

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11
Paper 11 (Open Books)

Key messages

Detailed knowledge of texts is not on its own sufficient for high reward. Candidates must tailor their detailed knowledge to the demands of the question.

In their critical responses, candidates must include analysis of the effects writers create in order to convey their meanings.

Responses to extract-based questions should engage with the detail and language of the extract, by selecting relevant words and phrases to address the question.

Personal responses to texts should be informed responses, that is, substantiated by apt textual detail.

General comments

The most successful critical responses demonstrated a detailed knowledge of texts and a sustained engagement with the question. Some candidates started their responses well but lost focus part of the way through the essay – as they perhaps veered towards a topic they had covered before. A minority of responses struggled to communicate personal responses to characters, themes and settings. There were a few instances of responses starting with extraneous background information, sometimes at great length, before addressing the key words of the question. Some answers showed remarkably little evidence of thorough knowledge of the chosen texts and this was revealed not only in the general essays but also in the extract-based questions which some candidates appeared to treat as ‘Unseen’ passages.

The strongest responses to Drama texts acknowledged the text as a play, i.e. something to be performed on a stage. These responses invariably referred to the ‘play’ rather than ‘book’ and to the ‘audience’ rather than ‘reader’. They also explored the words of the dialogue, not merely relying on stage directions to indicate the emotions of characters.

IGCSE Literature critical essay questions make reference to the writer. Key words in questions include ‘Explore’, ‘How?’ and ‘In what ways?’ These are all designed to encourage a critical engagement with a writer’s techniques. Such an engagement requires a consideration of the ways in which writers shape and convey meanings. The strongest responses were skilful at combining precise analytical comment and concise, useful reference. Less successful responses tended to log features and found it difficult, therefore, to go beyond a descriptive approach. Sometimes comments were so unhelpfully general as to be true of any text: ‘The description draws you in’; ‘The writer uses strong words’; ‘It makes you feel as if you are there’.

In 45-minute responses candidates are not required to provide exhaustive responses. For extract-based questions, for example, they need to select detail carefully from the extract in order to answer the question effectively. Where candidates attempted exhaustive commentaries on extracts or poems, they tended to produce superficial responses. Some candidates did a brief plan before starting to write their answer, and this helped them to organise their ideas effectively.

The strongest critical responses made judicious use of textual reference. They made frequent, concise and pertinent references to the texts and integrated the references flawlessly into their own writing. Less effective responses used quotations, sometimes quite lengthy ones, to illustrate a point but did not take the opportunity to explore the language of the key words. The least effective responses made mere assertions.

The best empathic responses created a convincingly authentic voice for the character and showed a clear appreciation of both the character and moment specified in the question. Additionally they rooted their

responses in the detail of the text. The least successful empathic responses struggled to capture a suitable voice and/or neglected to include textual detail for support.

There were relatively few rubric errors though there seemed to be an increasing tendency for candidates to number questions wrongly or not to number their questions at all. Work was generally well presented.

Comments on Specific Questions

SECTION A: DRAMA

Question 1

For this question, most candidates focused on the powerful feelings the two young people have for each other and, in particular, Chris's declaration of love to Ann. Some candidates noted that only when she says she is leaving does Chris declare his love and that this suddenness takes the audience by surprise. Most were able to see the significance of Larry's presence over the scene and commented on how, for two years Chris and Ann had to keep their feelings hidden on account of the baggage associated with the two families. The least successful responses focused almost exclusively on stage directions and ignored the ways in which the dialogue made this moment so moving.

Question 2

Stronger responses emerged when candidates 'stood back from' the text to detail the way in which Miller almost manipulates our response to Keller by presenting him in such a positive light at the start, and then making us reassess our feelings as gradual revelation leads us to the certainty of his duplicity and greed. Candidates were free to take whatever line they wished so long as it was carefully substantiated, though most attempted a balanced approach. They noted that Joe was a down-to-earth and likeable character for whom family is everything, someone who had had few advantages in life. Then there was the Joe who avoided taking responsibility, who knew what risks he took with others' lives and who lacked moral courage. In weaker responses background material about the American Dream was included but not in a way that explicitly addressed the question.

Question 3

Most responses captured the character's searing anger and the strongest responses were rooted in the detail of the text and the particular moment. George is appalled when he recalls that Ann is visiting the Kellers and is determined to prevent her from marrying Chris.

Question 4

Most candidates had a secure grasp of the content of the extract and were able to say something about the chaos that had been unleashed in the wake of Caesar's death. Only the stronger responses were able to convey the dramatic impact of this moment in the play, with three men playing God with others' lives. The strongest responses noted the dramatic nature of life and death being decided by the marking of a spot on a piece of paper. They noted that this is the first time we see Octavius and Antony together, and they are decisive and ruthless. This is a different and despicable Antony from the one who spoke to the crowd after Caesar's death. Only a few candidates were able to probe the effects of Antony's 'horse' analogy when denigrating Lepidus's worth.

Question 5

This was less popular than the extract question. Many responses were based on narrative recall of what the character did and said, with very limited commentary. Often assertions were used rather than careful argument: e.g. 'This shows that Caesar was the noblest man' or 'This showed that he was of feeble temper'. The first prompt about Caesar's nobility was tackled more effectively, with the strongest responses making some use of dialogue spoken by Brutus and Antony. Less effective were comments on Caesar as a 'man of such feeble temper'.

Question 6

There were very few responses to this question. The strongest demonstrated Lucius's concern for Portia; the weakest had some difficulty capturing the moment, with one candidate thinking that Portia was already dead.

Question 7

The strongest responses focused on the playwright at work, with the rounding-up of loose ends and order restored. Miranda and Ferdinand are to be formally married, Ariel is to be given his freedom and possibilities of hope can be seen in Stephano's apparent penitence and Caliban's contrition. The strongest responses contrasted this scene with the opening one with the tempest. Less successful responses tended to describe what was said in the speeches rather than probe the words spoken for their dramatic impact. Those who were most successful in arguing that this was (or was not) a satisfying conclusion to the play made at least some comment on events earlier in the play.

Question 8

The strongest responses incorporated a wide range of well-selected references to Caliban's role in the play. His villainy was evident in his earlier truculence to Prospero, the attempted rape of Miranda and his suggestion to Stephano and Trinculo that they kill Prospero and rule over the island. His status as victim was seen in his powerlessness against Prospero and the servitude in which he is held. Only a few candidates made use of Caliban's 'island' speech to illustrate his humanity. Some argued successfully that the island provided a haven for Prospero and Miranda whereas others made exaggerated and unsupported claims that Caliban was the victim of territorial conquest.

Question 9

There were very few responses in which candidates captured a reasonably authentic tone for the voice of Gonzalo but were less successful in using pertinent textual detail to support the voice.

Question 10

The strongest responses were able to explore what it is that makes Lady Bracknell's interviewing of Jack (some candidates said, 'interrogation') so amusing. Most captured the absurdity of her line of questioning with its emphasis on mercenary considerations. There was genuine outrage that image was more important to Lady Bracknell than the small matter of whether Gwendolen and Jack were actually in love. Some responses were more descriptive in their approach, often listing quotations that were amusing but without comment. A minority of candidates wrote earnestly about socio-economic factors without demonstrating an appreciation that this is a richly comic moment in a comic play.

Question 11

This was a less popular option. Only the strongest were able to delineate clearly the boundaries of their two chosen moments, where they began and ended. Suitable moments included Jack's being outed as a Bunburyist and the first exchange between Gwendolen and Cecily. Surprisingly very few chose the 'handbag' scene. Less successful responses blurred the moments and ended up re-telling the plot with occasional assertions made about 'absurd ways in which people can behave'. Those candidates who began with a concise pinpointing of their chosen moment appeared better able to control their responses.

Question 12

This was the least popular Wilde question. Candidates were usually able to convey something of the narrative underpinning the moment but less able to convey a recognisable voice for the moment. A number of responses attributed to Jack too much knowledge for the given moment.

SECTION B: POETRY

Question 13

The selection of Hardy's poetry was the less popular Poetry option. Most responses to this question had at least a basic understanding of key features: Hodge as a victim of the war; his youth; the alien nature of his resting-place. Many used direct quotation from the poem to illustrate some of these points. Only a minority of

candidates, however, went on to probe the specific effects of the words used by Hardy in conveying the powerfully moving nature of the poem.

Question 14

In general, responses showed at least some understanding of the basic situation described in the poem: the speaker's sense of loss; the reminiscence of their earlier life together; his imagining he can hear her; the finality of his loss. The strongest responses analysed the words and imagery closely. A minority of responses introduced an excessive amount of background material about Hardy's marriage to Emma without addressing the actual question; these responses were descriptive rather than critical.

Question 15

There were very few responses seen, and they demonstrated only a very basic grasp of either poem. There was only limited evidence of an ability to explore the imagery of the poems.

Question 16

The *Songs of Ourselves* poetry selection was the more popular Poetry option. Most responses were able to point out the contrast between life in the city and life in the countryside. Less effective responses tended to list features rather than probe the effects of particular words or sounds closely. In particular, the references to the smells of the city were listed. Occasionally, responses focused on techniques without considering the poet's ideas. Commendably, many candidates at least attempted to examine the significance of the final two-line stanza in relation to the rest of the poem.

Question 17

The strongest responses explored the effects of uncertainty in the speaker's voice in *Continuum* and the apparent incongruity of the comparison of the man and insect in *The Cockroach*. These are perhaps among the most enigmatic of the poems in the current selection, and those who had studied their chosen poem in detail were able to tailor their ideas about the poem to the specific demands of the question on humour. Those who had only a sketchy knowledge of the details of their chosen poem struggled to engage with the main thrust of the question.

Question 18

Pied Beauty was the more popular choice of poem for this question. The strongest responses explored closely the imagery and sound devices employed by Hopkins. Discussion of tone was generally good, though comments on metre tended to be descriptive without reference to how it shapes and enhances the poem's meanings. Less successful responses listed the things God had created and noted their uniqueness (and by extension the 'beauty of the natural world') but this was at the expense of examining the effectiveness of individual images. The more metaphysical aspects of *Summer Farm* were generally overlooked, as responses focused on listing the beautiful aspects of nature found in the poem.

SECTION C: PROSE

Question 19

Stronger responses highlighted the significance of the first person narrative in leading the reader to a reappraisal of Nyasha (viewed unfavourably hitherto). They offered a range of well-selected references to convey the warmth of affection between the two girls and explored sensitively the significance of Tambu's description of what she calls her first love affair. Some pinpointed the precise moment of the tension between the two breaking as Nyasha bursts out laughing. Less successful responses focused less on the qualities of the writing and opted for a paraphrase of the extract, simply listing Tambu's thoughts with minimal critical comment.

Question 20

There were only a few responses, which tended to offer character sketches of Tambu's mother rather than addressing the specific demands of the question 'How far does Dangarembga make your feelings about Tambu change as you read the novel?'

Question 21

There was insufficient evidence for useful comment to be made here.

Question 22

There was a range of responses to this, the most popular question on *Fasting, Feasting*. Many responses wrote sensitively about the pressures of Mama in having the luckless job of getting Uma married, with Mama acting on her own for once rather than as half of MamaPapa. Some observed that the unattractiveness of the suitors indicates the extent of Mama's desperation to get Uma married. The strongest responses commented on Mama's lack of sensitivity towards her daughter, referring to Mama's harsh words and rough handling of Uma. Quite a number of responses missed these telling details and what they reveal about Mama, concentrating on Mama's feelings rather than how they felt towards her.

Question 23

Some of the strongest responses chose a key character from each section, for example, Uma and Melanie, Mama and Mrs Patton. Less effective responses offered character sketches whereas more confident responses tailored their material to the question's key words 'Explore the ways in which' and 'bring to life'. Successful responses explored characterisation; less successful responses merely described characters in general terms.

Question 24

This was one of the paper's more popular empathetic questions. Stronger responses demonstrated a clear appreciation of this somewhat vague and nervy character, unable or unwilling to acknowledge the problems in her dysfunctional family. The strongest responses suggested that her constant shopping was something of a displacement activity to convince herself that she was a good mother providing for the needs of her family. Some responses were, given the moment specified in the question, a little too prescient in anticipating shopping expeditions with Arun and her own embracing of vegetarianism.

Question 25

This was the most popular question on *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Most responses had something to say about both parts of the question: making fun of Mr Chawla and making fun of the government service. They captured the element of caricature about the portrayal of Mr Chawla as every inch the pushy parent, and explored the satirical barbs directed at the self-serving government bureaucracy. The strongest responses communicated the ironic nature of the perceived 'perks' of the government service and acknowledged Mr Chawla's talking up his son's job in order to keep up appearances. A minority of responses missed the humour of the extract.

Question 26

Most responses explored her qualities as a dreamer and outsider, someone who inhabits the world of her senses, finely-tuned to the scents of the exotic dishes she prepares. Many candidates acknowledged her role in the downfall of the spy (literally into her cooking pot) at the end of the novel. Whereas stronger answers directly addressed the question's key words 'mysterious' and 'fascinating', weaker ones tended to produce character sketches, with a tendency to re-tell those parts of the plot involving her.

Question 27

The few responses to this question generally captured the moment and made some attempt to use at least some expression that was suitable for the character. They noted that the crisis that meets him contrasted with earlier expectations that the District Collector's posting to a supposed backwater would present few pressing problems.

Question 28

The majority of responses saw very few reasons for sympathy. His desire to make right his failure to acknowledge comes too late, and most candidates deplored Godfrey's arrogance in believing that only he could make Eppie's life better. Stronger responses remarked on the unexpected eloquence of Silas at this moment in the novel whereas less effective responses tended simply to explain what both Silas and Godfrey say. The strongest answers explored the role of the omniscient narrator in guiding the reader's feelings.

Question 29

There were only a few responses to this question. In general, they showed a basic awareness of key aspects: Silas's loss of faith after William Dane's betrayal; Silas's consequent isolation and miserliness. Generally, however, there was insufficient attention paid to the ways in which Eliot 'vividly conveys' the effect of the Lantern Yard experience of Silas's life. In less effective responses, characters were regarded as real-life people rather than fictional constructs.

Question 30

The few who attempted this question managed to convey the kindliness of Dolly's character and incorporated a range of reference to God and church, but often without really rooting their responses in the detail of the text. In a few responses Dolly's voice lacked credibility, as her expressions seemed to belong more to the 21st rather than the 19th century.

Question 31

This was a popular question, and a range of responses was seen. Most candidates acknowledged Kingshaw's sense of hope here, with the emphatic 'Fielding is *my friend*. This is all right.' They pointed out that this was a moment when Kingshaw glimpses the possibilities of a better future. The strongest responses were able to relate their personal response to what happens in the extract to the main thrust of the question: how Hill makes the moment so moving. The strongest responses observed that the depiction of Fielding's family life was not entirely romanticised and referred to the fate of the birds in the cages. A few perceptive responses were able to contextualise this particular moment by observing that Hooper's unexpected imminent return will puncture Kingshaw's current euphoria.

Question 32

Most responses referred to relevant aspects of the novel: the key incidents in the unfolding relationship between Hooper and Kingshaw; the self-interest of the parents making them blind to the agonies Kingshaw experiences; the increasing sense that there is no escape from the terrors of Hooper's tyranny. Some candidates expressed frustration at Kingshaw for failing to take advantage of the few occasions that he was metaphorically 'king of the castle'. Less effective responses made reference to relevant parts of the novel but often in a descriptive or narrative way. The strongest responses explored Hill's techniques: the 'ways' in which she makes us feel that Kingshaw's death is inevitable'.

