

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31

Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- Questions focus on ways in which writers treat particular concerns, so successful responses focus on authors' choices of language and literary methods, and the effects these might have on a reader or audience.
- Questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding, so answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.
- Candidates succeed best when they use secure detailed references and quotations to support points.
- Candidates need to think carefully about the specific question in order to select the most appropriate poems, stories or episodes from texts.
- Answers to (b) passage questions should examine the selected poem or extract in great detail.

General Comments

Examiners saw a good range of responses to all the texts in the examination paper across the three variants. There were, though, clear differences, with, for example, very little work on Ted Hughes on papers 31 or 32, whereas his poetry was quite popular on 33. Owen and *A Passage to India* were universally popular, though there was a clear drop in interest in the *Stories of Ourselves* anthology on the 33 papers. Examiners read some excellent writing on all the texts, candidates at their best when using detailed quotation and literary analysis to support thoughtful arguments. Such answers combined detailed knowledge of the texts with appreciative understanding of the writers' methods. There were candidates who relied on recall of plot and character and wrote narrative summary and paraphrase; even when relevant to the question, such answers attract few marks.

Comments on Specific Questions

Comments on this paper must be prefaced by the observation that they are based on a small number of candidates who took this variant.

Question 1: Ted Hughes, Selected Poems

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, which offered candidates an opportunity to discuss those poems in the selection where Hughes explores the natural world beyond animals. 'Snowdrop', 'Thistles' and 'A Cranefly in September' were popular choices. However, candidates did not have to limit themselves and it would have been good to see how Hughes presents parts of the natural world within other poems.
- (b) The few responses seen to this question seldom explored the poem's language and imagery in much detail. From the opening golden flower image to the metaphors for the gathering strength of ice, there is much in the poem to discuss. Candidates might also have noted the way the poem's two-line stanza structure is made flexible by the enjambment from stanza to stanza, which then puts emphasis on some of the key diction and imagery.

Question 2: Wilfred Owen, Selected Poems

- (a) Candidates responding to this question had a great deal of material to choose from. ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’ and ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ were popular, but many candidates were more successful when choosing poems which offered some comparison. For example, some looked at the physical effects of warfare in one of these poems, compared with the mental horrors in a poem like ‘Mental Cases’ and the continuing aftermath of war in ‘Disabled’. Responses were only fully successful if they fully focused on the poetic means by which Owen presented the horrors; too many candidates relied on a description of the horrors themselves. Candidates who planned a response to take into account such variation tended to produce more interesting and individual answers.
- (b) There were not many answers on ‘The Parable’, but most candidates who wrote on it recognised Owen’s use of the Old Testament story and style. Those who picked up the deliberately archaic diction, such as ‘clave’, ‘spake’, ‘Behold’, ‘lo!’ and ‘Lay not thy hand’, were able to demonstrate how Owen creates that style, rather than merely assert that he does so. Many, though, neglected to consider the implications of ‘the Ram of Pride’. Most responses were successful in showing that the Biblical story is overturned when the old man refuses the angel’s request and saw that Owen uses the father figure to represent the politicians and non-fighting enthusiasts for war.

Question 3: Songs of Ourselves

- (a) There was an interesting range of responses to this question as candidates either chose to write about those poems which explicitly present death, or chose to consider, for example, the death of love, an interpretation which worked well with ‘When I Was Fair And Young’ and ‘I Grieve and Dare Not Show my Discontent’. Other poems featuring in answers were ‘Written The Night Before His Execution’, ‘The Author’s Epitaph, Made By Himself’, ‘Weep No More, Sad Fountains’ and ‘A Litany In Time Of Plague’. Most candidates knew the material well, however it was candidate’s ability to assess the effects of the poet’s techniques that best developed successful responses.
- (b) There were few responses on the Thomas Nashe poem. Candidates who did answer this question recognised the celebration of the season, with its imagery of new life, though not many showed awareness of the pastoral tradition or recognised the onomatopoeia imitating bird song in the poem’s refrain. Very few candidates noted the harmonies created within the poem by the use of internal as well as end of line rhyme, for example.

Question 4: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) Many candidates were well prepared for this topic. Most responses focused on ways in which Adichie presents personal and family loyalties tested by the challenges of the civil war. Candidates discussed the relationships between Olanna and Odenigbo, Richard and Kainene, and Ugwu and Odenigbo in particular, recognising these as the central relationships of the novel. More sophisticated responses moved beyond character focus to consider loyalty as it pertains to class, principles, tribe and country; exploring ways in which Adichie questions what it means to be loyal to one’s principles if those lead to a destructive civil war, which in turn causes child malnutrition and indiscriminate acts of violence and the abuse of power. The development of these considerations produced some very strong responses.
- (b) There were fewer responses on the passage. Stronger answers noted the question’s focus on ways in which the events of the extract are presented – less confident candidates restricted themselves to recounting aspects of the coup and Madu’s adventures in his escape. A successful response required close consideration of Madu’s dialogue, with few interruptions from his listeners. He invites Kainene’s recognition at several points: ‘You remember...’, ‘do you know...’, ‘You know Onunkwo, don’t you?’ These create an involved sense of storytelling, combined with the specific details of his escape, including the unpleasantness of the chicken house and the danger of the water tank. There are longer sentences of explanation and shorter climactic sentences for effect, such as ‘That bridge is a grave.’ Important for the novel are Madu’s explanation of the ethnic tension between Igbo and Hausa which led to the coup (though few candidates noted that Ibrahim is Hausa) and his pointed criticism of the ‘British GOC’ for Richard’s benefit.

Question 5: EM Forster, *A Passage to India*

- (a) There were very few responses. Successful answers developed ideas that Adela’s desire to see ‘the real India’ is both laudable and naïve, marking a contrast between her attitudes and those of the established members of the British community in Chandrapore. Important elements of her experience to consider would have been her relationship with Ronny, the tea party, the car accident, the Marabar

Caves and Aziz's trial, for example. In each of these episodes, Forster gives the reader different levels of access to Adela's thinking and candidates needed to consider this as part of his presentation of her experiences.

- (b) This was the more popular question although there were few answers to this question. Godbole is one of the important minor characters of the novel and this episode epitomises his characterisation. The two adjectives Forster uses at the beginning of the passage, 'sly and charming', are indicative and candidates might have noted the way his balanced, lengthy responses are so different from Fielding's straightforward questions. There was an opportunity here for candidates to examine his careful courtesy ('Excuse me...') while he poses different questions for debate with elaborate care in balanced, patterned sentences. His philosophical questions, though, are central to the novel and provide the reader with questions to debate, while the reader may also, like Fielding, find his philosophical obfuscations irritating.

Question 6: Stories of Ourselves

- (a) Candidates used a number of stories to respond to this question, including 'Srendi Vashtar', 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', 'The Bath' and 'The Enemy', although occasionally they struggled to show fully the stories' relevance to the 'strong feelings' referred to in the question. Stronger candidates had a clear grasp of the stories chosen and gave detailed accounts of the characters, discussing not only how the stories presented their strong feelings but also how they dealt with them. Less secure candidates were often restricted to narration of the stories, which was especially true of 'The Hollow of the Three Hills'.
- (b) Most responses to the passage from 'Report on the Threatened City' included some detailed discussion of language, commenting on the detached descriptions of the behaviour of the human race and governmental control of the population. There were some careful comments on the creation of the perception that people witnessing alien craft are 'mentally inadequate or deluded', 'described as mad' and 'threatened with incarceration'. Several candidates also commented on the way in which the narrative credits the younger population with greater awareness, despite growing up in a state of 'total war-preparedness'. Some strong responses commented on Lessing's satire of the human race presented in the passage and story as a whole.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32

Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

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- Candidates succeed best when they use secure detailed references and quotations to support points.
- Candidates need to think carefully about the specific question in order to select the most appropriate poems, stories or episodes from texts.
- Answers to (b) passage questions should examine the selected poem or extract in great detail.

General Comments

Examiners saw a good range of responses to all the texts in the examination paper across the three variants. There were, though, clear differences, with, for example, very little work on Ted Hughes on papers 31 or 32, whereas his poetry was quite popular on 33. Owen and *A Passage to India* were universally popular, though there was a clear drop in interest in the *Stories of Ourselves* anthology on the 33 papers. Examiners read some excellent writing on all the texts, candidates at their best when using detailed quotation and literary analysis to support thoughtful arguments. Such answers combined detailed knowledge of the texts with appreciative understanding of the writers' methods. There were candidates who relied on recall of plot and character and wrote narrative summary and paraphrase; even when relevant to the question, such answers attract few marks.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1: Ted Hughes, Selected Poems

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. 'Hawk Roosting', 'View of a Pig', 'Pike' and 'Thistles' were most popular among poems used by those candidates attempting it, and these responses tended to argue that Hughes presents the natural world with human characteristics which perhaps sidestepped the focus of the question. Poems like 'The Jaguar', 'Wind', 'Full Moon and Little Frieda' and 'When Men Got to the Summit' provided more fruitful ground for discussion of the poet's presentation of human responses to the natural world.
- (b) More candidates wrote about 'Her Husband' candidates recognised Hughes' portrait of a relationship in continual conflict, picking out details of the husband's aggressive and uncaring behaviour as well as his wife's passive-aggressive responses. There were some misinterpretations with candidates showing a lack of understanding of the coal mining, working class setting of the poem, while others saw the last stanza, surprisingly, as optimistic. Most candidates showed varying sympathy for these two characters, though those that argued that the husband had worked hard for the benefit of his wife and had a right to expect more from her echoed the attitudes of the husband in the poem but missed the ironies of Hughes' writing.

Question 2: Wilfred Owen, Selected Poems

- (a) This was a very popular option, where candidates were able to find plenty of material to support an essay about the mental suffering caused by warfare. It seemed that most appropriate poems in the collection had been used at some point, though the most popular were 'Strange Meeting', 'Mental

Cases' and 'Disabled'. Some candidates discussed the horrors of war without paying heed to the question's focus on mental suffering, but successful candidates discussed psychological, mental and emotional traumas caused by the violence of war, experienced by soldiers both on the battlefield and as survivors. There were good comments about Owen's use of visual and aural imagery, and the emotive language used to evoke sympathy and to convince the reader. While most candidates concentrated on war poems, some of the best responses were based on alternative poems, using 'On My Songs' and 'Shadwell Stair', for example, looking at how the imagery shows a troubled state of mind or explores personal emotional crises of identity and creativity. Such answers showed an individual response to the question with a discriminating choice of poems.

- (b) 'The Letter' produced many strong responses, most candidates readily understanding the situation in the poem and responding with sympathy to the plight of the soldier. The strongest responses showed how Owen creates that sympathy through the language and structure of the poem, the main text being the letter to the soldier's wife, while the brackets present the contrasting reality of life on the front line. Occasionally the colloquial expressions caused some confusion, but most essays showed understanding of the vernacular, suggesting an ordinary soldier of the ranks without advanced education who attracts the reader's sympathy through his making light of his discomforts in the letter, his false optimism and his care for his children. These points were often contrasted with the onomatopoeic shell in l.15 and the poignant drama of the letter writer being hit at the end of the poem. There was also perceptive discussion of the soldiers' camaraderie on the battlefield, with their banter evident in the poem and the responsibility of the letter being passed to Jim at the end. Less successful answers often provided a great deal of general context about the censorship of letters, poor rations, mistreatment of soldiers, poor medical resources and the ignorance of those at home, which although all relevant points sometimes dominated instead of the text of the poem. Occasionally too, the setting of the poem was not understood and some candidates missed the alternating 'voices' of the poem.

Question 3: *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Successful responses to this question tended to use such poems as: 'The Man of Life Upright', 'A Mind Content', 'A Litany in the Time of Plague' and 'The Author's Epitaph' among others. Some essays created a strong impression that candidates had prepared particular poems and were determined to force them to fit whatever question appeared on the paper; consequently there were many answers where the choice of poems made the candidate's job of answering the question very difficult. The most successful responses showed that the candidate knew two appropriate poems equally well and in sufficient detail to be able to write about the authors' choices of language, imagery and structure used to communicate ideas of moral goodness.
- (b) While there were many descriptive and narrative responses to Tichbourne's poem, this question gave candidates opportunities at all levels. There were some original and highly perceptive discussions from some candidates, while less confident students were still able to engage with the form and language. Many candidates recognised the use of antithesis and paradox and explained the effectiveness of these devices. On the whole, there was sound appreciation of Tichbourne's imagery, but many answers did not explain the use of diction beyond a superficial level, giving literal explanations of 'frost of cares' and 'field of tares', for example. On the other hand, there were some excellent discussions of 'The fruit is dead and yet the leaves be green' in terms of fertility and lack of fulfilment. The symbolism of the sun, representing hope and expectations was explained by many candidates, as was the imagery of 'My thread is cut' and 'dish of pain'. The patterning and structure of the poem was often discussed capably by stronger candidates.

Question 4: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) Many candidates attempting this question showed good textual knowledge and were well-prepared to discuss the effects of time shifts in the novel, focusing sharply on the impact the structure has on revelations of character, character growth and development, relationships, and the changing political arena. There were some answers which lapsed into narrative summary, describing the events of each section of the novel, but strong answers considered Adichie's preoccupations with the drastic changes in the dynamics of love, solidarity, betrayal, defeat and political divisions which are accentuated by the shifts between the two time periods, creating interest and suspense for the reader. The identity of Baby was often a key element of discussion, with the revelation that she is Alana's baby overturning the reader's previous assumptions. Candidates also explored sudden contrasts of life in Nsukka.

- (b) This passage attracted a large number of well-focused, analytical responses and many candidates found much specific material to comment on. The context of Kainene's disappearance was well understood and the sharp exchanges between Madu and Richard provided a key source of analysis, including Richard's monosyllabic replies and Madu's use of the words 'foreigners' and 'we', as well as his question 'Will you go back to England?' In addition, candidates commented perceptively on Richard's sadness and nostalgia in terms of his thoughts about the 'stew' and 'the drained pool'. Adichie's description of the scuffle was a key part of most essays, particularly ways in which it reveals Richard's weakness and his underlying racism. Many essays were alert to Adichie's use of key details, such as the inclusion of Richard's thoughts in the narrative, including his memories of Kainene, the imagery of 'oiling their faces with a valour' and the 'crayfish on Madu's breath.'

Question 5: E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*

- (a) A number of responses to this question discussed Mrs Moore generally, without focusing on the question of her Christianity. More successful answers considered her spirituality and its openness, citing, for example, her assertion that 'God is here' in the mosque and her later consideration of the wasp. Her Christian beliefs were seen to inform her lack of prejudice in her generosity to Indians and her disapproval of her son's attitudes towards them. In this way, her Christianity was often contrasted with the behaviour of other apparent Christians in the novel. There were several excellent essays which explored the challenges to her faith in detail, considering the effects of the Marabar Caves in particular. Her gradual disillusionment from that point was often well documented, as Mrs Moore moves to a spiritual position more in tune with Godbole's philosophy than conventional Christianity. The further development in the irony of her ultimate transformation to a Hindu deity, 'Esmoor', was also noted by some.
- (b) There were some excellent responses to this question, which looked at the presentation of the Collector by closely examining both the narrative descriptions of him, particularly in the opening paragraph and the interjections in the closing paragraph of the extract, and his dialogue with Fielding. Such answers noted the narrative irony in descriptions such as 'like a god in a shrine' and 'beautiful' matched with 'fanatical'. This was linked with the 'staleness and ungenerosity' in the final paragraph, together with the forceful rejection – 'never, never' – of close relationships between Indians and the English. Candidates who produced such responses sometimes wondered, on the evidence of the passage, whether the Collector's greatest concern is for Miss Quested or the blot on 'my whole career'. However, there were also many weak answers to this question, mainly from candidates who showed a lack of understanding of this key part of the novel. Some were unable to discriminate between Fielding's and the Collector's lines of dialogue, while others thought that Fielding was the Collector, a major error that undermined the entire response. A large number of candidates also demonstrated their limited understanding by failing to observe Forster's irony in the passage, taking their cue from an un-ironic reading of the 'god in a shrine' image and continuing to accept the description at face value, arguing that the Collector is god-like, brave, beautiful and generous in his dealings with all people in very trying circumstances.

Question 6: *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The question about characters dealing with their past was a popular one, though a number of responses dealt only with accounts of the characters' pasts in a descriptive manner, neglecting to consider ways in which they are explored in the stories. Such answers were unsuccessful, as they did not fully address the question and did not consider the literary presentation of the texts. The most popular stories were 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' and 'The Bath', which were often treated in this way. Candidates struggled particularly with 'The Bath', as the story focuses on the elderly woman's current difficulties, with some references to the past. 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' was generally a more successful choice, and there was also much good work on 'Elephant' and 'The Prison', arguing that the central characters were in their present bad situations because they refused to confront issues of the past. There was also focused critical comment on how Tommy is presented as retreating from life situations with naps and solitary movie watching and that even his attempts to do something about the girl are partial and half-hearted. Likewise in 'Elephant', the repetitive behaviours of the narrator in bailing out his family because of his feelings of guilt about the past made interesting reading.
- (b) It was evident in many answers to this question that candidates enjoyed this story and its ending. In considering 'its effect as the climax', many sympathised with Conrardin and were alert to the

narrative delays, such as the starlings, which make the outcome uncertain until the ferret emerges from the shed. Many wrote well on the idea that Saki creates expectation of the Woman's 'triumph', as 'always' in the first half of the extract and that Conrardin's last chant is out of defiance in perceived defeat. Most made thoughtful points about how the end is chilling and/or deeply satisfying, as Saki presents Conrardin making toast while the body is brought in and the adults wonder how to break the news to 'the 'poor child''. Many candidates wrote well on the irony here and its effect on the reader. Most responses showed good concentration on the extract, though with some relevant references to other parts of the story such as the hen and the limitation on butter. The most confident answers considered the effects of narrative perspective and the access to Conrardin's thoughts and observations. Those candidates who wrote narrative accounts of the passage missed key opportunities to focus on the stylistic and linguistic features with which the passage abounded.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/33

Poetry and Prose

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General Comments

Examiners saw a good range of responses to all the texts in the examination paper across the three variants. There were, though, clear differences, with, for example, very little work on Ted Hughes on papers 91 or 92, whereas his poetry was quite popular on 93. Owen and *A Passage to India* were universally popular, though there was a clear drop in interest in the *Stories of Ourselves* anthology on the 93 papers. Examiners read some excellent writing on all the texts, candidates at their best when using detailed quotation and literary analysis to support thoughtful arguments. Such answers combined detailed knowledge of the texts with appreciative understanding of the writers' methods. There were candidates who relied on recall of plot and character and wrote narrative summary and paraphrase; even when relevant to the question, such answers attract few marks.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1: Ted Hughes, Selected Poems

- (a) The question gave candidates the opportunity to use a wide range of poems, with 'Pike', 'Hawk Roosting', 'Thrushes' and 'The Jaguar' proving particularly popular choices. Many answers focused on ways in which Hughes portrays animals as powerful, dangerous, violent, instinctive or majestic, with some commenting too on the symbolic value of the animals to show nature's superior energy, vitality, and violence in comparison to humankind. Other answers were more specific, looking at Hughes' language and imagery which presents creatures in unexpected ways – here the 'Speedway goggles, international mobsters' of 'Swifts' and the mechanical 'coiled steel' of 'Thrushes' were examined, for example – while others commented on the mingling of 'Little Fauntleroy', 'wet blue-reddish muzzle' and 'Butchers developing expertise' in 'A March Calf'.
- (b) This poem produced a curious range of answers. The most successful ones came from candidates who noted the requirement in the question to consider imagery and structure and picked up the sequence of 'Now' at the beginnings of the stanzas and commented on the way the poem's switches from stanza to stanza imitating the fluctuations of the river in this early month of the year. This then allowed them to comment on the imagery of wealth and majesty for when the river runs high and the imagery of deprivation when there is less water flowing. Some alert responses noted the use of 'voice', 'song' and 'choir' and considered this and other patterns in the imagery. Such answers were much more successful than those which ran through the poem offering a descriptive summary of each stanza and those which asserted an imposed reading without due consideration of the poem itself – such answers suggested that the poem is about pollution, man's despoliation of the globe, or even the suicide of Sylvia Plath.

Question 2: Wilfred Owen, *Selected Poems*

- (a) Quite a large number of responses offered only general critical commentaries on two poems, with the word ‘outrage’ perhaps featuring in the opening and the conclusion. More successful responses considered the demands of the question and gave thought to what in the poems was provocative and Owen’s poetic methods of provocation. They homed in on the telling details, such as disrespect for the dead soldier ‘flung’ in a wagon, the wheelchair-bound hero left unattended, the soldiers left fighting not just the enemy but the poor conditions, made worse by poor equipment and limited supplies. In these essays, poems such as ‘Disabled’, ‘Mental Cases’, ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’, ‘Futility’, ‘The Sentry’ and ‘The Dead-Beat’, among others, were used successfully. Less assured responses to this question were general ‘horrors of war’ essays, lacking clear and discriminating focus on what might ‘provoke outrage’. Some sensitive answers though, also considered what kind of outrage might have been produced, such as anger, frustration, horror, shock and a determination to effect change.
- (b) This poem proved to be a very good discriminator. The best responses showed precise discussion which viewed the poem as three separate snapshots that show first the official view of soldiers on parade, followed by a more intimate dialogue between two men where rank does not feature and finally a passage which is almost a monologue, where the soldier who was told to “old his mouth” reflects with insight. There was comment on the aggressive verbs which show hierarchy – ‘rapped’ and ‘snapped’ – creating reader sympathy for the soldier. Less successful responses gave a summary, incorporating confusion about the speakers within the poem. Many candidates picked up on the reference to Lady Macbeth however not all were able to apply the link successfully to the poem. Equally only the strongest responses examined carefully the language and imagery of the last stanza and the implications of the ‘world washing out its stains’ for ‘Field-Marshall God’s inspection.’

Question 3: *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were few responses to this question. While those candidates who attempted it interpreted life’s uncertainties quite broadly, the most popular poems were Spenser’s Sonnets 54 and 75 with Shakespeare’s Sonnet 73. Successful answers looked closely at the poets’ use of the sonnet form, while candidates who either failed to focus on poetic expression, or chose poems which did not fit the question as easily, tended to struggle.
- (b) This was a much more popular question, though many essays did not focus clearly on ways in which Campion presents a virtuous life in the poem. There was much general comment and stanza by stanza paraphrase. More successful responses explored the sermon-like tone of the poem, some arguing that Campion resents an ideal of behaviour rather than an instruction manual, while others argued persuasively that the privations of virtue are described to be so straitened that the poem presents a virtuous life as deeply unattractive. These thoughtful responses depended on a very close examination of the language and imagery, giving different interpretations to phrases such as ‘silent days’, ‘Good thoughts his only friends’ and ‘sober inn’. Some candidates commented well on that final image, with its implications of the earth being only a stopping place on a longer journey. There were also observant comments that the poem’s tight, controlled form imitates the control of the subject’s life.

Question 4: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) While there were a number of responses which offered narrative summaries of sections of the novel, more confident answers recognised the opportunity to write about the effects Adichie achieves by presenting the action of the novel from differing perspectives. Many candidates showed impressive, detailed knowledge of the text and were able to show how the different points of view show the socio-economic effects of war on different generations, classes, and characters. In considering Richard, Olanna and Ugwu, some interesting answers commented that the three characters were all types who might be expected to be weak in a war situation – the bookish foreigner, the social beauty and the houseboy. Successful answers explored how these characters’ particular backgrounds and experiences affect their responses to the war, with Ugwu’s growing understanding and maturity modified by his terrible experiences in the war, leading him to be its chronicler. They also explored Olanna’s perspective, from an initial position of privilege and education changing to a woman struggling for food helping in a refugee camp, while Richard drew many developed discussions of the importance of an Englishman’s perspective within Biafra during the civil war, as a detached but involved foreigner.

- (b) There were many sensitive responses to this passage, where Richard is under direct and indirect attack in an unfamiliar social world, in which he ‘felt helplessly weak’. Candidates commented on Madu’s ambiguous relationship with Kainene and his and Major Udodi’s racial and sexual verbal attacks which put pressure on Richard, while stronger responses discussed the importance of this section following Richard’s point of view, so that his internal doubts and frustrations are evident to the reader. The fact that his thoughts are internal emphasises his inability to speak – some observed that he has no dialogue in the passage at all while the narrative shows that he ‘wished he could open his mouth’. Successful answers also analysed the intentional antagonism in Madu’s questions and comments as well as Udodi’s crude sexual suggestions which demean Richard’s relationship with Kainene, comparing these with Richard’s body language as he ‘bristled’ and ‘slapped at an irritating mosquito’.

