he feels. There was interesting comment on the relationship between James and Arthur and the impact the son's words would have on the father in future parts of the novel. Less successful responses tended to paraphrase (or simply ignore) the content of the manuscript whereas more confident answers explored in detail what makes it such a powerful contribution to the extract and wider novel. Only the most successful responses explored effects closely, for example, the contrast between the simple language of the narrative and the more academic language of the manuscript.

Question 20

There were only a few responses seen to this question. The focus was generally on Absalom rather than his companions. These answers needed a more thorough grasp of relevant textual detail and support, together with a closer exploration of the ways in which Paton achieves his effects.

Question 21

Most answers were able to make reference to what might be 'sad' in the extract, for example, the old man's obvious suffering, his thoughts about death and being cremated rather than buried. More successful answers were able to account for what makes the extract a 'sad ending' to the story by referring to what happens earlier in the story: the old man's trip to the city to plead with the authorities and his failure to persuade the planners who have designated land for re-development without regard to Maori traditions. Stronger responses were able to use these details to account for the man's very great disappointment and his attempt to put on a brave face ('right as rain'). Only the most confident responses commented on the style of the extract, its presentation of dialogue, use of colloquial language in conveying the old man's stream of consciousness; these responses were, as a result, better equipped to explore '*how*' Grace makes this 'such a sad ending to the story'.

Question 22

There were far fewer responses seen to this general essay question on *The Open Boat* than to the extract-based question on *Journey*. Answers revealed a rudimentary knowledge of the plot and a grasp in general terms of what makes the Captain an admirable character. Most candidates made basic points: he is injured, he mourns the loss of his ship and reassures the crew they will get ashore. More successful responses attempted to comment on his conversations with the men and his calm and pragmatic tone. In general, however, a more thorough grasp of the detail of the story was needed to address the specific thrust of the question. It is worth reminding candidates that they need to know the anthology stories in detail so that they have sufficient textual reference when answering questions.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0992/22
Drama

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Key messages

- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Useful opening paragraphs were brief, referenced the question and avoided lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writer's techniques to be addressed. Conclusions needed to be more than a reiteration of points.
- Responses to passage-based questions which briefly contextualised the passage in the play, explored the whole passage, including the ending, were the most successful.
- Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and gave a precise, wide range of reference.
- Many responses would have been improved by avoiding a retelling of the whole plot before addressing the specific question or only attempting to link this information to the question in the conclusion.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

General comments

The strongest candidates knew their set texts well and were able to demonstrate their knowledge whilst focusing closely on the terms of the questions. They deconstructed the question, focusing on the key terms, for example, 'memorably', 'vividly' or 'strikingly', to choose their material effectively. They demonstrated their ability to quote from texts to support their comments and developed the argument effectively. These often included an introductory paragraph to give an overview of the intended answer.

A less successful approach was where candidates wrote all they knew about a text, or character, without linking it to the specific question. These often relied on lengthy quotations or textual detail without demonstrating understanding of the text quoted. Often there was some reference to the text, but this was not analysed to show understanding of the author's methods and effects. The tendency to retell the plot up to the start of a specific passage, before attempting to focus on the question, resulted in much valuable examination time being wasted. The best responses were able to write a sentence or two to contextualise a passage before analysing well-selected material drawing close links to the question throughout.

Formulaic approaches were common, where the same point introduced and ended a paragraph, resulting in unnecessary repetition and taking away valuable time in an examination context.

Successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as drama, referring to the 'audience', rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', as well as exploring the author's methods to convey the texts' main concerns. They recognised that characters were constructs and not real people. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms that do not relate to the question or help to develop an argument constructively.

The most popular texts were *Macbeth, A Raisin in the Sun and Romeo and Juliet.* Fewer candidates answered on *The Winslow Boy.* There was one new text this series, *The Crucible* but this was studied by relatively few candidates. Candidates should be made aware that it is not a productive use of examination time to preface responses to this text with lengthy introductions about the religious, social, and historical background of Salem, or the political context of McCarthyism in the United States in the 1950's, in response to questions on this text.

There was an unusually high number of rubric infringements on 0475/22 where candidates answered two questions on the same text or answered two passage-based questions. There was some evidence that candidates did not have detailed knowledge of at least one of the set texts to answer the questions in enough depth. This was particularly obvious in the passage-based questions where some candidates did not know the context of the passage or were unable to recognise the events referred to in the passage, relying on writing all they could about the passage with scant understanding or reference to the actual question. This type of approach is unlikely to achieve high reward. In addition, there were some candidates who simply copied out the passages for two questions, with no personal comments or any attempt to address the question. Here there was nothing to reward.

Candidates endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly. However, there are still a few candidates answering the discursive question on the passage which resulted in some low marks as these responses were self-penalising.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

(a)   This was a popular choice of text and question. It was a rich passage with a lot to say about George and Beneatha separately and together. Most candidates who attempted this question focused on the 'striking impressions' created and understood that this passage revealed the incompatibility of Beneatha and George. They were able to identify the different ideologies of the two characters and the tension this causes between them. Some candidates over-stated the impression of George labelling him a 'misogynist' whilst others were more measured, considering him 'sexist', in attitude and behaviour. The most successful were able to identify that George was '*shallow'*, a stereotypical male of this period whilst Beneatha was not the stereotypical female and not in terms of the Black community. They were able to support these comments with some well-selected references to their behaviour and dialogue: George only interested in Beneatha for her looks and not her 'thoughts' and Beneatha wanting and enjoying more intellectual conversation. The best candidates managed to explore the stage directions and what they reveal of George and Beneatha at this moment. There was some effective analysis and general satisfaction conveyed at the writer's use of pauses, with emphasis on Beneatha's '*longer pause'* followed by her abrupt '*Good night, George'*. Many understood that this was a moment where Beneatha felt understood by her mother in the final exchange between them and identified this as 'striking', contrasting it to the previous scene when Mama had slapped her.

Less successful responses worked through the passage with little focus on the question and concentrated on George, or strayed from the passage completely, to talk about the couple in other parts of the play. There was some misinterpretation of the stage directions, especially of '*groping*', with some candidates accusing George of sexual assault: he was considered evil and a pathological liar as he tells Mama that he had had a nice time. There was also some misinterpretation of his reference to '*Garbo*' with candidates failing to understand who she was, or the context, and saying that he was calling her '*garbage.*' Some responses demonstrated a surface understanding of the passage attempting a narrative overview with evidence that the text had not been studied or understood.