Question 33

Most responses captured Mr Hooper's sense of guilt at neglecting his son and putting his own interests before his son's. Some responses depicted an ineffectual father naively believing that marriage to Helen would solve everything. The strongest responses probed the detail of the text more closely, with Mr Hooper reflecting on his relationship with his own father in trying to establish why it is that he finds it difficult to relate to his own son.

Question 34

This was the most popular of the questions on the anthology *Stories of Ourselves*. Most responses showed at least a sound understanding of the key events and broad themes of the story and alluded to the marriage for economic reasons, the vicar's 'social suicide' and their removal to the city, and her son's snobbery. Stronger answers explored in detail the methods Hardy uses to create such a sympathetic character. Less effective responses tended to re-tell the entire story, often going well beyond the extract, and treat the characters as real-life people. A minority of responses concentrated on the social and historical contexts of the story without really addressing either the question or the detail of the text.

Question 35

Candidates generally had a sound grasp of the key narrative aspects of their chosen story. The strongest responses to Lurie's *My Greatest Ambition* explored the humour of the story, as events are described from the perspective of the memorable young and precocious narrator. The most successful responses to Soueif's *Sandpiper* showed a sensitive appreciation of the narrator's predicament. Less effective responses tended to re-tell significant moments from their chosen story rather than explore how the writer makes the narrator so memorable.

Question 36

The few responses to this question generally demonstrated a sound understanding of McAllister's likely feelings towards the employer who had sacked him but who was now begging him to return to Blandings. There were some commendable attempts at humour.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 12
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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

Less successful answers made appropriate points but did not back them up with textual support. Most understood the general situation at this moment in the play, and there was often a focus on the tension between the three characters. Larry was often discussed at some length, at the expense of consideration of the actual text of the extract. Candidates tended to show a clearer understanding of Kate than of the other two and Chris was often neglected. Weaker answers generally did not take into account when in the play this moment comes: there was confusion about who – the audience included – knows what, at this point. Better responses noted the tension generated by the stage directions (the range of tones, the movement on stage). A few responses were perceptive about the contrast between Kate's over-protested, relatively long speeches and Ann's terse rebuttals.

Question 2

Most answers showed knowledge of the character, had the right quotations ready, and focused on the 'power of the play'. Most showed a good understanding of Jim and his dramatic function as a foil to Joe and as a disappointed idealist who lives in 'the usual darkness'; the character who knows all of the play's truth and who controls the play's dramatic/emotional temperature. Some strong answers focused on what Jim knew about Joe, and why he said nothing. Weaker responses demonstrated some uncertain knowledge of the character and his function in the play. Differentiation came from the extent to which answers went beyond character sketch to consider dramatic function.

Question 3

This empathic question offered candidates a good opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of both character and text, given the pivotal nature of the moment. Candidates who grasped the despair and self-loathing Joe is experiencing by this stage tended to have more success in achieving a convincing voice than those who attempted self-justification or attempted to blame Kate for helping to hush things up. Overall, this was a reasonably successful option for those candidates who chose it. Many missed the task's 'You are in your room' and made the mistake of writing in the past tense – offering narrative, interspersed with the odd emotional comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: Julius Caesar

Question 4

Less successful answers gave only limited attention to the actual passage and spent too much time on narration of the events leading up to Caesar's assassination. Better answers were able to state clearly the characteristics of Caesar on display in this extract: his arrogance, his pride, his susceptibility to flattery, his superstition, maybe his fickle nature, maybe his naivety, and then explore clearly how these are brought to light. The failure to explore the 'how' of the question was what limited many of the responses. Some stronger answers attempted to engage with the writer's technique, commenting, for example, on Caesar's referring to himself in the third person and on the language that Decius uses to 'massage Caesar's ego'. Some conflated Decius Brutus and Marcus Brutus, with very misleading results. Relatively few candidates considered the last part of the extract at all, and only the best in any depth.

Question 5

In less successful answers, focus on the question was not sharp. Many had clearly prepared for a ‘Brutus’ question and wrote competently about Brutus, ignoring the crux of the actual question: the extent to which our view of Brutus *changes*. Frequently, the question was interpreted as being ‘how does Brutus change during the play’, rather than how the audience’s view of him changes. Consequently, many weaker responses were basically character descriptions. A number of responses attempted to answer the question using the question 4 extract – often compounding the difficulty this created by assuming Decius and Brutus were one and the same. Relatively few candidates moved far beyond the opening scenes of the play to consider Brutus following the death of Caesar. The best answers were very well informed; often with excellent textual recall. Most candidates – but by no means all – were aware of the honourable nature of Brutus and explored to some effect how an honourable man could kill his friend and how this affected their response to him. Many argued that he never lost his honourable nature throughout and were able to quote Antony’s eulogy at the end of the play in support. Some candidates saw Brutus as power-hungry and unscrupulous, and were never able to supply textual evidence for their opinion.

Question 6

Most answers found difficulty in capturing a voice for Octavius, although his ambition was recognised. Of the few candidates who attempted to assume the voice, a number were unable to tie the speech to the relevant ‘moment’ of the play and used general material from later than the immediate post-meeting moment asked about. Several mistook the moment, and had Octavius hurrying back to Rome to prevent the assassination of Caesar. Many did capture something of Octavius’s strength of purpose and determination even when the voice was not distinctive.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

Question 7

The extract proved accessible for most candidates who chose this option, and most were able to identify some of the ways in which it was entertaining. Few were able to go on to analyse how the language of the extract enhanced the effect. Better answers tended to identify the contribution Ariel made to the overall comedy, thereby showing awareness of the play in performance. Some candidates offered interesting ideas on the scene as a parody of colonisation, but these ideas needed to be linked to the question to gain full credit. For ‘entertaining’, most candidates read ‘humorous’. Some simply said that the scene is funny because three characters are drunk, bickering and rowdy, and confused by Ariel’s intervention. Almost all responses noted that it was amusing that Ariel was behind the confusion of the passage, and many noted the amusing violence – though most needed to argue more fully why and how the violence was actually amusing. Differentiation came from the extent to which the comic richness of the language was explored – what the characters call, and how they address, one another; the best answers sensed serious foundations – to do with power, status etc. – of this comic richness. The best answers were able to offer a good range of material and mention Shakespeare’s authorial presence behind the action or the language of its presentation.

Question 8

This was often handled well, particularly by those candidates who recognised that the ‘How far’ in the question implied that a balanced response was expected. Nearly all candidates found something to say about Prospero’s treatment of Miranda, Ariel and Caliban. Often, this was little more than narrative, and often relied disproportionately on Prospero’s account to Miranda of their arrival on the island. Many candidates simply wrote about how Prospero was admirable – as a father and/or as a slave-master. Better candidates were able to offer much more, and even explore these two basic points in more subtle and thoughtful detail. Some saw him as an evil coloniser, while others saw him as a god-like figure dispensing forgiveness rather than revenge.

Question 9

Some candidates found difficulty in developing a voice for Sebastian. This difficulty was compounded by a failure to identify the character correctly – several candidates wrote as Ferdinand. Some more successful responses displayed considerable knowledge of Sebastian and his part in proceedings, although there were some who offered an unregenerate character wanting to get back to Naples to have another go at Alonso.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Question 10

Some of the candidates who offered responses to this question were able to identify quite clearly the moments of comedy and the best of these were also able to discuss reasonably effectively how Wilde was able to make these hilarious. There were comments on the visual humour in Cecily's treatment of Gwendolen and the use of language parallels. Most candidates were able to respond relevantly though many still find it very hard to show how something is 'hilarious' or the ways in which Wilde makes it so, largely because they are unable to explore in sufficient detail the language he uses in doing this. Many forgot that it is a play, and ignored the stage directions – some believing that Gwendolen's 'Detestable girl! But I require tea!' is heard by Cecily. Others interpreted the tea party as a misunderstanding, rather than combat as a result of a prior misunderstanding. The best responses sensed social satire and critique. Weaker answers focused on Victorian social criticism in general terms, and this also contributed to the lack of success in answering this question.

Question 11

Very few candidates attempted this question, and those who did showed at best a rather shaky grasp of the character and of what he did that was amusing. Good candidates were able to point to the humour of this mature man of the cloth deeply and simpering in love and his eagerness to please Jack and Algernon. Again, some candidates wrote about the role of the church in Victorian times, missing the (much simpler) point.

Question 12

There were a few good Lady Bracknell's, the voice ringing true(ish) and with suitable content, but too many moved beyond the specified moment to give a summary of the ensuing scene. Lady Bracknell's overbearing voice eluded most, often being replaced by an unconvincingly worried mother or aunt. Her need for Algernon's musical services was mentioned by only a few, and there was often an anachronistic knowledge of Mr Worthing's circumstances. Conversely, cucumber sandwiches loomed large.

SECTION B: POETRY

THOMAS HARDY: *Selected Poems*

Question 13

Answers tended to be descriptive, with little consideration of the 'feelings' in the question. Good answers discussed the speaker's feelings of isolation, and possibly bitterness, by consideration of the language used, the night setting of the poem, the passing of the motor car and the despair of the conclusion, considering the words and images of the poem and the effects created. Weaker answers read the poem as an autobiographical episode, (e.g. the poet is waiting for his wife to return from hospital) and did not distinguish between poet and speaker. Those who kept Hardy –the man- out of it were more successful in engaging with language and technique.

Question 14

Answers met with some success as they seemed to understand some of the thematic concerns on display, in particular the idea of the permanence of basic human emotions.

Question 15

This was not well tackled. Most answers chose *The Going*, and focused in general biographical terms on Hardy's life and marriage rather than engaging with the poem itself. Very little sense of the writing emerged from answers, and there was little attempt to deal with 'vividly'.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: from Part 4

Question 16

Weaker answers showed little understanding of Bhatt's feelings or how she conveys these. There were also some very hazy ideas of what 'culture' means. Candidates might have performed better if they had begun by defining their own terms as examiners allowed a wide range of interpretations of the word. Very few candidates attempted to answer the question, offering instead general narration or paraphrase of the first 18 lines of the poem, often ignoring the final section altogether. Weaker answers offered a kind of translation of the poem, but often in doing so revealed a lack of understanding. Many made no comment at all about colonisation in the second stanza. Better answers were able to reveal a basic understanding of the content, and show some awareness of Bhatt's anger in the second stanza. Some noted the different form of the second stanza but made little analysis of the language. A few good responses were able to get down to looking at the poet's word choices and show how these revealed feelings 'vividly'. In these good answers, where the poem had clearly been studied in detail, responses interpreted lines from the poem as metaphors for different attitudes to cultures and provided effective argument supported by relevant quotation. For most, where the final 10 lines of the poem were considered at all, this took the form of a series of vague generalisations about colonialism.

Question 17

Only the most successful responses adapted their knowledge and understanding of *Pike* to consider the focus of the question on the poet's feelings about nature. Many candidates were able to describe in detail the poetic creation of the pike but very few then applied that to Hughes' feelings about nature, in other words they were unable to make the necessary intellectual leap from narrative to supported speculation. Some misread the question as being about the nature of the pike. Understanding of the poem also suffered from imposed readings, for example that the pike was a representation of human nature, beautiful on the outside but evil within. Sadly, therefore, some good candidates might have let themselves down by simply not reading the question.

Question 18

The two 'planners' poems were popular and appropriate choices to tackle the question. Weaker answers tended to write in general terms about city life, with little or no consideration of the 'strong reactions' mentioned in the question. Candidates were well prepared, but instead of being selective and focusing on 'strong reactions and aspects of city life', in order to answer the question, some wrote everything they knew about their poem.

SECTION C: PROSE

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

Question 19

This question generated an interesting range of responses. Many candidates were shocked at Babamukuru's violence towards his daughter, although for many, his use of the term 'whore' was more shocking than the physical violence displayed. In some answers, this was accepted as reasonable parental behaviour, and the shock was that his daughter should retaliate in kind. Weaker responses were directed towards the behaviour of the characters, and how that behaviour reflected some of the themes of the novel, at the expense of consideration of the detail of the extract. Some very good answers dealt with the surprise because of what they had previously come to expect of the characters, and wrote relevantly about the fact that Maiguru and Chido had to intervene; better candidates were able to explore the language in detail, and sometimes effectively separated the shocking from the surprising to good effect. Such answers were well-reasoned and supported with a good range of relevant material drawn from across the whole passage.

Question 20

This was another example of a question where many candidates ignored 'To what extent' and instead listed ways in which Jeremiah is weak. Most recognised his laziness and his treatment of Tambu, often relating this to some of the themes of the novel, for instance, arguing that he could get away with this behaviour because of the patriarchal society. Few considered his subservient position in the wider family hierarchy, or his treatment of his wife and her sister, or his willingness to take credit for the achievements of others.

Question 21

Generally the 'moment' was well understood but some candidates confused this with the moment covered in question 19, thereby creating a good deal of confusion. There were some strong responses from candidates who recognised Babamukuru's intense sense of his own importance as head of the family and captured a credible conflict between his desire to keep his public image undisturbed and a sense of irritation or distress at his wife's rebellion. Many of the better responses were able to capture the weighty, self-important tone of the character whilst still conveying concern, anxiety, and – some suggested – slight feelings of guilt and remorse. A good range of relevant reference was necessary here, and better candidates were able to supply this.

ANITA DESAI: Fasting, Feasting

Question 22

This question elicited some excellent responses. Some candidates used the question as an opportunity to write, often with some passion, about the treatment of women in some traditional Indian societies, without paying much, if any, attention to the extract itself or to Desai's writing. There were some excellent close readings, with attention paid to lighting, tone, time, unfolding, point of view, structure as well as pointing out the uncertainties about Anamika's death and the lack of reaction of her relatives. Weaker answers merely summarised the extract without considering what was 'disturbing' about this moment.

Question 23

Most answers found something relevant to say. Many were able to find enough textual references to demonstrate ways in which Uma's life was full of disappointment. There was a good deal of condemnation of Mamapapa for their repressive treatment of their daughter, often linked to generalisations about the role of women in Indian society. Relatively few went on to offer a balanced assessment – implied by the word 'fair' in the question. Those who did tended to take account of her moments of escape from the confines of the family.

Question 24

As with several of the empathic questions in the Prose section of the paper, less successful answers sometimes confused what the character would think and what the candidate thought they ought to think. In the case of Arun, several candidates thought that regret at leaving the Patton household would figure prominently, and that he would be feeling overwhelmingly grateful to Mrs Patton in particular for her care for him. Most candidates showed reasonable knowledge of the events in the American part of the novel, but were not always able to convince that they had understood their significance.

KIRAN DESAI: Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 25

Candidates made good use of the passage to show how different a light on the Brigadier's character it throws and there were some perceptive responses. Sound selection of material to prove what the Brigadier is normally like, here at the outset of the passage and elsewhere earlier in the novel, was contrasted efficiently with the surprisingly soft and in some ways vulnerable man he appears once he espies the bird. Better candidates made very good use of the contrast and best answers got down to looking at individual words and phrases, revealing a genuine engagement with Desai's writing. Weaker answers did not really identify the surprise of the revelation of another side to his character, but offered description or paraphrase.