Question 5: E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*

- (a) Candidates took a number of different approaches to this question some successfully interpreted the places and ceremonies very widely, including some it was difficult to see as religious ceremonies, such as the Bridge Party and tea at Fielding’s house. The Marabar Caves episode was frequently cited, which was successful if carefully argued, but many candidates relied on assertion rather than argument. It is important that candidates choose their material carefully in response to the specific question. Successful answers usually focused on Mrs Moore in the mosque, her disillusionment in the Marabar Caves, the preparations for Muharram and the Hindu Festival in Mau. By looking at these, candidates were able to comment on the variety of religious practice and experience and linked this with the structure of the novel. Successful answers often focused on ‘oneness’ as the novel moves from a rare moment of religious togetherness with Mrs Moore and Aziz in the mosque to separation, division and disillusion, before the chaotic reunification in the Hindu Festival. Such answers often drew on impressive recall of specific telling detail from the novel. Less confident candidates wrote rather generally about religion or religions, lacking the focus on places and ceremonies required by the question.
- (b) While some context was necessary to establish the nature of the changes in Aziz, the most successful answers did this economically and focused most of the response on the passage itself. Within the passage, candidates noted Aziz’s changed attitudes presented in his ‘genuine hatred’ of the English, his bitterness and resentment about the ‘treachery’ of Fielding and ‘those advocacies of the girl’. His views about nationalism and politics were noted, as well as the development of his views on Islamic culture and faith. Candidates noted that changes in his life such as marriage and children bring him contentment, while some observed that despite the changes in his life in Mau, away from the English, some of his character traits remain the same. Strong answers looked at the unease Forster puts in the back of Aziz’s mind regarding Fielding’s sacrifices, and the static, emotionless description of Aziz standing motionless in the rain. The imagery of hunting around Aziz’s ‘escape’ was widely noted and usefully discussed, particularly when this was part of observations about presentation of Aziz through narrative voice.

Question 6: *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The range of stories in the anthology contains a wide variety of characters and challenges, so there was plenty of material from which candidates could choose in answering this question. This was shown in the number of stories used; among them, ‘The Bath’, ‘The Moving Finger’, ‘The Lady in the Looking Glass’, ‘Sredni Vashtar’, ‘The Prison’, ‘Billennium’ and ‘Elephant’ were particularly popular. There were some very productive discussions of devices in the stories, such as the bath, the mirror, toast, the wardrobe, dreams among others. While there were certainly a number of responses which merely narrated the stories, Examiners commented that they were impressed by the number of candidates who clearly worked to avoid simply plot and character-based responses and focused on the writers’ methods of presentation.
- (b) Curiously, there was often less success in avoiding narrative and focusing on method with this passage question, which resulted in many simply narrative essays. Stronger answers often considered the creation of the gothic setting in the first paragraph, with the hills, the hollow and references to ‘decaying’, ‘sluggish’, ‘dim’ and ‘putrid’, before going on to explore the presentation of the two contrasting women, one ‘graceful in form and fair of feature’, the other an ‘old withered woman’. After this, strong candidates discussed the speech patterns and language of the women while considering movements and body language. A successful response required this level of detailed attention to the writing of the passage in order to consider its effects on the reader.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates should familiarise themselves with the common phrasings in these types of question ('dramatic presentation', for example) and ensure that they understand some of the implications of the phrases for the answers they produce.
- When answering **(b)** type questions, candidates should avoid the temptation to provide a line-by-line commentary and seek, instead, to use a structured approach when considering the passage as a whole.
- Candidates should be encouraged to be selective in their approach and structure responses with the question in mind.

General comments

With some questions, there was quite a temptation to refer to contextual factors (The American Dream in Albee, the position of women in Shakespeare's time in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example). Whilst not irrelevant, inclusion of this sort of material can lead to significant digression or to drift from the question set. It should be used only when it is directly relevant to the question and supports the argument being constructed. If candidates are to show 'personal response', the inclusion of large amounts of undigested contextual material may hinder, rather than help, a response.

The mark scheme talks about the need for 'quotation and direct reference,' so candidates who do not have a ready arsenal of quotations or are not prepared to talk about particular moments in **(a)** type questions, put themselves at a disadvantage.

In passage-based **(b)** questions, the best responses took a strategic view of the moment presented, rather than looking to go through it chronologically; these responses often paid careful attention to the stage business of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to what is said. Many candidates could have done more to discuss choices of language or syntax. Less successful responses often noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but failed to see how these transfer into dramatic effects when used in a performance.

Answers of both types that engaged with the dramatic qualities of the texts through discussion of form, structure and language showed a firm understanding of both content and of the writer's strategies. The strongest responses showed sustained commitment to dealing precisely with the terms of the question by citing examples and offering clear, relevant analysis. In the best responses seen, analysis often led to perceptive originality about the author's strategies and techniques in bringing to life the characters and themes on the stage.

Less convincing responses showed similar characteristics, but there was, perhaps, a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples were not being fully explored. At this level, responses were sometimes over long, a sign that candidates have not made judicious selection of what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and attempts to be comprehensive often struggle through their over-ambition. Bearing in mind the time limitation, candidates should aim to frame a clear, relevant, and tightly structured discussion that demonstrates knowledge and understanding without being exhaustive.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded. Answers at this level were not without some analysis of text, but points often failed to cohere into a clear argument or were rather simplistic. Candidates sometimes need to be aware that feature spotting needs to be supplemented by analytical discussion. There was often little suggestion that the text is being shaped for effect by an author.

A few scripts showed little evidence of understanding that went beyond plot. Others, at the very bottom, were often brief, irrelevant, or confused in expression.

Comments on Specific Questions

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

Question 1

- (a) The strongest responses here were able to look closely at the dark humour of the play, particularly with reference to dramatic or farcical moments. The best answers were able to analyse various ways in which Albee uses humour and comedy as a means of making an audience feel uncomfortable. Less competent work focused more on things that make the characters (as opposed to the audience) laugh. Weaker answers often resorted to narrative or to giving examples without fully analysing how they work within the dramatic structure of the play.
- (b) The most successful responses, rather than taking a chronological view contrasted the first part of the passage with the second. Many responses were able to make useful remarks about the tension of the first section and the sudden change of mood when Nick and Honey first appear. Weaker answers tended to focus on George and Martha, with Nick and Honey only discussed incidentally. These responses also tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Proficient answers were keen to focus on the language and staging of the incident.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) The strongest answers here were able to note that apart from its contribution to the atmosphere at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Mechanicals' play serves to comment on both the themes and the action. Some excellent responses were able to look closely at the ways in which Shakespeare satirises stage conventions and subverts the language of romantic love in order to give an audience a fresh, more realistic view of what has gone on elsewhere. Proficient responses also often pointed out that it is not merely the presentation of the play at the end that is important, but the preparations leading up to it (the ridiculousness of the casting in the play, for example) that create a commentary on the characters and action elsewhere.
- (b) Many responses focused almost entirely and quite mechanically on the contrast between blank verse and prose. Better answers were able to look more strategically at the reasons for the juxtaposition and at the change of atmosphere and tempo created. The best responses looked at the contrast between the two worlds presented and examined various ways in which the abstractions of tormented love are replaced by the earthy pragmatism of the mechanicals. Bottom's love of rhetoric (lines 54–61) could have been more fully examined as a means of positioning Helena's excesses.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Responses often focused on Richard's lack of conscience and his explicit desire to be a villain. Weaker answers tackled the question chronologically in order to trace Richard's increasing sense of his own wickedness. Some simply focused on Richard's bad dreams at the end of the play. The best answers noted that Richard sees conscience as a 'coward', a corrupting affliction, and something that has to be overcome if he is to achieve his ambitions. This enabled discussion about Richard's self-conscious awareness of how he is trying to defeat a force that lies within him.
- (b) The small number of responses to this question noted that if we hadn't witnessed Richard's behaviour the night before the battle, he would be seen as a purposeful (the imperatives in the first lines), brave and charismatic leader, a point emphasised by Norfolk when he calls him a 'warlike sovereign'. The best answers looked at details of Richard's language and his ability to shape discourse to his present purpose through abuse of the opposition as 'vagabonds' and 'rascals' who nauseate the 'o'er-cloyed country' and through his use of inclusive language ('Let's', 'we') later on in the passage. On the whole, responses did not deal fully enough with Richard's carefully stage-managed presentation of himself as the successor to 'fair Saint George'.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Candidates were quick to give examples of disloyalty in the play, usually with suitable examples of betrayals and of the political manoeuvrings around Henry and More. Some responses also demonstrated the point through contrasting loyalty with disloyalty and thus seeing More as someone who is compromised between his loyalty to the king and the law and his loyalty to his religion. These responses recognised that the issue of loyalty goes beyond that of the other characters and is, in fact, central to the presentation of More himself. The question asked for 'dramatic presentation', and only the best responses really started on the details of particular moments or on ways in which Bolt shapes the action.
- (b) Solid answers to this question often gave an account of the action and provided a running commentary. Better responses were able to be more strategic and to see that the dramatic tension emerges not only from the issue of religion but also from More's tiredness (he 'sits wearily'; he half takes off his coat) and the inappropriateness of Roper's timing. More could perhaps have been made of the contrast between Roper's argumentative energy and More's 'expressionless' or 'rueful' responses.

Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

Question 5

- (a) A number of answers concentrated on a simple comparison of the marriages. More sophisticated answers recognised that the power relationships within the various couples change during the course of the play. The best answers supported the points with close reference to both dialogue and action.
- (b) Simpler answers focused on discussing characters within narrow definitions, for example: Sidney as a bully and Jane as a neurotic. More sophisticated responses were able to see that the seeds of what happens later in the play are contained here. Many responses looked at Jane's fixation with cleaning, without understanding fully what it could be seen to represent. The best responses were able to characterise the dark humour of the scene and to analyse the social anxiety shared by the couple.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates should familiarise themselves with the common phrasings in these types of question ('dramatic presentation', for example) and ensure that they understand some of the implications of the phrases for the answers they produce.
- When answering **(b)** type questions, candidates should avoid the temptation to provide a line-by-line commentary and seek, instead, to use a structured approach when considering the passage as a whole.
- Candidates should be encouraged to be selective in their approach and structure responses with the question in mind.

General comments

With some questions, there was quite a temptation to refer to contextual factors (The American Dream in Albee, the position of women in Shakespeare's time in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example). Whilst not irrelevant, inclusion of this sort of material can lead to significant digression or to drift from the question set. It should be used only when it is directly relevant to the question and supports the argument being constructed. If candidates are to show 'personal response', the inclusion of large amounts of undigested contextual material may hinder, rather than help, a response.

The mark scheme talks about the need for 'quotation and direct reference,' so candidates who do not have a ready arsenal of quotations or are not prepared to talk about particular moments in **(a)** type questions, put themselves at a disadvantage.

In passage-based **(b)** questions, the best responses took a strategic view of the moment presented, rather than looking to go through it chronologically; these responses often paid careful attention to the stage business of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to what is said. Many candidates could have done more to discuss choices of language or syntax. Less successful responses often noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but failed to see how these transfer into dramatic effects when used in a performance.

Answers of both types that engaged with the dramatic qualities of the texts through discussion of form, structure and language showed a firm understanding of both content and of the writer's strategies. The strongest responses showed sustained commitment to dealing precisely with the terms of the question by citing examples and offering clear, relevant analysis. In the best responses seen, analysis often led to perceptive originality about the author's strategies and techniques in bringing to life the characters and themes on the stage.

Less convincing responses showed similar characteristics, but there was, perhaps, a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples were not being fully explored. At this level, responses were sometimes over long, a sign that candidates have not made judicious selection of what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and attempts to be comprehensive often struggle through their over-ambition. Bearing in mind the time limitation, candidates should aim to frame a clear, relevant, and tightly structured discussion that demonstrates knowledge and understanding without being exhaustive.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded. Answers at this level were not without some analysis of text, but points often failed to cohere into a clear argument or were rather simplistic. Candidates sometimes need to be aware that feature spotting needs to be supplemented by analytical discussion. There was often little suggestion that the text is being shaped for effect by an author.

A few scripts showed little evidence of understanding that went beyond plot. Others, at the very bottom, were often brief, irrelevant, or confused in expression.

Comments on Specific Questions

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

Question 1

- (a) Most responses to this question quickly saw that the imagined child represents the blurring of reality and fantasy in the play. This was often linked to the need for a child in order for parents to fulfil the American dream. Better responses saw that the child is the cement that keeps George and Martha together and perhaps discussed the significance of the boy's announced death as a significant moment in the relationship between the pair. Candidates also often commented on the obvious parallels between this imaginatively realised child and the baby that Honey tries so hard to avoid.
- (b) Responses were quick to identify this as the moment when George starts to take the initiative and really get under Nick's skin. They also noted that this is the moment where Martha recognises that the battle is no longer going her way. Better responses were able to look closely at the aggression of the language and the ways in which George patronises Nick ('houseboy', 'good puppy'). There was often comment on George's physical dominance over the scene. Very good answers showed consistent awareness of how Albee is directing an audience's response through the stage directions. The best responses were able to get hold of the uneasy mixture of the frivolous and the threatening that is central to the episode.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Most responses showed solid knowledge of the various marriages in the play, though some simply dealt with love or romance in its various manifestations. Better answers took a more conceptual view and were able to compare and contrast Theseus and Hippolyta's mature relationship with others in the play, or discuss the only fully realised marriage (and its limitations), that of Titania and Oberon. At times, pre-formulated discussions about male supremacy, patriarchy and arranged marriages obstructed honest discussion of the detail of the text. Those who had internalised these contexts were able to use them more discriminately to support and illuminate their interpretations. The best responses were precise in their use of detail and saw how marriage provides the structure, occasion, and dominant theme of the play.
- (b) Weaker responses tended simply to summarise the passage or comment line-by-line. Discussions at this level often failed to observe the precise terms of the question. Better answers were able to consider the dramatic situation and the various ironies that are presented. The best answers were able to consider the dramaturgy and examine the scene as central to the play's presentation of various cruelties and humiliations, whilst noting the serious undertones beneath what initially seems to be slapstick or farce. The best answers were able to show how the scene contributes to the presentation of the ludicrousness of romantic love in the play. At all levels, more could have been done to draw attention to the range of different sorts of language that Shakespeare employs. Comparatively few responses, for example, even got as far as pointing out the irony of Bottom calling Snout an 'ass-head.'

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Although Richmond is a minor figure in the play as a whole, it is clear that Shakespeare's ending to the play depends on an audience understanding what will replace Richard, dull though it may be by comparison. It was a shame, therefore, that many candidates treated the question as an opportunity for lengthy discussion of Richard, with Richmond only being mentioned tangentially or as something of an afterthought. Better responses, of course, saw that there is deliberate dramatic paralleling of the two the night before the battle and in the rallying speeches to the troops. At the top end, responses were able to see how an audience is manipulated, not merely by Richard's

doings and sayings, but by the balance of information we have for the two men. At all levels, closer attention to particular moments and to the use of language would have been welcome.

- (b) Basic responses narrated their way through the passage, often without acknowledging the role of the passage in the bigger patterns of the play in order to see how these pledges of loyalty and friendship are undermined. Some simply ignored the split in the passage and paid no attention to Richard's speech at all. Better responses sought to show how characters conceal their true feelings with language. Proficient response were able to use knowledge of the rest of the play in order to demonstrate the disingenuousness of the characters and demonstrate how Buckingham and Richard set themselves apart at this point in the play. The best answers responded strongly to the staging and the religious language of the scene.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Lower end responses tended to make general comments about More's integrity without really discussing Bolt's presentation of him. Better responses saw him as a point of focus through which the various degrees of corruption and lack of integrity in others are focused. Limited responses often simply looked at the contrast between More and Rich. More comprehensive discussions were able to see how Cromwell, Henry and Wolsey fit into the pattern too. Some responses rightly saw More's family as part of the model of integrity, with Margaret particularly mentioned as an example of honesty. Responses that saw the play in terms of a nuanced range of examples rather than in terms of binary opposition tended to move to the upper end of the mark scheme. The strongest responses dealt with the question in terms of careful analysis of particulars and strong awareness of significant, telling moments and their presentation in dramatic terms. The silver cup was often cited as a physical representation of the issue.
- (b) Responses at the lower end tended to be confined to narrative summary, with occasional remarks about the stage directions or presentation of character. Better responses were able to see development in the extract and note that the behaviour of Margaret and Alice is quite distinctly contrasted. These responses also tended to see how the stage properties (the food, the rack) provide a visual reminder of what More confronts. Responses at the top end were able to see how More is put under increased pressure by the various strategies employed by Margaret, Alice and Roper. Some even saw these characters in mediaeval terms, as versions of the temptations.

Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

Question 5

- (a) Responses to this question showed clear understanding of the double implication of the question. The kitchens represent 'backstage' for the hosts of the various social events who are 'staging' themselves for a social occasion, and they are also an opportunity for Ayckbourn to show what the characters are like when they are not on show to others. Responses at a higher level were also able to observe that when the 'guests' come into the kitchens they behave differently, less formally perhaps, and that this gives us further understanding of their characters and motivations. Answers that engaged precisely with details of action by referring to particular moments were highly rewarded. The best responses engaged fully with the prompt quotation in the question.
- (b) Quite a number of answers at the lower end of the mark range misread the mood and tone of the extract, seeing the play as ending on a light-hearted, comic note. Candidates who had appreciated Sidney's social ambition and anger at being patronised by others were able to see how this is his revenge. These responses showed how power relations have changed by this point in the play and how this turns into vindictiveness on Sidney's part, with Jane perhaps not realising the seriousness of what is going on. The strongest responses looked in detail at the language and stage directions. These responses also made points about the humorous mechanization of the 'victims' of the seemingly jolly Christmas game and went on to develop sophisticated arguments about the complexity of response that an audience might have.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key messages

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- When answering **(b)** type questions, candidates should avoid the temptation to provide a line-by-line commentary and seek, instead, to use a structured approach when considering the passage as a whole.
- Candidates should be encouraged to be selective in their approach and structure responses with the question in mind.

General comments

With some questions, there was quite a temptation to refer to contextual factors (The American Dream in Albee, the position of women in Shakespeare's time in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example). Whilst not irrelevant, inclusion of this sort of material can lead to significant digression or to drift from the question set. It should be used only when it is directly relevant to the question and supports the argument being constructed. If candidates are to show 'personal response', the inclusion of large amounts of undigested contextual material may hinder, rather than help, a response.

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Answers of both types that engaged with the dramatic qualities of the texts through discussion of form, structure and language showed a firm understanding of both content and of the writer's strategies. The strongest responses showed sustained commitment to dealing precisely with the terms of the question by citing examples and offering clear, relevant analysis. In the best responses seen, analysis often led to perceptive originality about the author's strategies and techniques in bringing to life the characters and themes on the stage.

Less convincing responses showed similar characteristics, but there was, perhaps, a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples were not being fully explored. At this level, responses were sometimes over long, a sign that candidates have not made judicious selection of what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and attempts to be comprehensive often struggle through their over-ambition. Bearing in mind the time limitation, candidates should aim to frame a clear, relevant, and tightly structured discussion that demonstrates knowledge and understanding without being exhaustive.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded. Answers at this level were not without some analysis of text, but points often failed to cohere into a clear argument or were rather simplistic. Candidates sometimes need to be aware that feature spotting needs to be supplemented by analytical discussion. There was often little suggestion that the text is being shaped for effect by an author.

A few scripts showed little evidence of understanding that went beyond plot. Others, at the very bottom, were often brief, irrelevant, or confused in expression.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

- (a) In some responses the significance and wealth of material available for a discussion of George and Martha meant that the particular requirement of the question – that of comparison – got lost. Better candidates were able to see both parallels and contrasts between the two couples. Discussions ranged widely over different aspects of the presentation of the couples, and it was clear that better candidates were fully aware that an audience's sympathy for George and Martha grows in parallel to the growth of more negative feelings towards Nick and Honey as the play progresses. The best responses dealt with particular moments, and made close, supported, reference to the text in order to demonstrate how the play creates its effects on the stage.
- (b) Most responses saw that Albee is placing Nick and George in parallel in this scene and suggesting that they have more in common than might, at first, seem apparent. In tracing the progress of the episode, competent responses looked carefully at the various ways in which George engineers Nick's revelations through questions or by urging him on ('She was a good witch, and she married the white mouse...') and adding to the story. Much was made of Nick's giggling, of him not quite being in control of himself. The best answers looked to other moments in the play and recognised that this oddly intimate moment is one of the moments of mutual sympathy between characters in the play, with them acting as co-conspirators ('They both laugh a great deal, but it is sad laughter').

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

- (a) Answers often focused on Puck as a puppet master who is employed by Oberon to indulge his childish petulance. There was also focus on his role as the agent, the plot catalyst that facilitates characters who are seeking their true partners. Better answers were able to engage with his use of language, his change of register and vocabulary when dealing with the various worlds of the play. Weaker answers tended simply to work through examples of scenes where Puck is active. Those who considered Puck's presentation as a "sprite" were able to better consider his ambiguous presentation, and its shades of dark malice in the fairy world.
- (b) Better answers coped well with the elevated, privileged language employed by Egeus and Theseus that is so successfully rebutted by Hermia at every point in the discussion. Basic answers focused much more on providing a character study of Hermia. At times, discussions of women's roles in a patriarchal society dominated at the expense of detailed discussion of the passage presented. Responses that looked carefully at the structure of the scene and the language employed (Theseus's imperatives, his poetic evocation of the tokens of romantic love or the strength of a work like 'filch'd') showed awareness of how Shakespeare is dramatizing one of the key issues of the play. Those who could characterise the robustness of Hermia's response to her situation ('So will I grow, so live, so die') showed a grasp of what is going on that went well beyond character study or description of the situation.

Question 3

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

- (a) A number of candidates mistook the word 'supernatural' and transformed it into 'superstition' for the purposes of their arguments. This provided a larger sphere for examples, but at times it directed responses away from the very significant examples of ghosts and dreams that are either shown or referred to in the play. Some discussion of things such as oaths and curses was relevant when linked to the prophetic qualities of the ghost scene, but where it dominated answers, candidates were not dealing fully with the particulars of the question set.

- (b) Weaker answers to this question simply viewed Buckingham as Richard's henchman, who practices vilification and flattery to aid his master's cause. More subtle responses noted that he enjoys — in much the same way that Richard does — the game that is being played. They also noted that there is significant self-interest in his actions. A number of answers focused on the first section of the extract and thus missed the opportunity to talk about Richard's self-dramatizing refusal of the crown. Better responses were able to talk about the relationship between the staged performance here and the meta-theatrical nature of much of the play that is conveyed to the audience through contrasts between Richard's soliloquies and his 'public' pronouncements. Most answers contained full discussions of why Edward was not fit to be king; fewer saw that what Buckingham says is a fine example of political 'spin.'

Question 4

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

- (a) There were comparatively few responses to this question. Weaker answers focused solely on the moment when the king actually appears. Stronger responses saw that the whole of the play's action revolves round Henry's whims and fancies, and that, in his absence, his will is often evoked (and distorted) by More's enemies in order to push forward their own agendas.
- (b) Responses were quick to point out More's careful distancing of himself from Chapuys so that he cannot be accused of plotting against the king. Competent and proficient responses looked at the drama of the situation ('he moves deliberately') and the ways in which More heads off any advances that might compromise his integrity by being very open about what he knows Chapuys is trying to do. Candidates were less convincing on the whole when dealing with the second half of the passage, though it is obviously there as a means of Bolt showing an audience what it is that More stands to lose as a consequence of his integrity. The role of Alice, when understood, provided evidence of the strength of the various forces — both political and personal — that he is resisting in order to be loyal to his convictions. The best responses were able to see the 'arc' of the whole scene and respond to the tensions presented through detailed reference to both language and action.

Question 5

Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

- (a) Responses here were differentiated by the varying degrees in which they recognised the dramatic function of the kitchens as being a domestic, private space that allows the characters to reveal their true feelings and motivations. Weaker responses tended to a narrative approach, giving an account of the situation at each point in the play. The best responses noted that the kitchen themselves are representations of the attitudes and values of their owners. The strongest responses saw the kitchens as dramatic spaces rather than real rooms and thus commented fully on the ways in which the kitchens serve a thematic as well as practical purpose for the playwright.
- (b) Basic responses tended simply to give a character study of Ronald and note that he is sitting in a cold kitchen having lost everything. There was much reference to the symbols of his reduced circumstances as seen through his wearing outdoor clothing indoors, or his scarcely credible, half-hearted explanation of why there is no heating. Fuller and more nuanced responses were able to see the irony and humour of his situation, particularly bearing in mind what has gone before. His inability to treat his wife as anything other than as a possession or a nuisance has finally reached fruition, and his sheer incompetence — he does not even know where the food is kept — limits an audience's sympathy for his plight. Many responses suggested that sympathy in part comes from the contrast with Eva who shows ability and strength in the exchange. The best responses interrogated the question by suggesting (and demonstrating) that there was plenty of evidence to suggest that he was undeserving of the audience's pity and sympathy.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century Texts

Key Messages

- (1) Candidates should have a clear understanding of the relevant literary conventions of the different genres.
- (2) Candidates should respond to the full demands of a passage **(b)** question by referring appropriately to the wider text.
- (3) Candidates should be prepared to discuss the poetic methods of writers, particularly Chaucer and Shakespeare, in their answers.

General Comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and it was pleasing to see a reduction in the number of candidates with timing problems. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although there are some candidates whose expression can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to all of the questions set. Some texts were very popular – *Othello*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* – with others remaining very much minority choices, particularly the Hardy and Rossetti texts.