Very few candidates explored the staging with any awareness of the humour of George's persistence or the visual comedy of Beneatha's rejection of George.

(b)   Fewer candidates answered this question, and many struggled with the idea of the apartment having any significance beyond showing the family's poverty. Too often responses focused on the biographical details of Lorraine Hansberry and the socio-historical context of the play with some candidates focusing entirely on the poverty and discrimination of the black community rather than focusing on the text and question. Few managed to get beyond the basic assertion that as the apartment was the only setting it was 'memorable' and then proceeded with describing, often in generalised terms, a few moments from the play. These did not move beyond the lack of rooms and space for a family of five people; the shared bathroom; only having one window and the lack of

sunlight and the worn-out furniture. Most candidates were able to include one or two quotations mainly taken from the opening setting of Act One.

Better responses were able to discuss the significance of the single window and the symbolism of Mama's plant, showing an understanding of how the apartment reflected the characters' emotions, lives and dreams. Stronger candidates linked the poverty of the area, reflected in the apartment, to racism and the family's desire, especially Mama's dream of moving to a larger home and better neighbourhood. There was understanding of the 'centrality' of the apartment as a setting: all the action takes place here, so the audience is directly involved in the daily struggles of individual family members. There was some understanding of the '*care and love and even hope*' in Mama's original choice of the furnishings and the fact that it was now '*tired*', signifying the worn-out lives of mama and Big Walter. Better responses were able to link the drama of the characters' lives specifically to the apartment, for example, Ruth's willingness to resort to an abortion due to the lack of space, reflected in Beneatha's brutal comment about where 'it' was going to sleep, suggesting 'on the roof?' Others noted Travis being unable to prepare his bed on the sofa, or sleep, whilst Walter was on the telephone or Beneatha had visitors. The best responses picked up on Mr Lindner's visit to the apartment with the pertinent comment that for a white man to visit a Black family's home in those time was unusual, so clearly 'memorable', and obviously for a particularly important reason as the audience were to find out.

Some weaker responses compared the apartment with hypothetical living conditions in their 'new home' without considering that they had yet to move.

ARTHUR MILLER: The Crucible

Question 2

(a)   Of the few candidates who answered on this text, this was the more popular question. This was a straightforward question focused on what was 'powerful and dramatic' and the passage provided a plethora of detail for candidates to explore. However, only a few stronger responses showed a secure understanding of the passage and its context within the play. There was some understanding of what was happening in the passage, the chaos and drama, and what it revealed about Abigail's manipulation. Most understood that Mary was turning the tables on Proctor and that this was a dramatic twist in expected events. They showed awareness of the text being performed on stage and commented on the language and stage directions, especially in relation to Mary, though few explored the actual sounds, the screams and movements of the girls.

Comments on John Proctor and Hale were less successful, with widespread misinterpretation of both Proctor's and Hale's words. Some candidates did not grasp Proctor's words, '*God is dead'*, and thought this was a '*confession*', that he had publicly acknowledged that he was in league with the devil and agreeing with Mary's accusations against him. They did not understand that Hale left the proceedings due to his horror at what was happening and argued he was leaving the proceedings because he was angry with Proctor and siding with Mary. There was little focus on the hysteria in court or commentary on Proctor's concluding words, '*You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore*!'. Danforth's role was only mentioned in a few of the strongest responses.

Less successful responses paraphrased the passage with little or no focus on the question, demonstrating little understanding of the situation. Some responses were very confused thinking that Mary is John's wife, and that John is guilty of witchcraft.

(b)   Very few candidates attempted this question. For this to be more than a straightforward character profile of Rebecca Nurse, it was essential to focus on the terms of the question, her 'dramatic impact' on the play. Better responses recognised her worth as a kind and good Christian woman, a pillar of the community, supporting this with her husband's comment, that she is the '*brick and mortar of the church'.* She was considered a wise woman and being the mother of seven children, an expert on children as she said that Betty would awake when she was ready. Some commented on her husband Francis, his arguments with Mr Putnam over land and Mrs Putnam's jealously of Rebecca's children whilst she had several children die in infancy when Rebecca acted as the midwife. Only the best responses linked the Putnam's jealousy to their unfounded accusation and saw the dramatic impact of her arrest and execution, and how petty jealousies could result in people being accused of witchcraft with no chance of defending themselves. The Proctor's shock at

her arrest and her conversations with John Proctor, before their respective deaths, were rarely explored.

Less successful responses narrated a little of her role in the play finding little to say about her, so these tended to be brief. These responses lacked precise textual reference to the text and there was some confusion between Rebecca Nurse and Mrs Putnam.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 3

(a)   This was a less popular choice of text. Responses to the passage needed to focus on Rattigan's methods to making the family's first meeting with Sir Robert memorable. Many candidates were confused about the timing of the meeting, stating that Arthur was late rather than Sir Robert being early. This impacted on some responses where they argued Catherine was embarrassed and attempting to keep Sir Robert engaged until her father arrived, supporting this further by Grace entering *'hastily'*. The best responses understood the context and Catherine's knowledge and support for Len Rogers. Her deliberate attempt to provoke a response from Sir Robert during this meeting was also explored as memorable. These candidates commented on her intended irony in reporting his handling of the case as a '*great forensic triumph'* and '*masterly'* before implying that Rogers' suicide is Sir Robert's fault. Her provocation in labelling Ronnie's case '*trivial*' was understood. There was an awareness of audience response with exploration of the underlying tension, the language, the stilted dialogue and the pauses. The family's respect and awe of Sir Robert, his dining at '*Devonshire House'* and activities in the '*House of Commons'* were also highlighted as memorable as was his affected manner, described as '*carelessly*' and '*languidly*'. Some candidates were amused to see Arthur forced to be more polite, than his usual self, in trying to secure the examination of Ronnie and with it, the services of Sir Robert. The satisfactory ending to the meeting with the enjoyment of the phrase, '*Let Right be done'* was a memorable ending to the passage.

    Less successful answers just described what happened in the passage with some confusion over Sir Robert's behaviour. Some thought he was behaving so *'indifferently'* as he was attracted to Catherine and that he becomes more amiable when Desmond enters to belatedly impress Catherine, clearly not understanding the context or purpose of this meeting. These did not convey understanding of Catherine's cold response to Sir Robert or understand what her comments about the past case signified. The weakest responses relied on paraphrasing the passage with little understanding, or focus, on how the different members of the Winslow family interacted with Sir Robert during this, their first meeting.