Question 26

This question presented difficulties for candidates who did not understand the term ‘self-important’. Examiners accepted a broad definition of the term, and some successful answers were written about Pinkie and Mr Chawla in particular. Some candidates wrote about substantial parts of the novel, stretching the meaning of the term ‘moment’, and for some, ‘ridiculous’ was addressed only by implication.

Question 27

The empathetic question was frequently attempted with some success. Many candidates appreciated the different aspects of Sampath’s character, and often achieved an appropriate voice. Others stressed guilt, regret and shame, reflecting perhaps what the candidates thought Sampath ought to have been feeling. The best answers reflected his lack of regret, his pleasure about his performance at the wedding, and the prospect of freedom from the oppressions in his life, with, sometimes, some anxieties about what his father might say. Generally, at whatever level of achievement, candidates communicated their enjoyment of this particular text.

GEORGE ELIOT: Silas Marner

Question 28

Most candidates managed to identify and highlight parts of the extract which showed Dunsey’s unpleasantness quite well, although comments on Eliot’s use of language were sparse. There was a general appreciation of the situation between the brothers and supporting quotation was often selected quite effectively, although there was a tendency for candidates to move from considering the extract to offering a narrative of subsequent events. Better responses were able to focus on the language used by Eliot, almost always picked up on the way even the dog reacts to the villainous Dunstan, and often even Dunstan’s body language. Generally most candidates were able to make some relevant response to this question.

Question 29

Some candidates who attempted this question struggled with the meaning of ‘amusing’ even though it is a term that has been used on this syllabus for a long time. For some, it appeared to mean ‘amazing’, for others ‘pleasingly instructive’. Some candidates selected completely inappropriate moments e.g. Dunsey robbing Marner and attempted to create convoluted arguments to justify their choice. Most answers offered narrative accounts of incidents – often Lantern Yard and the arrival of Eppie – with no attempt to explain or explore how and why they were amusing. There were a few attempts to use the extract and suggest the humour in that.

Question 30

Answers seemed to find difficulty in locating the precise moment and often wrote about parties in general, with little success in finding a voice for the character. There were some attempts which showed some grasp of events, although seldom was Nancy’s shyness conveyed. Instead, she was often portrayed as something of an envious man-hunter.

SUSAN HILL: I'm the King of the Castle

Question 31

Most candidates were able to discuss Kingshaw’s feeling of having escaped, and signs that he had not and generally they were keen to point out the relative tranquillity of the relationship between Kingshaw and Hooper in this section. They were alive to the contrast with their relationship at Warings. Better answers explored the language, and there were some detailed examples of analysis which showed sensitivity to the symbolism. In weaker answers there was too much narration of the story and too little attention to the important term in the question: ‘powerfully conveys’.

Question 32

Answers sometimes offered some relevant textual detail, showing how Mr Hooper treated Kingshaw, and made comments about how he did not understand his own son. There was often quite a lot of assertion made without sufficient arguing of the point in hand. Better candidates were able to offer a wider range of relevant reference and offered more fully developed responses.

Question 33

Candidates generally caught the moment well, and imagined plausible thoughts in a suitable voice. There was often a sound enough general nastiness in the voice of Hooper and some villainous threats of how he planned to follow and to terrorise Kingshay, but closer detail would have made some answers much more impressive, and helped to develop the voice still further.

From Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

The Rain Horse was frequently attempted and there were some good responses. These were characterised by close inspection of the passage and good, clear analysis of the writer's use of language. Better answers were able to link the weather with the incident to good effect, and were able to make clear the man's vulnerability. There were some very useful responses to the descriptions of the horse which create a surreal effect. Most answers, even weaker ones, made some relevant observations in connection with the question here, and there was a strong sense of engagement with the strangeness of this powerful moment in the story. Weaker responses sometimes appeared to have approached the extract as an 'unseen', showing only limited understanding of events and their significance.

Question 35

Sandpiper was the most frequently chosen of the stories and there were some very good answers which went beyond itemising the ways in which the narrator feels alienated, to consider the imagery and symbolism of the story, for example the white wall and the sand and the sea. Responses on *At Hiruharama* seldom moved beyond mere narration, with at best a brief comment about remoteness. A minority of candidates ignored the 'either/or' of the question and wrote about both texts, which was inevitably self-penalising.

Question 36

Even more than with Sampath (question 27), responses to this empathetic question were weakened by the candidates' tendency to express what they thought Randolph ought to be thinking rather than what he would most probably think. Consequently, there were many Randolphs wracked with grief and remorse. Better answers achieved a suitably pompous voice in which to convey the snobbishness and nastiness of the character. At times, Randolph was portrayed as just abusive and there was insufficient detail included from the text to make it anything but a very nasty, hateful child cursing his dead mother. At the opposite end of the spectrum there were some responses which seemed to show some love and remorse at his treatment of his mother when she was alive, though the textual evidence for this approach is not readily available and none was ever offered. Better answers were able to produce a good deal of reference to the concerns of the text and reveal a snobbish, domineering and unpleasant man who has had and still has no time whatsoever for his ignorant and common mother. In these answers, the arrogance and snobbishness of Randolph's tone were well captured, often skilfully using textual echo, and thus made for a powerful response to character and moment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13
Paper 13 (Open Books)

Key messages

Detailed knowledge of texts is not on its own sufficient for high reward. Candidates must relate detailed knowledge to the demands of the question.

In their critical responses candidates must include analysis of the effects writers create in order to convey their meanings.

Responses to extract-based questions should engage with the detail and language of the extract, by selecting relevant words and phrases to address the question.

Personal responses to texts should be informed responses that are substantiated by apt textual detail.

General comments

The most successful critical responses demonstrated a detailed knowledge of texts and a sustained engagement with the question. Some candidates started their responses well but lost focus part of the way through the essay – as they perhaps veered towards a topic they had covered before. A minority of responses struggled to communicate personal responses to characters, themes and settings. There were a few instances of responses starting with extraneous background information, sometimes at great length, before addressing the key words of the question. Some answers showed little evidence of thorough knowledge of the chosen texts and this was revealed not only in the general essays but also in the extract-based questions which some candidates appeared to treat as ‘Unseen’ passages.

The strongest responses to Drama texts acknowledged the text as a play, i.e. something to be performed on a stage. These responses invariably referred to the ‘play’ rather than ‘book’ and to the ‘audience’ rather than ‘reader’. They also explored the words of the dialogue, not merely relying on stage directions to indicate the emotions of characters. Questions make reference to the writer. Key words in questions include ‘Explore’, ‘How?’ and ‘In what ways?’ These are all designed to encourage a critical engagement with a writer’s techniques. Such an engagement requires a consideration of the ways in which writers shape and convey meanings. The strongest responses were skilful at combining precise analytical comment and concise, useful reference. Less successful responses tended to log features and found it difficult, therefore, to go beyond a descriptive approach. Sometimes comments were so unhelpfully general as to be true of any text: ‘The description draws you in’; ‘The writer uses strong words’; ‘It makes you feel as if you are there’.

In 45-minute responses candidates are not required to provide exhaustive responses. For extract-based questions, for example, they need to select detail carefully from the extract in order to answer the question effectively. Where candidates attempted exhaustive commentaries on extracts or poems, they tended to produce superficial responses. Some candidates did a brief plan before starting to write their answer, and this helped them to organise their ideas effectively.

The strongest critical responses made judicious use of textual reference. They made frequent, concise and pertinent references to the texts and integrated the references flawlessly into their own writing. Less effective responses used quotations, sometimes quite lengthy ones, to illustrate a point but did not take the opportunity to explore the language of the key words. The least effective responses made mere assertions.

The best empathic responses created a convincingly authentic voice for the character and showed a clear appreciation of both the character and moment specified in the question. Additionally they rooted their responses in the detail of the text. The least successful empathic responses struggled to capture a suitable voice and/or neglected to include textual detail for support.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A: DRAMA

Arthur Miller: All My Sons

Question 1

Most candidates could identify aspects of how Miller conveyed George's guilt and anger, citing stage directions, dialogue and the characters themselves. The best answers showed understanding of George's personal guilt at not having visited or written to his father, how he tries to make Ann share that feeling of guilt, his certainty that his father was framed, and the final confrontation with Chris. An understanding of the text as drama was also conveyed. Weaker responses focused on stage directions and punctuation without relevant textual support or exploration of the text itself.

Question 2

Candidates engaged with the character, Joe, and had no difficulty in pinpointing at least a few disagreeable features of his character though points were not always supported with textual detail. Weaker answers wrote in general about Joe, and the plot of the play, rather than remaining focused on the question, and some candidates considered Miller as a character rather than as the playwright. Good responses explored how the use of language can create effects.

Question 3

Only a few responses were seen. Most who attempted this question were able to convey some appropriate aspects of Kate's thinking.

William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar

Question 4

There were some very good responses, characterised by sound understanding of the relationship. Generally, there was clear understanding of this scene, and even weaker candidates were able to grasp some aspects of what was 'moving'. Some focused entirely on Portia's perspective and showed her devotion and concern but ignored Brutus's appreciation of his wife and his tender words. The best responses were able to highlight some of the deeper implications of the extract, describing Portia's changing strategies with sensitivity. Weaker responses narrated the scene and included lengthy explanations about gender inequality, losing sight of both the passage and question.

Question 5

The best responses selected a range of examples of omens and the supernatural, and analysed their dramatic impact. The Soothsayer's warning, the weather, Calpurnia's dream and Caesar's ghost were cited. They identified the idea of foreshadowing and explored how tension, dramatic irony and suspense are created for the audience. Weaker responses listed key events or re-told the plot.

Question 6

Most answers showed knowledge of Antony's situation, expressing suitable thoughts and feelings. His relationship with Caesar, initial shock, and his loathing of the conspirators figured largely. The best answers included his planning ahead and desire for vengeance with a few using background knowledge to create a convincing context for his words.

William Shakespeare: The Tempest

Question 7

Most candidates were able to comment in general on the relationship between Ferdinand and Prospero but missed some of the deeper implications. Understanding of the satisfaction felt by the audience when Prospero agrees to the marriage was shown and the dramatic threats made to Ferdinand explored. Though Prospero's love for Miranda was appreciated, only the very best candidates analysed the language closely. Ferdinand was often recognised as suitably honourable. Better answers included an understanding of the wider theme of reconciliation and the requirement for a resolution, and the dramatic and satisfying aspects of the scene. Many candidates ignored Ariel's 'dramatic' role in this scene in receiving Prospero's orders and the 'satisfying' implication of his 'last service'.

Question 8

Most responses showed some awareness of the comedy and were able to comment on the entertaining aspects of Trinculo and Stefano. In less successful answers, assertions were made about humour, but were not supported, and where references to the text were made, the language and humour were not explored. General comments were made about the pair, frequently retelling their parts, but they lacked detailed support and development. Some better answers gave some detailed analysis of the slapstick humour.

Question 9

Only a few responded to this question but most answered this well, showing understanding of Gonzalo's character and perspective. His good nature and shock at seeing Prospero were conveyed.

Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

This was a popular question. There was a tendency in weaker answers to write about the Victorians, social and historical background and Wilde's personal life without linking the information to the terms of the question. Most candidates were able to identify what they claimed were hilarious features but did not really show understanding of the humour, moving through the passage identifying key phrases, but failing to draw out the significance. Whilst there was an effort to consider how the audience is engaged, many struggled to be precise in their response to how the humour works. There was quite a lot of repetition, possibly because the interaction in the passage keeps going back to the issue of the cigarette case.

Question 11

A few really good answers were seen. Most were able to give an account of Gwendolen's character, but found it more difficult to say why Jack was lucky to be marrying her. Weaker candidates wrote a general character description with limited attention to the question. The very best answers considered the precise terms of the question, 'How far...' and produced a developed, balanced response.

Question 12

Most responses managed to capture at least some aspect of her romantic ideas and shallowness.

SECTION B: POETRY

Thomas Hardy: Selected Poems

Question 13

In the poem the speaker is bitter and appears to have been betrayed. His lover is described in very unattractive terms and his life has been ruined, and the very best answers explored this, responding to the effects of colour, and the weather. There were some very weak responses which showed hardly any knowledge of the poem. Most of the weaker answers introduced their responses with detailed biographical notes on Hardy's relationship with Emma rather than focusing on the terms of the question, and the poem, itself. There were a few good responses, characterised by clear points, relevant support and demonstrating understanding of the language and how Hardy's 'disappointment' in love was portrayed. Weaker candidates tended to work through the verses, commenting on language features but not supporting their points or explain how they are effective.

Question 14

The best responses engaged with the language and explored the contrast between the opulence of the ship and vanity of the people and the image of the ship lying at the bottom of the sea. Well-selected detail was integrated in these responses. Weaker answers worked through the poem, narrating events and making general, unsupported statements and personal comments.

Question 15

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

Songs of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

This was generally well done. Candidates engaged with the poem and nearly all explored some aspects of the imagery, supporting comments with integrated, relevant quotations, with the very best making insightful comments on the poet's feelings and how these were conveyed. Weaker candidates, however, spent too much time on the poet's background and contextualisation of 'The Planners' without linking this closely to the terms of the question. A general overview was given and there were some that focused entirely on the rhythm and rhyme, ignoring the meaning of the poem completely.

Question 17

Discussion of *Horses* was better than on *Summer Farm* which was characterised by quite vague and generalised statements, lacking textual detail. Many candidates did not quite understand this poem and offered a variety of personal opinions including comments on the importance of metaphysical attitudes to life. Candidates seem to have been fascinated by some of the images in this poem, especially the wobbling ducks and what some perceived as a 'one-eyed hen' but had difficulty in describing the significance. Many candidates found it difficult to identify the specific 'moment' for the poems and tended to just work through the poems with no attention to the question, particularly with *Horses*. However, there were some excellent responses demonstrating critical understanding of both language and poetic devices. Weaker candidates attempted to argue that the moment was the 'Industrial Revolution' when Muir was a boy and were clearly unable to support and develop this line of argument.

Question 18

There were some excellent responses to both *Hunting Snake*, and *Pike*, where candidates engaged with what they found 'surprising', sustaining and supporting ideas with integrated references and critical understanding of how the poets achieved effects. Most recognised the mixed feelings of the voice of the poems and some expressed their own sense of fascination with both animals depicted. Weaker candidates worked through the poems with little attention to the question. Some less successful answers argued generally that *Hunting Snake* was a metaphor for the cultural issues between the Australian Aborigine and the white colonists but did not support ideas, explore effects created, or link ideas to the question.

SECTION C: PROSE

Tsitsi Dangarembga: Nervous Conditions

Question 19

Although there were some good answers to this question where candidates expressed immense satisfaction that Tambu's hard work was rewarded by the scholarship and quoted Babamukuru's words of praise, it generally seemed to be difficult for candidates to highlight points that were 'satisfying' and 'amusing'. Many responses were very general and worked through the passage with little attention to the terms of the question or the language of the passage. The nuances of the passage, like Jeremiah's attitude to Babamukuru, were often missed. Quite a few responses commented on racial attitudes but could have made their points more relevant to the passage.

Question 20

Most responses focused on general issues such as gender inequality and racial or colonial issues rather than selecting points which developed the idea of the rebelliousness of the girls. A few candidates wrote about both girls rather than just one and limited responses to straightforward character studies. Only a few chose to write about Lucia but these were amongst the best responses as they could identify what made her 'memorably rebellious' and detailed her progress and determination through the novel to successfully receiving an education, employment and ultimately, a degree of independence.