Centres are reminded that the rubric for this paper changes from June 2016 and candidates will have to tackle at least one option **(b)** or passage-based question. They may do one passage **(b)** and one discursive **(a)** question or two passage **(b)** questions. They will however no longer be able to offer two discursive option **(a)** essays. **Please see the 9695 syllabus for more details.**

There are three specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (1) Candidates should have a clear understanding of the conventions of the genre of their texts. Many candidates studying Chaucer and Shakespeare for example are not secure in their grasp of these conventions. Chaucer's use of rhetorical devices or authorities was often misunderstood by candidates, who then offered a confused argument about the Wife of Bath's characterisation. Similarly, candidates studying *As You Like It* often had little grasp of the common conventions of pastoral comedy so that interpretations of the characters are again based on a false premise. While a personal response to the texts is encouraged, it can lead the candidate into confusion if a purely modern interpretation of the actions, such as those of Silvius and Phebe in the Shakespeare text, are offered.
- (2) When tackling option **(b)** passage questions candidates need to ensure that the full demands of the question are met. Each passage question will require a detailed analysis or critical appreciation of the given passage, in which the candidates explore aspects of the style of writing. The question will also require that this analysis, either in terms of the writer's general methods and concerns, or with a specific focus such as a particular character or theme, is then developed into a consideration of the wider text. Many candidates are able to do this when tackling Shakespeare, or a novel, but often seem less confident in this regard when writing about poetry. The general requirements of a passage **(b)** question are the same irrespective of the genre.
- (3) Centres should encourage candidates to discuss the poetic methods employed by Chaucer and Shakespeare in their answers. Many candidates are well prepared to explore characters and themes, but are less confident in discussing the poetic methods, such as form, language and imagery, and crucially the effects of the writer's choices on the reader or audience. This is an

important part of the assessment objectives at this level and candidates need to be prepared to explore stylistic matters in detail in order to achieve the higher assessment bands.

Section A: Question 1

William Shakespeare: As You Like It

- (a) This was a very popular question with the majority of candidates able to select the two pairs of brothers for discussion and many managing to draw parallels between the pairs. Weaker candidates provided a narrative approach to the task, although some showed an awareness of the characters as constructs. Most candidates were at least able to identify some 'dramatic effects', as specified in the task. Common examples include the role of the brothers' relationships in advancing the plot and creating tension due to conflict. Better answers linked the relationships to wider themes of the play such as familial love, jealousy, materialism, court and country life and reconciliation through the restorative powers of the Forest. Other good answers linked the presentation of the brothers to Rosalind and Celia, the 'sisters'. Such approaches when supported by consideration of dramatic and poetic methods often did very well.
- (b) This was a much less popular task than the 'a' option. There was some difficulty with the need to 'consider how Shakespeare shapes an audience's response' but nearly all answers did manage to engage with the 'character' element of this question. Most answers thought Phebe's language was cruel and heartless, with better answers successfully exploring how this impression was achieved. Some candidates suggested that Shakespeare urged us to sympathise with Phebe as Silvius lacked 'manliness', linking this to Orlando and Elizabethan attitudes to manliness. Rosalind's 'advancing' was noted by some candidates as highlighting her more assertive persona in the guise of Ganymede. Better candidates explored Rosalind's subsequent speeches in detail, often identifying the humour and irony of her words: '*she (Phebe) suffers the hurt she once inflicted*'. Those who developed these considerations by exploring the concerns of the wider play and their effects often did very well.

Section A: Question 2

William Shakespeare: Othello

- (a) This was a popular choice with some sensitive handling of the issue of race and its importance in the play. Many candidates referred to the opening scene with its racist language and Brabantio's dramatic disapproval of Othello marrying Desdemona. For some candidates Iago was seen as being partially motivated by racism but better candidates were aware of the complexity of his motivation, often quoting Coleridge's well-known comment. More developed answers regarded Othello himself suggesting his race makes him more vulnerable to jealousy, lacking in self-confidence, thus making his race a key device in advancing the plot and building tension. Better answers supported this with detailed reference to the text and at times analysed the poetic and dramatic effects. Some well-developed answers showed interesting, original engagement with the issue of expectations from an Elizabethan audience regarding Othello's race and mistrust over the strength of his Christianity; so that the audience are partly satisfied by the events of the play, as Othello's actions conform with their suspicions of Othello's race.
- (b) This was the more popular choice with a clear sense of its significance from nearly all answers. Candidates naturally focused to a large extent on Iago with weaker answers tending to summarise his role in the wider play. Better answers focused on how this extract furthered understanding of his character. Nearly all answers discussed the change from prose to verse in his soliloquy, with better responses offering a close analysis of the imagery Iago adopts here. The effects of this change were well considered, the prose suggested as fitting for the informal advice of a false friend in Cassio's moment of misery; compared to the more formal eloquence in the soliloquy to reflect Iago's scheming pride. Cassio's character was also considered by most answers and there was some dispute amongst responses regarding Cassio's attitude towards Iago at this stage. Most candidates took his short lines as evidence of either lingering inebriation, or his misery brought about by his removal from his post. More perceptive responses discussed Iago's contempt for women, revealed in his language and tone, and his delight in his manipulation and expected destruction of those he envied.

Section B: Question 3

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) This was the most popular text in this session with candidates especially engaged with the contrast between Colonel Brandon and Edward. All candidates were able to bring in some relevant knowledge to support their ideas, with the weaker answers agreeing with the quotation, and selecting relevant narrative to support Brandon's claim to be hero. Better candidates took care to define the notion of heroism with some more developed answers seeing Willoughby as having the characteristics of a hero – debonair, handsome and charming – but without the moral strength exhibited by Brandon and Ferrars. Other candidates connected ideas about Brandon's heroism with his actions throughout the novel, citing his regular support towards Marianne, such as during her sickness, his offer of the Delaford living to Edward and his unerring aid to Eliza. More developed answers suggested that our view of Brandon is heightened through Austen's use of Elinor's voice and her positive view of him. Edward was often judged harshly by candidates, many criticising his weakness at not standing up to his mother and his deception regarding Lucy. Better answers acknowledged Edward's attempt at loyalty in his commitment to Lucy and his eventual favouring of love over wealth.
- (b) This was a popular choice. Most candidates were able to explore the significance of the letter and the sisters' reactions to it. Weaker answers were sometimes unsure of the specific context and often gave too much supporting narrative from the wider text. Better answers considered Austen's methods in presenting Marianne's outburst of grief, Elinor's more balanced response and the letter itself. Candidates who explored the language in detail often did well. Many were able to relate Marianne's behaviour here to the wider novel, highlighting her role in representing the 'Sensibility' element of the novel's title. Candidates, who explored Elinor's presentation beyond symbolising 'Sense', often noted her assertive stance towards Mrs Jennings in the opening of the extract. Her support for Marianne received most attention by candidates with many commenting on her earlier warnings about Willoughby and praising the fact that she does not mention this here, instead offering her full sympathy to her sister. Better candidates, who also considered Austen's use of the letter as a narrative technique, often did well. Candidates often did very well when they considered the shift to first person narration and how this allows the reader a level of insight into Willoughby's character and remembering the true author of the letter. Some responses further developed this by analysing the language and style of the letter in detail.

Section B: Question 4

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) This was a popular text in this session. Nearly all candidates were able to summarise in some detail the events of Alison's marriage to Jankyn. Weaker answers tended to put this into the narrative context of her other relationships and in some answers link it to the Tale as well. Better answers saw how the relationship enabled Chaucer to develop a number of his key themes – 'maistrie', love, violence, money and attitudes to women and religion were all considered. Others saw how '*the learned Jankyn is fooled by the uneducated Alison, because experience always triumphs over authority*'. Those answers which linked the prologue and the tale through these themes, particularly when supported by quotation and some consideration of the poetic methods, often did very well.
- (b) This was the less popular choice on the text. Many answers used the passage as a link to discussing Alison's marriages and attitudes more generally. Weaker answers tended to offer a detailed paraphrase of the extract or move too far away from the passage into generalisation and summary of the whole text. Better answers looked more closely at the style and the language of the passage, with some enjoying the humour and the satire, as well as exploring the concerns. A few answers were able to consider the poetic methods in detail as well. Those who used this analysis as a way of linking the passage to the wider text, including the Tale, often did very well.

Section B: Question 5

George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) This text was a minority choice. Nearly all candidates were able to identify relevant parts of the novel to discuss. Weaker answers tended to summarise key events – Mr Tulliver's descent into bankruptcy and Tom's single minded pursuit of wealth for example. Better answers saw the importance of

attitudes to money and wealth to the plot and to the characterisation, especially Tom and his struggles to pay off the family debt. Some answers developed this into considering the effects on Maggie and Mrs Tulliver, whilst others saw the contrast between the Moss family's attitudes to money and wealth and those of the Dodsons. Answers which linked these discussions into the wider thematic concerns such as duty and sacrifice and attitudes to the family, often did very well.

- (b) Most candidates were able to explore the significance of this extract. Weaker answers tended to summarise the events leading up to this point but many were able to discuss the roles of Maggie and Tom in detail and offer engaged personal responses, with most sympathetic to Maggie, but recognising Tom's exasperation. Better answers explored the tension in the scene and examined how Eliot creates sympathy for Maggie. Answers that considered the methods often did well. Some, for example, noted Tom's lengthy speeches as a sign of Maggie's vulnerability and Tom's power over her. Other answers considered Tom's predicament at this stage of the plot, suggesting the reader might sympathise with the conflict between his duty as a brother and his strong principles; support for this argument was offered in the form of Tom's willingness to provide for Maggie. The closing line of the passage was seen by some candidates as especially poignant due to Mrs Tulliver's lack of maternal affection up to this point in the novel, some considering that her change highlighted the extremity of Tom's anger and injustice. The most successful answers considered narrative techniques, such as dialogue and the third person narrator, linking these points to the wider novel.

Section B: Question 6

Thomas Hardy: *Return of the Native*

- (a) This was the least popular of the novels in this session. Most candidates focused on Clym's attempts to educate the heath folk, with weaker answers summarising the narrative. Other answers developed this into discussing the Heath's perceived antagonism to civilisation, with some referencing the bonfires as a rebellion against it, as well as Clym's blindness as punishment for attempting to thrust education upon the heath-folk. Better answers considered different attitudes to education such as Grandfer Cumble's view of education as 'nonsense' and as inappropriate for the heath-folk, suggesting education would '*only pose a stumbling block to their normal lives*'. More developed answers saw the threat education poses to the social class structure that was essential to life on the Heath. Better answers linked these approaches into an exploration of how Hardy developed plot and characterisation through his presentation of education and learning.
- (b) This was the more popular choice on the text. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with some offering too much narrative background, at the expense of attention to the extract itself. Those who offered a more precise context, including the significance of the passage occurring near the end of the novel, did better. Some answers felt Hardy was '*tidying up*' his novel. Better answers also showed a keen understanding of the contrast between the atmosphere in the opening of the passage, '*melancholic*', and the '*joyful*' wedding scene later in the passage. Answers which developed the analysis, seeing the passage as symbolic of Clym's journey throughout the novel, for example the 'crooked stair' representing the difficulties in his marriage and the 'darkness' representing his blindness, often did well. Other candidates explored Charley's role in mirroring Clym in his grief, as possibly highlighting the protagonist's desperation. Others analysed Hardy's use of symbols here – Clym's blindness, for example, and the poignancy of the lock of Eustacia's hair. Some very good answers linked the concerns here into a wider commentary on the novel: '*this vignette perfectly illustrates how the heath punishes (evidenced by Clym's dark situation) and repays (signalled by Thomasin's happiness)*' as one candidate suggested.

Section B: Question 7

John Keats: Selected Poems

- (a) This was the less popular choice on the text. Nearly all answers were able to refer in detail to three relevant poems. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems, showing what they revealed about Keats's attitudes, through his love of different things, Fanny, poetry and nature most commonly. Some answers drifted into too much discussion of the biographical context at the expense of looking at the detail of the poems. Better answers focused on 'presentation', comparing Keats's use of different types of poetry, for example, to reveal his concerns. Answers which developed this into a consideration of form and style, with close reference to the poetic methods and the detail of the poems, especially language and imagery, often did very well.

- (b) This was a popular choice of question. Weaker candidates tended to take a stanza by stanza approach, offering a detailed paraphrase, with some able to pick out some interesting features for comment. Better answers explored the poetic methods in detail, for instance the language used at the start to emphasize the cold and create atmosphere. Those answers which linked this to the rest of the poem, for example, the warmth of the young lovers, often did well. Other answers considered the wider concerns in detail – the longing to escape, the presentation of nature and attitudes to religion, for example. The most successful answers came from those who supported their points with specific reference to other poems and developed this through detailed analysis of the poetic methods.

Section B: Question 8

Christina Rossetti: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This was the least popular text on the paper. Very few answers to this option were seen. Nearly all answers agreed with the view given. Weaker candidates summarised more or less relevant poems, sometimes in great detail. Better answers were able to link the poems, through the view expressed, and show how human or religious love was treated in a similar way by Rossetti. The best answers developed the response by close reference to the detail of the poems and the poetic methods used by Rossetti in creating her effects.
- (b) This question was a slightly more popular choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the extract given, with some able to link to the wider poem but less often in the wider text. Better answers saw how the extract linked to the theme of loneliness and isolation in Rossetti's other work and when supported with some analysis of the methods, often did well. Other answers, though sometimes lacking in a thorough scrutiny of the poetry, did show some engagement with the effects of the poem in terms of inspiring sympathy with the persona. Good answers developed this into considering other poems such as *Cousin Kate*, *Apple Gathering* and *Maude Clare* and the presentation of women in Rossetti's poems.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century Texts

Key Messages

- (1) Candidates should have a clear understanding of the relevant literary conventions of the different genres.
- (2) Candidates should respond to the full demands of a passage **(b)** question by referring appropriately to the wider text.
- (3) Candidates should be prepared to discuss the poetic methods of writers, particularly Chaucer and Shakespeare, in their answers.

General Comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and it was pleasing to see a reduction in the number of candidates with timing problems. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although there are some candidates whose expression can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to all of the questions set. Some texts were very popular – *Othello*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* – with others remaining very much minority choices, particularly the Hardy and Rossetti texts.

Centres are reminded that the rubric for this paper changes from June 2016 and candidates will have to tackle at least one option **(b)** or passage-based question. They may do one passage **(b)** and one discursive **(a)** question or two passage **(b)** questions. They will however no longer be able to offer two discursive option **(a)** essays. **Please see the 9695 syllabus for more details.**

There are three specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (1) Candidates should have a clear understanding of the conventions of the genre of their texts. Many candidates studying Chaucer and Shakespeare for example are not secure in their grasp of these conventions. Chaucer's use of rhetorical devices or authorities was often misunderstood by candidates, who then offered a confused argument about the Wife of Bath's characterisation. Similarly, candidates studying *As You Like It* often had little grasp of the common conventions of pastoral comedy so that interpretations of the characters are again based on a false premise. While a personal response to the texts is encouraged, it can lead the candidate into confusion if a purely modern interpretation of the actions, such as those of Silvius and Phebe in the Shakespeare text, are offered.
- (2) When tackling option **(b)** passage questions candidates need to ensure that the full demands of the question are met. Each passage question will require a detailed analysis or critical appreciation of the given passage, in which the candidates explore aspects of the style of writing. The question will also require that this analysis, either in terms of the writer's general methods and concerns, or with a specific focus such as a particular character or theme, is then developed into a consideration of the wider text. Many candidates are able to do this when tackling Shakespeare, or a novel, but often seem less confident in this regard when writing about poetry. The general requirements of a passage **(b)** question are the same irrespective of the genre.
- (3) Centres should encourage candidates to discuss the poetic methods employed by Chaucer and Shakespeare in their answers. Many candidates are well prepared to explore characters and themes, but are less confident in discussing the poetic methods, such as form, language and imagery, and crucially the effects of the writer's choices on the reader or audience. This is an

important part of the assessment objectives at this level and candidates need to be prepared to explore stylistic matters in detail in order to achieve the higher assessment bands.

Section A: Question 1

William Shakespeare: As You Like It

- (a) This was a very popular question with the majority of candidates able to select the two pairs of brothers for discussion and many managing to draw parallels between the pairs. Weaker candidates provided a narrative approach to the task, although some showed an awareness of the characters as constructs. Most candidates were at least able to identify some 'dramatic effects', as specified in the task. Common examples include the role of the brothers' relationships in advancing the plot and creating tension due to conflict. Better answers linked the relationships to wider themes of the play such as familial love, jealousy, materialism, court and country life and reconciliation through the restorative powers of the Forest. Other good answers linked the presentation of the brothers to Rosalind and Celia, the 'sisters'. Such approaches when supported by consideration of dramatic and poetic methods often did very well.
- (b) This was a much less popular task than the 'a' option. There was some difficulty with the need to 'consider how Shakespeare shapes an audience's response' but nearly all answers did manage to engage with the 'character' element of this question. Most answers thought Phebe's language was cruel and heartless, with better answers successfully exploring how this impression was achieved. Some candidates suggested that Shakespeare urged us to sympathise with Phebe as Silvius lacked 'manliness', linking this to Orlando and Elizabethan attitudes to manliness. Rosalind's 'advancing' was noted by some candidates as highlighting her more assertive persona in the guise of Ganymede. Better candidates explored Rosalind's subsequent speeches in detail, often identifying the humour and irony of her words: '*she (Phebe) suffers the hurt she once inflicted*'. Those who developed these considerations by exploring the concerns of the wider play and their effects often did very well.

Section A: Question 2

William Shakespeare: Othello

- (a) This was a popular choice with some sensitive handling of the issue of race and its importance in the play. Many candidates referred to the opening scene with its racist language and Brabantio's dramatic disapproval of Othello marrying Desdemona. For some candidates Iago was seen as being partially motivated by racism but better candidates were aware of the complexity of his motivation, often quoting Coleridge's well-known comment. More developed answers regarded Othello himself suggesting his race makes him more vulnerable to jealousy, lacking in self-confidence, thus making his race a key device in advancing the plot and building tension. Better answers supported this with detailed reference to the text and at times analysed the poetic and dramatic effects. Some well-developed answers showed interesting, original engagement with the issue of expectations from an Elizabethan audience regarding Othello's race and mistrust over the strength of his Christianity; so that the audience are partly satisfied by the events of the play, as Othello's actions conform with their suspicions of Othello's race.
- (b) This was the more popular choice with a clear sense of its significance from nearly all answers. Candidates naturally focused to a large extent on Iago with weaker answers tending to summarise his role in the wider play. Better answers focused on how this extract furthered understanding of his character. Nearly all answers discussed the change from prose to verse in his soliloquy, with better responses offering a close analysis of the imagery Iago adopts here. The effects of this change were well considered, the prose suggested as fitting for the informal advice of a false friend in Cassio's moment of misery; compared to the more formal eloquence in the soliloquy to reflect Iago's scheming pride. Cassio's character was also considered by most answers and there was some dispute amongst responses regarding Cassio's attitude towards Iago at this stage. Most candidates took his short lines as evidence of either lingering inebriation, or his misery brought about by his removal from his post. More perceptive responses discussed Iago's contempt for women, revealed in his language and tone, and his delight in his manipulation and expected destruction of those he envied.

Section B: Question 3

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) This was the most popular text in this session with candidates especially engaged with the contrast between Colonel Brandon and Edward. All candidates were able to bring in some relevant knowledge to support their ideas, with the weaker answers agreeing with the quotation, and selecting relevant narrative to support Brandon's claim to be hero. Better candidates took care to define the notion of heroism with some more developed answers seeing Willoughby as having the characteristics of a hero – debonair, handsome and charming – but without the moral strength exhibited by Brandon and Ferrars. Other candidates connected ideas about Brandon's heroism with his actions throughout the novel, citing his regular support towards Marianne, such as during her sickness, his offer of the Delaford living to Edward and his unerring aid to Eliza. More developed answers suggested that our view of Brandon is heightened through Austen's use of Elinor's voice and her positive view of him. Edward was often judged harshly by candidates, many criticising his weakness at not standing up to his mother and his deception regarding Lucy. Better answers acknowledged Edward's attempt at loyalty in his commitment to Lucy and his eventual favouring of love over wealth.
- (b) This was a popular choice. Most candidates were able to explore the significance of the letter and the sisters' reactions to it. Weaker answers were sometimes unsure of the specific context and often gave too much supporting narrative from the wider text. Better answers considered Austen's methods in presenting Marianne's outburst of grief, Elinor's more balanced response and the letter itself. Candidates who explored the language in detail often did well. Many were able to relate Marianne's behaviour here to the wider novel, highlighting her role in representing the 'Sensibility' element of the novel's title. Candidates, who explored Elinor's presentation beyond symbolising 'Sense', often noted her assertive stance towards Mrs Jennings in the opening of the extract. Her support for Marianne received most attention by candidates with many commenting on her earlier warnings about Willoughby and praising the fact that she does not mention this here, instead offering her full sympathy to her sister. Better candidates, who also considered Austen's use of the letter as a narrative technique, often did well. Candidates often did very well when they considered the shift to first person narration and how this allows the reader a level of insight into Willoughby's character and remembering the true author of the letter. Some responses further developed this by analysing the language and style of the letter in detail.

Section B: Question 4

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) This was a popular text in this session. Nearly all candidates were able to summarise in some detail the events of Alison's marriage to Jankyn. Weaker answers tended to put this into the narrative context of her other relationships and in some answers link it to the Tale as well. Better answers saw how the relationship enabled Chaucer to develop a number of his key themes – 'maistrie', love, violence, money and attitudes to women and religion were all considered. Others saw how '*the learned Jankyn is fooled by the uneducated Alison, because experience always triumphs over authority*'. Those answers which linked the prologue and the tale through these themes, particularly when supported by quotation and some consideration of the poetic methods, often did very well.
- (b) This was the less popular choice on the text. Many answers used the passage as a link to discussing Alison's marriages and attitudes more generally. Weaker answers tended to offer a detailed paraphrase of the extract or move too far away from the passage into generalisation and summary of the whole text. Better answers looked more closely at the style and the language of the passage, with some enjoying the humour and the satire, as well as exploring the concerns. A few answers were able to consider the poetic methods in detail as well. Those who used this analysis as a way of linking the passage to the wider text, including the Tale, often did very well.

Section B: Question 5

George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) This text was a minority choice. Nearly all candidates were able to identify relevant parts of the novel to discuss. Weaker answers tended to summarise key events – Mr Tulliver's descent into bankruptcy and Tom's single minded pursuit of wealth for example. Better answers saw the importance of

attitudes to money and wealth to the plot and to the characterisation, especially Tom and his struggles to pay off the family debt. Some answers developed this into considering the effects on Maggie and Mrs Tulliver, whilst others saw the contrast between the Moss family's attitudes to money and wealth and those of the Dodsons. Answers which linked these discussions into the wider thematic concerns such as duty and sacrifice and attitudes to the family, often did very well.

- (b) Most candidates were able to explore the significance of this extract. Weaker answers tended to summarise the events leading up to this point but many were able to discuss the roles of Maggie and Tom in detail and offer engaged personal responses, with most sympathetic to Maggie, but recognising Tom's exasperation. Better answers explored the tension in the scene and examined how Eliot creates sympathy for Maggie. Answers that considered the methods often did well. Some, for example, noted Tom's lengthy speeches as a sign of Maggie's vulnerability and Tom's power over her. Other answers considered Tom's predicament at this stage of the plot, suggesting the reader might sympathise with the conflict between his duty as a brother and his strong principles; support for this argument was offered in the form of Tom's willingness to provide for Maggie. The closing line of the passage was seen by some candidates as especially poignant due to Mrs Tulliver's lack of maternal affection up to this point in the novel, some considering that her change highlighted the extremity of Tom's anger and injustice. The most successful answers considered narrative techniques, such as dialogue and the third person narrator, linking these points to the wider novel.

Section B: Question 6

Thomas Hardy: *Return of the Native*

- (a) This was the least popular of the novels in this session. Most candidates focused on Clym's attempts to educate the heath folk, with weaker answers summarising the narrative. Other answers developed this into discussing the Heath's perceived antagonism to civilisation, with some referencing the bonfires as a rebellion against it, as well as Clym's blindness as punishment for attempting to thrust education upon the heath-folk. Better answers considered different attitudes to education such as Grandfer Cantic's view of education as 'nonsense' and as inappropriate for the heath-folk, suggesting education would '*only pose a stumbling block to their normal lives*'. More developed answers saw the threat education poses to the social class structure that was essential to life on the Heath. Better answers linked these approaches into an exploration of how Hardy developed plot and characterisation through his presentation of education and learning.
- (b) This was the more popular choice on the text. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with some offering too much narrative background, at the expense of attention to the extract itself. Those who offered a more precise context, including the significance of the passage occurring near the end of the novel, did better. Some answers felt Hardy was '*tidying up*' his novel. Better answers also showed a keen understanding of the contrast between the atmosphere in the opening of the passage, '*melancholic*', and the '*joyful*' wedding scene later in the passage. Answers which developed the analysis, seeing the passage as symbolic of Clym's journey throughout the novel, for example the 'crooked stair' representing the difficulties in his marriage and the 'darkness' representing his blindness, often did well. Other candidates explored Charley's role in mirroring Clym in his grief, as possibly highlighting the protagonist's desperation. Others analysed Hardy's use of symbols here – Clym's blindness, for example, and the poignancy of the lock of Eustacia's hair. Some very good answers linked the concerns here into a wider commentary on the novel: '*this vignette perfectly illustrates how the heath punishes (evidenced by Clym's dark situation) and repays (signalled by Thomasin's happiness)*' as one candidate suggested.