(b)   There were fewer responses to this question. They were relatively weak with candidates adopting a narrative approach or writing a character profile of Ronnie, occasionally adding that this made the reader/audience feel sympathy for Ronnie but without exploring how the writer makes the audience sympathise with Ronnie. Most candidates found it difficult to provide supporting evidence from the text, so responses were very general. There was little detailed discussion of Sir Robert's interrogation of Ronnie or the reactions of other characters to Ronnie.

    More successful responses sympathised with how a young boy, unfairly expelled from school for allegedly stealing a postal order was sent home alone. His fear of facing his father, hiding in the garden in the rain and Sir Robert's interrogation of Ronnie were also reasons to sympathise. A few candidates balanced their responses feeling little sympathy due to his perceived indifference to his case, falling asleep rather than following the news and his absence at the crucial moment of the final verdict. Most responses would have been improved by a wide range of precise textual references.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Macbeth*

Question 4

(a)   This was the most popular text and question, and most candidates were able to identify some aspects of the context. The most successful responses briefly contextualised the passage commenting on Macbeth having just murdered King Duncan and returned to Lady Macbeth with the

guards' bloody daggers. There were many strong responses to this passage with candidates maintaining a sharp focus on the question with much perceptive analysis of the language and what it reveals of their different reactions. There was critical understanding of Macbeth's guilt, fears and regrets, with the stark contrast to Lady Macbeth's '*calm and collected*' approach. These were supported by well-selected references and close analysis of the language. Stronger responses drew salient links between their behaviour in the passage to both before the murder, and later in the play, when their reactions change completely with Lady Macbeth's words, '*a little water clears us of this deed*' and Macbeth's repetition of having '*murder'd sleep*' coming back to haunt her. The strongest candidates were able to do this, without losing focus on the question or passage itself. Candidates commented on Lady Macbeth's decisiveness, scorn and use of imperatives, contrasting this to Macbeth's fearful state and the visual horror at the sight of blood for the audience. Some candidates lost focus and drifted into commentary on gender role-reversal and concepts of masculinity and femininity, with both characters falling short of these perceived standards. Many candidates could talk of Lady Macbeth's emasculation of her husband but struggled with the imagery itself – the eye of childhood/heart so white. The latter was frequently seen as her thinking she was still pure.

Less successful responses were generalised, writing about their reactions collectively as in, '*they were afraid*', which misses the point of the question and shows little understanding of their respective behaviour and dialogue at this moment. A few candidates thought they had both committed the murder. Some discussed his '*unbearable guilt which keeps him awake at night*' when, in fact, he has only just committed the murder. There were other mis-readings on his invocation of Neptune as a desire for 'God's' help and asking for his forgiveness. Others commented on the absurdity of mentioning 'oceans' and 'water' as there is no water on Neptune, forgetting that Shakespeare and the Elizabethans would have had no such knowledge of the planetary system. Only the best responses addressed and understood the knocking which heralds the arrival of the outside world with weaker responses interpreting this as '*within*' his mind like the '*voices*' at the start of the passage.

Weaker candidates resorted to paraphrasing the passage, after lengthy introductions about the plot. Where there was textual detail it was repetitive and did not help to develop the argument. For example: '*Macbeth is afraid, because he says, 'I am afraid*'', without further commentary. There were some sweeping generalisations on Macbeth's '*paranoia*' and descent into '*madness*' and Lady Macbeth's behaviour as evidence of her being the '*fourth witch*', without any textual support or development.

(b)   This was a less popular question and difficult for many candidates as they had limited textual support and precise moments in the play to support Shakespeare's characterisation. The most successful responses were aware of the terms of the question, Banquo's 'dramatic impact' and understood that he was a foil to Macbeth. They were able to explore their responses to the witches' prophecies, loyalty to King Duncan and the dramatic murder of Banquo and appearance of his ghost. Only the strongest answers were supported by well-selected references to the text and relevant quotations, fully analysed. They explored his dramatic impact on Macbeth, the murder of his 'best friend' attempting to secure the crown and returning as a ghost to signify Macbeth's guilt and the suspicions Macbeth's babbling raises in the minds of the thanes regarding both the murder of King Duncan and Banquo himself. The brutality of his murder and telling Fleance to flee were frequently commented on.

Less successful answers wrote character sketches of Banquo and lost sight of the question, except to mention it at the end. When used, references to the text supported a narrative approach and lacked the detail concerning the effect and implications of Banquo's language quoted. The weakest responses retold the plot tracing Banquo's part in the play or contrasted him to Macbeth, often writing more on Macbeth than Banquo. It was clear that some candidates referred to film versions of the play particularly when referencing Banquo's murder and Fleance's escape.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Romeo and Juliet*

Question 5

(a)   This was a more popular question than 5**(b)**, perhaps because a passage offers the opportunity to support comments with textual detail and for some analysis of the language. However, many

candidates found it difficult to comment on how Shakespeare portrays their friendship and struggled to explore the language of the passage. Most saw how Mercutio and Benvolio were trying to cheer up a lovesick and depressed Romeo. Unable to explore the extract in any meaningful way, many responses provided a simple, repetitive overview of their friendship: '*They were good friends and trusted each other'.* Only the strongest candidates were able to contextualise the passage accurately knowing that Romeo had read the Capulet servant letter about the feast and that Benvolio's plan was for Romeo to see other '*admired beauties*. Most candidates saw it as a sudden idea to 'gate crash' the party. There was a lot of misreading of individual phrases within the passage with weaker candidates copying out lengthy quotations then trying to explain them but showing only a surface understanding of the text. Assertions were then made that this showed that they '*trusted'* or '*advised each other'*, showing they were good friends, but without any precise analysis of the language or the writer's methods to show this.

A few stronger responses showed understanding of their closeness and camaraderie; Mercutio's teasing and the banter, and how Shakespeare was laying the foundations of a solid friendship to prepare the audience for later events: the death of Mercutio and Romeo's act of revenge against Tybalt. One candidate argued that in persuading Romeo to attend this ball where he meets Juliet, ironically, they ultimately proved not to be good friends at all.

The weakest responses resorted to narrating the plot and what follows this scene, with scant focus on the question or the passage. There were reports of some candidates simply copying out the passage verbatim with no attempt to answer the question.