Question 21

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

Anita Desai: Fasting, Feasting

Question 22

Some candidates were highly critical of 'MamaPapa' for their poor parenting skills including their different attitude to the birth of a boy than to the birth of their daughters, the forced feeding and the general obsession and nervousness in dealing with Arun. A few candidates were particularly angered at the fact that they continued to socialise, leaving Arun at home in the care of an older sister. The best responses were able to support points with close reference to the text, exploring Uma's perspective and looking at the deeper implications of the language and text. Weaker answers were able to identify points from working through the passage but did not relate them directly enough to the question.

Question 23

Candidates seemed to enjoy picking out the problems in the Patton family. There was a range of 'problems' that candidates identified, with some relevant observations and examples to support arguments. For some weak answers, this question ended up being a narrative response and some lost focus on the question completely, describing in length their personal views on issues such as bulimia and what they perceived as the American obsession with food as an indication of wealth and status.

Question 24

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

Kiran Desai: Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 25

There were some entertaining and enjoyable responses, which picked out the key parts of the passage that were amusing. Nearly all candidates commented appropriately on the poor CMO, and drew out details from the passage such as the 'missile', his special tea, the irony of his own health when he was supposed to be in charge of the health of the district. Nearly all candidates commented on the 'horrible, horrible onion juice', and expressed sympathy for the CMO. Generally this was very well done.

Question 26

This question was not as popular and though most responses were able to explain some characteristics of Pinky and Sampath, few of these responded to the ‘clash’ between their personalities. There was a tendency for candidates to write two character studies and then to comment on their differences. The very best responses explored their amusing clashes citing, for example, the bicycle run, Sampath’s disrobing at the wedding and their experiences with monkeys.

Question 27

A few responses were seen, most of which were able to connect with Mr Chawla’s despair at his son’s behaviour.

George Eliot: Silas Marner

Question 28

Most candidates were able to connect with some ‘moving’ aspects of the passage. The context of the passage was clearly understood and there was a general understanding of Dolly’s kindness and the significance of her visit. Most candidates were able to highlight some relevant points from the passage with textual detail in support, and the best explored how the writer achieved effects through language and situation. Weaker candidates retold the passage, failing to comment on what was ‘moving’ or supporting points with textual detail.

Question 29

A few responses were seen and these tended to be character profiles or narrative responses, lacking focus on what made Nancy Cass such an impressive character.

Question 30

Most answers were able to convey Eppie’s affection for Silas and how Lantern Yard had changed with some suitable features of her voice. Some weaker responses showed knowledge of the novel but did not reveal anything about Eppie.

Susan Hill: I'm the King of the Castle

Question 31

This was generally very well done. Candidates engaged with both the question and passage. Most candidates were well prepared and understood the difficulties in the relationship between father and son. There was a wide range in quality of responses and some of the best answers were able to analyse literary features in the passage as well the nuances of their conversations and actions. Weaker answers were able to at least note some of the instances of the strained relationship.

Question 32

Very few candidates were able to identify two suitable ‘moments’, of the ‘countryside’ which were ‘particularly powerful’. Some responses wrote about buildings or places, Warings, the castle, or the ‘Red Room’ and others offered very vague information about Hang Wood or the ‘field’ or the ‘stream’. In a few cases, candidates only described one situation. Many candidates chose to write about Warings with little reference to countryside, though they were able to write about at least one appropriate moment, for example, episodes in Hang Wood, Kingshaw’s experience with the crow in the cornfield or life on Fielding’s farm. Generally, weaker answers did not support their statements with sufficient detail or explain how Hill made their chosen moment powerful.

Question 33

A few responses were seen and these were able to capture a little of Mrs Kingshaw’s relief, shallowness and misguided idea of what a happy family they would make.

From Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

There were some interesting ideas developed about the generation gap, post-war class system and the ‘coming of age’ story the text provokes. Most responses picked out a few relevant points from the passage though not always exploring how it made it such an effective ending. A number of responses made quite general comments outside the passage including a range of views about the effects of the war. The best responses focused on the determination of the gang to carry out their ingenious plan, whatever their motives, the paradox of making Mr Thomas comfortable with a blanket and food whilst destroying his home and the humour in the repetition of, ‘There’s nothing personal...’ from both the adult driver and young boys. These responses were supported by close detail to the writing.

Question 35

Most candidates identified some reasons why Harold’s father was so unpleasant, citing his ‘two faces’, mocking of Harold’s job and hair loss, as well as the empty string of questions about his family without waiting for a reply to any of them. His hypocrisy in criticising and despising Harold, despite his own bankruptcy, and feigned lack of interest in money were also highlighted. There was much insight into Pritchett’s writing with interesting analysis of the language, for example, to describe his ‘two faces’ and the ‘silver topped pencil’ poised to make calculations once Harold mentioned his ability to raise some money. The very best explored the ‘fly’ and the significance of the title.

Question 36

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/02
Coursework

Key messages

Tasks for critical essays must direct candidates to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects if candidates are to meet the assessment criteria for the higher bands.

Teacher annotation of candidates' work enables centres to justify the award of a particular mark and is an important part of the dialogue between a Centre and the Moderator.

General comments

The importance of effective task-setting was evident in this session's submissions. Candidates were able to reach the highest bands if the tasks they were addressing allowed them to do so. A task such as 'Describe the character of _____' merely asks candidates to produce character sketches. The task is inadequate because it does not invite candidates to explore the writer's use of language or dramatic methods and, as a result, makes it difficult for them to achieve a mark in the highest bands.

Centres where coursework is most effectively managed address the suitability of coursework tasks early in the course. The *Coursework Training Handbook* offers examples of successful tasks and less successful ones. Even Centres where teachers have been accredited will find it useful to remind themselves periodically of the guidance and examples contained in the *Handbook*. Doing this will enable them to evaluate the appropriateness of the Centre's own tasks.

Another useful document, which can be found on the Teacher Support website, is the *Standards Booklet* which gives examples of candidate work in the examinations, where the same mark scheme is used. Teachers will find examples of work at different levels, together with commentaries.

Teachers should use focused ticking and brief marginal annotation to indicate the particular strengths and weaknesses of assignments. Such annotation enables them to justify the award of a particular mark and is an important part of the moderation process.

The following list provides a summary of good practice found in Centres which manage coursework effectively:

- texts and tasks are in keeping with syllabus requirements
- tasks are worded carefully in order to allow candidates to meet the assessment criteria
- all teachers tick and annotate assignments, making reference to the wording of the assessment criteria, thereby ensuring a dialogue within the Centre and between the Centre and external Moderator
- concise comments are provided to justify marks changed by the internal Moderator
- sample and paperwork are checked carefully before dispatch to Cambridge
- the deadline for submission is met.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31

Unseen

Key Messages

- Candidates should be prepared to consider answering on either poetry or prose.
- A good introductory paragraph presents an overview of the whole text.
- It is important to pay attention to sense as well as sound and rhythm when writing about poetry.
- Characterisation and narrative voice are important to the writers of prose; candidates should focus on these skill as well as descriptive passages.
- Answers on prose need to look beyond plot and consider the writer's purpose and effects. The stem question and the bullet points help candidates to do this.
- Candidates need to consider what are helpful comments on structure and form and what are not. Comments on form need to be related to meaning.
- A personal response should be an interpretation of the deeper implications of the text, based on exploration of the effect of the writer's use of language. Conclusions should be clearly relevant to the effects of the writing.
- Although handwriting, spelling and grammar are not assessed aspects of this paper, candidate should take care that their writing does not prevent effective communication of their ideas.

General Comments

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the unseen poetry and prose this series, with many demonstrating well-developed critical skills. Personal engagement with the writers' craft was evident in many candidates' answers. Most used quotation effectively and many made some comment on literary techniques and their effect, exploring beyond the surface meaning. Some candidates had obviously developed a real love of language and of the way the writers they encountered on the paper had employed their skills to communicate with the reader.

Relatively few answers betrayed a complete lack of understanding of the material, although there were some candidates who projected unusual personal interpretations onto the texts, some of which appeared to be based on an uncertain grasp of the actual content of the writing. Mistakes in interpretation tended to be the result of not reading the grammar and syntax of the poems carefully enough, or not looking at what is implicit in the prose passages beyond the surface narrative.

Poetry questions remain the more popular choice over prose passages, and some candidates appear to have been advised not to consider the prose. We choose poems of sufficient complexity to challenge our most able candidates; while the prose passages may appear longer, they are not necessarily any more demanding to interpret, and the bullet points give candidates guidance in choosing a careful selection of material. There is no expectation that every sentence of a prose passage will be interpreted, but if a section of a relatively short poem is left out, it will be assumed that this is because the candidate has not understood it. If candidates find a poem elusive, they should consider the prose. Prose passages are, of course, likely to have a more obvious surface narrative, and for that reason alone are less likely to be misunderstood by less strong candidates.

Selection is one reason why candidates are advised to spend twenty minutes reading and planning before beginning to write. They are also encouraged to annotate the texts on the question paper, highlighting significant details, interesting words, metaphors, similes, pattern within the language of the passage and

changes of tone or mood. Candidates should also be encouraged to annotate the ‘stem’ question (always in bold) and pay careful attention to its precise wording. Questions do not invite a generalised ‘critical appreciation’ of the texts; they give candidates a specific focus and they emphasise the writing and its intended effect on the reader. The key words are carefully chosen to match those candidates should be used to in their preparation for other Cambridge IGCSE Literature papers: ‘vivid’, ‘striking’, ‘memorable’, ‘convey’, ‘dramatic’ and ‘significant’. The bullet points are intended to guide candidates in their selection of material; it is not a requirement to work through them paragraph by paragraph. Nevertheless, successful answers rarely fail to include reference to the bullet points.

Stronger scripts usually demonstrate evidence of planning through an effective opening paragraph. Too many answers simply copy out the words of the question or the bullet points with little alteration: while this gives the subsequent answer focus, it does not provide Examiners with anything to reward. Far more effective are those responses which convey an overview of the whole text, and its overall initial effect, guided by the questions, before plunging into detail. Good plans are determined by the candidate’s personal response to aspects of the writing, rather than imposing a checklist of pre-learned technical terms on the text. A good plan may work through the text chronologically but will have a sense of its overall structure and be illustrated by a key quotation for each paragraph of the response. It is much better for candidates to have achieved an overall interpretation of the text and to indicate this in their opening paragraph rather than work their way towards meaning as their answer proceeds. Good responses are not distinguished by their length, but rather by their sense of purpose and thoughtful selection of material.

Careful reading is of course an essential skill for success in this paper. Misunderstandings in poems often come from candidates reading line by line instead of following the meaning of a sentence over the line endings, or misreading parts of speech, for example reading verbs as nouns. In prose passages, as well as in poetry, candidates should pay attention to who is speaking. Just as poets express feelings and attitudes through choice of a lyrical voice, the choice of narrator or narrative perspective makes a difference to a prose passage. Candidates should ask themselves: ‘who is seeing or feeling this, and what do we learn about them?’

In prose as well as poetry, writers encourage a reading which goes beyond the surface meaning and provoke us to reflect on characters, emotions and ideas. In order to read more closely, good use of quotation is essential. Quotations should not be over-long and should not be given by listing line numbers; short and purposeful quotations of individual words and phrases followed by comment on their effect is most effective. Stronger candidates used quotation very effectively to demonstrate their understanding of the writer’s methods.

Candidates are generally good at identifying use of figurative language and techniques such as rhyme (or its absence), alliteration and repetition. There are still some who spend a lot of time spotting the use of techniques but without commenting on their effect, or relating them to an overall interpretation of the text. Writers’ methods are always a means to convey meaning and to make an impact on the reader. Although Examiners mark positively and reward any sensitivity to the writer’s use of language and personal response to effect, they award the stronger marks to those who explain how effects contribute to the overall impact of the writing.

Stronger responses are also marked out by strong conclusions. Such answers never fail to take some account of the significance of the words with which a poem or prose passage ends. The final words are usually carefully chosen by the poet to make a lingering effect on the reader, or have been chosen as the most powerful way to conclude an extract. Good conclusions respond to the third bullet point, but treat it as an opportunity to develop a personal interpretation of the text based around the writer’s language and techniques, rather than simply an opportunity to make some personal assertions which are not directly related to the writing. This is a good moment to reflect on what is implied in the writing, and what goes beyond surface meaning, to identify underlying attitudes, feelings and ideas, in the spirit of the Cambridge IGCSE syllabus.

Finally, although this is a Literature examination under timed conditions, and Examiners are trained to be sensitive to candidates’ own ways of expressing their responses to the texts and not to be swayed by grammatical errors, spelling or handwriting, it is important that candidates ensure that their own expression and presentation does not prevent understanding. They should aim to write as clearly and accurately as possible. The personality and individuality of expression in responses to this paper provides one of the pleasures of marking it; candidates need to remember that this exercise will have at least one very careful reader and do their best both to impress and to convince through good presentation of their ideas. This paper continues to provide an excellent demonstration, under testing conditions, of all the reading and writing skills which candidates have acquired through their English studies.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Candidates responded well and with feeling to the poem *Back to Work* by Sally Emerson, a vivid evocation of returning to work whilst leaving a young baby at home. The bullet points suggested that the candidates look at the section about work and the section about the baby at home, and then comment on the contrast between them. Most candidates were able to comment on the central elements of the “narrative” of the poem. Work is busy and noisy. There are phones, typewriters, piling paperwork and dust. In contrast, at home all is peace and happiness – the baby sleeps and smiles, the leaves rustle and the curtains dance. Good candidates established early in their responses both the connection between the two worlds and their essential contrasts, so avoiding unnecessary repetition when dealing with the third bullet point. Candidates should be encouraged to convey a holistic understanding of the text, and to establish this from the outset with a conceptualised introductory overview which gets to the heart of the text and its fundamental concerns and approach.

There are ample opportunities to explore the contrast in language between the two halves of the poem, and this is what we might expect as we move up the mark range. A small minority of candidates did not go too far beyond commenting on the general unpleasantness of work compared to the pleasant environment of the baby’s world. Most did begin to identify specific characteristics of the two scenes and to comment on their presentation although there was an over-reliance on alluding to simply “positive” and “negative” atmospheres or connotations, “good” and “bad” feelings and “opposite” or “different” reactions. While there is an obvious validity to such observations, candidates should be encouraged to explore the effects of particular word choices or devices with as much focus and specificity as they can.

Similarly, candidates should be taught to consider carefully the effects of opening and closing lines. Good candidates commented well on how “The world enters my body” might be suggestive of an unwelcome, physically invasive quality, and used this insight to frame their comments on the presentation of the world of work in the whole stanza. Perceptive ones speculated as to how such an intrusion might connect in sharply contrasting terms to her earlier pregnancy. The reference to “vast red buses” was seen as developing this idea of the interpenetration of the outer world of the city and the blood and organs of the mother. The effects of the return to work are felt in an intensely physical way but these are intimately linked, of course, to psychological and emotional reactions. “Swerves” is suggestive of disorientation, suddenness and potential danger, while “havoc” similarly connotes chaos, destabilisation and destruction. The language borders at times on the violent with forceful, active verbs such as “enters”, “runs”, “swerves” and “ram”, the latter particularly being suggestive of assault and consequent pain. Many candidates commented on how the noises of the office create an impression of sensory overload and discomfort, as do the insistent references to the accumulation of dust. More straightforward responses pointed to the unpleasantness of working in a dirty and unkempt environment, while more sophisticated ones referred to feelings of abandonment or despair. For some, the dust symbolised futility or death. Almost all candidates commented on how “Even the sunshine here is / Made of grey”, with responses ranging from the simple indication of a boring or depressing place to ideas relating to unnaturalness or the nullification of the energy, richness and colour of life itself. It is not always easy for candidates to discuss convincingly the effects of run-on lines, but a number were persuasive in their observation as to how both the enjambment here and the short line which follows have a pointed, emphatic effect. Good candidates saw a development of the idea of the unnatural, life-denying characteristic of the environment with the last line of the stanza “And nothing is as it should be.” Perceptive responses recognised this as a moment of reflection and summation as well as a thoroughgoing condemnation, which, in structural terms, acts as a turning point in the poem.