Section B: Question 7

John Keats: Selected Poems

- (a) This was the less popular choice on the text. Nearly all answers were able to refer in detail to three relevant poems. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems, showing what they revealed about Keats's attitudes, through his love of different things, Fanny, poetry and nature most commonly. Some answers drifted into too much discussion of the biographical context at the expense of looking at the detail of the poems. Better answers focused on 'presentation', comparing Keats's use of different types of poetry, for example, to reveal his concerns. Answers which developed this into a consideration of form and style, with close reference to the poetic methods and the detail of the poems, especially language and imagery, often did very well.

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Section B: Question 8

Christina Rossetti: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This was the least popular text on the paper. Very few answers to this option were seen. Nearly all answers agreed with the view given. Weaker candidates summarised more or less relevant poems, sometimes in great detail. Better answers were able to link the poems, through the view expressed, and show how human or religious love was treated in a similar way by Rossetti. The best answers developed the response by close reference to the detail of the poems and the poetic methods used by Rossetti in creating her effects.
- (b) This question was a slightly more popular choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the extract given, with some able to link to the wider poem but less often in the wider text. Better answers saw how the extract linked to the theme of loneliness and isolation in Rossetti's other work and when supported with some analysis of the methods, often did well. Other answers, though sometimes lacking in a thorough scrutiny of the poetry, did show some engagement with the effects of the poem in terms of inspiring sympathy with the persona. Good answers developed this into considering other poems such as *Cousin Kate*, *Apple Gathering* and *Maude Clare* and the presentation of women in Rossetti's poems.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century Texts

Key Messages

- (1) Candidates should have a clear understanding of the relevant literary conventions of the different genres.
- (2) Candidates should respond to the full demands of a passage **(b)** question by referring appropriately to the wider text.
- (3) Candidates should be prepared to discuss the poetic methods of writers, particularly Chaucer and Shakespeare, in their answers.

General Comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and it was pleasing to see a reduction in the number of candidates with timing problems. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although there are some candidates whose expression can impede communication at this level.

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There are three specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (1) Candidates should have a clear understanding of the conventions of the genre of their texts. Many candidates studying Chaucer and Shakespeare for example are not secure in their grasp of these conventions. Chaucer's use of rhetorical devices or authorities was often misunderstood by candidates, who then offered a confused argument about the Wife of Bath's characterisation. Similarly, candidates studying *As You Like It* often had little grasp of the common conventions of pastoral comedy so that interpretations of the characters are again based on a false premise. While a personal response to the texts is encouraged, it can lead the candidate into confusion if a purely modern interpretation of the actions, such as those of Silvius and Phebe in the Shakespeare text, are offered.
- (2) When tackling option **(b)** passage questions candidates need to ensure that the full demands of the question are met. Each passage question will require a detailed analysis or critical appreciation of the given passage, in which the candidates explore aspects of the style of writing. The question will also require that this analysis, either in terms of the writer's general methods and concerns, or with a specific focus such as a particular character or theme, is then developed into a consideration of the wider text. Many candidates are able to do this when tackling Shakespeare, or a novel, but often seem less confident in this regard when writing about poetry. The general requirements of a passage **(b)** question are the same irrespective of the genre.
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Section A: Question 1

William Shakespeare: *As You Like It*

- (a) This was a popular text with most candidates opting for (a). Nearly all answers showed a secure knowledge of the text and candidates were able to explore Orlando's character relevantly in the light of the quotation. Better answers dealt with Orlando's role and characterisation, exploring how Shakespeare reveals his immaturity through Touchstone's mocking of Orlando's poems and the dialogues with Jaques and Rosalind. Other answers balanced this with reference to Orlando's bravery and also his support for Adam. Many answers concluded that by the end he was a fitting husband for Rosalind, with more developed responses linking her emotional and intellectual growth with his. The best answers engaged with debates around this, examining whether there was romance, humour or ridicule in Shakespeare's presentation of Orlando by close reference to the text and to poetic methods, especially the layers of irony, to show how the dramatic effects are created.
- (b) This was the less popular choice on this text. Most candidates were able to place it in context with some awareness of Phebe's dramatic alteration at this stage. Many saw the significance of the passage in demonstrating Phebe's sudden attraction towards Ganymede, thus highlighting the theme of love at first sight, and its importance in the wider text. There was some appreciation of the humour in Phebe's attraction to a woman disguised as a man, with the best answers taking this an extra step by reminding us of the gender layers with the use of a male actor. Better answers showed some understanding of the comic conventions and, with some understanding of the dramatic situation at this point, explored the language and tone, including, for example, awareness of the humour in Phebe's conflict between praise and criticism of Ganymede. Candidates offered a variety of judgements on Silvius, with some candidates feeling sympathy for his desperation and obsession with Phebe, others thinking him merely foolish and representative of love as ridiculous. Again better answers explored the comic elements to his role and character, with the most successful answers focusing on language and style for as one candidate suggested '*though mere forest dwellers, they speak in verse, a highly formalised and educated form of language.*'

Section A: Question 2

William Shakespeare: *Othello*

- (a) This was a very popular choice. The issue of Othello's occupation inspired some sophisticated responses and revealed excellent knowledge of the text. On a basic level, candidates pointed to Othello's occupation as significant in the plot, enabling him to attract Desdemona and causing him to be sent to Cyprus, as well as being a contributing factor in Iago's motivations against him. Better answers considered the significance of Othello's occupation in impacting on his behaviour. For some candidates Othello's role as a soldier allows him to only see in black and white; often arguing that his need for quick decision making on the battlefields translates to his eagerness to act with regards to Desdemona. For others, as one candidate commented, '*being a soldier, it is as though he has become desensitised to murder and death.*' Other candidates thought the importance of Othello's identity as a soldier was in the bonds created with Iago and Cassio, attributing his refusal to '*succumb to cuckoldry*' to his pride in this identity and military reputation. Candidates who developed these ideas with close textual support and a consideration of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare often did well.
- (b) This was a popular choice and nearly all candidates had a clear appreciation of the significance of this passage from the opening of the play, with points being made about the tension created at the start and how first impressions of Othello are formed here in relation to his race. Many answers discussed the presentation of Iago and the duality and duplicity of his character, already evident by the end of the passage. There was some awareness of Iago's shift from prose at the start, as depicting the vulgarity of his message, to verse as he reveals his strategy to Roderigo. Candidates who recognised the dramatic nature of the extract in terms of staging, setting and lighting often did well. Other answers, concentrating on the racist, animalistic imagery and the language related to robbing, explored the thematic elements of the passage, such as race, attitudes to women and status. Some answers saw the various attitudes to Desdemona as effectively treating her as a possession, with tragic consequences for her later. Better candidates were also able to analyse deeply into the detail of the passage and find insightful points. As one candidate suggested about

the night setting: '*this is symbolic of how Iago, introduced during the night, is a character that will work unseen or hide his true actions.*'

Section B: Question 3

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) This was a very popular text and question. Nearly every candidate was able to find relevant material to discuss. Weaker answers tended to summarise the narrative, with some implicit contrasting of Ferrars and Brandon and the sisters. Better answers were able to construct an argument in response to the quotation, with most candidates broadly agreeing with the contention. Some effective responses also went to develop their responses by revealing their understanding through closer examination of how Austen presents the characters through their actions and dialogue. Other responses paid close attention to the roles of Marianne and Elinor in order to assess how 'deserving' the two men were as husbands. Candidates who developed these ideas by close reference to the detail of the text and showed understanding of Austen's literary choices often did very well.
- (b) This was a popular question. Nearly every answer had at least an awareness of the context of Willoughby's treachery. Weaker answers tended to summarise too much of the preceding narrative at the expense of close reading of the passage. In well-developed responses there was a close focus on the relationship between the sisters and a common argument suggested that this episode brought the two closer together as each gained more balance in their attributes of sense and sensibility. Others, as one candidate put it, saw how '*they are blissfully unaware of the true state of each other's relationships and romantic position*'. Better answers often explored the presentation of Marianne's overly dramatic grief and how Austen implicitly compared it to the calmness of Elinor in coping with '*her own disappointed hopes and dreams*'. Other good answers discussed the themes explored here, such as the lack of communication between the sisters, the concept of public and private behaviour and attitudes to propriety and proper behaviour. Answers which explored how these are presented in the passage and linked them to the wider text did very well.

Section B: Question 4

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) This was a popular text with most candidates opting for (a). Nearly every answer was able to discuss relevant parts of the Prologue and at times the Tale as well. Weaker answers, though often showing detailed textual knowledge, were less able to consider Chaucer's presentation, though some answers did explore the various types of domination. Better answers saw the idea of female domination as comic in different ways – to a contemporary of Chaucer though his use of the comic stereotype, with some contrasting this to a modern reader's response to the way domination is achieved and maintained by Alison, through her physical, sexual and material demands. Many focussed on Jankyn as a different sort of dominator, with some developing this into a consideration of the knight in the Tale. The most successful responses supported these ideas with some analysis of Chaucer's poetic.
- (b) This was the less popular choice on this text. Most candidates were able to place the passage into a broad context, though weaker answers tended to offer too much background narrative. Better answers explored what the passage reveals about Alison's methods and through that sometimes Chaucer's concerns. Those answers that developed these ideas into the wider text often did well, though few were able to confidently link the passage through its methods and concerns to the Tale. Candidates able to explore Chaucer's poetic methods, usually language and imagery, did very well.

Section B: Question 5

George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) This was not a popular text. Nearly every candidate could refer relevantly to the text in detail. Weaker answers tended to summarise the narrative, with some able to show how sympathy is created towards Tom with his situation largely being deemed out of his control. For instance, his determination to pay off the family debt was used as evidence to challenge the 'selfish' description in the statement. Better answers also explored how Eliot's narrative methods, often presenting events through Maggie's eyes, contributed to the development of the reader's response to Tom,

who was often seen as ‘unfeeling’, with most citing his arguments with Philip Wakem, as Maggie looked on, in support. Candidates who explored the language and imagery used to present Tom, often seen as bleak and cold, did very well.

- (b) This was very much a minority choice. Most candidates offered at least a broad context, showing knowledge of Tulliver’s bankruptcy and the rivalry with Wakem. Weaker answers adopted a narrative approach, often giving too much background detail. Better answers explored what the passage revealed about the relationship, with some good answers developing this into exploring Eliot’s concerns more generally in the text, such as attitudes to women, love and marriage. Some candidates felt pity for the current state of Mr Tulliver, taking responsibility for his errors and in a sense here seeking redemption by his humility to his watching family. Mr and Mrs Tulliver’s attitudes to money and wealth were often discussed, with good answers contrasting them with Maggie and Tom and sometimes more widely such as with the Dodsons and the Wakems.

Section B: Question 6

Thomas Hardy: *Return of the Native*

- (a) This was not a popular text. Candidates generally agreed with the contention, with many referring to Clym and Eustacia in particular. Weaker answers generally had relevant narrative to support a personal view, though often failed to explore the text as a construct. Better answers, starting with a consideration of the characters, were able to develop their arguments by reference to Eliot’s thematic concerns, for example, wealth and education. Some more sophisticated responses saw how the Heath itself is presented as an active agent by Hardy, linking the individual disappointments to the more general view that the Heath rejected strangers and innovations. The most successful answers came from candidates who explored these ideas by reference to Hardy’s narrative techniques and literary choices.
- (b) This was the less popular choice on this text. Most candidates were able to place the passage broadly into a relevant context. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, perhaps unsure of its significance in the wider text. Better answers were able to explore the situation, the relationships and the development of the plot with more precision, often noting what Venn’s misunderstanding led to in terms of Clym’s relationships. More sophisticated answers considered Hardy’s use of chance and fate, as well as exploring Venn’s role as ‘*though he is the conductor of an orchestra*’. The most successful answers developed such ideas by reference to Hardy’s methods here and in the wider text, for example the use of dialogue and directive third person narration.

Section B: Question 7

John Keats: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This was a popular text, though there were few answers to option (a). Most candidates could refer relevantly to three poems, often well chosen to show the range of Keats’s presentation of the imagination. Weaker answers tended to summarise each poem in turn, with some moving away from the task into more general comments about the poems and Keats’s biography. Better answers were able to construct an argument, using the poems to show Keats’s contrasting attitudes in for example ‘*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*’ and ‘*On Looking into Chapman’s Homer*’. Candidates who developed such ideas by reference to Keats’s poetic methods, such as language choices and imagery often did well.
- (b) This was a very popular choice. Most candidates revealed a solid knowledge of the poem and to some extent its effects. Weaker candidates tended to paraphrase each stanza, with some better answers shaping the linking comments to the discussion of Beauty, with occasional references to the wider text. Better answers saw this poem as typical of Keats in for example its three separate appeals to the reader senses of sound, sight and mind. Other answers explored stylistic details, such as language choices and imagery, to great effect, noting for example the use of rhetorical questions to draw the reader in. But as one candidate put it, many responses concluded ‘*there are no answers and this emphasizes the inexplicable beauty of the urn.*’ The most successful candidates were able to develop such analysis into the wider text, with apposite references to and exploration of other relevant poems, particularly the Odes.

Section B: Question 8

Christina Rossetti: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This was not a popular choice of text or task. Weaker answers were able to refer to relevant poems and showed some sound knowledge of the text. Most often cited were '*An Apple Gathering*', '*Cousin Kate*', '*Goblin Market*' and '*A Convent Threshold*'. These were often treated separately but candidates who were able to shape their comments into an argument often did better. Candidates did well to structure their responses by splitting concepts of love into different types in order to structure their observations, focusing for instance on physical love, sisterly love and love of God. Other answers considered the consequences of love and its loss, whether human or divine. Few answers explored Rossetti's poetic methods in detail, but those that were able to offer analysis of her ways of presenting love often did very well.
- (b) This was the less popular choice on this text. Weaker candidates struggled to explore the poem's meaning with any confidence, with others offering a broad paraphrase and occasional links to other poems. Better answers discussed the poem's elusive meanings and how Rossetti created a mood and tone, without offering a specific narrative. Most successful answers were able to explore the poet's choices here and to link them into a consideration of relevant poems from the wider text.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
20th Century Writing

Key Messages

- Candidates need to show detailed knowledge of the texts, selected for relevance to the terms of the questions.
- Candidates need to make more frequent and effective use of pertinent quotations to demonstrate some understanding of narrative, poetic and dramatic methods and effects.
- Candidates choosing (b) questions must ensure that they relate the passage to the wider text.

General Comments

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers and while some texts are obviously more popular than others, generally speaking at all levels candidates showed evidence of personal engagement and some clear understanding of the various writers' concerns. The most impressive scripts displayed substantive textual knowledge with pertinent quotations, some detailed analysis informed by relevant contextual or critical knowledge and enthusiastic, personal response based on close reading of the texts. In the (a) responses the most successful candidates made good attempts to explore the writers' use of narrative, poetic or dramatic techniques, showing excellent and sensitive knowledge of the whole text with a good command and appropriate use of literary terminology. Less successful candidates depended upon narrative summary or paraphrased approaches which did not always lend themselves to a cogently developed critical discussion or argument. In responses to the (b) questions there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This restricted discussion of the significance and effect of specific details within the passages and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic' of a writer's methods or concerns. It was noticeable this session that many candidates had one answer that was significantly stronger than the other. The weakest scripts came from candidates attempting (b) questions on texts that they did not appear to have studied in any detail, notably on Fugard and Mansfield. At best they were able to identify some aspects of a writer's concerns and sometimes they offered some general contextual or biographical material, but responses were limited by a surface reading of the passages, attempting to make basic deductions about theme or characters with very little evidence of knowledge of the wider text.

There were a few rubric errors with some candidates offering only one text. Some scripts delivered short under-developed responses or over-long answers in which the candidates lost sight of the question. This session, however, an increasing number of candidates showed evidence of deconstructing the questions and planning their answers so that even when there was not enough detailed textual knowledge and analysis, the answers were more focused and clearly structured. They embedded the key terms of the questions into their answers, often signalling the direction of their arguments by appropriate use of discourse markers such as *moreover, in addition, in contrast* and *on the other hand*. In the best essays, each paragraph signalled a new stage in a coherent argument but in weaker essays, points tended to be blurred together or revisited, losing clarity and coherence. Candidates continue to experience some difficulty in structuring a response to the (b) questions. A line-by-line approach is too indiscriminate and causes problems with time management. A more useful strategy is to read the whole extract and then focus on the crux of the extract, its significance for the text as a whole, its introduction or development of particular themes or characters followed up by some detailed analysis of how the writer shapes meaning and effects. The most obvious aspect of exam essay writing technique for centres to focus on in future is the use of quotations. Candidates need a bank of short, multi-purpose quotations so that they can show some judgement in selecting them and making them relevant to the question or point under consideration. Some candidates often selected apt quotations but tended to use them to support simple observations, only implying some response to the language by some assertion of tone or effect. Particularly in responses to (b) questions, they copied out overlong quotations from the extracts or signalled whole paragraphs by writing the first and last words, leaving out the significant words which could be worthy of analysis. More candidates

need to develop the skill of embedding short single words or phrases within an analytical sentence so that a quotation is not just used to support a view of an idea or character but can be followed up by some consideration of how the choice of language: the diction, tone, sound effects of the words and the sentence structure contribute to the effects in the context of the passage and how far such examples are characteristic of a writer's methods in the wider text. Increasingly some centres are training candidates to use quotations from the critics. This can be helpful in developing an argument, especially when a candidate can support or challenge the critical view with detailed application to the primary text but knowledge about the texts should not be a substitute for detailed knowledge of the primary text and a personalised response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

W.H. AUDEN: Selected Poems

This was not a popular text this session. Both questions were accessible with candidates probably performing better on the (a) question which was the preferred option.

- (a) This was an open question in that candidates could make the case for using a wide variety of poems to explore the idea of 'suffering'. The most popular angle was to look at those concerned with indifference to the suffering of others as in 'Refugee Blues', 'Musée des Beaux Arts' or more personal reflections on relationships such as 'But I Can't' or 'The More Loving One'. The key issue which differentiated proficient from weaker essays was the extent to which candidates focused on 'means and effects' and treated the poems as poetic expressions of ideas or feelings rather than summarising the ideas within the poems. There was a tendency to see Auden as preaching peace to the world. Better candidates sometimes considered 'methods', the use of voices, allusions, visual imagery and repetition. More modest answers were often unbalanced with one central discussion of a single poem and relatively superficial treatment of two others. Weaker essays offered simple summaries which were not detailed or accurate or occasionally candidates wrote about too many poems with superficial treatment of each one.
- (b) This was a long poem and those candidates who tended to work from start to finish, attempting to paraphrase, sometimes ran out of time and also found it difficult to refer to the wider text. Better essays made links with Auden's general concerns such as love and time and although these were often not well detailed, the knowledge helped to develop the discussion about romantic love and the fragility of human relationships and feelings. Only a few confidently examined a range of Auden's poetic methods and effects making good use of 'But I Can't' or 'Lay your sleeping head, my love...' Most candidates restricted their discussion to the given poem and could comment to some extent on the use of hyperbole and the personification of time. A few attempted remarks on the form and use of voice but there was generally a reluctance to look in detail at the second half of the poem, and consider the effects and significance of the imagery and tone. Weaker essays offered very thin summaries revealing rather literal thinking so that 'fields of harvest wheat' meant he was walking in the countryside. Contextual allusion relied heavily on the poet's autobiographical details without always using ideas to support analysis of the poem.

Question 2

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca* and *My Children! My Africa!*

This has become a popular text. Candidates have obviously enjoyed the plays and engaged with the political ideas and contexts, showing some knowledge of conditions under Apartheid. However, there is a reluctance to discuss the texts as theatrical experiences and focus on Fugard's dramatic methods and effects. To write well on these plays candidates need to display more detailed knowledge of relevant, specific scenes, so they can analyse how the writer creates effects and shapes an audience's response to the characters. Particularly in answer to (b) questions, more consideration should be given to Fugard's language and the way he controls tone and conveys emotion through the sentence structure.

- (a) This was the minority choice. Most candidates had more success discussing characterisation in the light of Fugard's concern with betrayal and trust but tended to pay less attention to the creation of dramatic effects. They also found it easier to deal with *My Children! My Africa!* and some restricted their answers to the one play. They were interested in the conflict of education versus direct action and investigated Mr M's idealism and investment in Thami, his denunciation of the names to the

police and Thami's betrayal of his comrades in warning Mr M and offering to lie to save his life. These discussions, focusing on the relationship between the two characters, with some consideration of Isabel's position and feelings on Thami's withdrawal from the competition; the death of Mr M revealed a good level of detailed knowledge and some intelligent insight into the characters. Only a few, however, had enough quotations and detailed specific references to particular confrontations or soliloquies, to analyse the dramatic effects. Treatment of *The Road to Mecca* was more generalised, with candidates over-investing in the relationship between Elsa and David – betraying his wife and having little to say about the way Fugard leads up to the revelation of Helen's 'accident' with the fire and the extent to which Elsa feels betrayed by Helen's lies. Modest answers tended to write about the ideas, explaining them clearly but with knowledge confined to aspects of plot and some sound but generalised descriptions of characters.

- (b) Many candidates showed a sound grasp of character and situation, with the best essays focusing on the central focus of the scene: 'If my Mecca is finished, Elsa, then so is my life' and linking it to the rest of the play to discuss the significance of the sculptures, the symbolism of the candles and the attempted suicide. They showed some insight into the ways Fugard dramatises Helen's fears: the anecdote about her childhood, the reference to herself in the third person 'that little girl', the focus on courage: 'Such brave little lights', the relationship with Marius and the significance of 'the moment'. A few discussed the impact of his entrance at the end and the tone he might use when he says 'Ah, Miss Barlow!' They also paid attention to the presentation of Elsa here and elsewhere in the play, noting examples of her harshness and the irony that 'I don't think I know anything'. Very few linked this scene to specific moments in the wider text such as the one when the stage is lit by candles. More modest answers adopted an explanatory approach, showing some clear understanding of the context and significance of the scene, focusing on descriptions of the characters, rather than the dramatic presentation of them in this scene and elsewhere. For example they spent too long explaining the reference to the woman with the baby on her back. It was clear that the apparent simplicity of the language lured some candidates into attempting the question without having the necessary knowledge of the wider text. The restricted discussion of the extract tended to use a running commentary approach which lead to some reliance on paraphrase and repetition. The best of these picked up on the symbolic fear of 'Darkness' and death and the use of light to suggest hope, but showed some confusion over what the 'secret' might be, or the significance of 'the moment'. Some candidates with only a partial understanding of the plot thought that Marius wanted to put Helen in a home so that he and his church could take possession of her house.

Question 3

L.P.HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This continues to be quite a popular text and candidates clearly enjoy the story and know the plot. Responses to both questions were however restricted by a lack detailed knowledge and appropriate quotations; not enough attention was paid to the effects of Hartley's use of the dual perspective of the young and elderly Leo.

- (a) Trimingham was often given a straight character study, one of general approval for his decency, good manners, friendliness to Leo, lack of snobbery and loyalty to Marion. This was a straightforward question though candidates did not always focus on how Trimingham is presented – through the eyes of young Leo – and some of the effects of this, for example Leo's response to his physical deformities, the embarrassment over his 'ambiguous social position' and how Trimingham's interactions with Leo reveal aspects of Leo's personality and thinking. A few considered some of the ways Hartley made him a sympathetic character and had quotations to show his humour and ability to make Leo feel at ease or important. The best essays analysed the means by which Hartley shapes a reader's response to Trimingham through Leo's experience of him, details included were: his change in attitude on knowing his title, his position in the Zodiac as The Archer, the comparison of Trimingham and Ted's appearance at the celebratory supper and some details within the conversations, particularly on the 'fifth Viscount' which allow the readers to understand more of Trimingham's feelings for Marion than Leo is aware of. Weaker essays restricted their answers to rather thin character portraits with very few specific references or quotations from key scenes.
- (b) Better answers managed to maintain a balance between detailed analysis of the way Hartley presents Leo's thought processes in the extract with relevant details from the wider text, such as Leo's experience at school and the awful trauma of the discovery of the lovers with its dreadful

repercussions. Many answers showed sound understanding of the significance of the content, how Leo must do everything by application of rules and needed to recall the various rules of schooldays before justifying his reading the visible bit of the letter. Some discussed the symbolic significance of the edge of the letter being ‘sharp’ its potential to hurt Leo. Good answers looked closely at how Hartley’s sentence structure conveys the twists and turns of Leo’s thought and the diction at times reveals the retrospective narrative point of view of the elderly Leo or the tendency to self-dramatisation in youthful Leo with the accompanying irony of ‘matters of life and death...if she would get into the most frightful row.’ Those answers which showed evidence of this sort of close reading did well. Weaker answers tended to discuss the passage rather generally as a reflection of how Leo is making a journey from childhood to adulthood without providing a context for the passage or referring to its influence on later events or drifted away from the passage, tending to embark on narrative summaries or attempting to explore Leo’s relationship with Marion.