(b) Fewer candidates attempted this question. Effective responses focused on the Nurse's relationship with Juliet, addressed the 'How far' of the question, and presented a balanced argument. She was not to blame because everything she did was to make Juliet happy, but she was to blame as she encouraged the romance with Romeo, knowing the feuding families would never agree to their union. They traced her role as messenger, not telling the Capulets and giving bad advice. Many candidates argued that her most culpable contribution was her advice to marry Paris, perceived as the betrayal which resulted in Juliet's death as she is driven to desperate measures. Only the strongest responses were able to support ideas with close reference to the text and detail to the nurse's language. These responses referenced other factors contributing to Juliet's death before coming to a decision. The best answers explored the words of the Chorus at the start of the play, arguing that the death of the '*star-crossed lovers'* was destined so whatever the nurse did made no difference to the outcome.

Less successful responses became speculative, losing sight of the question and the Nurse's role, suggesting what she could have done differently, and ideas were not rooted in the text. They narrated the plot, working through who, or what, was to blame. The weakest responses were confused about the chronology of events and thought the Nurse was involved in the plan with Friar Lawrence. These were very general, narrative in approach and could only indicate others who were culpable.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0992/32 **Drama**

Key messages

- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Useful opening paragraphs were brief, referenced the question and avoided lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writer's techniques to be addressed. Conclusions needed to be more than a reiteration of points.
- Responses to passage-based questions which briefly contextualised the passage in the play, explored the whole passage, including the ending, were the most successful.
- Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and gave a precise, wide range of reference.
- Many responses would have been improved by avoiding a retelling of the whole plot before addressing the specific question or only attempting to link this information to the question in the conclusion.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

General comments

The strongest candidates knew their set texts well and were able to demonstrate their knowledge whilst focusing closely on the terms of the questions. They deconstructed the question, focusing on the key terms, for example, 'memorably', 'vividly' or 'strikingly', to choose their material effectively. They demonstrated their ability to quote from texts to support their comments and developed the argument effectively. These often included an introductory paragraph to give an overview of the intended answer.

A less successful approach was where candidates wrote all they knew about a text, or character, without linking it to the specific question. These often relied on lengthy quotations or textual detail without demonstrating understanding of the text quoted. Often there was some reference to the text, but this was not analysed to show understanding of the author's methods and effects. The tendency to retell the plot up to the start of a specific passage, before attempting to focus on the question, resulted in much valuable examination time being wasted. The best responses were able to write a sentence or two to contextualise a passage before analysing well-selected material drawing close links to the question throughout.

Formulaic approaches were common, where the same point introduced and ended a paragraph, resulting in unnecessary repetition and taking away valuable time in an examination context.

Successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as drama, referring to the 'audience', rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', as well as exploring the author's methods to convey the texts' main concerns. They recognised that characters were constructs and not real people. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms that do not relate to the question or help to develop an argument constructively.

The most popular texts were *Macbeth, A Raisin in the Sun and Romeo and Juliet.* Fewer candidates answered on *The Winslow Boy.* There was one new text this series, *The Crucible* but this was studied by relatively few candidates. Candidates should be made aware that it is not a productive use of examination time to preface responses to this text with lengthy introductions about the religious, social, and historical background of Salem, or the political context of McCarthyism in the United States in the 1950's, in response to questions on this text.

There was an unusually high number of rubric infringements on 0475/22 where candidates answered two questions on the same text or answered two passage-based questions. There was some evidence that candidates did not have detailed knowledge of at least one of the set texts to answer the questions in enough depth. This was particularly obvious in the passage-based questions where some candidates did not know the context of the passage or were unable to recognise the events referred to in the passage, relying on writing all they could about the passage with scant understanding or reference to the actual question. This type of approach is unlikely to achieve high reward. In addition, there were some candidates who simply copied out the passages for two questions, with no personal comments or any attempt to address the question. Here there was nothing to reward.

Candidates endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly. However, there are still a few candidates answering the discursive question on the passage which resulted in some low marks as these responses were self-penalising.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

(a)   This was a popular choice of text and question. It was a rich passage with a lot to say about George and Beneatha separately and together. Most candidates who attempted this question focused on the 'striking impressions' created and understood that this passage revealed the incompatibility of Beneatha and George. They were able to identify the different ideologies of the two characters and the tension this causes between them. Some candidates over-stated the impression of George labelling him a 'misogynist' whilst others were more measured, considering him 'sexist', in attitude and behaviour. The most successful were able to identify that George was '*shallow'*, a stereotypical male of this period whilst Beneatha was not the stereotypical female and not in terms of the Black community. They were able to support these comments with some well-selected references to their behaviour and dialogue: George only interested in Beneatha for her looks and not her 'thoughts' and Beneatha wanting and enjoying more intellectual conversation. The best candidates managed to explore the stage directions and what they reveal of George and Beneatha at this moment. There was some effective analysis and general satisfaction conveyed at the writer's use of pauses, with emphasis on Beneatha's '*longer pause'* followed by her abrupt '*Good night, George'*. Many understood that this was a moment where Beneatha felt understood by her mother in the final exchange between them and identified this as 'striking', contrasting it to the previous scene when Mama had slapped her.

Less successful responses worked through the passage with little focus on the question and concentrated on George, or strayed from the passage completely, to talk about the couple in other parts of the play. There was some misinterpretation of the stage directions, especially of '*groping*', with some candidates accusing George of sexual assault: he was considered evil and a pathological liar as he tells Mama that he had had a nice time. There was also some misinterpretation of his reference to '*Garbo*' with candidates failing to understand who she was, or the context, and saying that he was calling her '*garbage*.' Some responses demonstrated a surface understanding of the passage attempting a narrative overview with evidence that the text had not been studied or understood.

Very few candidates explored the staging with any awareness of the humour of George's persistence or the visual comedy of Beneatha's rejection of George.

(b)   Fewer candidates answered this question, and many struggled with the idea of the apartment having any significance beyond showing the family's poverty. Too often responses focused on the biographical details of Lorraine Hansberry and the socio-historical context of the play with some candidates focusing entirely on the poverty and discrimination of the black community rather than focusing on the text and question. Few managed to get beyond the basic assertion that as the apartment was the only setting it was 'memorable' and then proceeded with describing, often in generalised terms, a few moments from the play. These did not move beyond the lack of rooms and space for a family of five people; the shared bathroom; only having one window and the lack of

sunlight and the worn-out furniture. Most candidates were able to include one or two quotations mainly taken from the opening setting of Act One.