The first word of the second stanza is similarly important, of course, in linking the two halves of the poem and the two worlds presented, with good candidates pinning down the concurrent nature of the experiences described. Where the importance of “Meanwhile” was recognised, some candidates used it perceptively as a springboard to start to unpick the dream-like qualities of the stanza, and the role imagination plays in the mind of both mother and child. Indeed, an observation on the positioning of this word tended to represent a far more productive comment on form than perhaps rather forced attempts to consider rhyme (or the lack of it), or the efforts of candidates who tried to make something of, say, the differences in line length in the poem, usually with limited success.

Again, it should be emphasised that what is important is the quality of the comment on the effects of a particular feature of the writing as opposed to simply its identification. Very many candidates, for instance, made reference to the use of anaphora in “She turns and she turns and she turns” but only a few managed to do something really useful with the line as, for example, reflecting the life-force or energy of the child, of her zest for life. Such an insight could then be traced through what the mother sees as the baby’s animation

of the inanimate world, such as in the delighted, playful movement of the leaves and the curtains, and the central idea of her renewing or revivifying everything around her. Similarly, while for many candidates “ocean eyes” was a poetic way of suggesting deep blue eyes, the strongest responses started to open up the idea of unplumbed depths, endless possibilities and the instinctive impulse to journey out into the unknown, embracing the world and “taking it all in.” The best candidates established an overview around this idea, making constant comparisons, linking images and interpretations, and using the contrasts inherent in the poem to perceptive effect.

Question 2

The prose extract is from *The Other Side of the Bridge* by Mary Lawson, a novel set in a remote northern part of Canada. Jake and Arthur in the story are the sons of a farmer but have very different personalities. Arthur is a low achiever, stolid but decent; Jake is intelligent, spoiled and immoral. The question and the bullet points especially encouraged the candidates to explore the ways in which the relationship is striking. Candidates were asked to distinguish between their characters and attitudes, and to explore the sub-text to probe the tensions in their relationship.

Almost all candidates were able to make at least some elementary comment on the contrasting characters of the two brothers and their different attitudes to school. Jake is upset and indignant about the ruination of his textbook, whereas Arthur only remembers the book vaguely, can’t remember what the teacher said, and can’t see the point of History. Jake is promoted at school while Arthur is held back in the Eighth Grade. Jake incites violence; Arthur is peaceable.

In fact, a number of candidates perhaps spent rather too much time focusing on these contrasting attitudes to school; to the detriment of their response to the other two bullets and to a consideration of the second half of the passage in general. That said, there was much useful material here if the candidates were able to take a more analytical approach and to begin to consider how the language and style of the piece intensify these contrasts. Jake, strikingly, prefers extremes – the “triumphs and disasters” of school – and embraces the idea of “enemies”, a suggestive detail in itself. His voice is “shrill” and books are “sacred”. Some strong candidates pointed to the somewhat melodramatic nature of his response and general temperament, or the emotive, hyperbolic and self-dramatising nature of his language. Such responses began to draw out how he might be “playing games” with his elder brother or “putting on an act”. Certainly many candidates saw how Jake selfishly pushes Arthur into fighting his battles for him. The resultant pressure is reflected in Arthur’s convoluted and repetitive thought processes as he is trying to work out the truth of it all. A careful focus on the particular words used here was invariably helpful in beginning to develop an analysis of the characterisation at work – Jake is a “subtle... devious” bully who “specialised” in getting people into trouble. Jake’s final move is (assumed?) horror at the idea of telling on a fellow pupil, thus manipulating Arthur to act against his will.

This close attention to the writer’s choice of words led able candidates to respond closely to the third bullet and to explore how the language of the piece reveals the tension between the boys. Arthur finds it “unendurable” that they are in the same class. Jake “brandishes” and “waves” the book at Arthur in an importunate manner, demanding that he act. Some candidates recognised that there was a distinct imbalance of power and that the power lay with Jake. They went on to suggest that this perhaps inverts what the reader might have expected. In fact, a number of candidates began to explore productively what was seen to be the writer’s subversion of “stereotypes” in her portrayal of the younger and older brother. Good responses focused particularly on Arthur’s inability to “read” Jake, and ones which were attentive to language began to explore the suggestions of helplessness, confusion and despair in the metaphor of his “floundering in a sea of unknown possibilities”. There was the beginnings of an exploration into the dilemma which faces Arthur, one accentuated by the fact that Jake’s power lies not simply in his being cleverer than his brother but because behind him looms the presumably formidable person of their mother – she “would never forgive him” if anything happened to her favourite son. Arthur accedes to Jake as a consequence but only “reluctantly”. Strong responses looked carefully at how the dialogue functioned here in revealing the tensions between the two boys, how it was structured and sequenced, and what was being suggested at each stage as regards their respective feelings and impulses.

Candidates should also be taught to be able to identify and comment sensitively on the effects of the particular narrative perspective or point of view being employed by the writer. In fact, such a focus on the voice or voices present would make an excellent starting point for establishing an introductory overview of the passage. Here, the best responses were able to make an extended exploration of the narrative stance and, in particular, how the third person omniscient narrative voice is coloured or shaped by Arthur’s thoughts and feelings. A striking aspect of the passage is, indeed, how the reader, seeing Jake through Arthur’s eyes, can only speculate about what Jake is thinking and what his real motives might be – these remain hidden to

the end. The use of this perspective tangibly heightens, as a consequence, our sense of Arthur's confusion and distrust, accentuating his straightforwardness in sharp contrast to the deviousness of his younger brother. Some candidates commented on how this helped establish a bond of intimacy between the character and the reader, as well as on how it might intensify the latter's sense of sympathy for Arthur's plight. In contrast, such candidates saw Jake as an unattractive, darkly mysterious and perhaps somewhat sinister figure.

That being said, only a minority of candidates were able to go much beyond scratching the surface of the subtleties in this passage, such as the inherently ironic humour of its tone or the shifts between the anxious workings of Arthur's consciousness and the more detached, almost laconic observations of the dominant narrative voice. If they are to achieve such levels of analysis, it is clear that candidates need to be taught to identify some of the central techniques and strategies that a novelist has at her or his disposal, and that they are given the time to practise the close reading of prose texts in preparation for the examination.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32

Unseen

Key Messages

- Candidates should be prepared to consider answering on either poetry or prose.
- A good introductory paragraph presents an overview of the whole text.
- It is important to pay attention to sense as well as sound and rhythm when writing about poetry.
- Characterisation and narrative voice are important to the writers of prose; candidates should focus on these skill as well as descriptive passages.
- Answers on prose need to look beyond plot and consider the writer's purpose and effects. The stem question and the bullet points help candidates to do this.
- Candidates need to consider what are helpful comments on structure and form and what are not. Comments on form need to be related to meaning.
- A personal response should be an interpretation of the deeper implications of the text, based on exploration of the effect of the writer's use of language. Conclusions should be clearly relevant to the effects of the writing.
- Although handwriting, spelling and grammar are not assessed aspects of this paper, candidate should take care that their writing does not prevent effective communication of their ideas.

General Comments

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the unseen poetry and prose this series, with many demonstrating well-developed critical skills. Personal engagement with the writers' craft was evident in many candidates' answers. Most used quotation effectively and many made some comment on literary techniques and their effect, exploring beyond the surface meaning. Some candidates had obviously developed a real love of language and of the way the writers they encountered on the paper had employed their skills to communicate with the reader.

Relatively few answers betrayed a complete lack of understanding of the material, although there were some candidates who projected unusual personal interpretations onto the texts, some of which appeared to be based on an uncertain grasp of the actual content of the writing. Mistakes in interpretation tended to be the result of not reading the grammar and syntax of the poems carefully enough, or not looking at what is implicit in the prose passages beyond the surface narrative.

Poetry questions remain the more popular choice over prose passages, and some candidates appear to have been advised not to consider the prose. We choose poems of sufficient complexity to challenge our most able candidates; while the prose passages may appear longer, they are not necessarily any more demanding to interpret, and the bullet points give candidates guidance in choosing a careful selection of material. There is no expectation that every sentence of a prose passage will be interpreted, but if a section of a relatively short poem is left out, it will be assumed that this is because the candidate has not understood it. If candidates find a poem elusive, they should consider the prose. Prose passages are, of course, likely to have a more obvious surface narrative, and for that reason alone are less likely to be misunderstood by less strong candidates.

Selection is one reason why candidates are advised to spend twenty minutes reading and planning before beginning to write. They are also encouraged to annotate the texts on the question paper, highlighting significant details, interesting words, metaphors, similes, pattern within the language of the passage and

changes of tone or mood. Candidates should also be encouraged to annotate the ‘stem’ question (always in bold) and pay careful attention to its precise wording. Questions do not invite a generalised ‘critical appreciation’ of the texts; they give candidates a specific focus and they emphasise the writing and its intended effect on the reader. The key words are carefully chosen to match those candidates should be used to in their preparation for other Cambridge IGCSE Literature papers: ‘vivid’, ‘striking’, ‘memorable’, ‘convey’, ‘dramatic’ and ‘significant’. The bullet points are intended to guide candidates in their selection of material; it is not a requirement to work through them paragraph by paragraph. Nevertheless, successful answers rarely fail to include reference to the bullet points.

Stronger scripts usually demonstrate evidence of planning through an effective opening paragraph. Too many answers simply copy out the words of the question or the bullet points with little alteration: while this gives the subsequent answer focus, it does not provide Examiners with anything to reward. Far more effective are those responses which convey an overview of the whole text, and its overall initial effect, guided by the questions, before plunging into detail. Good plans are determined by the candidate’s personal response to aspects of the writing, rather than imposing a checklist of pre-learned technical terms on the text. A good plan may work through the text chronologically but will have a sense of its overall structure and be illustrated by a key quotation for each paragraph of the response. It is much better for candidates to have achieved an overall interpretation of the text and to indicate this in their opening paragraph rather than work their way towards meaning as their answer proceeds. Good responses are not distinguished by their length, but rather by their sense of purpose and thoughtful selection of material.

Careful reading is of course an essential skill for success in this paper. Misunderstandings in poems often come from candidates reading line by line instead of following the meaning of a sentence over the line endings, or misreading parts of speech, for example reading verbs as nouns. In prose passages, as well as in poetry, candidates should pay attention to who is speaking. Just as poets express feelings and attitudes through choice of a lyrical voice, the choice of narrator or narrative perspective makes a difference to a prose passage. Candidates should ask themselves: ‘who is seeing or feeling this, and what do we learn about them?’

In prose as well as poetry, writers encourage a reading which goes beyond the surface meaning and provoke us to reflect on characters, emotions and ideas. In order to read more closely, good use of quotation is essential. Quotations should not be over-long and should not be given by listing line numbers; short and purposeful quotations of individual words and phrases followed by comment on their effect is most effective. Stronger candidates used quotation very effectively to demonstrate their understanding of the writer’s methods.

Candidates are generally good at identifying use of figurative language and techniques such as rhyme (or its absence), alliteration and repetition. There are still some who spend a lot of time spotting the use of techniques but without commenting on their effect, or relating them to an overall interpretation of the text. Writers’ methods are always a means to convey meaning and to make an impact on the reader. Although Examiners mark positively and reward any sensitivity to the writer’s use of language and personal response to effect, they award the stronger marks to those who explain how effects contribute to the overall impact of the writing.

Stronger responses are also marked out by strong conclusions. Such answers never fail to take some account of the significance of the words with which a poem or prose passage ends. The final words are usually carefully chosen by the poet to make a lingering effect on the reader, or have been chosen as the most powerful way to conclude an extract. Good conclusions respond to the third bullet point, but treat it as an opportunity to develop a personal interpretation of the text based around the writer’s language and techniques, rather than simply an opportunity to make some personal assertions which are not directly related to the writing. This is a good moment to reflect on what is implied in the writing, and what goes beyond surface meaning, to identify underlying attitudes, feelings and ideas, in the spirit of the Cambridge IGCSE syllabus.

Finally, although this is a Literature examination under timed conditions, and Examiners are trained to be sensitive to candidates’ own ways of expressing their responses to the texts and not to be swayed by grammatical errors, spelling or handwriting, it is important that candidates ensure that their own expression and presentation does not prevent understanding. They should aim to write as clearly and accurately as possible. The personality and individuality of expression in responses to this paper provides one of the pleasures of marking it; candidates need to remember that this exercise will have at least one very careful reader and do their best both to impress and to convince through good presentation of their ideas. This paper continues to provide an excellent demonstration, under testing conditions, of all the reading and writing skills which candidates have acquired through their English studies.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

John Montague's 'The Trout' is a disarming text of some simplicity which allowed all candidates to understand the majority of the content of the poem. Some made comparisons to Ted Hughes's 'The Pike' and were alive to ways in which the poet might admire his prey. Many candidates were exceptionally good at utilising evidence from the text in this series to both illuminate and further their analysis. A few candidates were able to detach themselves from a commentary-based approach, with the confidence to plan a conceptualised response illustrating the deeper implications of the text from the outset. This was an approach which gave access to the highest range of marks from the beginning of their responses. The question, rubric and bullet points encouraged candidates to consider how the poet presents a moment of calm and reflection before catching (and presumably eating) the trout, using his bare hands. The 'surface narrative' therefore ought to have been clear. Depths of interpretation should have been explored by looking at the fascination the fish holds for the fisherman, and the exciting and disturbing ways in which he reflects on himself as a 'bodiless lord of creation'.

Good candidates directly addressed the relationship between the hunter and the hunted, and explored the poet's pride in his careful enticing cage-like grip, which lures the trout in, before grasping it. Some were able to make wider metaphorical interpretations of these actions. Most noticed the poet's subsequent emotions, and the abrupt switch to the present tense in the final two line 'To this day I can / Taste the terror on my hands.' The alliteration makes the moment more memorable, as does the disturbing choice of word – reminding us of the trout's ultimate destination? It is not clear whether the poet feels regret or pride, whether he is mourning the death of the trout or gloating over it. Stronger responses did not sentimentalise but were alert to ambiguities of tone and meaning, explored them in some detail and were comfortable with the idea that the poem does not have a clear final meaning.

Weaker responses tended to create ambiguities where they do not exist, by not reading carefully enough. For example, 'I parted / Rushes to ease my hands / In the water' was often misinterpreted as the poet being in a rush, because the enjambment was not understood. Everything else in the poem indicated that the poet needed to move slowly and carefully to catch the trout. The stillness and 'photographic calm' of the opening stanzas are especially striking. The gentle lack of movement of the trout, lying there like a plant, lost 'in his fluid sensual dream', is compared with the slow movement of the poet's hands which enter the water 'without a ripple', his senses expanding to reflect on the pleasures of the moment, but also his own 'bodiless' mastery as the god who will determine the fish's fate. Candidates who did not read carefully enough tended to confuse poet and trout in these stanzas, and were unsure who was dreaming, who was calm and who was the 'lord of creation'.