Question 4

LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

This has not yet become a popular text though candidates who have studied the poems in depth have clearly enjoyed them, understood the ideas and begun to appreciate the wit and precision of Lochhead’s choice of language, control of tone and range of voices and effects. To do well with this text, candidates need to go beyond a superficial discussion of the ideas or a summary and display a literary appreciation of Lochhead’s poetic methods and how she shapes a reader’s response. It is not a good idea for candidates to attempt the (b) question as an unseen, because without detailed analysis and reference to the wider text they are providing a partial response to the question.

- (a) This was a straightforward question allowing candidates to select relevant poems such as ‘Poem for My Sister’, ‘Revelation’, ‘The Teachers’, ‘Everybody’s Mother’ or with careful argument – aspects of ‘The Choosing’. Answers could have explored the ways Lochhead presents innocence and vulnerability or uses memory and covered such characteristic methods as her use of dramatic or concrete situation, her energetic or reflective use of colloquial speech patterns punctuated by the calculated use of repetition, the sound effects of her language and sentence structure and judicious choice and placing of specific descriptive detail.
- (b) A few candidates opted for this question. There were a few excellent answers which showed thorough knowledge and understanding of the sonnet form, and explored the language and structure of the poem with intelligent insight into the way Lochhead develops ideas about the transformative power of love to change people and their perception of the world. They commented on the universalising and positive effects of the use of the first person plural pronoun; the impact of the simplicity of the diction, the enjambment and caesura of ‘but all we know/ Is: love surprises us.’ the use of natural imagery, and the positive affirmation in the final rhyming couplet. They seized with relish on phrases such as ‘gladrag finery’. The extent to which this poem is characteristic of Lochhead did not receive much attention, though some made general reference to more personal poems of disappointment or loss. Unfortunately this omission restricted the marks available to candidates who were obviously more than proficient in the skills of practical criticism. Those who were approaching the poem as an unseen tended to paraphrase and sometimes struggled to follow the meaning, finding the sentence structure in the sestet something of a challenge. They tended to note the rhyme scheme in a mechanical way and to explain the meaning rather than commenting on methods and effects.

Question 5

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

This continues to be a popular text. The (a) question had a quotation which needed to be addressed and the (b) question as usual required some reference to the wider text in order to comment on the extent to which the extract is characteristic of Mansfield’s methods and concerns. Both questions proved to be equally popular with candidates probably finding more success in responding to the essay question. Many responses revealed an over-investment in biographical details or contextual material on the patriarchal society.

- (a) This was a popular choice with the best responses carefully selecting stories where they could focus on Mansfield’s use of ‘the moment’ and consider how and to what extent characters came to a new understanding of their feelings or their view of the world. The most successful offered close readings of ‘Bliss’, ‘The Garden Party’, ‘Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding’ and ‘Millie’ and

generated some robust arguments on how far the characters were given self-awareness which is why ‘The Doll’s House’ and ‘The Woman at the Store’ proved problematic for candidates attempting this question. Many ignored the quotation and focused on the presentation of characters in any combination of stories, often doing little more than offering detailed summaries of the plot with some description of character. The best answers showed a good understanding of Mansfield’s modernist techniques and had a critical framework available to them. This included appropriate use of literary terms such as ‘stream of consciousness’, ‘first person viewpoint’, ‘omniscient narrative’ and ‘epiphany’ which enabled the discussion to be more tightly focused on the question of ‘ways’. There were a few insightful discussions of the ambivalence of the endings. Some competent responses attempted to link stories by theme – attitudes to marriage, motherhood, or class and were able to explore the use of symbolism, such as the pear tree in ‘Bliss’, or Laura’s newly awakened awareness of her class consciousness through her observations on the workmen appreciating the lavender and the significance of her hat. Weaker responses lacked detailed knowledge and made some clumsy links between some of the characters such as Bertha or Linda to Mansfield’s own life.

- (b) This was also a popular choice with the most successful covering the complexities of character and situation, both explicit and implicit, within the passage though very few referred to the ending of the story and Beryl’s encounter with Harry Kember – which could have informed discussion of the Kemberts’ marriage, his reputation and the predatory behaviour and imagery associated with Mrs. Kember. Few picked up on the final description of her as ‘a horrible caricature of her husband.’ There was however some perceptive and robust engagement with authorial method and narrative voice as candidates analysed the way the language generated the gossipy critical tones of other women at the Bay and noted that we never learn the inner thoughts of Mrs. Kember so that makes her motives suspicious and readers concerned for Beryl’s well-being. Good answers to (b) questions are characterised by a willingness to show evidence of close reading and analysis and here some deconstructed Beryl’s ambivalence towards Mrs Kember, and considered the implications of ‘a bold, evil feeling started up in her breast’ and ‘she felt she was being poisoned by this cold woman, but she longed to hear.’ Some appreciated the sensuousness of the description where Beryl gives herself to the movement of the sea, comparing the effect to that generated by the description of Mrs. Kember. Competent answers looked at the descriptive language for all three characters and discussed how social conventions were being challenged, with some relevant discussion of the social context, with occasionally some brief references to Beryl and Linda in other stories. Less successful responses did not get beyond rather simple personal response to Mrs. Kember’s smoking and the disparity in ages and physical attractiveness in her marriage, or only covered part of the passage, ignoring Beryl. Some drifted away from the passage into extended, unsubstantiated autobiographical detail and vague, contextual allusions to feminism.

Question 6

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

This was the favoured text this session with both questions proving equally popular and provoking answers across the range. There were some candidates who had had access to critical material which they could apply to the text itself and use to develop their responses to both questions. Those who considered the text as a theatrical experience, and showed detailed knowledge and appreciation of relevant scenes did well.

- (a) Most candidates were able to explain how there was some doubt as to whether it was Stanley’s birthday and that the treatment of Stanley before the party, his silence during it and the bizarre and violent nature of the game of Blind Man’s Buff challenged an audience’s expectations of a birthday party. Basic responses showed some clear understanding that the birthday party was where the main action happens but they struggled to grapple with the absurdist nature of the play, expressing bewilderment at the absence of proper friends and birthday cake. Better answers were able to argue that although it was not Stanley’s calendar birthday, symbolically it was his birthday; given the various suggestions of his guilt in betraying the organisation or ill-treatment of women, his enforced breakdown and appearance in a suit suggested that he was reborn into conventional society. A few good answers placed their discussion of the title within the context of the Theatre of the Absurd and discussed some of the ways Pinter generates ambiguity by withholding or contradicting information or shocking an audience. They also showed a practical appreciation of the ‘Comedy of Menace’ by focusing in some detail on the dramatic methods used in the presentation of the party itself. Many showed a straightforward understanding of the dramatic effects caused by the use of the drum, the significance of the breaking of the glasses and the blindfold, but a few good answers discussed the varying effects of the use of the blackout and

torches twice, the sound effects and the resulting uncomfortable laughter together with the shock of the violence towards Meg and Lulu. The weakest responses ignored the question and struggled to generate some discussion of its meaning and effects.

- (b) Better responses had knowledge of the wider text and were able to place the extract in the immediate context of the eruption of violence in the previous interrogation scene and link forward to the game of Blind Man's Buff and the attacks on Meg and Lulu. Most showed some intelligent appreciation of the dramatic effects of the use of the drum, the stage business with the chairs and the significance of Stanley asking for his glasses. A few good answers used their understanding of the Comedy of Menace to analyse the scene. For example some appreciated the comic visual and linguistic effects of Goldberg's insistence that Meg 'promenade to the kitchen', his exaggerated praise for her 'deportment' and the absurdity of saying she looked 'like a Gladiola'. Others drew attention to the subversive nature of Goldberg's language in speaking to or about 'the birthday boy', how despite the apparent friendliness of the language. 'Maybe Stan'll play us a little tune afterwards' the tone and effect are one of menace. A few of the best responses discussed the initial comic effect of McCann's mistakenly shining the torch on Meg and the threatening effect of torch illuminating Stanley, and then showed how this happened again, in more bizarre fashion in the Blind Man's Buff scene. Less assured responses explained the events, usually managing to comment on Meg's attention-seeking behaviour, Goldberg's ability to flatter and flirt while Stanley is isolated and mostly silent. Many picked up on the use of 'your Stanley' by Goldberg and embarked on a more restricted essay dealing with Meg's relationships with Petey and Stanley in Act 1. Weaker responses tended to focus on Meg in a rather simple sometimes judgemental way, focusing on the repetition as evidence of her stupidity, suggesting that she was a flirt who had no business tolerating the slap on the bottom but was trying to make Stanley jealous.

Question 7

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*.

This continues to be a popular text with candidates at all levels showing personal engagement with the story and some appreciation of Roy's political and social concerns. Both questions provoked answers across the range. The discriminating factor in answers to both questions was the way some candidates made good use of pertinent quotations to discuss how the choice of language and stylistic features shape a reader's response to the characters or concerns and generate a range of effects.

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to compare the characters and bring out their similarities and differences to some extent. The weakest responses tended to simplify the roles of Ammu and Baby Kochamma to that of victim and villain; usually explained by Baby Kochamma's jealousy of Ammu for having been married, and outrage at her divorce and relationship with an Untouchable. There was often much explanation of the caste rules and the position of unmarried women in society which needed to be more firmly tied to the question and supported by textual detail. Very few mentioned Baby Kochamma's humiliation by the Communists at the demonstration and how this anger was projected onto Velutha. Basic responses tended to give sequential accounts of the characters. A few candidates showed insecure knowledge and thought they were sisters and that their parents had been discriminatory in denying Ammu higher education and sending Baby Kochamma to university. Competent answers showed detailed knowledge but were often descriptive in approach. Better responses linked the characters to the wider concerns of the novel and its structure by bringing out the various parallel events to show how both characters had tested the boundaries of the 'Love Laws'. Good candidates had pertinent quotations to bring out the contrast in the characters' treatment of the twins and resisted the temptation to idealise Ammu as a mother, suggesting that her hurtful remarks and reckless behaviour were not intended to harm others whereas Baby Kochamma's lies to the police and manipulation of the twins and Chacko were calculated ploys to protect herself. The most sophisticated responses successfully answered the question through skilfully integrated, sustained comparison throughout the essay of the characters, their roles and the language used to describe them.
- (b) This was a very rich passage and most candidates were able to respond to the challenge of showing some ability to for close reading and appreciation of Roy's narrative methods and concerns. The best responses engaged very productively with the drama and significance of the scene by carefully combining close textual analysis with pertinent, integrated wider textual and thematic evidence. They went for the focus of the passage: the role of the police as 'history's henchmen' and their lack of any sense that Velutha was 'fellow creature' and wrote in detail about the various ways Roy portrayed and explained their lack of humanity. Others explained the context

and offered a more or less detailed running commentary, but often drifted into paraphrase or away from the passage into explanations of Roy's political concerns and activism. Many candidates considered the narrative point of view and explored the effects generated by a range of stylistic features such as the various visual and sound effects in the first few paragraphs and the equally horrific distancing effect of the 'clinical' diction in the second half. They took various opportunities to relish the impact of a range of characteristic stylistic devices such as the dramatic compression in the hyphenated description 'Blue-lipped and dinner-plate-eyed', the significance here and elsewhere of motifs and capitalisation such as 'Men's Needs' and the 'Heart of Darkness' and the various effects generated throughout the passage by Roy's sentence structure: the use of minor sentences, lists and the repetition of 'They didn't ...'. The best responses distinguished themselves by picking on very specific details such as the candidate who explored the tone of 'human history masquerading as God's purpose' and discussed the effects of referring to the twins as 'an under-age audience' watching a 'live performance.' Less assured candidates were able to identify the irony in Roy's portrayal of the police both within the passage and show how their behaviour contrasted with the Police mission statement earlier in the novel. They often showed some personal response to the impact of the language and tone by selecting apt if overlong quotations, copied or written out with unhelpful ellipsis; for example: 'Unlike the custom ... Or behead him.' This formulation does not allow for analysis of language and effect and consequently comments tended to be restricted to some general explanation of meaning, or assertion of tone or effect. The least successful responses came from candidates with limited experience perhaps of this sort of close analysis, whose knowledge and ability to express ideas is restricted to a summary of the plot and some general information about social context and autobiographical material.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
20th Century Writing

Key Messages

- Candidates need to show detailed knowledge of the texts, selected for relevance to the terms of the questions.
- Candidates need to make more frequent and effective use of pertinent quotations to demonstrate some understanding of narrative, poetic and dramatic methods and effects.
- Candidates choosing (b) questions must ensure that they relate the passage to the wider text.

General Comments

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers and while some texts are obviously more popular than others, generally speaking at all levels candidates showed evidence of personal engagement and some clear understanding of the various writers' concerns. The most impressive scripts displayed substantive textual knowledge with pertinent quotations, some detailed analysis informed by relevant contextual or critical knowledge and enthusiastic, personal response based on close reading of the texts. In the (a) responses the most successful candidates made good attempts to explore the writers' use of narrative, poetic or dramatic techniques, showing excellent and sensitive knowledge of the whole text with a good command and appropriate use of literary terminology. Less successful candidates depended upon narrative summary or paraphrased approaches which did not always lend themselves to a cogently developed critical discussion or argument. In responses to the (b) questions there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This restricted discussion of the significance and effect of specific details within the passages and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic' of a writer's methods or concerns. It was noticeable this session that many candidates had one answer that was significantly stronger than the other. The weakest scripts came from candidates attempting (b) questions on texts that they did not appear to have studied in any detail, notably on Fugard and Mansfield. At best they were able to identify some aspects of a writer's concerns and sometimes they offered some general contextual or biographical material, but responses were limited by a surface reading of the passages, attempting to make basic deductions about theme or characters with very little evidence of knowledge of the wider text.

There were a few rubric errors with some candidates offering only one text. Some scripts delivered short under-developed responses or over-long answers in which the candidates lost sight of the question. This session, however, an increasing number of candidates showed evidence of deconstructing the questions and planning their answers so that even when there was not enough detailed textual knowledge and analysis, the answers were more focused and clearly structured. They embedded the key terms of the questions into their answers, often signalling the direction of their arguments by appropriate use of discourse markers such as *moreover, in addition, in contrast* and *on the other hand*. In the best essays, each paragraph signalled a new stage in a coherent argument but in weaker essays, points tended to be blurred together or revisited, losing clarity and coherence. Candidates continue to experience some difficulty in structuring a response to the (b) questions. A line-by-line approach is too indiscriminate and causes problems with time management. A more useful strategy is to read the whole extract and then focus on the crux of the extract, its significance for the text as a whole, its introduction or development of particular themes or characters followed up by some detailed analysis of how the writer shapes meaning and effects. The most obvious aspect of exam essay writing technique for centres to focus on in future is the use of quotations. Candidates need a bank of short, multi-purpose quotations so that they can show some judgement in selecting them and making them relevant to the question or point under consideration. Some candidates often selected apt quotations but tended to use them to support simple observations, only implying some response to the language by some assertion of tone or effect. Particularly in responses to (b) questions, they copied out overlong quotations from the extracts or signalled whole paragraphs by writing the first and last words, leaving out the significant words which could be worthy of analysis. More candidates

need to develop the skill of embedding short single words or phrases within an analytical sentence so that a quotation is not just used to support a view of an idea or character but can be followed up by some consideration of how the choice of language: the diction, tone, sound effects of the words and the sentence structure contribute to the effects in the context of the passage and how far such examples are characteristic of a writer's methods in the wider text. Increasingly some centres are training candidates to use quotations from the critics. This can be helpful in developing an argument, especially when a candidate can support or challenge the critical view with detailed application to the primary text but knowledge about the texts should not be a substitute for detailed knowledge of the primary text and a personalised response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

W.H. AUDEN: Selected Poems

This was not a popular text this session. Both questions were accessible with candidates probably performing better on the (a) question which was the preferred option.

- (a) This was an open question in that candidates could make the case for using a wide variety of poems to explore the idea of 'suffering'. The most popular angle was to look at those concerned with indifference to the suffering of others as in 'Refugee Blues', 'Musée des Beaux Arts' or more personal reflections on relationships such as 'But I Can't' or 'The More Loving One'. The key issue which differentiated proficient from weaker essays was the extent to which candidates focused on 'means and effects' and treated the poems as poetic expressions of ideas or feelings rather than summarising the ideas within the poems. There was a tendency to see Auden as preaching peace to the world. Better candidates sometimes considered 'methods', the use of voices, allusions, visual imagery and repetition. More modest answers were often unbalanced with one central discussion of a single poem and relatively superficial treatment of two others. Weaker essays offered simple summaries which were not detailed or accurate or occasionally candidates wrote about too many poems with superficial treatment of each one.
- (b) This was a long poem and those candidates who tended to work from start to finish, attempting to paraphrase, sometimes ran out of time and also found it difficult to refer to the wider text. Better essays made links with Auden's general concerns such as love and time and although these were often not well detailed, the knowledge helped to develop the discussion about romantic love and the fragility of human relationships and feelings. Only a few confidently examined a range of Auden's poetic methods and effects making good use of 'But I Can't' or 'Lay your sleeping head, my love...' Most candidates restricted their discussion to the given poem and could comment to some extent on the use of hyperbole and the personification of time. A few attempted remarks on the form and use of voice but there was generally a reluctance to look in detail at the second half of the poem, and consider the effects and significance of the imagery and tone. Weaker essays offered very thin summaries revealing rather literal thinking so that 'fields of harvest wheat' meant he was walking in the countryside. Contextual allusion relied heavily on the poet's autobiographical details without always using ideas to support analysis of the poem.

Question 2

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca* and *My Children! My Africa!*

This has become a popular text. Candidates have obviously enjoyed the plays and engaged with the political ideas and contexts, showing some knowledge of conditions under Apartheid. However, there is a reluctance to discuss the texts as theatrical experiences and focus on Fugard's dramatic methods and effects. To write well on these plays candidates need to display more detailed knowledge of relevant, specific scenes, so they can analyse how the writer creates effects and shapes an audience's response to the characters. Particularly in answer to (b) questions, more consideration should be given to Fugard's language and the way he controls tone and conveys emotion through the sentence structure.

- (a) This was the minority choice. Most candidates had more success discussing characterisation in the light of Fugard's concern with betrayal and trust but tended to pay less attention to the creation of dramatic effects. They also found it easier to deal with *My Children! My Africa!* and some restricted their answers to the one play. They were interested in the conflict of education versus direct action and investigated Mr M's idealism and investment in Thami, his denunciation of the names to the

police and Thami's betrayal of his comrades in warning Mr M and offering to lie to save his life. These discussions, focusing on the relationship between the two characters, with some consideration of Isabel's position and feelings on Thami's withdrawal from the competition; the death of Mr M revealed a good level of detailed knowledge and some intelligent insight into the characters. Only a few, however, had enough quotations and detailed specific references to particular confrontations or soliloquies, to analyse the dramatic effects. Treatment of *The Road to Mecca* was more generalised, with candidates over-investing in the relationship between Elsa and David – betraying his wife and having little to say about the way Fugard leads up to the revelation of Helen's 'accident' with the fire and the extent to which Elsa feels betrayed by Helen's lies. Modest answers tended to write about the ideas, explaining them clearly but with knowledge confined to aspects of plot and some sound but generalised descriptions of characters.

- (b) Many candidates showed a sound grasp of character and situation, with the best essays focusing on the central focus of the scene: 'If my Mecca is finished, Elsa, then so is my life' and linking it to the rest of the play to discuss the significance of the sculptures, the symbolism of the candles and the attempted suicide. They showed some insight into the ways Fugard dramatises Helen's fears: the anecdote about her childhood, the reference to herself in the third person 'that little girl', the focus on courage: 'Such brave little lights', the relationship with Marius and the significance of 'the moment'. A few discussed the impact of his entrance at the end and the tone he might use when he says 'Ah, Miss Barlow!' They also paid attention to the presentation of Elsa here and elsewhere in the play, noting examples of her harshness and the irony that 'I don't think I know anything'. Very few linked this scene to specific moments in the wider text such as the one when the stage is lit by candles. More modest answers adopted an explanatory approach, showing some clear understanding of the context and significance of the scene, focusing on descriptions of the characters, rather than the dramatic presentation of them in this scene and elsewhere. For example they spent too long explaining the reference to the woman with the baby on her back. It was clear that the apparent simplicity of the language lured some candidates into attempting the question without having the necessary knowledge of the wider text. The restricted discussion of the extract tended to use a running commentary approach which lead to some reliance on paraphrase and repetition. The best of these picked up on the symbolic fear of 'Darkness' and death and the use of light to suggest hope, but showed some confusion over what the 'secret' might be, or the significance of 'the moment'. Some candidates with only a partial understanding of the plot thought that Marius wanted to put Helen in a home so that he and his church could take possession of her house.

Question 3

L.P.HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This continues to be quite a popular text and candidates clearly enjoy the story and know the plot. Responses to both questions were however restricted by a lack detailed knowledge and appropriate quotations; not enough attention was paid to the effects of Hartley's use of the dual perspective of the young and elderly Leo.

- (a) Trimingham was often given a straight character study, one of general approval for his decency, good manners, friendliness to Leo, lack of snobbery and loyalty to Marion. This was a straightforward question though candidates did not always focus on how Trimingham is presented – through the eyes of young Leo – and some of the effects of this, for example Leo's response to his physical deformities, the embarrassment over his 'ambiguous social position' and how Trimingham's interactions with Leo reveal aspects of Leo's personality and thinking. A few considered some of the ways Hartley made him a sympathetic character and had quotations to show his humour and ability to make Leo feel at ease or important. The best essays analysed the means by which Hartley shapes a reader's response to Trimingham through Leo's experience of him, details included were: his change in attitude on knowing his title, his position in the Zodiac as The Archer, the comparison of Trimingham and Ted's appearance at the celebratory supper and some details within the conversations, particularly on the 'fifth Viscount' which allow the readers to understand more of Trimingham's feelings for Marion than Leo is aware of. Weaker essays restricted their answers to rather thin character portraits with very few specific references or quotations from key scenes.
- (b) Better answers managed to maintain a balance between detailed analysis of the way Hartley presents Leo's thought processes in the extract with relevant details from the wider text, such as Leo's experience at school and the awful trauma of the discovery of the lovers with its dreadful

repercussions. Many answers showed sound understanding of the significance of the content, how Leo must do everything by application of rules and needed to recall the various rules of schooldays before justifying his reading the visible bit of the letter. Some discussed the symbolic significance of the edge of the letter being ‘sharp’ its potential to hurt Leo. Good answers looked closely at how Hartley’s sentence structure conveys the twists and turns of Leo’s thought and the diction at times reveals the retrospective narrative point of view of the elderly Leo or the tendency to self-dramatisation in youthful Leo with the accompanying irony of ‘matters of life and death...if she would get into the most frightful row.’ Those answers which showed evidence of this sort of close reading did well. Weaker answers tended to discuss the passage rather generally as a reflection of how Leo is making a journey from childhood to adulthood without providing a context for the passage or referring to its influence on later events or drifted away from the passage, tending to embark on narrative summaries or attempting to explore Leo’s relationship with Marion.

Question 4

LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

This has not yet become a popular text though candidates who have studied the poems in depth have clearly enjoyed them, understood the ideas and begun to appreciate the wit and precision of Lochhead’s choice of language, control of tone and range of voices and effects. To do well with this text, candidates need to go beyond a superficial discussion of the ideas or a summary and display a literary appreciation of Lochhead’s poetic methods and how she shapes a reader’s response. It is not a good idea for candidates to attempt the (b) question as an unseen, because without detailed analysis and reference to the wider text they are providing a partial response to the question.

- (a) This was a straightforward question allowing candidates to select relevant poems such as ‘Poem for My Sister’, ‘Revelation’, ‘The Teachers’, ‘Everybody’s Mother’ or with careful argument – aspects of ‘The Choosing’. Answers could have explored the ways Lochhead presents innocence and vulnerability or uses memory and covered such characteristic methods as her use of dramatic or concrete situation, her energetic or reflective use of colloquial speech patterns punctuated by the calculated use of repetition, the sound effects of her language and sentence structure and judicious choice and placing of specific descriptive detail.
- (b) A few candidates opted for this question. There were a few excellent answers which showed thorough knowledge and understanding of the sonnet form, and explored the language and structure of the poem with intelligent insight into the way Lochhead develops ideas about the transformative power of love to change people and their perception of the world. They commented on the universalising and positive effects of the use of the first person plural pronoun; the impact of the simplicity of the diction, the enjambment and caesura of ‘but all we know/ Is: love surprises us.’ the use of natural imagery, and the positive affirmation in the final rhyming couplet. They seized with relish on phrases such as ‘gladrag finery’. The extent to which this poem is characteristic of Lochhead did not receive much attention, though some made general reference to more personal poems of disappointment or loss. Unfortunately this omission restricted the marks available to candidates who were obviously more than proficient in the skills of practical criticism. Those who were approaching the poem as an unseen tended to paraphrase and sometimes struggled to follow the meaning, finding the sentence structure in the sestet something of a challenge. They tended to note the rhyme scheme in a mechanical way and to explain the meaning rather than commenting on methods and effects.