Better responses were able to discuss the significance of the single window and the symbolism of Mama's plant, showing an understanding of how the apartment reflected the characters' emotions, lives and dreams. Stronger candidates linked the poverty of the area, reflected in the apartment, to racism and the family's desire, especially Mama's dream of moving to a larger home and better neighbourhood. There was understanding of the 'centrality' of the apartment as a setting: all the action takes place here, so the audience is directly involved in the daily struggles of individual family members. There was some understanding of the '*care and love and even hope*' in Mama's original choice of the furnishings and the fact that it was now '*tired*', signifying the worn-out lives of mama and Big Walter. Better responses were able to link the drama of the characters' lives specifically to the apartment, for example, Ruth's willingness to resort to an abortion due to the lack of space, reflected in Beneatha's brutal comment about where 'it' was going to sleep, suggesting 'on the roof?' Others noted Travis being unable to prepare his bed on the sofa, or sleep, whilst Walter was on the telephone or Beneatha had visitors. The best responses picked up on Mr Lindner's visit to the apartment with the pertinent comment that for a white man to visit a Black family's home in those time was unusual, so clearly 'memorable', and obviously for a particularly important reason as the audience were to find out.

Some weaker responses compared the apartment with hypothetical living conditions in their 'new home' without considering that they had yet to move.

ARTHUR MILLER: The Crucible

Question 2

(a) Of the few candidates who answered on this text, this was the more popular question. This was a straightforward question focused on what was 'powerful and dramatic' and the passage provided a plethora of detail for candidates to explore. However, only a few stronger responses showed a secure understanding of the passage and its context within the play. There was some understanding of what was happening in the passage, the chaos and drama, and what it revealed about Abigail's manipulation. Most understood that Mary was turning the tables on Proctor and that this was a dramatic twist in expected events. They showed awareness of the text being performed on stage and commented on the language and stage directions, especially in relation to Mary, though few explored the actual sounds, the screams and movements of the girls.

Comments on John Proctor and Hale were less successful, with widespread misinterpretation of both Proctor's and Hale's words. Some candidates did not grasp Proctor's words, '*God is dead'*, and thought this was a '*confession*', that he had publicly acknowledged that he was in league with the devil and agreeing with Mary's accusations against him. They did not understand that Hale left the proceedings due to his horror at what was happening and argued he was leaving the proceedings because he was angry with Proctor and siding with Mary. There was little focus on the hysteria in court or commentary on Proctor's concluding words, '*You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore*!'. Danforth's role was only mentioned in a few of the strongest responses.

Less successful responses paraphrased the passage with little or no focus on the question, demonstrating little understanding of the situation. Some responses were very confused thinking that Mary is John's wife, and that John is guilty of witchcraft.

(b) Very few candidates attempted this question. For this to be more than a straightforward character profile of Rebecca Nurse, it was essential to focus on the terms of the question, her 'dramatic impact' on the play. Better responses recognised her worth as a kind and good Christian woman, a pillar of the community, supporting this with her husband's comment, that she is the '*brick and mortar of the church'*. She was considered a wise woman and being the mother of seven children, an expert on children as she said that Betty would awake when she was ready. Some commented on her husband Francis, his arguments with Mr Putnam over land and Mrs Putnam's jealously of Rebecca's children whilst she had several children die in infancy when Rebecca acted as the midwife. Only the best responses linked the Putnam's jealousy to their unfounded accusation and saw the dramatic impact of her arrest and execution, and how petty jealousies could result in people being accused of witchcraft with no chance of defending themselves. The Proctor's shock at

her arrest and her conversations with John Proctor, before their respective deaths, were rarely explored.

Less successful responses narrated a little of her role in the play finding little to say about her, so these tended to be brief. These responses lacked precise textual reference to the text and there was some confusion between Rebecca Nurse and Mrs Putnam.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 3

(a)   This was a less popular choice of text. Responses to the passage needed to focus on Rattigan's methods to making the family's first meeting with Sir Robert memorable. Many candidates were confused about the timing of the meeting, stating that Arthur was late rather than Sir Robert being early. This impacted on some responses where they argued Catherine was embarrassed and attempting to keep Sir Robert engaged until her father arrived, supporting this further by Grace entering *'hastily'*. The best responses understood the context and Catherine's knowledge and support for Len Rogers. Her deliberate attempt to provoke a response from Sir Robert during this meeting was also explored as memorable. These candidates commented on her intended irony in reporting his handling of the case as a '*great forensic triumph'* and '*masterly'* before implying that Rogers' suicide is Sir Robert's fault. Her provocation in labelling Ronnie's case '*trivial*' was understood. There was an awareness of audience response with exploration of the underlying tension, the language, the stilted dialogue and the pauses. The family's respect and awe of Sir Robert, his dining at '*Devonshire House'* and activities in the '*House of Commons'* were also highlighted as memorable as was his affected manner, described as '*carelessly'* and '*languidly'*. Some candidates were amused to see Arthur forced to be more polite, than his usual self, in trying to secure the examination of Ronnie and with it, the services of Sir Robert. The satisfactory ending to the meeting with the enjoyment of the phrase, '*Let Right be done'* was a memorable ending to the passage.

Less successful answers just described what happened in the passage with some confusion over Sir Robert's behaviour. Some thought he was behaving so *'indifferently'* as he was attracted to Catherine and that he becomes more amiable when Desmond enters to belatedly impress Catherine, clearly not understanding the context or purpose of this meeting. These did not convey understanding of Catherine's cold response to Sir Robert or understand what her comments about the past case signified. The weakest responses relied on paraphrasing the passage with little understanding, or focus, on how the different members of the Winslow family interacted with Sir Robert during this, their first meeting.

(b)   There were fewer responses to this question. They were relatively weak with candidates adopting a narrative approach or writing a character profile of Ronnie, occasionally adding that this made the reader/audience feel sympathy for Ronnie but without exploring how the writer makes the audience sympathise with Ronnie. Most candidates found it difficult to provide supporting evidence from the text, so responses were very general. There was little detailed discussion of Sir Robert's interrogation of Ronnie or the reactions of other characters to Ronnie.