Stronger responses appreciated that the first two stanzas create tension by portraying the stillness before action, and that the final two stanzas are linked by sentence form, carrying enjambment over the stanza break in order to portray continuous action. Then the reader needs to wait for the main verb of the final stanza, as if reading a sentence of Latin: the words 'I gripped' at the beginning of the penultimate line bring out the suddenness and finality of the moment of capture. The slowness of the opening stanzas are replaced by the swing of the fisherman's hands, the trout's surge (ironically 'with visible pleasure'), the palms 'crossed in a cage' to indicate the human trap formed for the fish and the moment when the man no longer simply looms over the fish but plunges to grasp him. Good responses reflected on the meaning of the man's god-like supremacy and skilful ability to determine the trout's fate (but perhaps still taste his regret afterwards). Certainly the final lines enact the trout's own surprise and fear at his destiny, and create a disturbing 'taste of terror' for the reader as well as the poet.

In terms of responding to what is 'both fascinating and disturbing' about the experience, many candidates peppered their answers with these descriptors throughout their answers, sometimes oscillating between the two. Other candidates found the first half 'fascinating' and the second half 'disturbing'. Many were disturbed by the whole poem, perhaps because they found it remote from their experience, or could not relate to the poet's preoccupation with detail and 'Senses expanding in the slow / Motion'. Some found the sensuousness of the poem disturbing in itself, imposing an anthropomorphic sentimentality about animals which the poet avoids, except perhaps in his final line.

Literary devices and feature spotting were in evidence from many candidates when it might have served them better to spend more of their time and focus on dealing with the deeper implications of the poem, and perhaps most obviously those ambiguous final words. Better answers showed an appreciation of the poet's excitement and his awe for his own skill, as much as for the trout's beauty, and they demonstrated their understanding of the quality of the poem as a 'memory'. Some perceptive candidates noticed the poet's

repetition of the phrase ‘my hands’ and associated this with the poet’s sense of guilt and the implied ‘blood on my hands’ allusion. Other good answers included reference to the senses of sight and touch and taste and the final line of synaesthesia. A few answers revealed something of an angler’s knowledge and referred to the exercise as ‘trout-tickling’; they tended to be less surprised by the trout’s apparent enjoyment of being handled and sudden shock at being trapped.

Many, but not all, candidates made productive comment on the form of the poem; its division into stanzas, its use of free-verse, enjambment and the poet’s use of punctuation. Most candidates referred to the poet’s use of the first person and of the past tense which changes so abruptly. The full range of achievement was seen in response to a poem which some candidates found puzzling, and others found a little too removed from their own experiences or interests to appreciate fully. There were several instances where candidates confessed to finding the poem ‘dull’ (why not choose the prose?); these were offset by the many who appreciated the poet’s methods of building suspense and engaging the reader’s interest.

Question 2

The powerful extract from Athol Fugard’s *Tsotsi* proved a very accessible text for the vast majority of candidates who attempted it. The tsotsi (some candidates recognised the South African word for a ‘thug’ or ‘thief’) gradually comes to realise that he is changing, and that his usual acquired instinct to rob and indeed to kill is being challenged by his own recovering memory and conscience. His failure to rob the crippled Morris Tshabalala is a turning point of the novel.

Tsotsi’s narrative voice and point of view were the focus of a question which highlighted how the writing brought his changing feelings to life (at other times in the novel, Fugard presents the event from Morris’s perspective). In sharp contrast to the poem in **Question 1**, Tsotsi uses the stillness of the moment not to pounce, but to reflect on why he does *not* act. Candidates were asked to explore the ways in which Fugard take us inside Tsotsi’s mind and depicts him surprising himself with his own observations and developing capacity for sympathy. His feelings are not described explicitly – after all, Tsotsi does not believe he has any – but he realises he is changing and so begins to ask himself why. Most candidates were able to use the first two bullets to follow Tsotsi’s train of thought and appreciate why he allows Morris to escape.

The highest attaining candidates were able to summarise the key moments in the text using a range of embedded quotations, highlighting the purpose and effect of different literary techniques. They noticed the conflict between Tsotsi’s violent feelings towards Morris and his body’s refusal to act on them. He begins to think differently. When he says ‘I don’t care a damn thing for you’ he admits ‘it had not been necessary to say this to himself before’. Less confident candidates were keen to find different literary features upon which to rest their own reading and interpretations. These were generally less successful and Centres should be encouraged to highlight the importance of reading, evaluating and planning with the wider implications of the text in mind. Appropriate comments highlighted the use of setting and the growing discontent of the lead character. There were some excellent developed responses which started with an overarching understanding of the text, and appreciated the ways in which the truth insists on itself in stark ways which Tsotsi cannot ignore: ‘Tsotsi had a growing presentiment of its nature, but it was not yet fully revealed...The truth persisted’. Less successful responses provided a commentary on the extract, which was often completed at the expense of answering how the author built and sustained tension and suspense as the piece progressed.

Many candidates appreciated the third person, yet omniscient, narrative voice and they understood how the writer succeeded in garnering empathy both for Tsotsi and for his victim through his painstaking revelation of Tsotsi’s thought processes. Stronger responses focused on the way the writer creates suspense, not only through the ‘will he / won’t he rob his victim?’ question that the narrative encourages but by the writer’s use of repetition, of short sentences and phrases and through the writer’s depiction of a dark, night-time scene in a poor part of town. These responses also focused on the writer’s use and choice of language associated with animals: the dog, nodding ‘the way donkeys do to dislodge a troublesome swarm of flies’. They also explored their implications, suggesting ways in which both Tsotsi and his intended victim are dehumanised; most mentioned how the tension was heightened by reference to the ‘knife’, indicating Tsotsi’s murderous potential. Stronger responses frequently referred to Tsotsi’s inner monologue and distinguished between straightforward description and description which is filtered through Tsotsi’s consciousness.

Not all candidates understood Tsotsi’s ‘spasm of relief’ when he realised that ‘he did care’; many did not understand his dilemma at all and opinion was divided over whether Tsotsi’s mental comparison of Morris Tshabalala to a dog implied that he was softening towards him (man’s best friend) or trying to see him as even more worthless than he already was as a ‘cripple’, and therefore more appropriate as a victim. Others did appreciate that the image of ‘a long tongue lolling out of the bent head’ is created by Tsotsi’s imagination,

and one consequence of the change, portrayed as a ‘hidden working in his body’ which gradually becomes a ‘desire’ and then a ‘galling truth’ is that he finally sees Morris as a fellow human and the writer calls ‘the cripple’ by his name. The irony that Morris can only expect ‘a few more hours of troubled living’ is set against Tsotsi’s surprise that he feels ‘desperately glad’. Strong personal responses appreciated the ways in which Tsotsi is shown to have discovered a moral consciousness, to his own surprise. Tsotsi’s shock at his own feelings and alienation from his own thought processes were tackled by the strongest answers.

Weaker responses offered a narrative retelling of the events of the passage or even misread the situation and made Tsotsi into a murderer stalking his prey for the pleasure of the kill. Some became embroiled in the morality of robbing a beggar and some questioned the logic – how much money would Morris actually have? Frequent errors included the belief that Morris Tshabalala escaped in a car or that he was run over by a car.

However, the majority were quick to appreciate the nature of the revelation. Those who tackled it most effectively also appreciated that the ending of the passage – ‘it was obvious now what was happening to him’ – has implications for how we read the earlier paragraphs. They were able to draw distinctions between what Tsotsi appears to think and feel, and what his lethargic body and the implications of the narrator are telling us. Strong responses saw the echo of ‘he did care...he did care’ and how this cancels out his attempt to say ‘what do I care’. It is not just the old car which saves Morris’s life but ‘all of the time to come’ which ‘rushed past like the motor cars, leaving him against the wall and the cripple on his corner’, in other words Tsotsi has been overtaken by a change in life which he is powerless to prevent. The strongest answers conveyed clear critical understanding of the importance of this moment, and how the writing conveys its capacity to transform Tsotsi’s feelings and actions.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33

Unseen

Key Messages

- Candidates should be prepared to consider answering on either poetry or prose.
- A good introductory paragraph presents an overview of the whole text.
- It is important to pay attention to sense as well as sound and rhythm when writing about poetry.
- Characterisation and narrative voice are important to the writers of prose; candidates should focus on these skill as well as descriptive passages.
- Answers on prose need to look beyond plot and consider the writer's purpose and effects. The stem question and the bullet points help candidates to do this.
- Candidates need to consider what are helpful comments on structure and form and what are not. Comments on form need to be related to meaning.
- A personal response should be an interpretation of the deeper implications of the text, based on exploration of the effect of the writer's use of language. Conclusions should be clearly relevant to the effects of the writing.
- Although handwriting, spelling and grammar are not assessed aspects of this paper, candidates should take care that their writing does not prevent effective communication of their ideas.

General Comments

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the unseen poetry and prose this series, with many demonstrating well-developed critical skills. Personal engagement with the writers' craft was evident in many candidates' answers. Most used quotation effectively and many made some comment on literary techniques and their effect, exploring beyond the surface meaning. Some candidates had obviously developed a real love of language and of the way the writers they encountered on the paper had employed their skills to communicate with the reader.

Relatively few answers betrayed a complete lack of understanding of the material, although there were some candidates who projected unusual personal interpretations onto the texts, some of which appeared to be based on an uncertain grasp of the actual content of the writing. Mistakes in interpretation tended to be the result of not reading the grammar and syntax of the poems carefully enough, or not looking at what is implicit in the prose passages beyond the surface narrative.

Poetry questions remain the more popular choice over prose passages, and some candidates appear to have been advised not to consider the prose. We choose poems of sufficient complexity to challenge our most able candidates; while the prose passages may appear longer, they are not necessarily any more demanding to interpret, and the bullet points give candidates guidance in choosing a careful selection of material. There is no expectation that every sentence of a prose passage will be interpreted, but if a section of a relatively short poem is left out, it will be assumed that this is because the candidate has not understood it. If candidates find a poem elusive, they should consider the prose. Prose passages are, of course, likely to have a more obvious surface narrative, and for that reason alone are less likely to be misunderstood by less strong candidates.

Selection is one reason why candidates are advised to spend twenty minutes reading and planning before beginning to write. They are also encouraged to annotate the texts on the question paper, highlighting

significant details, interesting words, metaphors, similes, pattern within the language of the passage and changes of tone or mood. Candidates should also be encouraged to annotate the ‘stem’ question (always in bold) and pay careful attention to its precise wording. Questions do not invite a generalised ‘critical appreciation’ of the texts; they give candidates a specific focus and they emphasise the writing and its intended effect on the reader. The key words are carefully chosen to match those candidates should be used to in their preparation for other Cambridge IGCSE Literature papers: ‘vivid’, ‘striking’, ‘memorable’, ‘convey’, ‘dramatic’ and ‘significant’. The bullet points are intended to guide candidates in their selection of material; it is not a requirement to work through them paragraph by paragraph. Nevertheless, successful answers rarely fail to include reference to the bullet points.

Stronger scripts usually demonstrate evidence of planning through an effective opening paragraph. Too many answers simply copy out the words of the question or the bullet points with little alteration: while this gives the subsequent answer focus, it does not provide Examiners with anything to reward. Far more effective are those responses which convey an overview of the whole text, and its overall initial effect, guided by the questions, before plunging into detail. Good plans are determined by the candidate’s personal response to aspects of the writing, rather than imposing a checklist of pre-learned technical terms on the text. A good plan may work through the text chronologically but will have a sense of its overall structure and be illustrated by a key quotation for each paragraph of the response. It is much better for candidates to have achieved an overall interpretation of the text and to indicate this in their opening paragraph rather than work their way towards meaning as their answer proceeds. Good responses are not distinguished by their length, but rather by their sense of purpose and thoughtful selection of material.

Careful reading is of course an essential skill for success in this paper. Misunderstandings in poems often come from candidates reading line by line instead of following the meaning of a sentence over the line endings, or misreading parts of speech, for example reading verbs as nouns. In prose passages, as well as in poetry, candidates should pay attention to who is speaking. Just as poets express feelings and attitudes through choice of a lyrical voice, the choice of narrator or narrative perspective makes a difference to a prose passage. Candidates should ask themselves: ‘who is seeing or feeling this, and what do we learn about them?’

In prose as well as poetry, writers encourage a reading which goes beyond the surface meaning and provoke us to reflect on characters, emotions and ideas. In order to read more closely, good use of quotation is essential. Quotations should not be over-long and should not be given by listing line numbers; short and purposeful quotations of individual words and phrases followed by comment on their effect is most effective. Stronger candidates used quotation very effectively to demonstrate their understanding of the writer’s methods.

Candidates are generally good at identifying use of figurative language and techniques such as rhyme (or its absence), alliteration and repetition. There are still some who spend a lot of time spotting the use of techniques but without commenting on their effect, or relating them to an overall interpretation of the text. Writers’ methods are always a means to convey meaning and to make an impact on the reader. Although Examiners mark positively and reward any sensitivity to the writer’s use of language and personal response to effect, they award the stronger marks to those who explain how effects contribute to the overall impact of the writing.

Stronger responses are also marked out by strong conclusions. Such answers never fail to take some account of the significance of the words with which a poem or prose passage ends. The final words are usually carefully chosen by the poet to make a lingering effect on the reader, or have been chosen as the most powerful way to conclude an extract. Good conclusions respond to the third bullet point, but treat it as an opportunity to develop a personal interpretation of the text based around the writer’s language and techniques, rather than simply an opportunity to make some personal assertions which are not directly related to the writing. This is a good moment to reflect on what is implied in the writing, and what goes beyond surface meaning, to identify underlying attitudes, feelings and ideas, in the spirit of the Cambridge IGCSE syllabus.

Finally, although this is a Literature examination under timed conditions, and Examiners are trained to be sensitive to candidates’ own ways of expressing their responses to the texts and not to be swayed by grammatical errors, spelling or handwriting, it is important that candidates ensure that their own expression and presentation does not prevent understanding. They should aim to write as clearly and accurately as possible. The personality and individuality of expression in responses to this paper provides one of the pleasures of marking it; candidates need to remember that this exercise will have at least one very careful reader and do their best both to impress and to convince through good presentation of their ideas. This

paper continues to provide an excellent demonstration, under testing conditions, of all the reading and writing skills which candidates have acquired through their English studies.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This poem by Helen Dunmore was published in *Short Days, Long Nights: New and Selected Poems* (1991). It presents an unusual and slightly surreal image, initially a still life, and then a moving picture. Dunmore's text and techniques made this an accessible piece for many candidates, although in this paper the prose text proved a more popular choice. Candidates enjoyed exploring the ways in which the Skater prepared for his journey or hobby. The vast majority of candidates were able to understand the superficial meaning of the text and many were able to develop their reading by exploring the final stanzas and discussing the range of metaphors being used. The weakest responses attempted to retell the poem, as if it were a true story of factual occurrence which required translation when, in truth, the poem demands a sense of possibility and a degree of faith that poetry touches on elements of life, both actual and spiritual, that perhaps cannot be explained away. For the majority of the best responses seen, the sense of the spiritual journey or the allegory being presented was something to be explored, and not simply answered away and for Centres, it may be something to think about in the type of varied preparation and examination materials that are used in the classroom. Candidates who really got to grips with the poem had read and planned carefully how they were going to express and explore the sense of reaching for something 'other' by the Skater, and the ways in which the bystanders looked out to him was something to be made a lot from.