Question 5

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

This continues to be a popular text. The (a) question had a quotation which needed to be addressed and the (b) question as usual required some reference to the wider text in order to comment on the extent to which the extract is characteristic of Mansfield’s methods and concerns. Both questions proved to be equally popular with candidates probably finding more success in responding to the essay question. Many responses revealed an over-investment in biographical details or contextual material on the patriarchal society.

- (a) This was a popular choice with the best responses carefully selecting stories where they could focus on Mansfield’s use of ‘the moment’ and consider how and to what extent characters came to a new understanding of their feelings or their view of the world. The most successful offered close readings of ‘Bliss’, ‘The Garden Party’, ‘Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding’ and ‘Millie’ and

generated some robust arguments on how far the characters were given self-awareness which is why ‘The Doll’s House’ and ‘The Woman at the Store’ proved problematic for candidates attempting this question. Many ignored the quotation and focused on the presentation of characters in any combination of stories, often doing little more than offering detailed summaries of the plot with some description of character. The best answers showed a good understanding of Mansfield’s modernist techniques and had a critical framework available to them. This included appropriate use of literary terms such as ‘stream of consciousness’, ‘first person viewpoint’, ‘omniscient narrative’ and ‘epiphany’ which enabled the discussion to be more tightly focused on the question of ‘ways’. There were a few insightful discussions of the ambivalence of the endings. Some competent responses attempted to link stories by theme – attitudes to marriage, motherhood, or class and were able to explore the use of symbolism, such as the pear tree in ‘Bliss’, or Laura’s newly awakened awareness of her class consciousness through her observations on the workmen appreciating the lavender and the significance of her hat. Weaker responses lacked detailed knowledge and made some clumsy links between some of the characters such as Bertha or Linda to Mansfield’s own life.

- (b) This was also a popular choice with the most successful covering the complexities of character and situation, both explicit and implicit, within the passage though very few referred to the ending of the story and Beryl’s encounter with Harry Kember – which could have informed discussion of the Kemberts’ marriage, his reputation and the predatory behaviour and imagery associated with Mrs. Kember. Few picked up on the final description of her as ‘a horrible caricature of her husband.’ There was however some perceptive and robust engagement with authorial method and narrative voice as candidates analysed the way the language generated the gossipy critical tones of other women at the Bay and noted that we never learn the inner thoughts of Mrs. Kember so that makes her motives suspicious and readers concerned for Beryl’s well-being. Good answers to (b) questions are characterised by a willingness to show evidence of close reading and analysis and here some deconstructed Beryl’s ambivalence towards Mrs Kember, and considered the implications of ‘a bold, evil feeling started up in her breast’ and ‘she felt she was being poisoned by this cold woman, but she longed to hear.’ Some appreciated the sensuousness of the description where Beryl gives herself to the movement of the sea, comparing the effect to that generated by the description of Mrs. Kember. Competent answers looked at the descriptive language for all three characters and discussed how social conventions were being challenged, with some relevant discussion of the social context, with occasionally some brief references to Beryl and Linda in other stories. Less successful responses did not get beyond rather simple personal response to Mrs. Kember’s smoking and the disparity in ages and physical attractiveness in her marriage, or only covered part of the passage, ignoring Beryl. Some drifted away from the passage into extended, unsubstantiated autobiographical detail and vague, contextual allusions to feminism.

Question 6

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

This was the favoured text this session with both questions proving equally popular and provoking answers across the range. There were some candidates who had had access to critical material which they could apply to the text itself and use to develop their responses to both questions. Those who considered the text as a theatrical experience, and showed detailed knowledge and appreciation of relevant scenes did well.

- (a) Most candidates were able to explain how there was some doubt as to whether it was Stanley’s birthday and that the treatment of Stanley before the party, his silence during it and the bizarre and violent nature of the game of Blind Man’s Buff challenged an audience’s expectations of a birthday party. Basic responses showed some clear understanding that the birthday party was where the main action happens but they struggled to grapple with the absurdist nature of the play, expressing bewilderment at the absence of proper friends and birthday cake. Better answers were able to argue that although it was not Stanley’s calendar birthday, symbolically it was his birthday; given the various suggestions of his guilt in betraying the organisation or ill-treatment of women, his enforced breakdown and appearance in a suit suggested that he was reborn into conventional society. A few good answers placed their discussion of the title within the context of the Theatre of the Absurd and discussed some of the ways Pinter generates ambiguity by withholding or contradicting information or shocking an audience. They also showed a practical appreciation of the ‘Comedy of Menace’ by focusing in some detail on the dramatic methods used in the presentation of the party itself. Many showed a straightforward understanding of the dramatic effects caused by the use of the drum, the significance of the breaking of the glasses and the blindfold, but a few good answers discussed the varying effects of the use of the blackout and

torches twice, the sound effects and the resulting uncomfortable laughter together with the shock of the violence towards Meg and Lulu. The weakest responses ignored the question and struggled to generate some discussion of its meaning and effects.

- (b) Better responses had knowledge of the wider text and were able to place the extract in the immediate context of the eruption of violence in the previous interrogation scene and link forward to the game of Blind Man's Buff and the attacks on Meg and Lulu. Most showed some intelligent appreciation of the dramatic effects of the use of the drum, the stage business with the chairs and the significance of Stanley asking for his glasses. A few good answers used their understanding of the Comedy of Menace to analyse the scene. For example some appreciated the comic visual and linguistic effects of Goldberg's insistence that Meg 'promenade to the kitchen', his exaggerated praise for her 'deportment' and the absurdity of saying she looked 'like a Gladiola'. Others drew attention to the subversive nature of Goldberg's language in speaking to or about 'the birthday boy', how despite the apparent friendliness of the language. 'Maybe Stan'll play us a little tune afterwards' the tone and effect are one of menace. A few of the best responses discussed the initial comic effect of McCann's mistakenly shining the torch on Meg and the threatening effect of torch illuminating Stanley, and then showed how this happened again, in more bizarre fashion in the Blind Man's Buff scene. Less assured responses explained the events, usually managing to comment on Meg's attention-seeking behaviour, Goldberg's ability to flatter and flirt while Stanley is isolated and mostly silent. Many picked up on the use of 'your Stanley' by Goldberg and embarked on a more restricted essay dealing with Meg's relationships with Petey and Stanley in Act 1. Weaker responses tended to focus on Meg in a rather simple sometimes judgemental way, focusing on the repetition as evidence of her stupidity, suggesting that she was a flirt who had no business tolerating the slap on the bottom but was trying to make Stanley jealous.

Question 7

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*.

This continues to be a popular text with candidates at all levels showing personal engagement with the story and some appreciation of Roy's political and social concerns. Both questions provoked answers across the range. The discriminating factor in answers to both questions was the way some candidates made good use of pertinent quotations to discuss how the choice of language and stylistic features shape a reader's response to the characters or concerns and generate a range of effects.

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to compare the characters and bring out their similarities and differences to some extent. The weakest responses tended to simplify the roles of Ammu and Baby Kochamma to that of victim and villain; usually explained by Baby Kochamma's jealousy of Ammu for having been married, and outrage at her divorce and relationship with an Untouchable. There was often much explanation of the caste rules and the position of unmarried women in society which needed to be more firmly tied to the question and supported by textual detail. Very few mentioned Baby Kochamma's humiliation by the Communists at the demonstration and how this anger was projected onto Velutha. Basic responses tended to give sequential accounts of the characters. A few candidates showed insecure knowledge and thought they were sisters and that their parents had been discriminatory in denying Ammu higher education and sending Baby Kochamma to university. Competent answers showed detailed knowledge but were often descriptive in approach. Better responses linked the characters to the wider concerns of the novel and its structure by bringing out the various parallel events to show how both characters had tested the boundaries of the 'Love Laws'. Good candidates had pertinent quotations to bring out the contrast in the characters' treatment of the twins and resisted the temptation to idealise Ammu as a mother, suggesting that her hurtful remarks and reckless behaviour were not intended to harm others whereas Baby Kochamma's lies to the police and manipulation of the twins and Chacko were calculated ploys to protect herself. The most sophisticated responses successfully answered the question through skilfully integrated, sustained comparison throughout the essay of the characters, their roles and the language used to describe them.
- (b) This was a very rich passage and most candidates were able to respond to the challenge of showing some ability to for close reading and appreciation of Roy's narrative methods and concerns. The best responses engaged very productively with the drama and significance of the scene by carefully combining close textual analysis with pertinent, integrated wider textual and thematic evidence. They went for the focus of the passage: the role of the police as 'history's henchmen' and their lack of any sense that Velutha was 'fellow creature' and wrote in detail about the various ways Roy portrayed and explained their lack of humanity. Others explained the context

and offered a more or less detailed running commentary, but often drifted into paraphrase or away from the passage into explanations of Roy's political concerns and activism. Many candidates considered the narrative point of view and explored the effects generated by a range of stylistic features such as the various visual and sound effects in the first few paragraphs and the equally horrific distancing effect of the 'clinical' diction in the second half. They took various opportunities to relish the impact of a range of characteristic stylistic devices such as the dramatic compression in the hyphenated description 'Blue-lipped and dinner-plate-eyed', the significance here and elsewhere of motifs and capitalisation such as 'Men's Needs' and the 'Heart of Darkness' and the various effects generated throughout the passage by Roy's sentence structure: the use of minor sentences, lists and the repetition of 'They didn't ...'. The best responses distinguished themselves by picking on very specific details such as the candidate who explored the tone of 'human history masquerading as God's purpose' and discussed the effects of referring to the twins as 'an under-age audience' watching a 'live performance.' Less assured candidates were able to identify the irony in Roy's portrayal of the police both within the passage and show how their behaviour contrasted with the Police mission statement earlier in the novel. They often showed some personal response to the impact of the language and tone by selecting apt if overlong quotations, copied or written out with unhelpful ellipsis; for example: 'Unlike the custom ... Or behead him.' This formulation does not allow for analysis of language and effect and consequently comments tended to be restricted to some general explanation of meaning, or assertion of tone or effect. The least successful responses came from candidates with limited experience perhaps of this sort of close analysis, whose knowledge and ability to express ideas is restricted to a summary of the plot and some general information about social context and autobiographical material.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
20th Century Writing

Key Messages

Successful candidates carefully deconstruct the questions, focus on the key words and make sure they select material to cover all the aspects.

To do well on **(b)** questions candidates should focus in detail on the effects of the writing in the given passage but make sure this discussion is informed by references to the wider text.

In both **(a)** and **(b)** questions candidates need to make more productive use of quotations to provide material for detailed analysis of language and effects.

General Comments

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers and while some texts are obviously more popular than others, generally speaking at all levels candidates showed evidence of personal engagement and sound understanding of the various writers' concerns. The most impressive scripts offered substantive textual knowledge with pertinent quotations, detailed analysis informed by relevant contextual or critical knowledge and a perceptive, literary personal response based on a close reading of the texts. In the **(a)** responses the most successful candidates thoroughly explored the writers' use of narrative, poetic or dramatic techniques, showing excellent, detailed knowledge of the whole text with a good command and appropriate use of literary terminology and critical material. Less successful candidates often did not deconstruct the questions carefully enough and wrote partial responses or depended upon narrative summary or paraphrased approaches which did not always lend themselves to a cogently developed critical discussion or argument. In responses to the **(b)** questions there was the tendency from candidates of all levels of ability, to focus exclusively on the passage. This restricted discussion of the significance and effect of specific details within the passages and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic' of a writer's methods or concerns. The weakest scripts came from candidates attempting **(b)** questions on texts that they had not studied in any detail, particularly the given poems and Mansfield's short story 'Mr and Mrs Dove'. At best they were able to identify some aspects of the writer's concerns and sometimes they offered some general contextual or biographical material, but responses were limited by a surface reading of the passages and attempts to make basic deductions about theme or characters with very little evidence of knowledge of the wider text.

There were no rubric errors and most candidates offered two clearly-expressed essays of equal length and substance, many of which were a pleasure to read. Successful candidates showed evidence of planning and thinking in some depth about the implications and significance of ideas and concerns. They used the introduction to consider the terms of the questions and outline a response to it; they embedded the key terms of the questions into their answer, using discourse markers to signpost the direction of their argument so that each paragraph signalled a new stage in a coherent discussion. They created paragraphs of sustained literary analysis, writing strategically to the mark scheme. Conclusions were in some cases however, unproductive with too many candidates dutifully summarising their entire essay. A few scripts delivered short under-developed responses or over-long answers in which the candidates lost sight of the question. Points tended to be blurred together or revisited, losing clarity and coherence. Candidates continue to experience some difficulty in structuring a response to the **(b)** questions. A line-by-line approach is undiscriminating and causes problems with time management. A more useful strategy is to read the whole extract and then focus on the nub of the passage: its significance for the text as a whole, for example its introduction or development of particular themes or characters, followed up by some detailed analysis of how the writer shapes meaning and effects. The most obvious aspect of exam essay writing technique for some centres to focus on in future is the use of quotations and critical material. Candidates need a bank of short,

multi-purpose quotations so that they can show some judgement in selecting them for relevance and effective analysis. Some need to develop the skill of embedding short single words or phrases within an analytical sentence so that a quotation is not just used to support a view of an idea or character but can be followed up by some consideration of the how the choice of language: the diction, tone, sound effects of the words and the sentence structure contribute to the effects in the context of the passage and how far such examples are characteristic of a writer's methods and concerns in the wider text. Increasingly some centres are training candidates to use quotations from the critics. This can be helpful in developing an argument, especially when a candidate can support or challenge the critical view with detailed application to the primary text. There were some superb, informed and nicely judged considerations of ideas about *The Birthday Party* for example. However a detailed discussion of critical material, however intelligent should not be a substitute for more direct, personal engagement and response to the text and on many occasions, these quotations revealed partial understanding, and a difficulty in applying them to the primary text or connecting them to the current argument. Generally speaking many more candidates did well because they focused more directly on the texts themselves and communicated a sensitive awareness of how their understanding and responses were shaped by the writing. There was less investment in biographical material or sense of making-over previous essays and the engagement with both texts and questions this session was considered, lively and very insightful.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 W.H.AUDEN: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice this session with candidates showing a potentially useful level of knowledge of the poems chosen for question (a) and of the given poem in (b). Both questions produced answers across the range with the discriminating factor being the extent to which candidates discussed the 'effects' as well as the ideas within a poem.

- (a) This was an open question which allowed candidates to choose favourite, well-known poems and make them relevant to the question by considering Auden's concern for the individual within society, and anxiety over world affairs. They wrote about aspects of society such as conformity using 'The Unknown Citizen', its treatment of the individual as in 'Refugee Blues' and 'Musée des Beaux Arts' and just occasionally the role of the poet within society, with 'September 1st 1939'. Most of these competently discussed the ideas and supported them with useful quotations but only the very best considered the effects of the language within the quotations and analysed how Auden varies and controls tone, or shapes a reader's response. Most responses were able to discuss some aspects of imagery and the use of repetition or form. More basic responses gave summarised accounts of the poems.
- (b) This was the popular choice and the poem was more successfully done by those candidates who were able to successfully balance a detailed appreciation of the poem with relevant critical reading. Many chose a two-part structure where they analysed the poem first on its literal, military reading and then discussed its metaphorical significance. Just occasionally the most assured candidates moved between the two considering the semantic and sound effects of the language such as 'trained spy' and 'seduced by the old tricks', or the way the threat of intensified by the lack of definition in 'trouble coming' and the vagueness of the precise location of 'the passes'. Good responses made some attempt to deal with the sonnet form and delved into the effects of the natural imagery and tone of acceptance in the final sestet. In a few of the best responses, candidates successfully broadened the discussion to explore Auden's treatment of unrequited love or the transience of relationships. A few referred to Auden's anxiety over world affairs and linked the poem to ' "O where are you going?..." or 'September 1st 1939. Less assured responses asserted an allegorical significance attempting to tie individual images down to specific alternative meanings so that the 'key' and 'new district' represented opportunities and desires in life, references to water and the dam 'equalled sexual awakening,' while 'power' and the reference to 'wires' suggested 'the electricity created between people in a relationship.' Some candidates struggled to use ill-digested critical ideas about a conflict between progressiveness in the second quatrain with the forces of conservatism in the sestet. Weaker responses tended to use paraphrase in order to present some understanding of what the poem is about. These essays often over-invested in details of Auden's homosexuality by way of explanation and as a way of dealing with the second part of the question: the extent to which the poem was 'characteristic of Auden's

methods and concerns' but often this part of the question was neglected by candidates who could offer competent, coherent readings of the poem.

Question 2 ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca* and *My Children! My Africa!*

These straightforward, almost conventional plays are becoming more popular with candidates often showing keen interest in the political and social ideas, some detailed knowledge of the plots but less detailed appreciation of Fugard's dramatic methods and effects. Candidates demonstrated greater success at responding to the (b) question which was the more popular option.

- (a) A good strategy for developing depth in an (a) question using a quotation, is to consider the meaning and significance of the quotation itself. Here, very few candidates seemed to consider how trust in the plays means various things: being honest about one's situation and feelings in *The Road to Mecca*, accepting one's vulnerability and having faith that other people will, despite Elsa's nasty story, catch you when you fall. The idea of taking risks was explored rather more convincingly in *My Children! My Africa!* with candidates focusing on Isabel's willingness to embrace new experiences and some use of the contrast between Isabel and Mr M's faith in education and the literary competition and the sense of betrayal that they feel in Thami's rejection of it in favour of violent action. *The Road to Mecca* was less well known with candidates providing sketchy outlines of the characters and plot, reducing the argument to Helen's need to trust her instincts rather than Marius's plan to move her into a care home. Little was made of Helen's covering up of the significance of the fire and the dramatic consequences on stage of the revelation of the truth. Discussions tended to be restricted by the lack of detailed knowledge of relevant scenes which limited opportunities for discussing dramatic methods and effects. A few explored the use of contrasting characters, and mentioned Fugard's use of soliloquies but without use of significant quotations, comments were generalised and assertive.
- (b) Candidates had more success in bringing out the dramatic power and effects with this extract. Good responses efficiently sketched in the context and situation, and focused on how by presenting the action through the eyes of Mr M., Fugard was able to generate emotional impact on a personal as well as political level. Most were able to comment on the irony of the request for the correct spelling and the inequality in the struggle presented through the juxtaposition of 'children throwing stones and tear gas bombs' in Scene Two. They considered the various ways Fugard shows Mr M.'s desperation and were able to analyse how the visual impact of Mr M standing with a dictionary in one hand and a stone in the other reinforced the bitterness of his recognition that he and his 'wonderful words areuseless, useless, useless.' Because Fugard's language appears to be superficially undemanding, there is a tendency to ignore the effects created by the rhythms of his sentence structure and the use of repetition within speeches and as structural motifs in a play. A few good answers used this reference to 'words' to relate the scenes to the wider text and Mr M's pride in his vocation as a teacher as well as his argument with Thami over the virtues of development through education rather than evils of violent direct action. Less assured responses took an explanatory approach to the context and the scenes, showing knowledge: the reason for Thami's appearance for example, while better responses were able to focus on dramatic methods by focusing on the dramatic irony of Mr M's excitement that one student should still be alive prior to his arrival.

Question 3 L.P. HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This continues to be a popular text on this paper with candidates showing detailed knowledge of the text and appropriate levels of quotation, some useful critical reading to inform the discussion and engagement with the story. Both questions proved popular and produced responses across the range.

- (a) Candidates were able to focus on 'means and effects' by focusing on various social indicators such as use of titles, dress, the way people spoke and the sense of social superiority that came through descriptions of such incidents as finding Ted swimming in the river. Candidates enjoyed teasing out the details of class consciousness in the dialogue and through Leo's observations at the cricket match and the celebration afterwards. In less successful essays this became more of a sociological discussion, using details from the text to write about the English class system and the decline of the old aristocracy and the British Empire in the 'Golden Age' of the twentieth century. Good responses discussed the effects of the narrative point of view and showed how the awareness of class was used to communicate Leo's insecurities at Brandham Hall, his naivety and sense of

being an outsider and how while wishing to identify with the Hall, he experienced conflicts of loyalty at the cricket match. They made good use of detailed knowledge of very specific descriptions such as Leo's pride in his new suit of clothes and the descriptions of the two cricket teams, not just in equipment and manner of playing but as symbolic of a wider class struggle through the comparison of the village team to the Boers. At various levels of detail, most candidates discussed the impossibility of socially mixed marriages and the consequent tragedy of Marion and Ted. Better responses showed a sensitive appreciation of Marion's position and Ted's deference to Marion's wishes on the subject of going to war. They also considered the contrast between Trimingham's politeness and kindness to Leo, in comparison to the snobbery and teasing Leo experiences with Marcus and Denys. The best essays were distinguished by a focus on Leo's perceptions with an ability to comment on quotations to show an intelligent understanding of the way language and tone generate emotion or attitude; shaping a reader's response to the characters and the broader issues.

- (b) The passage stimulated some interesting answers on the novel as an initiation into adulthood for Leo with some close analysis of the narrative point of view. Many commented on the various examples of Leo's youthful ignorance, with the best focusing on the self-conscious awareness of language and its humorous effects as well as its significance for Leo's subsequent rejection of the world of emotions for that of facts. Good answers also focused on the sympathetic presentation of Ted here, his use of euphemism, and the way Hartley uses the dialogue to enable the reader to understand more of Ted's feelings and situation than the youthful Leo can understand or appreciate. Some noted the various ironies of Leo believing himself to be 'crafty', his assertion that he wasn't going to let Ted 'impose his standards' on him, his proud dismissal of 'spooning' and wonder at the word 'Natural!'. Assured responses managed to integrate references to the wider text and knowledge of Hartley's methods and concerns skilfully into paragraphs of detailed literary analysis. Less assured candidates either relied upon an explanation of the situation followed by character portraits with insufficient attention to the details of the passage, or used a running commentary approach which sometimes picked up on significant details such as evidence of the intrusion of the older Leo, but often tended to get bogged down in paraphrase and lacked discrimination.

Question 4 LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

This has not yet become a popular text though candidates who have studied the poems in depth have clearly enjoyed them, understood the ideas and begun to appreciate the wit and precision of Lochhead's choice of language, control of tone and range of voices and effects. The (b) question was the more popular choice and usually better done, though many did not show enough evidence of knowledge of the wider text.

- (a) Better responses attempted to consider some of the various ways Lochhead presents 'attitudes to love.' There was a very full, sensitive appreciation of the transforming effect of love using 'The New-married Miner,' linked to the sonnet 'Epithalamium' and then contrasted with the bitter disappointment and freer form of 'Obituary' but it was rare to find this careful structuring of a response to the question. Most candidates identified different kinds of love as romantic or for different family members and produced sometimes quite competent accounts of such poems as 'Persimmons', 'Obituary' or 'For my Grandmother Knitting' with some sound but restricted comments on Lochhead's use of colloquial diction, specific detail and repetition in passing. Some answers found it difficult to cover three poems in a similar amount of detail.
- (b) Most candidates understood the point of the given poem, 'The Choosing,' and clearly enjoyed teasing out aspects of its craftsmanship and appeal. Many candidates showed a sophisticated ability for practical criticism, based on close sensitive reading and a keen appreciation of many aspects of Lochhead's poetic methods and effects. Good responses appreciated the way the ideas of equality and difference were developed through the use of repetition. Many candidates identified the structural function of 'I remember... I remember' and considered the effects of the deceptively simple language in the broader philosophical conclusion that clarifies the title of the poem. Much was also successfully analysed in the final line with its use of alliteration and repetition with a difference: 'wonder when the choices got made/ don't remember making.' Many commented on the choice and placing of particular words, together with the way the rhythms of natural speech cut across the lines or are visually paused by placing 'Mary' on a line by itself. The best responses gained full marks because they were also able to refer to the wider text to make points of comparison about the presentation of the poetic voice, particularly the frequently used reflective

voice which took a memory or a concrete situation as a starting point. The majority of the essays unfortunately restricted themselves only to the given poem, but within these accounts there were some very good, personal considerations of many of the poetic effects. Candidates were able to build up substantial paragraphs of sustained literary analysis by considering details such as the way at various points, the syntax reinforced the idea of equality, from the structure of the first line, the repetition with a difference of 'First Equal, equally proud', together with the effect on the tone and rhythm of the juxtaposition and use of the parentheses in 'cleverest (equal)'. There were some equally astute and sensitive discussions of the various effects of details such as the implications of pregnancy in 'the full-shaped vase/that is her body' and tone in 'not that I envy her, really.' Less assured responses gave an account of the poem with some discussion of the details in a straight forward, descriptive or explanatory way. They often seized upon the significant phrase 'same houses, different homes', for example and sometimes drifted away from the poem to discuss gender issues or express personal feelings about fathers who, short of money, do not value and prioritise education for their daughters.