More successful responses sympathised with how a young boy, unfairly expelled from school for allegedly stealing a postal order was sent home alone. His fear of facing his father, hiding in the garden in the rain and Sir Robert's interrogation of Ronnie were also reasons to sympathise. A few candidates balanced their responses feeling little sympathy due to his perceived indifference to his case, falling asleep rather than following the news and his absence at the crucial moment of the final verdict. Most responses would have been improved by a wide range of precise textual references.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 4

(a)   This was the most popular text and question, and most candidates were able to identify some aspects of the context. The most successful responses briefly contextualised the passage commenting on Macbeth having just murdered King Duncan and returned to Lady Macbeth with the

guards' bloody daggers. There were many strong responses to this passage with candidates maintaining a sharp focus on the question with much perceptive analysis of the language and what it reveals of their different reactions. There was critical understanding of Macbeth's guilt, fears and regrets, with the stark contrast to Lady Macbeth's '*calm and collected*' approach. These were supported by well-selected references and close analysis of the language. Stronger responses drew salient links between their behaviour in the passage to both before the murder, and later in the play, when their reactions change completely with Lady Macbeth's words, '*a little water clears us of this deed*' and Macbeth's repetition of having '*murder'd sleep'* coming back to haunt her. The strongest candidates were able to do this, without losing focus on the question or passage itself. Candidates commented on Lady Macbeth's decisiveness, scorn and use of imperatives, contrasting this to Macbeth's fearful state and the visual horror at the sight of blood for the audience. Some candidates lost focus and drifted into commentary on gender role-reversal and concepts of masculinity and femininity, with both characters falling short of these perceived standards. Many candidates could talk of Lady Macbeth's emasculation of her husband but struggled with the imagery itself – the eye of childhood/heart so white. The latter was frequently seen as her thinking she was still pure.

Less successful responses were generalised, writing about their reactions collectively as in, '*they were afraid'*, which misses the point of the question and shows little understanding of their respective behaviour and dialogue at this moment. A few candidates thought they had both committed the murder. Some discussed his '*unbearable guilt which keeps him awake at night'* when, in fact, he has only just committed the murder. There were other mis-readings on his invocation of Neptune as a desire for 'God's' help and asking for his forgiveness. Others commented on the absurdity of mentioning 'oceans' and 'water' as there is no water on Neptune, forgetting that Shakespeare and the Elizabethans would have had no such knowledge of the planetary system. Only the best responses addressed and understood the knocking which heralds the arrival of the outside world with weaker responses interpreting this as '*within'* his mind like the '*voices*' at the start of the passage.

Weaker candidates resorted to paraphrasing the passage, after lengthy introductions about the plot. Where there was textual detail it was repetitive and did not help to develop the argument. For example: '*Macbeth is afraid, because he says, 'I am afraid'*', without further commentary. There were some sweeping generalisations on Macbeth's '*paranoia'* and descent into '*madness'* and Lady Macbeth's behaviour as evidence of her being the '*fourth witch',* without any textual support or development.

(b) This was a less popular question and difficult for many candidates as they had limited textual support and precise moments in the play to support Shakespeare's characterisation. The most successful responses were aware of the terms of the question, Banquo's 'dramatic impact' and understood that he was a foil to Macbeth. They were able to explore their responses to the witches' prophecies, loyalty to King Duncan and the dramatic murder of Banquo and appearance of his ghost. Only the strongest answers were supported by well-selected references to the text and relevant quotations, fully analysed. They explored his dramatic impact on Macbeth, the murder of his 'best friend' attempting to secure the crown and returning as a ghost to signify Macbeth's guilt and the suspicions Macbeth's babbling raises in the minds of the thanes regarding both the murder of King Duncan and Banquo himself. The brutality of his murder and telling Fleance to flee were frequently commented on.

Less successful answers wrote character sketches of Banquo and lost sight of the question, except to mention it at the end. When used, references to the text supported a narrative approach and lacked the detail concerning the effect and implications of Banquo's language quoted. The weakest responses retold the plot tracing Banquo's part in the play or contrasted him to Macbeth, often writing more on Macbeth than Banquo. It was clear that some candidates referred to film versions of the play particularly when referencing Banquo's murder and Fleance's escape.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 5

(a) This was a more popular question than 5**(b)**, perhaps because a passage offers the opportunity to support comments with textual detail and for some analysis of the language. However, many

candidates found it difficult to comment on how Shakespeare portrays their friendship and struggled to explore the language of the passage. Most saw how Mercutio and Benvolio were trying to cheer up a lovesick and depressed Romeo. Unable to explore the extract in any meaningful way, many responses provided a simple, repetitive overview of their friendship: '*They were good friends and trusted each other'.* Only the strongest candidates were able to contextualise the passage accurately knowing that Romeo had read the Capulet servant letter about the feast and that Benvolio's plan was for Romeo to see other '*admired beauties*. Most candidates saw it as a sudden idea to 'gate crash' the party. There was a lot of misreading of individual phrases within the passage with weaker candidates copying out lengthy quotations then trying to explain them but showing only a surface understanding of the text. Assertions were then made that this showed that they '*trusted'* or '*advised each other'*, showing they were good friends, but without any precise analysis of the language or the writer's methods to show this.

A few stronger responses showed understanding of their closeness and camaraderie; Mercutio's teasing and the banter, and how Shakespeare was laying the foundations of a solid friendship to prepare the audience for later events: the death of Mercutio and Romeo's act of revenge against Tybalt. One candidate argued that in persuading Romeo to attend this ball where he meets Juliet, ironically, they ultimately proved not to be good friends at all.

The weakest responses resorted to narrating the plot and what follows this scene, with scant focus on the question or the passage. There were reports of some candidates simply copying out the passage verbatim with no attempt to answer the question.

(b)   Fewer candidates attempted this question. Effective responses focused on the Nurse's relationship with Juliet, addressed the 'How far' of the question, and presented a balanced argument. She was not to blame because everything she did was to make Juliet happy, but she was to blame as she encouraged the romance with Romeo, knowing the feuding families would never agree to their union. They traced her role as messenger, not telling the Capulets and giving bad advice. Many candidates argued that her most culpable contribution was her advice to marry Paris, perceived as the betrayal which resulted in Juliet's death as she is driven to desperate measures. Only the strongest responses were able to support ideas with close reference to the text and detail to the nurse's language. These responses referenced other factors contributing to Juliet's death before coming to a decision. The best answers explored the words of the Chorus at the start of the play, arguing that the death of the '*star-crossed lovers'* was destined so whatever the nurse did made no difference to the outcome.