This poem attracted much speculation; some very assured work was seen, but there were also many candidates who struggled with the enigma of the Skater and his metaphorical journey, mounting the waves for the long-haul, out to sea. Fortunately, many of those who chose this poem over the prose were prepared to read less literally, and welcomed the image of the journey as a bid for freedom, or responded to the mood and tone of the verse even if they were shaky about its literal meaning.

Good answers responded well to the main question about how a striking image of the Skater is created and they looked carefully at his preparations to skate; they noted the sounds that were reported and how they appeared to puncture the silence of the frozen pond location. These candidates engaged with the 'wreath of effort and breath' and the realism of the Skater's action, noting that he is experienced and knows exactly what he is doing. They saw the appropriateness of a simile comparing his straps to the sound of ice 'when weight troubles it', and began to explore the implications of his decision to skate in the last few hours of afternoon sunset. Strong responses noted how the preparations dominate the poem in terms of lines attributed to them; they noted how little space was given over to the Skater's actual skating in the fifth stanza - 'Now he hisses and spins in jumps', a moment of poetic lift-off - and how, in the sixth stanza, the Skater's 'progress' is succeeded by the 'pictures' that the onlookers form of the Skater as he beats his way, 'seawards', so their imagination replaces direct description of his actions. To them, he seems to create a vista of endless possibility, moving ever forward, mounting the 'crusted waves' of the sea. His smooth movements may hint at man's ability to transcend his surroundings.

Many candidates found this a challenging poem to tackle. Frequently, the Skater was transformed into a 'young boy'; his 'trade' as a 'long-haul skater' ignored and the mystery at the heart of his journey 'seawards' was unattempted. Many candidates spent a long time on the fact that the skates were 'worn' and they wrestled with finding a narrative to fit this 'Canadian' Skater; some saw the line 'held by the straps' to refer to the tatty appearance of the skates. Some candidates took the phrase 'going his round' to refer to the Skater on the pond, rather than to the 'farm-worker' – others made a link between the two through this phrase and managed to suggest that through watching the Skater, even those stuck in routine (going his round) could envisage a greater freedom as they pictured the Skater breaking free from the 'round' of the pond and skating onto the ocean. Others simply enjoyed the contrast between the smooth forward progress of the Skater, apparently without any human or material needs ('foodless and waterless') and the fragile 'stick-like' villages offering up dismayed and awed children or farm-workers.

Too few candidates commented on the irregular form of the poem; its division into unequal stanzas, its use of free-verse, enjambment and use of punctuation. Most candidates referred to the poet's use of the third person and of the present tense which changes in the final stanza to envisage the endless journey into the future that the Skater's skills promise. This journey was best illustrated by attention to sound effects such as sibilance to convey the hissing contact of the skates, and how enjambment and syntax enact the limitless nature of the Skater's apparent onward progress.

At both ends of the scale candidates postulated theories about the ‘possible meaning’ of the Skater, ‘skating out to sea’. Often this was interpreted as a metaphor for conquering fears, or for attaining Olympic status (as a Skater) or for reaching heights of fame undreamed of by the villagers. Examiners are very open to interpretations which candidates have grounded in close observations about the language of the text and what it may imply. Stronger candidates realised there was no ‘right answer’ and welcomed the freedom of interpretation which this poem gave them.

Question 2

Candidates were in every sense on more secure ground in the passage from Will Cather’s *My Ántonia*, published in the USA in 1918. This was a detailed, descriptive and realistic piece of writing in which a rite of passage is seen from the perspective of a growing boy. The principal complication came from the intrusion of the older narrator in the penultimate paragraph, casting doubt on the heroic portrayal of his earlier actions. Each stage of the narrative had interesting descriptive and interpretative details, and candidates needed to make a judicious selection in order to complete their responses in the time allowed.

Many more confident candidates clearly preferred the prose extract as it enabled them to explore the changing feelings of the protagonist in ways in which the poem could perhaps possibly not do. The candidates found an accessible text but one which demanded an overview from the outset and not a commentary, as many of the deeper implications, such as the nature of the boy’s relationship with Ántonia Shimerda and desire to prove himself, needed to be highlighted from the beginning. Not all candidates were able to place the text in context, appreciating that this is an experience of maturity in which childhood fears are subsequently contextualised by an adult point of view which is more detached, and examines the event without passion. Here we had a text of reflection; but many candidates were too concerned with feature-spotting and literary techniques used to describe the snake, without fully appreciating the significance of the moment for the boy.

More attention to the stem question, and to the ways in which the bullets persistently highlight the changes in Jim’s feelings, would have made these responses more relevant. From stronger responses, there was some excellent language work in evidence to highlight the changing sense of the protagonist’s maturation from fear and disgust to instinctive and upsetting violence, towards the sense of triumph engendered by Ántonia’s reaction: ‘You is just like big mans ... Now we take that snake home and show everybody’. However, this is succeeded by a sense of regret and respect for the snake as an embodiment of ‘the ancient, eldest Evil’, followed by yet more ‘exultation’ as Ántonia embroiders his moment of triumph. Comedy is introduced when the boy looks furtively back to check ‘that no avenging mate... was racing up from the rear’, and more mature reflection follows, with a sense that this was a stroke of fortune, and one which changed the boy’s relationship with Ántonia for good.

Although the passage was a long one, the majority of candidates appeared to be thoroughly engaged by the adventure of young Jim; by his vivid description of his adversary, the ‘big snake’, and by the touching honesty of the older Jim as he looks back on his triumph with hindsight and modesty. Most candidates did follow the guidance contained in the bullet points and wrote well about the way in which the writer describes the snake, its hideous movements, immense size and unpleasantly vivid death. Many noted its ugliness, its ‘fetid smell’ and ‘the thread of green liquid’ which is the poison oozing from his mouth. They responded to Ántonia’s tomboyish enthusiasm and recognised the nature of Jim’s achievement, now a ‘big fellow’.

Good candidates appreciated the writer’s skill in showing us the rattle-snake through the eyes of an eleven-year-old boy, and they clearly enjoyed the exaggerated description of the snake’s size and strength: a ‘circus monstrosity’ ‘as thick as my leg’, with ‘abominable muscularity’ and full of ‘disgusting vitality’. Most candidates went from the ‘kill’ itself to consideration of Ántonia’s immediate response to her ‘hero’ and then onto Jim’s mature reflection on his achievement, and this was often a good way of dealing with a passage of this length. Some candidates were able to fit in attention to Jim’s triumphant homecoming as well, but such coverage only came from the minority of candidates who attempted the passage.

The most frequent, more significant omission was where candidates did not deal with the final two paragraphs, where the older Jim reassesses his conquest in the light of ‘subsequent experiences’. Good candidates recognised this as the crux of the passage, as the writer deconstructs his first encounter with a deadly snake and confesses how lucky he has been. Better candidates were sensitive to tense and to tone throughout; they recognised the child-like use of hyperbole in the opening section and compared it with the more cynical voice of the older man and his slightly ironic reference to himself as one of ‘many a dragon-slayer’ and the whole episode as a ‘mock adventure’. Some candidates failed to appreciate that they would not be able to deal with the whole of the passage in the time allowed and they spent all their time and

attention on the events described in the first few paragraphs; sometimes not even reaching the material on the second page.

Thus stronger responses came from those who saw the need for selection, and gained an overview of the whole passage before beginning to write, in order to give structure and purpose to their answer, reinforcing the points made in the general comments above. The best answers had a sense of place as well as characterisation and appreciated the boy's apparent triumph over the wild nature of a country to which 'white men first came' just twenty-four years earlier, and where the 'great land' now seems 'big and free'. For Jim, the moment remains symbolic: 'I began to think that I had longed for this opportunity, and had hailed it with joy', although his tenses and syntax acknowledge that these are retrospective emotions, and at the time he was scared and acting on impulse.

Examiners did not expect even very good answers to such a long and rich passage to be especially complete or comprehensive, but instead rewarded the qualities of insight into the aspects of language candidates chose to explore, and evaluated the sophistication and coherence of their interpretations of what the text implies and suggests. This was a very successful extract, which led to a range of full and interesting responses showing engagement and enjoyment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41

Set Texts: Closed Books – A

Key messages

Detailed knowledge of texts is not on its own sufficient for high reward. Candidates must tailor their detailed knowledge to the demands of the question.

In their critical responses, candidates must include analysis of the effects writers create in order to convey their meanings.

Responses to extract-based questions should engage with the detail and language of the extract, by selecting relevant words and phrases to address the question.

Personal responses to texts should be informed responses, that is, substantiated by apt textual detail.

General comments

The most successful critical responses demonstrated a detailed knowledge of texts and a sustained engagement with the question. Some candidates started their responses well but lost focus part of the way through the essay – as they perhaps veered towards a topic they had covered before. A minority of responses struggled to communicate personal responses to characters, themes and settings. There were a few instances of responses starting with extraneous background information, sometimes at great length, before addressing the key words of the question. Some answers showed remarkably little evidence of thorough knowledge of the chosen texts and this was revealed not only in the general essays but also in the extract-based questions which some candidates appeared to treat as ‘Unseen’ passages.

The strongest responses to Drama texts acknowledged the text as a play, i.e. something to be performed on a stage. These responses invariably referred to the ‘play’ rather than ‘book’ and to the ‘audience’ rather than ‘reader’. They also explored the words of the dialogue, not merely relying on stage directions to indicate the emotions of characters.

IGCSE Literature critical essay questions make reference to the writer. Key words in questions include ‘Explore’, ‘How?’ and ‘In what ways?’ These are all designed to encourage a critical engagement with a writer’s techniques. Such an engagement requires a consideration of the ways in which writers shape and convey meanings. The strongest responses were skilful at combining precise analytical comment and concise, useful reference. Less successful responses tended to log features and found it difficult, therefore, to go beyond a descriptive approach. Sometimes comments were so unhelpfully general as to be true of any text: ‘The description draws you in’; ‘The writer uses strong words’; ‘It makes you feel as if you are there’.

In 45-minute responses candidates are not required to provide exhaustive responses. For extract-based questions, for example, they need to select detail carefully from the extract in order to answer the question effectively. Where candidates attempted exhaustive commentaries on extracts or poems, they tended to produce superficial responses. Some candidates did a brief plan before starting to write their answer, and this helped them to organise their ideas effectively.

The strongest critical responses made judicious use of textual reference. They made frequent, concise and pertinent references to the texts and integrated the references flawlessly into their own writing. Less effective responses used quotations, sometimes quite lengthy ones, to illustrate a point but did not take the opportunity to explore the language of the key words. The least effective responses made mere assertions.

The best empathic responses created a convincingly authentic voice for the character and showed a clear appreciation of both the character and moment specified in the question. Additionally they rooted their

responses in the detail of the text. The least successful empathic responses struggled to capture a suitable voice and/or neglected to include textual detail for support.

There were relatively few rubric errors though there seemed to be an increasing tendency for candidates to number questions wrongly or not to number their questions at all. Work was generally well presented.

Comments on Specific Questions

SECTION A: DRAMA

Question 1

For this question, most candidates focused on the powerful feelings the two young people have for each other and, in particular, Chris's declaration of love to Ann. Some candidates noted that only when she says she is leaving does Chris declare his love and that this suddenness takes the audience by surprise. Most were able to see the significance of Larry's presence over the scene and commented on how, for two years Chris and Ann had to keep their feelings hidden on account of the baggage associated with the two families. The least successful responses focused almost exclusively on stage directions and ignored the ways in which the dialogue made this moment so moving.

Question 2

Stronger responses emerged when candidates 'stood back from' the text to detail the way in which Miller almost manipulates our response to Keller by presenting him in such a positive light at the start, and then making us reassess our feelings as gradual revelation leads us to the certainty of his duplicity and greed. Candidates were free to take whatever line they wished so long as it was carefully substantiated, though most attempted a balanced approach. They noted that Joe was a down-to-earth and likeable character for whom family is everything, someone who had had few advantages in life. Then there was the Joe who avoided taking responsibility, who knew what risks he took with others' lives and who lacked moral courage. In weaker responses background material about the American Dream was included but not in a way that explicitly addressed the question.

Question 3

Most responses captured the character's searing anger and the strongest responses were rooted in the detail of the text and the particular moment. George is appalled when he recalls that Ann is visiting the Kellers and is determined to prevent her from marrying Chris.

Question 4

Most candidates had a secure grasp of the content of the extract and were able to say something about the chaos that had been unleashed in the wake of Caesar's death. Only the stronger responses were able to convey the dramatic impact of this moment in the play, with three men playing God with others' lives. The strongest responses noted the dramatic nature of life and death being decided by the marking of a spot on a piece of paper. They noted that this is the first time we see Octavius and Antony together, and they are decisive and ruthless. This is a different and despicable Antony from the one who spoke to the crowd after Caesar's death. Only a few candidates were able to probe the effects of Antony's 'horse' analogy when denigrating Lepidus's worth.

Question 5

This was less popular than the extract question. Many responses were based on narrative recall of what the character did and said, with very limited commentary. Often assertions were used rather than careful argument: e.g. 'This shows that Caesar was the noblest man' or 'This showed that he was of feeble temper'. The first prompt about Caesar's nobility was tackled more effectively, with the strongest responses making some use of dialogue spoken by Brutus and Antony. Less effective were comments on Caesar as a 'man of such feeble temper'.

Question 6

There were very few responses to this question. The strongest demonstrated Lucius's concern for Portia; the weakest had some difficulty capturing the moment, with one candidate thinking that Portia was already dead.

Question 7

The strongest responses focused on the playwright at work, with the rounding-up of loose ends and order restored. Miranda and Ferdinand are to be formally married, Ariel is to be given his freedom and possibilities of hope can be seen in Stephano's apparent penitence and Caliban's contrition. The strongest responses contrasted this scene with the opening one with the tempest. Less successful responses tended to describe what was said in the speeches rather than probe the words spoken for their dramatic impact. Those who were most successful in arguing that this was (or was not) a satisfying conclusion to the play made at least some comment on events earlier in the play.

Question 8

The strongest responses incorporated a wide range of well-selected references to Caliban's role in the play. His villainy was evident in his earlier truculence to Prospero, the attempted rape of Miranda and his suggestion to Stephano and Trinculo that they kill Prospero and rule over the island. His status as victim was seen in his powerlessness against Prospero and the servitude in which he is held. Only a few candidates made use of Caliban's 'island' speech to illustrate his humanity. Some argued successfully that the island provided a haven for Prospero and Miranda whereas others made exaggerated and unsupported claims that Caliban was the victim of territorial conquest.

Question 9

There were very few responses in which candidates captured a reasonably authentic tone for the voice of Gonzalo but were less successful in using pertinent textual detail to support the voice.

Question 10

The strongest responses were able to explore what it is that makes Lady Bracknell's interviewing of Jack (some candidates said, 'interrogation') so amusing. Most captured the absurdity of her line of questioning with its emphasis on mercenary considerations. There was genuine outrage that image was more important to Lady Bracknell than the small matter of whether Gwendolen and Jack were actually in love. Some responses were more descriptive in their approach, often listing quotations that were amusing but without comment. A minority of candidates wrote earnestly about socio-economic factors without demonstrating an appreciation that this is a richly comic moment in a comic play.