Question 5 KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

This continues to be a favourite text on this paper. Both questions were popular with (a) question tending to be more successfully done because many able candidates had relevant detailed knowledge of appropriate stories, while few of those opting for (b) seemed to know how the story developed or ended. Good answers were distinguished by a literary approach. More modest attempts tended to adopt an explanatory approach often over-investing in the sociological context or biographical material.

- (a) The differentiating factor with this question was the extent to which candidates considered the quotation in the question, and selected and shaped their material accordingly. While 'The Garden Party', 'Bliss' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' were popular choices there were also some insightful detailed discussions of 'Psychology', 'Millie', 'The Wind Blows' and 'Prelude'. Use of 'The Doll's House' or 'The Woman at the Store' proved to be more problematic because of the narrative point of view and produced weaker responses. More able candidates focused firmly on those 'moments' of epiphany in the stories and had short, pertinent quotations available to enable them to discuss some of the ways Mansfield expresses feelings. They provided some paragraphs of sustained critical appreciation of the way choice of language and sentence structure create a 'stream of consciousness' for a particular character, and discussed the role of natural imagery and symbolism as triggers for a character's moment of awareness. Candidates were often able to structure their essays by choosing stories to explore particular concerns or to compare or contrast particular characters such as married women, younger women, men as in 'Feuille d'Album' and 'A Married Man's Story' but less successful essays lost sight of the question and focused on more general discussions about the patriarchal society, women's liberation and class-consciousness. The most mature responses saw Mansfield as having a broader, more humane awareness and also recognised that understanding did not necessarily alter the circumstances of life, or make it more easily endurable. The uncertainty of the endings of some stories was also well considered and the ambivalence of the outcomes. Less assured answers relied on character portraits or narrative summary, but most managed some discussion on symbolism.
- (b) Most candidates were able to engage with the character of Reggie to some extent with the best answers looking quite closely at how Mansfield's control of language and syntax in particular sentences created the stream of Reggie's consciousness and conveyed his nervous sense of unworthy desperation. They commented on the negativity in the diction at various points in the passage, the repetition of 'preposterous', 'impertinence', details of his financial situation, the momentary confused distraction at the green hair and contrasted this with the romantic idealised portrait of her 'delicate little nose, her perfect lips...' A few mature responses considered the implications of the fantasy to suggest that men were just as much victims of conventional romantic gender roles as women and made a relevant point of comparison to Beryl's fantasy of two people standing kissing in her room in 'The Bay.' Other responses discussed the ways Mansfield presents the idea of recognising and accepting love using the young man 'whose heart fell out of the side window of his studio' in Feuille d'Album and the couple in 'Psychology'. Most candidates however did not seem able to use the rest of the story to inform their discussions or to consider using other stories to discuss characteristic methods and concerns. More modest responses focused on the character and some provided quite detailed portraits, generally regarding Reggie as weak and inadequate. Most ignored or misunderstood the final paragraph about his mother. They recognised 'the stream of consciousness' and noted the use of dashes, ellipses and beginning sentences with

conjunctions but found it difficult to grasp the tone. The weakest responses used paraphrase to describe Reggie, sometimes misunderstanding the reference to the 'mater' in the last paragraph. Some attempted to broaden the discussion by commenting on the social context in terms of marriage, money and class and drifted into generalised comments on Mansfield's concerns.

Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

This was the most popular text on the paper and both questions produced answers across the range. Many candidates were able to support their answers with relevant critical reading, the key issue being the extent to which they were able to apply the comments to the detail of the text and treat the text as drama, not as a set of philosophical or political ideas.

- (a) This was the more popular choice and those candidates who focused more appreciatively on specific scenes within the play tended to do better than those who launched into detailed critical views of 'the meaning' of the play, the social and historical context and Pinter's broader political anxieties about the relationship between the individual and the state. Those who were able to judiciously select their textual and critical material to show the integration of comedy and menace and analyse how Pinter worked on the audience to disconcert them, challenge expectation, generate unease and nervous laughter as a relief from tension did well. There were some really good, well supported discussions of the various dramatic methods and effects used in the interrogation scenes and the party, and how menace was generated by undermining security, offering conflicting information or withholding it altogether. Just occasionally a candidate would admit to 'a dark chuckle or two' at Pinter's use of language, or the slap-stick stage business with the torches. However, 'comedy' seemed to elude most candidates and though some could produce 'a funny bit' usually found in what was perceived as Meg's ridiculously flirty behaviour, weaker responses ignored the word and focused on the sources of menace in terms of characters and dramatic moments. A popular approach was to look at how deluded the characters were and how they could not protect themselves from external threats or the need for social conformity.
- (b) There were some very good commentaries on this extraordinary episode, particularly from those who were secure in the knowledge of its context and prepared to focus on aspects of the language and draw out its various comic effects. Most answers placed the antics of McCann and especially of Goldberg in this scene against their behaviour elsewhere in the play and found much to consider, including Goldberg's dramatic failure to articulate his ideas and the ambiguity generated by Goldberg's reference to himself here as 'Benny'. Most answers were able to examine the actions in the scene in terms of the power play between the two characters to some extent. Those who knew that the scene follows McCann's refusal to 'go up there again' and Goldberg's violent reaction to being addressed as 'Simey' explained Goldberg's bizarre request as a demand for absolute obedience from McCann. Others suggested that Goldberg was having his own breakdown either caused by the horror of what they had done to Stanley, or because he had also experienced similar 'conditioning'. Evidence for this was found in the ambiguity of Goldberg's identity, the paranoia and need for conformity suggested by the use of clichés in his speech and his inability to articulate what he believed. Less assured responses restricted their responses to the extract without considering the characters elsewhere in the text. Some of these were quite close commentaries focusing on the unreality of his never having lost a tooth since birth, the irony of his views on 'Respect' and 'Honour thy father...' given his treatment of Lulu. Some tracked Goldberg's feelings and with occasional insight suggested he was talking himself up, noting the contradiction of his feeling as 'Fit as a fiddle' yet needing the 'breath of life' given to him by McCann. Many commented on the bathetic surprise of his 'triumphant' conclusion: 'Your great-gran-granny.' Weaker responses struggled with partially digested ideas about 'absurdity' and the 'verbal accoutrement, communication between privacies' and drifted away from the passage to discuss ideas about the 'meaning of the play'. Others could not work out what was happening with Goldberg and the question became a problem solving task with some partial discussion of details within the extract but often finding refuge in the idea that language and the play were meaningless.

Question 7 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This continues to be a very popular text which prompts responsive writing from candidates of all levels of ability. Both questions were popular and provoked responses across the range. Generally speaking candidates displayed a good level of detailed textual knowledge and rather more willingness to comment on the stylistic features and effects than with other texts. The discriminating factor was often the extent to which

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candidates wrote balanced essays in response to the questions and were able to discuss the effects of Roy's presentation of a character or scene. Knowledge of the social context and Roy's political concerns was usually well integrated into discussions.

- (a) Good answers considered both aspects of the character, though many tended to take Ammu's tenderness towards the twins for granted, saw her love for Velutha only in terms of 'recklessness' and focused more strongly on the various reasons for her 'rage' and the consequences of her actions. Although there was some appreciation of the fierceness of her love for the twins, there was rather more discussion about the levels of her responsibility for what happened, in particular the 'cruelty' of what she said to the twins – how 'loving a little less' and calling them 'millstones' around her neck so causing them to flee over the river and Sophie Mol's death. The question was often regarded as an invitation to present a character study, using knowledge of the plot to explain the character. Better answers connected Ammu with the major themes and discussed her role and function in the novel in terms of the Love Laws the position of women in the patriarchal society. Less effective were some essays which restricted discussion of Ammu's rage and difficulties to being caused by 'epistemic violence from a decaying colonial order or an indigenous culture' because this approach tended to distance the discussion from 'the ways' Roy 'shapes' a personal response to the character. Good answers were able to show how the gradual accumulation of complex detail and descriptions of emotions engages the sympathies of the readers. Many had pertinent quotations to show her anger at her position in society and the family, particularly in relation to Chacko and the arrival of Margaret Kochamma. A few very good answers explored the quality of her loving both in relation to the twins, particularly after Sophie Mol's death and with Velutha, focusing in some detail on the descriptions of the final scene in the novel.
- (b) This was also a very popular question and most candidates of all levels of ability were able to find lots of details within the passage to discuss. Many commented on the chronology and how the significance of some details such as the silence, toys, the issue of identity for Rahel and the implications of physical intimacy foreshadowed the big events: the attack on Velutha and the transcendence of the Love Laws. Competent essays took an explanatory approach to the experience of being separated twins and key themes such as the Love Laws, supporting the discussion with relevant references to the wider text and some straightforward points on the angle of vision here and elsewhere in the novel and stylistic features such as the recurring use of particular phrases and the coinage of compound adjectives e.g. 'A viable-dieable age'. Many candidates showed a sensitive understanding of character: Estha's bathing was often explained in terms of his compulsive behaviour caused by guilt. More successful candidates went further and examined not just the symbolic significance of his difficulty of removing his jeans but appreciated how the sentence structure contributed to the idea of his inability to leave his past behind him. The chief discriminating factor was the way some candidates demonstrated a huge capacity for close reading and critical appreciation not just of Roy's narrative methods but also of the effects, building up paragraphs of sustained critical analysis. They were able to do this comparing the language used to describe Estha: 'Chocolate with a twist of coffee' and that used to describe Velutha; the mysterious poetic qualities of 'A fisherman in a white-tiled bathroom, with sea-secrets in his eyes', the description of the bangles and the effects and significance of the parallel phrases at the end of the passage. Less assured candidates used details from the passage as a jumping off point to show their detailed knowledge of the text. A few restricted their discussion to incest, some showing a sensitive understanding of its function and effect in the novel; others expressing indignation and limited understanding of its significance.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71
Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

- Candidates are able to demonstrate that they have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- A tight focus is maintained on the poem or passage throughout the response.
- It is made clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.
- Responses demonstrate that there is a focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and upon how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Personal responses are given to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not simply to what is said.

General Comments

All three questions were addressed with some confidence, and very few responses relied upon narrative or paraphrase, a point that was pleasing for Examiners. Candidates had clearly been strongly and correctly advised that simple “knowledge” of the selected poem or passage is insufficient, and all – with varying degrees of success and sophistication – explored and considered the ways in which each writer created his or her effects upon their readers. Carefully and aptly selected textual material was of course required, but it could never be rewarded simply for its own sake; one Examiner put it like this: *“the most successful answers invariably showed meticulous attention to detail and used precise evidence from the texts to support the ideas being argued”*. More candidates than has sometimes been the case followed this advice, so that even where responses were more simplistic than sophisticated there was almost always at least an attempt to use what was written, rather than just to reiterate it.

A small point is worth making here: none of the passages set was from a play, so the use of the word “audience” was, on the whole, inappropriate. The most appropriate word is “reader” as a novel is meant to be read privately and silently, and on the whole the same is the case with poetry.

Virtually all candidates completed two responses as required; none attempted three. A few were clearly defeated by time, so that one, or occasionally both, responses did not cover the whole of the passage under discussion; this was particularly unfortunate in the case of both prose passages, in that the final lines of each are especially important. No response was penalised simply because it was incomplete, but inevitably there was a lack of full understanding of, in **Question 1** the police interrogator’s attitude towards Mr Cole, and in **Question 3** the nature of Trix’s question to Alice, both of which helped explain attitudes and ideas presented earlier in the passages. If time does become a problem, candidates are always well advised to spend the final few minutes making bullet-point notes of how their answers might have been concluded; Examiners will take account of these incomplete points, but when there is just nothing there then inevitably reward must be limited. The importance of the first bullet point in the Key Messages cannot be over-stated.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Virtually every candidate addressed this passage, and almost all demonstrated a sound and often good appreciation of the situation being portrayed, and of its increasingly sinister nature. A disappointing number spent time wondering about the title of the novel from which the passage was taken – *The Memory of Love* – and almost invariably found themselves losing focus on the passage itself as a result. It is worth suggesting to future candidates that, with the occasional exception of a short poem, there is little point in worrying about how relevant the title actually is, and certainly no point at all in criticising a writer for not adhering in a brief

extract to what this appears to say. The whole focus of a response must be unambiguously and consistently upon the passage itself.

Having said this, there was some very pointed and thoughtful response to the opening of this passage – to its abrupt and slightly disturbing opening sentence, for example, to the fact that the speaker was clearly unaware of his impending arrest, in his purchase of a cake for breakfast, in his evident unease at watching other people going about their “mundane ritual”, in his description of the grey, unpleasing nature of the building and its cell to which he is taken. There is much here that was well considered, though whether having a cake for breakfast is evidence that the speaker is wealthy, or unmarried, was purely speculative and, on the whole, irrelevant. The short sentences in paragraph two were often well noted as reflective of the speaker’s sense of unease, as was his use of several of his senses to describe his situation. The mention of three other people’s names is clearly important but left deliberately unexplained, adding as it does to the overall mystery and uncertainty of the writing. Short sentences and repetition are again used in paragraph four, and most candidates made some thoughtful responses to this aspect of the writing.

The arrival of the anonymous interrogator initially calms the atmosphere, especially when it appears that he is going to take a relaxed approach to the interview, and when he adopts a courteous though formal manner towards the speaker, identified here for the first time by name. The speaker at first respects this, but is increasingly irritated by much of what is said, and in particular of the slowness with which notes are taken; there is a perhaps unexpected moment in lines 54-55 when the interrogation seems to take a more sinister tone for a moment (“*It is quite all right, Mr Cole.....I know what I'm doing*”); as several candidates noted, neither Mr Cole nor the reader knows what he is doing, adding to an increasingly puzzling situation. Mr Cole’s personal discomfort was mentioned by most candidates, as was his repeated mentioning of his breakfast cake. This was seen by some in rather melodramatic terms as possibly containing drugs, or a weapon, or in one case a human head; none of these speculations could be substantiated with textual support as there is none. The cake can more certainly be seen as an image of Mr Cole’s ordinary daily life, which is now on a police desk and being, at least metaphorically, taken from him. Some possibly interesting links were made by some candidates between the historical ideas raised in lines 60-65 to what might lie behind Mr Cole’s arrest: he might, for example, be involved in terrorist plotting, but again there is no support for this in the passage, and again the discussion may simply be used to add mystery and threat to whatever is really happening.

The final question (“*Do you need to be somewhere?*”) was taken by some candidates as further evidence of the relaxed and friendly nature of the interrogation, but given the way that the policeman has gradually and almost imperceptibly taken control of the situation it is surely much more sinister than that, implying even that whatever Mr Cole was planning he now has no chance at all of going anywhere. Most candidates seemed to sense at least something of this nature.

Question 2

This poem was addressed by about half of all candidates, and attracted some sensitive and often very personal responses. Relatively few candidates saw it as simply a poem about a mouse, and most felt that it was quite clearly metaphorical, the mouse representing a range of other ideas, human and animal, usually but not invariably argued with some conviction. Many candidates became over-concerned about the form of the poem rather than trying to link this with what the poet is saying, though there were responses which tried to suggest that the free-verse nature of Roethke’s writing indicated something of the free and uncertain nature of his relationship with the creature, and of his own thoughts and emotions as they develop and change through the poem.

At its simplest, and perhaps only, level this is a poem about the finding of a mouse and about the way in which the narrator rescued it, fed it and looked after it for a while – possibly just a matter of days – and about his anxiety for its safety when it escaped. As with all small creatures, the mouse faced a range of dangers in the wider world, dangers which the poet lists, and then expands to include dangers faced by other creatures and perhaps humans too (line 30); before summing up in the sad but realistic closing three words of the poem. Centres can note that although a meadow mouse is a particular species of mouse, Examiners did not expect candidates to be clear about this, and accepted that the word “meadow” just indicated where the animal was found. The narrator is obviously entranced by the mouse’s appearance, describing it in a number of tender and affectionate ways, likening it to a puppy, a child, and even to a cartoon image of a mouse; this entrancement is so strong that when he finds that the creature has gone his distress is strong but entirely realistic – where he accepts, sadly perhaps, that nature must take its course.

Because his initial fondness is so powerful, many candidates were convinced that the poem must be about more than just a mouse. The creature was often interpreted as representing something different – perhaps a

child that the poet has lost, either through an accident or through the normal growing-up and moving-away process of a human child, with himself as the parent expressing his concern about how the child will manage in the adult world. Some say the simplicity of the language he uses, especially in the first part, as indicative that the poet is recalling an incident from his own childhood, an idea that is perfectly arguable, though whether a child would in fact use vocabulary such as “a little quaker”, or “minuscule” is open to debate. What marked the better interpretations from the less convincing, though, was the degree to which these interpretations were argued as opposed to simply asserted; responses which said categorically and with no discussion that the whole poem is metaphorical tended to be less successful than those which argued that that it is certainly a poem about a mouse, but which may have further and wider ideas as well. In the words of one Examiner, *“candidates should ensure that their personal response is not too far removed from what the text actually says.”*

Perhaps because of its free verse nature, a number of candidates felt the need to state that this is the case, often in some detail, but without attempting any justification – for example, “the poem is written in lines of different lengths”, which would need to be developed in order to be a critically useful statement. There were several responses which clearly felt that introduction of technical literary terms was needed, so that alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia for example were all asserted, sometimes with illustration, sometimes with inaccurate illustration, but often again without any sort of critical comment, as if the poet simply used these techniques for their own sake and without any poetic purpose. A useful illustration of this can be illustrated by the many candidates who commented that the poet uses “the rule of three” in the final line of the poem; this is perfectly true, but very few attempted to explain, why he might have ended the poem in this way. Such listing or identification – even when correct – can on its own not be rewarded. This was a point noted independently by several Examiners, so was clearly quite a common concern.

Question 3

In some ways a rather more straightforward passage, this was addressed by about half of all candidates, most of whom found plenty of thoughtful and often quite perceptive critical ideas to consider. A handful found some very basic difficulties – confusing the two girls, Trix and Alice; sometimes assuming that one of them was in fact Ruth; believing that Trix could not sleep simply because she was over-tired after her journey; thinking that Trix’s whispered question was just about her impending change to boarding School – but on the whole candidates understood the basic situation clearly and correctly: Trix, on the verge of becoming a young adult, believes that kissing a boy could lead to some significant sexual problem, presumably pregnancy, and wants reassurance about this from Alice.

The opening sentence of the extract is very striking, a good number of candidates suggested that the passage opens *“in media res”*. This may well be the case – there is no evidence that either passage is the opening of the novel or short story – and the identification of the technique is a fair point, but very few made any attempt to go beyond a bald statement of fact; what, for instance, is the effect of such an opening? How does it impact our response to the passage? How does it influence our reactions to the situations that Mr Cole and Trix are in? There is plenty to say in the opening paragraph here, with description of the various ways in which Trix tries to go to sleep, and most candidates noted the eerie and arguably foreshadowing, effect of the final few words: the comfort and warmth of the fire has suddenly become quite frightening, reflective of Trix’s mind and worries.

The relationship between the two girls is developed as the passage proceeds, with Alice, by four years the elder of the two, taking on a clearly big-sisterly role, and significantly one who is “in love” (line 13), something that their night-time conversation covers, and which (line 13) is “fearfully interesting”; this expression caused a few problems. Some candidates were unaware of the slightly old-fashioned sense of “fearfully” meaning “very”, and seeing a kind of oxymoron in that something interesting is unlikely to be fearful. Examiners accepted this, provided as ever that the oxymoronic idea was developed and argued; Trix *is* fearful, after all.

There is a wealth of rich and luxuriant description of the food in the pantry as the passage develops, beginning with the rather odd but certainly apt comparison of the moon to a round cheese. There is also some comedy in the description of the snoring that they can hear – this is not, of course, a true example of comic relief, a term that can only rightly be used when the main thrust of a passage is serious or tragic. Some candidates took the opportunity of the girls’ short journey to the pantry to wonder where they actually were, and in what sort of accommodation they were staying; this might possibly be of general interest, but it does not have any bearing upon the thrust of the conversation or situation. Candidates must always be advised not to speculate, but to focus very closely and specifically upon what is actually in the provided passage.

Line 60 leads to the main point of Trix's concern, where she "took the plunge", after which the writer reinforces the differing ages and experiences of the two girls: Trix is nervous, while Alice fails for a long time to see anything serious, and takes the situation lightly, until line 73, when she is "perturbed", and wonders "whether you ought to know. At your age!" On this occasion those few candidates who commented on the period during which the whole text was written (presumably, from the dates given, in the early 20th century) made some valuable contextual points: until relatively recently 13-year-old girls were expected to be naïve and sexually innocent, so whatever the exact nature of Trix's question it was clearly something to be worried about, and Alice quite correctly feels that she should be protected from. Those candidates, however, who criticised such views as simply old-fashioned and to be mocked did not do themselves any real favours: personal response is of course looked for, but this must be to the writing and its effects, not to the situation itself.

The passage comes to an abrupt but surely significant conclusion: Trix is worried about possible effects that kissing might lead to, hinted at by what another girl, Ella, had told her; Trix has allowed boys to kiss her, and the whole passage has led up to this moment. Her inability to sleep is not because of her tiredness, or her impending change of School, but because boys have kissed her. The passage opened with a quite abrupt sentence and it concludes in a similar way, a point noted by a few candidates, who saw a kind of balance or circularity in its structure. Those who made this point had very clearly read the whole passage fully and carefully, and were fully aware from the start of how the whole builds towards it, with Alice inadvertently tantalising Trix, and making her feelings worse as their conversation in the pantry progresses. A very salutary reminder of how important it is to read the whole passage at least twice before starting to write, and equally how important it is to ensure that candidates time their writing carefully, so that they do include the ending as well as everything else. In the words of one Examiner, the best candidates "*saw and explored how sensitively the writer portrayed the anxieties of youth*".

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72
Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

- Candidates are able to demonstrate that they have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- A tight focus is maintained on the poem or passage throughout the response.
- It is made clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.
- Responses demonstrate that there is a focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and upon how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Personal responses are given to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not simply to what is said.

General Comments

All three questions were addressed with some confidence, and very few responses relied upon narrative or paraphrase, a point that was pleasing for Examiners. Candidates had clearly been strongly and correctly advised that simple “knowledge” of the selected poem or passage is insufficient, and all – with varying degrees of success and sophistication – explored and considered the ways in which each writer created his or her effects upon their readers. Carefully and aptly selected textual material was of course required, but it could never be rewarded simply for its own sake; one Examiner put it like this: *“the most successful answers invariably showed meticulous attention to detail and used precise evidence from the texts to support the ideas being argued”*. More candidates than has sometimes been the case followed this advice, so that even where responses were more simplistic than sophisticated there was almost always at least an attempt to use what was written, rather than just to reiterate it.

A small point is worth making here: none of the passages set was from a play, so the use of the word “audience” was, on the whole, inappropriate. The most appropriate word is “reader” as a novel is meant to be read privately and silently, and on the whole the same is the case with poetry.

Virtually all candidates completed two responses as required; none attempted three. A few were clearly defeated by time, so that one, or occasionally both, responses did not cover the whole of the passage under discussion; this was particularly unfortunate in the case of both prose passages, in that the final lines of each are especially important. No response was penalised simply because it was incomplete, but inevitably there was a lack of full understanding of, in **Question 1** the police interrogator’s attitude towards Mr Cole, and in **Question 3** the nature of Trix’s question to Alice, both of which helped explain attitudes and ideas presented earlier in the passages. If time does become a problem, candidates are always well advised to spend the final few minutes making bullet-point notes of how their answers might have been concluded; Examiners will take account of these incomplete points, but when there is just nothing there then inevitably reward must be limited. The importance of the first bullet point in the Key Messages cannot be over-stated.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Virtually every candidate addressed this passage, and almost all demonstrated a sound and often good appreciation of the situation being portrayed, and of its increasingly sinister nature. A disappointing number spent time wondering about the title of the novel from which the passage was taken – *The Memory of Love* – and almost invariably found themselves losing focus on the passage itself as a result. It is worth suggesting to future candidates that, with the occasional exception of a short poem, there is little point in worrying about how relevant the title actually is, and certainly no point at all in criticising a writer for not adhering in a brief

extract to what this appears to say. The whole focus of a response must be unambiguously and consistently upon the passage itself.

Having said this, there was some very pointed and thoughtful response to the opening of this passage – to its abrupt and slightly disturbing opening sentence, for example, to the fact that the speaker was clearly unaware of his impending arrest, in his purchase of a cake for breakfast, in his evident unease at watching other people going about their “mundane ritual”, in his description of the grey, unpleasing nature of the building and its cell to which he is taken. There is much here that was well considered, though whether having a cake for breakfast is evidence that the speaker is wealthy, or unmarried, was purely speculative and, on the whole, irrelevant. The short sentences in paragraph two were often well noted as reflective of the speaker’s sense of unease, as was his use of several of his senses to describe his situation. The mention of three other people’s names is clearly important but left deliberately unexplained, adding as it does to the overall mystery and uncertainty of the writing. Short sentences and repetition are again used in paragraph four, and most candidates made some thoughtful responses to this aspect of the writing.