Less successful responses became speculative, losing sight of the question and the Nurse's role, suggesting what she could have done differently, and ideas were not rooted in the text. They narrated the plot, working through who, or what, was to blame. The weakest responses were confused about the chronology of events and thought the Nurse was involved in the plan with Friar Lawrence. These were very general, narrative in approach and could only indicate others who were culpable.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0992/42

Unseen

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Key messages

- This skills-based paper examines all the Assessment Objectives for Literature, and is a valuable test of how securely a wide range of candidates have mastered critical analysis.
- Good responses had a strong structural understanding of the texts, and explored language and imagery in detail.
- More candidates are choosing to write about prose passages and need a toolkit for unseen prose analysis.
- Good responses are also good arguments and conclude with an evaluation of the impact of the text on the reader.

General comments

This was an unusual assessment series at the end of a year which has caused difficulties and disruption for teachers and learners. In some regions, the entry was unavoidably lower than usual, and there was some weak work, but is pleasing to report that Examiners enjoyed reading many strong answers too. This paper is designed to test all the skills of literary criticism: knowledge and understanding supported by apt textual reference, analysis of literary features and their effect, and personal response requiring interpretation and evaluation of the whole text. However, as it does not rely on preparation of specific set texts, it is a very good teaching tool as well as assessment option in times when consistency of learning is problematic. Candidates have to apply their learning to the imagery, language and viewpoint presented to them in the unseen texts, and need the confidence to venture their own opinions about content, techniques and meaning. Unseen analysis is therefore an excellent test of how far literary skills have been embedded. Strong responses show quick identification of authorial techniques and extended commentary on their effect, with overall comment on the writer's purpose and methods.

Stronger responses are often notable for the effectiveness of their opening paragraph. While the bullet points provided can be used to help candidates to structure their responses, too many answers simply repeat or rephrase the stem question and bullet points. Understanding of the stem question is crucial to a good response, and the intensifying adverb (e.g. 'memorably' or 'strikingly') points the candidate to an emotive response to the feelings and mood of the writing, and the methods used by the writer to create tone and atmosphere. A good answer therefore looks at the bigger picture, and has an overall understanding of the emotions the writer wishes to convey. This is more effective than diving straight into the detail of words, images or narrative before achieving an overview. Stronger responses therefore tend to be planned, with well-structured and supported arguments to illustrate how the text works.

More candidates are choosing to write about the prose passage in preference to the poem. Teaching should encourage candidates to make choices, but they need to be as well equipped with analytical terms and language for exploring prose as they are for poetry. There is a tendency to misuse poetic terms such as caesura and anaphora in analysis of prose. It would be better for candidates to consider narrative viewpoint and voice, and consider focalisation, in order to interpret how prose writers present emotions through characterisation. Good answers on prose passages also appreciate the rhythm and development of the passage, often looking at syntactical variations or stylistic changes, with a view to where the writing is intended to take the reader by the end of the passage.

Most candidates use the bullet points skilfully to demonstrate understanding, and these bullet points are designed to help them to appreciate the development of the texts, and to address the Assessment Objectives. Almost all candidates appreciate the style of response required and make good use of supporting quotation, although weaker candidates tend to paraphrase instead of analysing the language within those quotations. There were very few rubric errors, and that suggests that candidates are well-prepared for the

demands of the paper. The third bullet tends to discriminate between stronger and weaker candidates, as it usually asks for a degree of evaluation, and understanding of the deeper implications of the way the poem or passage ends. Sometimes candidates simply run out of time because they have worked so exhaustively on earlier parts of the text, but the final section of a poem or prose passage tends to be a key indicator of its overall mood and effect.

Candidates could usefully practise writing stronger conclusions as well as stronger introductions. While the introduction has an overview of the text, the conclusion needs to evaluate its final impact on the reader. Good answers are also good and convincing arguments, with appreciation of why the writer wrote the text, how it achieves its effects and how the reader feels at the end. If candidates can learn to begin their writing with a clear end in view, they will improve the effectiveness of their response to whatever unseen text they have been set.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates tended to respond to the language of school reports in U. A. Fanthorpe's poem 'Reports' from the perspective of a candidate rather than a teacher. More careful reading of the introductory rubric would have helped them with the dramatic voice which the poet assumes here, and might have assisted in recognition of the poet's ironies. Candidates clearly had strong views of their own about the clichés and shorthand used in school reports and sometimes their personal responses got in the way of clear and deep understanding of the poem. This was especially true of candidates who did not read for meaning over the end of the short individual verse lines, and therefore misread the syntax of its phrases and sentences. Candidates wrote more effectively when they realised that the poet, in the role of an experienced and somewhat cynical teacher, is addressing another teacher. The cynicism and world-weariness, alongside some mordant humour, tended either to elude the weaker candidates or make them frustrated. Clearly they are used to much more candidate-centred teaching than this, and they found the world view communicated a little alien, although the poem is not more than fifty years old. Many felt the teacher's attitude was quite shocking: 'so different from what we might expect of a teacher'. They wanted to find more idealism and wanted to read the first four stanzas as guidance to a candidate about how to improve, rather than admonitions to a fellow teacher about how to couch terminal judgements cautiously.

The convention of representing another voice in poetry through *italics* is often misunderstood, and worth teaching. It indicates the degree of distance and irony in the poet's repetition of clichés such as '*has made a sound* beginning' and '*finds the subject difficult'*. A structural appreciation of how the poem is constructed out of a commentary on each of those stock phrases and then an extension of these phrases as a metaphor for attitude to life was evident only in the strongest answers, although many other responses had good incidental observations. One candidate wrote that the 'scattered' approach to where reporting comments were placed in the poem 'allude to the teacher's brain when writing reports'. Most appreciated that the poem comments on the repeated use of 'multi-purpose' terms to the point where they become meaningless. This often led to personal comments on how reports might be more motivational than a mere 'satisfactory' to satisfy the good. Some thought 'encouraging but dull' a comment on the learners rather than the teacher's comment, but most appreciated the caution of 'do not give them anything/To take hold of' especially when coupled with the invocation of the 'unholy trinity' of parent, child and head later in the poem.

Those who could understand the teacher's viewpoint felt that teachers had to 'bite their tongue' and 'sugar coat' their reports, and there was general understanding of the fear of giving offence. Some candidates gave the notion that even 'Pronouns are dangerous' a contemporary twist with reference to modern debates about gender identity. Some referred to a 'copy and paste' attitude among teachers, with different degrees of sympathy for the difficulties of those on the other side of the teacher-candidate divide. There was some effective commentary on language and techniques, such as the pun on 'sound' in 'strikes the right note', or the military imagery of 'feel free to deploy them' and 'be on your guard', depicting the classroom as the frontline in a battle. There was a feeling that parents must not be given any ammunition, or allowed to hold the teacher hostage.

The fourth stanza did cause quite a few confusions, not least because modern teachers would not even think of writing 'unmanageable oaf' in a report! The idea that using a neutral cliché here defuses confrontation, and allows the teacher to be 'master' was only grasped by the stronger candidates. Most enjoyed the religious allusions to an unholy trinity reading 'your scripture backwards'. However, only a few had a full understanding of how the last two stanzas show the poet applying the stock phrases of school to life, seeing

school as a metaphor for a disappointing journey through life ('school is the world'). Many candidates thought these stanzas described the life of a disappointed candidate or teacher, and was a warning of the potentially fatal consequences of a misplaced word or grammar in a school report.

However, the idea that language could easily be misinterpreted was well understood by most candidates, and they provided exploration of appropriate examples. Some made interesting comments about the 'duplicitous' nature of words, or the choice of the bland over more direct or purposeful language. There was pointed understanding of the use of euphemism, and the irony that while the language of reports was clear and straightforward, it was also vague and meaningless.

The wider application of this to judgements on life itself was only really tackled by the strongest candidates. One such wrote that the poem shows how 'school is intrinsically linked to life and regret'. That certainly demonstrates appreciation of the poem's tone and mood, as well as content. The ironic tone of the text caused some problems, and candidates at this level do need to read examples of poems in an ironic voice, such as Hardy's or Larkin's, which do not necessarily mean what they appear to say. However, there were a lot of interesting personal responses to the idea that death is the 'final instructor', such as candidate who wrote the 'without progress and criticism, one dies a death without meaning ... if one continues to be inexpressive and politically correct, these restrictions will follow us to the grave.' It is one of the pleasures of marking this paper that the strongest answers demonstrate not only incisive analysis but individual evaluation of what the text means to the candidate, with a sensitive response to verbal detail and tone.

Question 2

The extract from Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* (2014) proved more accessible to contemporary candidates, although only the strongest got to grips with its challenging narrative perspective and style. Despite the hints in the introductory rubric, only a small number appreciated that the passage describes George's memory of a moment in her recent past, even though the writer uses the present tense throughout, and therefore everything is filtered through George's perspective. However, many found the writer's imitation of the voice and viewpoint of an adolescent girl engaging and convincing. Most intuitively grasped that George is presenting her impressions of her mother's enthusiastic response to the city, and explored the difference between her articulacy and the relative silence of George and Henry. Indeed, some were rather worried that the latter has so little to say, although a few picked up an older sibling's disregard for the younger.

The bullet points were successfully used by candidates to structure and guide their responses. Stronger candidates commented on the implicit dynamic between George and her mother and ways in which the mother might be disguising her true feelings for fear of triggering teenage *ennui*. Many picked up that George does not really think the city is 'no big deal' – after all, she remembers the pictures she saw in the palace when commenting on the leggings worn by the young people in the historical pageant that evening. Those who were able to range more widely through the passage and did not simply treat it paragraph by paragraph could see the extent of the mother's enthusiasm for the city and its history, and that some of it is remembered in garbled form by George (such as the reference to 'Giorgio someone...a novelist who lived here in the past'). Some candidates were amused by the way George captures her mother's way of buttonholing the children, and contrasted her talk with the moment she stops speaking 'to let the wonder of the city speak for itself.

George's descriptive observations fall into two clear sections, which most candidates followed: the city by day and the ceremonies by night. Most commented on the simile which compares all three of them to 'the reprobate kids at school', some thinking they were scruffy, or outsiders, and some describing them as 'out of it' with wonder and amazement. There was surprisingly little comment on the writer's use of the present tense or deliberate eccentricities of punctuation and syntax to mirror the flow of George's thoughts, but most did comment on the immediacy of George's sense impressions, and adjectives such as 'miraculous' and 'effortless'. A number already felt there was a kind of magic about the city, in its easy elegance, lack of effort and mutual respect, and contrasted this with our usual associations with a 'modern' city. Some, lacking a clear historical perspective, struggled with how a city could be both historic and 'the first modern city' in Europe (the early modern period starts in the fourteenth century in Europe), but most appreciated the way pedestrians and cyclists, or young and old, are described as co-existing in harmony, so that the everyday business of life was made up of 'completely different acts here'. The implications about a culture of mutual respect were picked up by most candidates, indicated by the choice of verbs such as 'mingle' and weave'. Many commented on the pattern of sentences beginning 'Nobody...' and many understood that George is shaping a contrast with her own home town.

Stronger answers picked up the implications of this Mediterranean harmony and correspondence of feelings as the link between the *dolce fa niente* of the evening walks and the rambunctious ceremonies right up to midnight. In between, there is a moment when George blushes at the freedom of the insouciant lovers, and her mother's cheeky response to them, which captures the awkwardness of adolescence. Many noticed that while the dominant sense in the earlier scene is one of sight, in the night scene sound dominates, with many references to the 'noise'. The 'marching dances or dancing marches' are later contrasted with the ambling dog, who seems to have heard it all before, and the 'enchanted' behaviour of the teams after the midnight bells have struck, with their gentle and tuneful humming. Stronger answers did not forget to illustrate commentary with frequent brief quotation but also pertinent comment on the effects of language choices.

Those able to see the structure and movement of the whole passage wrote most effectively about these paragraphs, but many also noticed the details of how the young people, close in age to George, were dressed, the flags 'bigger than bedspreads' and 'like outsize butterfly wings'. Many noticed how the unfurling flags conveyed a magical atmosphere, and a few noticed how George's perceptions are also opening out in response. The passage ends with another comment by her mother, but this time she and George seem in complete harmony too, and both overawed by the enchantment of the moment, and the charms of the city and its people. A strong response might also have considered the contrasting syntax of the last two sentences.

Candidates seemed to share George's charm, although one or two tried to maintain that she remained resolutely unimpressed throughout. Some candidates did comment on the particular enjoyment of reading about this kind of experience of a foreign city at this time of pandemic and social restrictions. One reader felt they had 'time travelled', and another described the harmonious city as 'idyllic...a utopia. One striking response marvelled at the writer's portrayal of our sense of wonder when visiting a new place: ' a refreshing break from the dark confines of the covid restrictions, offering hope for new days and experience to come. This kind of personal response and engagement with the mood and implications of a text is rewarding for Examiners as well as candidates, and reinforces the importance of continuing to read imaginative literature in times of confinement.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0992/05
Coursework

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.