The arrival of the anonymous interrogator initially calms the atmosphere, especially when it appears that he is going to take a relaxed approach to the interview, and when he adopts a courteous though formal manner towards the speaker, identified here for the first time by name. The speaker at first respects this, but is increasingly irritated by much of what is said, and in particular of the slowness with which notes are taken; there is a perhaps unexpected moment in lines 54-55 when the interrogation seems to take a more sinister tone for a moment (“*It is quite all right, Mr Cole.....I know what I'm doing*”); as several candidates noted, neither Mr Cole nor the reader knows what he is doing, adding to an increasingly puzzling situation. Mr Cole’s personal discomfort was mentioned by most candidates, as was his repeated mentioning of his breakfast cake. This was seen by some in rather melodramatic terms as possibly containing drugs, or a weapon, or in one case a human head; none of these speculations could be substantiated with textual support as there is none. The cake can more certainly be seen as an image of Mr Cole’s ordinary daily life, which is now on a police desk and being, at least metaphorically, taken from him. Some possibly interesting links were made by some candidates between the historical ideas raised in lines 60-65 to what might lie behind Mr Cole’s arrest: he might, for example, be involved in terrorist plotting, but again there is no support for this in the passage, and again the discussion may simply be used to add mystery and threat to whatever is really happening.

The final question (“*Do you need to be somewhere?*”) was taken by some candidates as further evidence of the relaxed and friendly nature of the interrogation, but given the way that the policeman has gradually and almost imperceptibly taken control of the situation it is surely much more sinister than that, implying even that whatever Mr Cole was planning he now has no chance at all of going anywhere. Most candidates seemed to sense at least something of this nature.

Question 2

This poem was addressed by about half of all candidates, and attracted some sensitive and often very personal responses. Relatively few candidates saw it as simply a poem about a mouse, and most felt that it was quite clearly metaphorical, the mouse representing a range of other ideas, human and animal, usually but not invariably argued with some conviction. Many candidates became over-concerned about the form of the poem rather than trying to link this with what the poet is saying, though there were responses which tried to suggest that the free-verse nature of Roethke’s writing indicated something of the free and uncertain nature of his relationship with the creature, and of his own thoughts and emotions as they develop and change through the poem.

At its simplest, and perhaps only, level this is a poem about the finding of a mouse and about the way in which the narrator rescued it, fed it and looked after it for a while – possibly just a matter of days – and about his anxiety for its safety when it escaped. As with all small creatures, the mouse faced a range of dangers in the wider world, dangers which the poet lists, and then expands to include dangers faced by other creatures and perhaps humans too (line 30); before summing up in the sad but realistic closing three words of the poem. Centres can note that although a meadow mouse is a particular species of mouse, Examiners did not expect candidates to be clear about this, and accepted that the word “meadow” just indicated where the animal was found. The narrator is obviously entranced by the mouse’s appearance, describing it in a number of tender and affectionate ways, likening it to a puppy, a child, and even to a cartoon image of a mouse; this entrancement is so strong that when he finds that the creature has gone his distress is strong but entirely realistic – where he accepts, sadly perhaps, that nature must take its course.

Because his initial fondness is so powerful, many candidates were convinced that the poem must be about more than just a mouse. The creature was often interpreted as representing something different – perhaps a

child that the poet has lost, either through an accident or through the normal growing-up and moving-away process of a human child, with himself as the parent expressing his concern about how the child will manage in the adult world. Some say the simplicity of the language he uses, especially in the first part, as indicative that the poet is recalling an incident from his own childhood, an idea that is perfectly arguable, though whether a child would in fact use vocabulary such as “a little quaker”, or “minuscule” is open to debate. What marked the better interpretations from the less convincing, though, was the degree to which these interpretations were argued as opposed to simply asserted; responses which said categorically and with no discussion that the whole poem is metaphorical tended to be less successful than those which argued that that it is certainly a poem about a mouse, but which may have further and wider ideas as well. In the words of one Examiner, *“candidates should ensure that their personal response is not too far removed from what the text actually says.”*

Perhaps because of its free verse nature, a number of candidates felt the need to state that this is the case, often in some detail, but without attempting any justification – for example, “the poem is written in lines of different lengths”, which would need to be developed in order to be a critically useful statement. There were several responses which clearly felt that introduction of technical literary terms was needed, so that alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia for example were all asserted, sometimes with illustration, sometimes with inaccurate illustration, but often again without any sort of critical comment, as if the poet simply used these techniques for their own sake and without any poetic purpose. A useful illustration of this can be illustrated by the many candidates who commented that the poet uses “the rule of three” in the final line of the poem; this is perfectly true, but very few attempted to explain, why he might have ended the poem in this way. Such listing or identification – even when correct – can on its own not be rewarded. This was a point noted independently by several Examiners, so was clearly quite a common concern.

Question 3

In some ways a rather more straightforward passage, this was addressed by about half of all candidates, most of whom found plenty of thoughtful and often quite perceptive critical ideas to consider. A handful found some very basic difficulties – confusing the two girls, Trix and Alice; sometimes assuming that one of them was in fact Ruth; believing that Trix could not sleep simply because she was over-tired after her journey; thinking that Trix’s whispered question was just about her impending change to boarding School – but on the whole candidates understood the basic situation clearly and correctly: Trix, on the verge of becoming a young adult, believes that kissing a boy could lead to some significant sexual problem, presumably pregnancy, and wants reassurance about this from Alice.

The opening sentence of the extract is very striking, a good number of candidates suggested that the passage opens *“in media res”*. This may well be the case – there is no evidence that either passage is the opening of the novel or short story – and the identification of the technique is a fair point, but very few made any attempt to go beyond a bald statement of fact; what, for instance, is the effect of such an opening? How does it impact our response to the passage? How does it influence our reactions to the situations that Mr Cole and Trix are in? There is plenty to say in the opening paragraph here, with description of the various ways in which Trix tries to go to sleep, and most candidates noted the eerie and arguably foreshadowing, effect of the final few words: the comfort and warmth of the fire has suddenly become quite frightening, reflective of Trix’s mind and worries.

The relationship between the two girls is developed as the passage proceeds, with Alice, by four years the elder of the two, taking on a clearly big-sisterly role, and significantly one who is “in love” (line 13), something that their night-time conversation covers, and which (line 13) is “fearfully interesting”; this expression caused a few problems. Some candidates were unaware of the slightly old-fashioned sense of “fearfully” meaning “very”, and seeing a kind of oxymoron in that something interesting is unlikely to be fearful. Examiners accepted this, provided as ever that the oxymoronic idea was developed and argued; Trix *is* fearful, after all.

There is a wealth of rich and luxuriant description of the food in the pantry as the passage develops, beginning with the rather odd but certainly apt comparison of the moon to a round cheese. There is also some comedy in the description of the snoring that they can hear – this is not, of course, a true example of comic relief, a term that can only rightly be used when the main thrust of a passage is serious or tragic. Some candidates took the opportunity of the girls’ short journey to the pantry to wonder where they actually were, and in what sort of accommodation they were staying; this might possibly be of general interest, but it does not have any bearing upon the thrust of the conversation or situation. Candidates must always be advised not to speculate, but to focus very closely and specifically upon what is actually in the provided passage.

Line 60 leads to the main point of Trix's concern, where she "took the plunge", after which the writer reinforces the differing ages and experiences of the two girls: Trix is nervous, while Alice fails for a long time to see anything serious, and takes the situation lightly, until line 73, when she is "perturbed", and wonders "whether you ought to know. At your age!" On this occasion those few candidates who commented on the period during which the whole text was written (presumably, from the dates given, in the early 20th century) made some valuable contextual points: until relatively recently 13-year-old girls were expected to be naïve and sexually innocent, so whatever the exact nature of Trix's question it was clearly something to be worried about, and Alice quite correctly feels that she should be protected from. Those candidates, however, who criticised such views as simply old-fashioned and to be mocked, did not do themselves any real favours: personal response is of course looked for, but this must be to the writing and its effects, not to the situation itself.

The passage comes to an abrupt but surely significant conclusion: Trix is worried about possible effects that kissing might lead to, hinted at by what another girl, Ella, had told her; Trix has allowed boys to kiss her, and the whole passage has led up to this moment. Her inability to sleep is not because of her tiredness, or her impending change of School, but because boys have kissed her. The passage opened with a quite abrupt sentence and it concludes in a similar way, a point noted by a few candidates, who saw a kind of balance or circularity in its structure. Those who made this point had very clearly read the whole passage fully and carefully, and were fully aware from the start of how the whole builds towards it, with Alice inadvertently tantalising Trix, and making her feelings worse as their conversation in the pantry progresses. A very salutary reminder of how important it is to read the whole passage at least twice before starting to write, and equally how important it is to ensure that candidates time their writing carefully, so that they do include the ending as well as everything else. In the words of one Examiner, the best candidates "*saw and explored how sensitively the writer portrayed the anxieties of youth*".

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages

- Candidates are able to demonstrate that they have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write;
- In responses there is a focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and upon how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase;
- A range of literary devices and techniques are identified and – most importantly – candidates consider how these are used by the writers, and the effects that they create;
- Personal responses are given to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not simply to what is said;
- A tight focus is maintained on the poem or passage throughout the response;
- It is made clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.

General Comments

All three questions were addressed by candidates in roughly equal numbers, and most candidates demonstrated at least some attempt to move beyond straightforward narrative or paraphrase, although these did register quite strongly in too many instances. Candidates must be advised that simple “knowledge” of a passage or poem cannot be rewarded highly; such knowledge must of course be evident, but at Advanced Level it is essential that what candidates aim for, and what Examiners look for, is an understanding of *how* each writer has achieved his or her effects, and how particularly identified literary techniques are used, and to what effect upon readers or audiences.

There was a tendency among some candidates to divide their responses into a number of sections: the general meaning, the detailed meaning, the writer’s intentions and the writer’s techniques. Each of these categories is certainly necessary in a response, but to isolate them and talk about them as if distinctly different and discrete factors cannot result in a cogently argued critical exploration, and of course we can never be entirely sure of what a writer’s intentions were, especially when discussing simply an extract from the entire text.

It is important, too, that candidates demonstrate a clear awareness that what they are writing about is from a particular literary genre, each with its own particular characteristics and methods. For example – a point that will be taken up more fully later in this Report – **Question 3** is very evidently an extract from a play rather than from a novel or short story, so it must be expected by Examiners that some consideration of its dramatic and theatrical nature will be discussed; this was too often something apparently ignored by candidates.

It became quickly clear that a number of candidates were aware of the events of the short story from which the passage in **Question 1** was taken, perhaps from reading the short story, or having seen the film. While it might appear that this was an advantage, it in fact proved the opposite, in that too often a response discussed later events rather than focusing exactly and tightly upon what was printed in the question paper. There are of course several indications in the passage that something is seriously wrong, but the point being made by the writer is that Mr Button, and the reader, does not know what it is, and candidates were expected to consider how the writer creates a sense of uncertainty, mystery and possibly fear. It is extremely unusual for a passage to be familiar to candidates, but they must be strongly advised well in advance of sitting the examination that if this should be the case, they should ignore such knowledge, and focus only upon what is set in front of them. To do otherwise may be unhelpful.

Virtually all candidates completed two responses as required; none attempted three. A few were clearly defeated by time, so that one, or occasionally both, responses did not cover the whole of the passage under

discussion; this was particularly important in the case of the drama extract, where George's final speech, whatever he actually means, is clearly of huge significance. No response was penalised simply because it was incomplete, but if time does become a problem, candidates are always well advised to spend the final few minutes making bullet-point notes of how their answers might have been concluded; Examiners will take account of these incomplete points, but when there is just nothing then inevitably reward must be limited. The importance of the first bullet point in the Key Messages cannot be over-stated.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The opening paragraphs of this passage are relatively straightforward, with none of the uncertainty and increasingly frantic worry that develop later; all we know initially is that Mr Button is anxious to speak to Dr Keene, so much so that he runs towards him without the dignity expected from a gentleman of his social and business position. The third and even fourth paragraphs continue in a more or less similar way, though the doctor's "curious expression" (line 9) is of possible significance; Mr Button's "gasping rush" of anxiety is still something to be expected of a man whose wife has clearly just given birth, and the brief phrases in line 12 were mentioned by many candidates as clear evidence of this growing anxiety. This anxiety and uncertainty – felt by Mr Button and readers alike – grows more serious as the passage progresses, and the doctor's clearly unprofessional attitude is very striking, especially when he somehow manages to snap out the word "outrageous" "in almost one syllable", a point that virtually no candidate mentioned. Nor was there much mention of the interestingly used adverb in line 30 when he "drove severely away", a piece of writing that one might have expected at least the more observant to notice.

Mr Button is understandable shaken, as most candidates said, and this is made worse when he speaks to the first nurse; her "look of utter terror", combined with the fact that she "seemed about to fly from the hall", was mentioned by several candidates as evidence of two things: first and most obviously Mr Button's growing alarm, and secondly a strange infusion of dark humour, intensified a few lines later when the second nurse drops the basin, whose onomatopoeic descent was seen by some candidates as echoing the descent being felt by Mr Button himself as his situation, and that of his wife and newly born child, increases in mystery. Many candidates had already noted that in line 36 the hospital hall was full of "opaque gloom"; as several candidates said, hospitals, and especially perhaps maternity units, should be full of light and hope, so this gloom is used by the writer to reflect how Mr Button feels at this moment.

The doubt and mystery continue, and reach a kind of climax in line 56, when the nurse "threw Mr Button a look of hearty contempt", not the kind of look a new father expects to be given. Her speech echoes what Dr Keene had said earlier – the hospital's reputation will never recover after what has happened, and the passage ends on a note of total suspense – in idiomatic and non-literary terms, it is what some candidates referred to as a cliff-hanger, at least metaphorically, and the reader is left in complete uncertainty as to what has happened. As noted above, some candidates weakened their argument at this point by explaining exactly what has happened, and what in fact happens later in the short story, a weakening effect because they were not focusing upon this moment of climactic mystery in the printed passage.

Comment has been made in earlier Reports about candidates who rely over-much upon a writer's use of punctuation. However, in this particular passage it is quite legitimate to note how many question marks (lines 11, 19, 24) and even more how many exclamation marks (lines 27-28, 50-51, 57-60) are used, as helping to create the melodramatic atmosphere that is drawn by the writer, and the way in which he draws our attention to what on the face of it seem entirely unreasonable and indeed literally incomprehensible matters.

Question 2

Comparing two poems is a quite demanding task, especially when they come – as these two poems do – from very different historical eras, and it was good to read some thoughtful and quite critically perceptive responses from around half of all candidates.

Many spent unnecessary time listing the differing rhyme schemes of the poems, not always correctly, without considering how and for what purposes the two poets may have used these patterns; in the second poem, of course, conventional sonnet "rules" of the time apply, so there was no need to spend any time on this, though in the first the use of a rhyming couplet to end each stanza has very particular effect on the poet's meaning and ideas, especially in the climactic final lines. It was certainly worthwhile commenting on Clare's rhyme pattern. In a similar way, both poets use entirely regular iambic pentameters throughout, so there was again little point in simply saying this; what is striking, however, is how both poets deliberately break this

rhythm in their opening lines, a point missed by almost all candidates, though surely of huge significance. The narrator opens with the simplest but at the same time profoundest and most personal of philosophical statements – “I am” – followed immediately by a caesura and then the central and saddest of all the comments regarding their feelings. Similarly, Wroth uses punctuation to break the iambic rhythm of her opening lines, so that each word is emphasised by the natural stresses – and each word of the first line tells of her sense of isolation and loneliness, leading to the climax of line 4, where there is nothing but an echo of her cries for help. Those candidates who focused initially upon the similarities between these two openings made a very good start to their responses.

Most candidates did note some at least of the vocabulary used by each poet; Clare’s words throughout the poem lay emphasis upon the narrator’s feelings of being nothing and nobody, even though “I am”; whilst the narrator of Wroth’s poem stresses her sadness and misery. There are some differences in the kind of distress that each expresses, though there is initially more similarity than contrast, a point that some candidates considered. As Clare’s poem develops, however, the narrator expresses a wish to leave the real world, and to be with “my creator, God”, to return to the calm and simple ease they felt – or perhaps thinks that they felt – as a child who slept sweetly, reaching the culmination of the poem where they wish for a calm and peaceful death. Wroth’s narrator on the other hand can find no such possible comfort; her sorrow is such that she can feel nothing but pain – in sharp contrast to Clare’s poem, she suggests that “pleasures to dying eyes bring but disease”, and in closing says that the pain is such that she can find no comfort at all.

Most candidates wanted to show knowledge of alliteration and assonance, but having found these techniques – not always correctly – most seemed lost for ways to explain why each poet might have used them. Clare’s final stanza has a wealth of such moments, all of which could have been helpfully used: the alliteration of “w” in line 14 brings sharply together the idea of an after-life where nobody weeps; the repeated “s” sound in line 16 helps create the memory of his childhood sweet sleeps; and the near-repetition of “untroubling” and “untroubled”, combined with the threefold use of the letter “l”, carried forward into the closing line, reinforces exactly what he wants to say and indeed what he wants to do instead of living. Wroth uses similar methods in her poem’s opening lines, with the repetition of “n” in line 1, and of the word “to” in lines 2 and 3, and of “s” in line 4. Wroth’s closing two lines are also very interesting, in her usage of closely placed opposites (“who daily ending live”), and the perhaps unexpected near-rhyme between “daily” and “wailing”, which serves to draw these two important words together. There is enough here to make the point very clearly that both poets use specific literary methods, not for their own sake, and certainly not so that examination candidates can find and identify them, but to add weight to the sadness and distress that is being expressed.

Question 3

The question itself does not state that this passage is from a play, but it is surely self-evidently so; it was therefore surprising and indeed disappointing to read some responses which seemed unaware of this fact, referring to “the speaker” or “the narrator”, and in at least one case to the passage being a story “in dialogue form”. The majority of responses were, however, quite clear that this is a piece of drama, and made sure that in at least some ways their critical approach treated it as such. There will not always be a piece of drama in this Paper, but when there is it is very important that candidates make explicit reference not just to audience response, but to specifically theatrical effects, and of course where appropriate to what an audience will see and hear when watching it – even if their eyes are, as in this examination, just the eyes of imagination.

The most obviously dramatic technique here is perhaps the fact that over two pages there is a wealth of simple, brief speech; each character says little, but cumulatively they do in fact say and reveal a great deal, moving from George’s opening and very tentative attempts to tell Honor what his problem is, and culminating in his perhaps very strange but still quite tentative statement that “I don’t want that kind – I don’t want – I want a different kind of – I don’t want a wife”. Those candidates who referred to this closing speech rightly noted the dramatist’s use of ellipsis, of incomplete sentences, and the strikingly ambiguous final comment. What does George want? We are not told, and there was much speculation that perhaps he is homosexual, that he has another lover, or simply that he is tired of life with Honor; all are possible, but since there is no clear textual support for any of them then speculation alone could not be rewarded highly. What was rewarded highly were comments that the dramatist is deliberately holding back firm knowledge, in order partly to deepen George’s torn character, but also to tantalise and attract the audience, making them want to know more.

Another very obvious and strikingly theatrical technique is the repeated use of the word “Beat”, something that probably an audience in a theatre will not be aware of, unless, as a number of candidates suggested, it refers to an actual single drum beat, signifying perhaps Honor’s beating heart, perhaps the passing of time, or perhaps it is simply a moment of silence.

The fact that so many of the speeches – indeed all of them on the first page – are very short is something that nearly all candidates noted, and some suggested quite sensibly that the dramatist wrote them in this way to indicate how very uncertain and hesitant both George and Honor are in this situation; as was commented on in **Question 2** above, punctuation is for once very significant here: the many dashes, the many unfinished sentences and even single-word speeches (as in line 32), all go towards the creation of worry, uncertainty, distress. And almost all candidates saw the use in line 59 of a sequence of upper-case letters in George's speech, signifying perhaps how the writer wants the actor to stress and separate each word. An audience will of course not see these things, but the dramatist wants her actors to respond to their effects, and her audience to hear them.

Although a drama, there are few stage directions apart from "Beat", but what there are make it very clear how the actors playing Honor (in lines 4-5, 10-11 and 15), George (line 59) and both of them (line 79) should act and react. Most of the action is verbal, and as suggested earlier the dramatist uses what is said, however brief and uncertain, to create and develop both characters and their disintegrating relationship.

Most candidates, except those few who relied almost entirely upon paraphrase of the passage, were able to see and explore at least something of these techniques, and even when there was no apparent awareness that this is a piece of theatrical drama they could see some ways in which the writing works. It is important that – as in a piece of prose, but possibly even more in a piece of drama – candidates do show an understanding that the characters presented are entirely fictional, and in no way real people, though on top of this that what they do and say are to be presented by actors, not just within a reader's mind as he or she reads; this is an additional, quite complex but very valuable, critical tool to use; future candidates should be made aware of the various ways in which a passage of drama needs to be addressed, in ways that are of course very similar to how prose and poetry are addressed, but with additional factors as well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8
Coursework

Key Messages

Good answers will:

- address their two questions and texts with clear and concise focus
- explore in some detail how the writers create their particular effects, discussing the literary techniques used
- support what is said with brief textual quotations and references
- make some brief use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments
- where practicable, write on individually selected and worded questions, to make responses as personal as possible
- ensure that the work submitted remains within the overall 3000 word limit; (with effect from 2016, this limit will exclude textual quotations).

General Comments

The entry this session was small, but the work submitted was in every case either good or very good. Candidates had clearly been well prepared for Coursework, and were fully aware of what was required in their two essays, with the result that while some assessments were a little over-generous there was no doubt that texts had been thoroughly and critically studied, and that responses were well-detailed and very securely based upon textual reference and quotation.

All candidates used two texts from two different genres, and while there was inevitably some overlapping of ideas that had been taught and discussed as part of the preparatory teaching process there was also and importantly much evidence of individual and independent thinking. The questions set were all appropriate in focus and demand, and all candidates, whatever their critical sophistication, were clearly aware of the need to explore not just *what* each writer is saying but more importantly *how* it is said and written. In some Centres all candidates used the same texts, and there was some overlapping of questions; the former is entirely understandable – the logistics of offering every candidate even limited freedom of choice are demanding – but it is always helpful for questions to be as individual as possible, to allow for each candidate's particular strengths to be encouraged, and any weaknesses to be supported.

Poetry was widely used by candidates, and in most cases a sufficient number of poems was addressed; unless those that are studied are unusually long or unusually complex it should always be the case that a minimum of five or six are discussed in some detail, with briefer comparative reference to a further two or three, as evidence that candidates have studied a similar number to those that they have read in preparation for their other examination papers. It is important, too, that poems are considered as *poems*, so that there is consideration of specifically poetic concerns – rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, stanza form – rather than just what the poems, or the selection as a whole, is saying. In the same way, when a play is used, it is important that consideration is given to some at least of the specifically dramatic and theatrical devices used by the writer; many candidates were very clear that they knew the importance of this, and made apt reference where appropriate to staging effects, to actual productions seen, or to directors' comments. This is not a theatre studies examination, of course, but since the Syllabus requires candidates to use texts from two different literary genres it is important that genre characteristics form a reasonably significant part of what is written.

There is no requirement to introduce alternative critical views or ideas, though many candidates did so, often fluently and helpfully; if other critics are quoted or referred to, then it is important that the sources of their ideas are acknowledged, in a footnote and in a bibliography, ideally with brief details of the publication or website concerned. It is important, too – and this was the case in most responses – that when such critical

views are introduced, it is not done simply for its own sake, but as a means of developing a candidate's own personal thoughts and interpretations.

Contextual factors are valuable, however, particularly for work that is to be placed in the top marking band; the Marking Criteria for this Band say that "*There may be evidence [in such work] of sensitive awareness of the contexts in which the literary works studied were written and understood.*" The word "may" is used, but there was no doubt this session that where candidates did introduce some contextual material and it was used to effect where it invariably helped their arguments. Such material can be of any kind, whether social, historical, cultural, literary or biographical, but again when introduced it does need to be *used* – and indeed in almost every appropriate case this session, it was used – rather than simply listed.

Centre annotations and summative comments were very helpful for the external Moderator, showing in some detail how and why a mark had been reached. Where possible – and particularly when the entry is a large one, covering more than one teaching set – it is very important that there is some evidence of internal moderation; this is most simply done by having more than one internal marker, so that there is written evidence on essays that they have been seen and assessed by more than one teacher, with a finally agreed mark. This was best done in summative comments, but marginal annotations were also very helpful in drawing attention to particularly well-phrased ideas, to interesting or unusual ideas, to sharp critical insights, or of course at times to moments that were less successfully managed or even occasionally factually incorrect. Annotations and comments in this session's submissions were generally of a detailed and helpful order.

While an external moderator will not expect summative comments to simply copy the wording of the Marking Criteria, it was particularly useful when they did refer to what these Criteria require; it is certainly helpful for internal markers and internal moderators to do this, to reassure themselves that they are working in line with what the Syllabus expects of candidates, and it is helpful for the external moderator too to see that this guidance has been followed.

Overall, then, while quite small, this was a generally very good set of coursework, reading which was almost always a genuine pleasure.