Question 11

This was a less popular option. Only the strongest were able to delineate clearly the boundaries of their two chosen moments, where they began and ended. Suitable moments included Jack's being outed as a Bunburyist and the first exchange between Gwendolen and Cecily. Surprisingly very few chose the 'handbag' scene. Less successful responses blurred the moments and ended up re-telling the plot with occasional assertions made about 'absurd ways in which people can behave'. Those candidates who began with a concise pinpointing of their chosen moment appeared better able to control their responses.

Question 12

This was the least popular Wilde question. Candidates were usually able to convey something of the narrative underpinning the moment but less able to convey a recognisable voice for the moment. A number of responses attributed to Jack too much knowledge for the given moment.

SECTION B: POETRY

Question 13

The selection of Hardy's poetry was the less popular Poetry option. Most responses to this question had at least a basic understanding of key features: Hodge as a victim of the war; his youth; the alien nature of his resting-place. Many used direct quotation from the poem to illustrate some of these points. Only a minority of

candidates, however, went on to probe the specific effects of the words used by Hardy in conveying the powerfully moving nature of the poem.

Question 14

In general, responses showed at least some understanding of the basic situation described in the poem: the speaker's sense of loss; the reminiscence of their earlier life together; his imagining he can hear her; the finality of his loss. The strongest responses analysed the words and imagery closely. A minority of responses introduced an excessive amount of background material about Hardy's marriage to Emma without addressing the actual question; these responses were descriptive rather than critical.

Question 15

There were very few responses seen, and they demonstrated only a very basic grasp of either poem. There was only limited evidence of an ability to explore the imagery of the poems.

Question 16

The *Songs of Ourselves* poetry selection was the more popular Poetry option. Most responses were able to point out the contrast between life in the city and life in the countryside. Less effective responses tended to list features rather than probe the effects of particular words or sounds closely. In particular, the references to the smells of the city were listed. Occasionally, responses focused on techniques without considering the poet's ideas. Commendably, many candidates at least attempted to examine the significance of the final two-line stanza in relation to the rest of the poem.

Question 17

The strongest responses explored the effects of uncertainty in the speaker's voice in *Continuum* and the apparent incongruity of the comparison of the man and insect in *The Cockroach*. These are perhaps among the most enigmatic of the poems in the current selection, and those who had studied their chosen poem in detail were able to tailor their ideas about the poem to the specific demands of the question on humour. Those who had only a sketchy knowledge of the details of their chosen poem struggled to engage with the main thrust of the question.

Question 18

Pied Beauty was the more popular choice of poem for this question. The strongest responses explored closely the imagery and sound devices employed by Hopkins. Discussion of tone was generally good, though comments on metre tended to be descriptive without reference to how it shapes and enhances the poem's meanings. Less successful responses listed the things God had created and noted their uniqueness (and by extension the 'beauty of the natural world') but this was at the expense of examining the effectiveness of individual images. The more metaphysical aspects of *Summer Farm* were generally overlooked, as responses focused on listing the beautiful aspects of nature found in the poem.

SECTION C: PROSE

Question 19

Stronger responses highlighted the significance of the first person narrative in leading the reader to a reappraisal of Nyasha (viewed unfavourably hitherto). They offered a range of well-selected references to convey the warmth of affection between the two girls and explored sensitively the significance of Tambu's description of what she calls her first love affair. Some pinpointed the precise moment of the tension between the two breaking as Nyasha bursts out laughing. Less successful responses focused less on the qualities of the writing and opted for a paraphrase of the extract, simply listing Tambu's thoughts with minimal critical comment.

Question 20

There were only a few responses, which tended to offer character sketches of Tambu's mother rather than addressing the specific demands of the question 'How far does Dangarembga make your feelings about Tambu change as you read the novel?'

Question 21

There was insufficient evidence for useful comment to be made here.

Question 22

There was a range of responses to this, the most popular question on *Fasting, Feasting*. Many responses wrote sensitively about the pressures of Mama in having the luckless job of getting Uma married, with Mama acting on her own for once rather than as half of MamaPapa. Some observed that the unattractiveness of the suitors indicates the extent of Mama's desperation to get Uma married. The strongest responses commented on Mama's lack of sensitivity towards her daughter, referring to Mama's harsh words and rough handling of Uma. Quite a number of responses missed these telling details and what they reveal about Mama, concentrating on Mama's feelings rather than how they felt towards her.

Question 23

Some of the strongest responses chose a key character from each section, for example, Uma and Melanie, Mama and Mrs Patton. Less effective responses offered character sketches whereas more confident responses tailored their material to the question's key words 'Explore the ways in which' and 'bring to life'. Successful responses explored characterisation; less successful responses merely described characters in general terms.

Question 24

This was one of the paper's more popular empathetic questions. Stronger responses demonstrated a clear appreciation of this somewhat vague and nervy character, unable or unwilling to acknowledge the problems in her dysfunctional family. The strongest responses suggested that her constant shopping was something of a displacement activity to convince herself that she was a good mother providing for the needs of her family. Some responses were, given the moment specified in the question, a little too prescient in anticipating shopping expeditions with Arun and her own embracing of vegetarianism.

Question 25

This was the most popular question on *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Most responses had something to say about both parts of the question: making fun of Mr Chawla and making fun of the government service. They captured the element of caricature about the portrayal of Mr Chawla as every inch the pushy parent, and explored the satirical barbs directed at the self-serving government bureaucracy. The strongest responses communicated the ironic nature of the perceived 'perks' of the government service and acknowledged Mr Chawla's talking up his son's job in order to keep up appearances. A minority of responses missed the humour of the extract.

Question 26

Most responses explored her qualities as a dreamer and outsider, someone who inhabits the world of her senses, finely-tuned to the scents of the exotic dishes she prepares. Many candidates acknowledged her role in the downfall of the spy (literally into her cooking pot) at the end of the novel. Whereas stronger answers directly addressed the question's key words 'mysterious' and 'fascinating', weaker ones tended to produce character sketches, with a tendency to re-tell those parts of the plot involving her.

Question 27

The few responses to this question generally captured the moment and made some attempt to use at least some expression that was suitable for the character. They noted that the crisis that meets him contrasted with earlier expectations that the District Collector's posting to a supposed backwater would present few pressing problems.

Question 28

The majority of responses saw very few reasons for sympathy. His desire to make right his failure to acknowledge comes too late, and most candidates deplored Godfrey's arrogance in believing that only he could make Eppie's life better. Stronger responses remarked on the unexpected eloquence of Silas at this moment in the novel whereas less effective responses tended simply to explain what both Silas and Godfrey say. The strongest answers explored the role of the omniscient narrator in guiding the reader's feelings.

Question 29

There were only a few responses to this question. In general, they showed a basic awareness of key aspects: Silas's loss of faith after William Dane's betrayal; Silas's consequent isolation and miserliness. Generally, however, there was insufficient attention paid to the ways in which Eliot 'vividly conveys' the effect of the Lantern Yard experience of Silas's life. In less effective responses, characters were regarded as real-life people rather than fictional constructs.

Question 30

The few who attempted this question managed to convey the kindliness of Dolly's character and incorporated a range of reference to God and church, but often without really rooting their responses in the detail of the text. In a few responses Dolly's voice lacked credibility, as her expressions seemed to belong more to the 21st rather than the 19th century.

Question 31

This was a popular question, and a range of responses was seen. Most candidates acknowledged Kingshaw's sense of hope here, with the emphatic 'Fielding is *my friend*. This is all right.' They pointed out that this was a moment when Kingshaw glimpses the possibilities of a better future. The strongest responses were able to relate their personal response to what happens in the extract to the main thrust of the question: how Hill makes the moment so moving. The strongest responses observed that the depiction of Fielding's family life was not entirely romanticised and referred to the fate of the birds in the cages. A few perceptive responses were able to contextualise this particular moment by observing that Hooper's unexpected imminent return will puncture Kingshaw's current euphoria.

Question 32

Most responses referred to relevant aspects of the novel: the key incidents in the unfolding relationship between Hooper and Kingshaw; the self-interest of the parents making them blind to the agonies Kingshaw experiences; the increasing sense that there is no escape from the terrors of Hooper's tyranny. Some candidates expressed frustration at Kingshaw for failing to take advantage of the few occasions that he was metaphorically 'king of the castle'. Less effective responses made reference to relevant parts of the novel but often in a descriptive or narrative way. The strongest responses explored Hill's techniques: the 'ways' in which she makes us feel that Kingshaw's death is inevitable'.

Question 33

Most responses captured Mr Hooper's sense of guilt at neglecting his son and putting his own interests before his son's. Some responses depicted an ineffectual father naively believing that marriage to Helen would solve everything. The strongest responses probed the detail of the text more closely, with Mr Hooper reflecting on his relationship with his own father in trying to establish why it is that he finds it difficult to relate to his own son.

Question 34

This was the most popular of the questions on the anthology *Stories of Ourselves*. Most responses showed at least a sound understanding of the key events and broad themes of the story and alluded to the marriage for economic reasons, the vicar's 'social suicide' and their removal to the city, and her son's snobbery. Stronger answers explored in detail the methods Hardy uses to create such a sympathetic character. Less effective responses tended to re-tell the entire story, often going well beyond the extract, and treat the characters as real-life people. A minority of responses concentrated on the social and historical contexts of the story without really addressing either the question or the detail of the text.

Question 35

Candidates generally had a sound grasp of the key narrative aspects of their chosen story. The strongest responses to Lurie's *My Greatest Ambition* explored the humour of the story, as events are described from the perspective of the memorable young and precocious narrator. The most successful responses to Soueif's *Sandpiper* showed a sensitive appreciation of the narrator's predicament. Less effective responses tended to re-tell significant moments from their chosen story rather than explore how the writer makes the narrator so memorable.

Question 36

The few responses to this question generally demonstrated a sound understanding of McAllister's likely feelings towards the employer who had sacked him but who was now begging him to return to Blandings. There were some commendable attempts at humour.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42

Set Texts: Closed Books – A

Key messages

Detailed knowledge of texts is not on its own sufficient for high reward. Candidates must tailor their detailed knowledge to the demands of the question.

In their critical responses candidates must include analysis of the effects writers create in order to convey their meanings.

Responses to extract-based questions should engage with the detail and language of the extract, by selecting relevant words and phrases to address the question.

Personal responses to texts should be informed responses, that is, substantiated by apt textual detail.

General comments

The most successful critical responses demonstrated a detailed knowledge of texts and a sustained engagement with the question. Some candidates started their responses well but lost focus part of the way through the essay – as they perhaps veered towards a topic they had covered before. A minority of responses struggled to communicate personal responses to characters, themes and settings. There were a few instances of responses starting with extraneous background information, sometimes at great length, before addressing the key words of the question. Some answers showed remarkably little evidence of thorough knowledge of the chosen texts and this was revealed not only in the general essays but also in the extract-based questions which some candidates appeared to treat as ‘Unseen’ passages.

The strongest responses to Drama texts acknowledged the text as a play, i.e. something to be performed on a stage. These responses invariably referred to the ‘play’ rather than ‘book’ and to the ‘audience’ rather than ‘reader’. They also explored the words of the dialogue, not merely relying on stage directions to indicate the emotions of characters.

IGCSE Literature critical essay questions make reference to the writer. Key words in questions include ‘Explore’, ‘How?’ and ‘In what ways?’ These are all designed to encourage a critical engagement with a writer’s techniques. Such an engagement requires a consideration of the ways in which writers shape and convey meanings. The strongest responses were skilful at combining precise analytical comment and concise, useful reference. Less successful responses tended to log features and found it difficult, therefore, to go beyond a descriptive approach. Sometimes comments were so unhelpfully general as to be true of any text: ‘The description draws you in’; ‘The writer uses strong words’; ‘It makes you feel as if you are there’.

In 45-minute responses candidates are not required to provide exhaustive responses. For extract-based questions, for example, they need to select detail carefully from the extract in order to answer the question effectively. Where candidates attempted exhaustive commentaries on extracts or poems, they tended to produce superficial responses. Some candidates did a brief plan before starting to write their answer, and this helped them to organise their ideas effectively.

The strongest critical responses made judicious use of textual reference. They made frequent, concise and pertinent references to the texts and integrated the references flawlessly into their own writing. Less effective responses used quotations, sometimes quite lengthy ones, to illustrate a point but did not take the opportunity to explore the language of the key words. The least effective responses made mere assertions.

The best empathic responses created a convincingly authentic voice for the character and showed a clear appreciation of both the character and moment specified in the question. Additionally they rooted their

responses in the detail of the text. The least successful empathic responses struggled to capture a suitable voice and/or neglected to include textual detail for support.

There were relatively few rubric errors though there seemed to be an increasing tendency for candidates to number questions wrongly or not to number their questions at all. Work was generally well presented.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

Less successful answers made appropriate points but did not back them up with textual support. Most understood the general situation at this moment in the play, and there was often a focus on the tension between the three characters. Larry was often discussed at some length, at the expense of consideration of the actual text of the extract. Candidates tended to show a clearer understanding of Kate than of the other two and Chris was often neglected. Weaker answers generally did not take into account when in the play this moment comes: there was confusion about who – the audience included – knows what, at this point. Better responses noted the tension generated by the stage directions (the range of tones, the movement on stage). A few responses were perceptive about the contrast between Kate's over-protested, relatively long speeches and Ann's terse rebuttals.

Question 2

Most answers showed knowledge of the character, had the right quotations ready, and focused on the 'power of the play'. Most showed a good understanding of Jim and his dramatic function as a foil to Joe and as a disappointed idealist who lives in 'the usual darkness'; the character who knows all of the play's truth and who controls the play's dramatic/emotional temperature. Some strong answers focused on what Jim knew about Joe, and why he said nothing. Weaker responses demonstrated some uncertain knowledge of the character and his function in the play. Differentiation came from the extent to which answers went beyond character sketch to consider dramatic function.

Question 3

This empathic question offered candidates a good opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of both character and text, given the pivotal nature of the moment. Candidates who grasped the despair and self-loathing Joe is experiencing by this stage tended to have more success in achieving a convincing voice than those who attempted self-justification or attempted to blame Kate for helping to hush things up. Overall, this was a reasonably successful option for those candidates who chose it. Many missed the task's 'You are in your room' and made the mistake of writing in the past tense – offering narrative, interspersed with the odd emotional comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: Julius Caesar

Question 4

Less successful answers gave only limited attention to the actual passage and spent too much time on narration of the events leading up to Caesar's assassination. Better answers were able to state clearly the characteristics of Caesar on display in this extract: his arrogance, his pride, his susceptibility to flattery, his superstition, maybe his fickle nature, maybe his naivety, and then explore clearly how these are brought to light. The failure to explore the 'how' of the question was what limited many of the responses. Some stronger answers attempted to engage with the writer's technique, commenting, for example, on Caesar's referring to himself in the third person and on the language that Decius uses to 'massage Caesar's ego'. Some conflated Decius Brutus and Marcus Brutus, with very misleading results. Relatively few candidates considered the last part of the extract at all, and only the best in any depth.

Question 5

In less successful answers, focus on the question was not sharp. Many had clearly prepared for a ‘Brutus’ question and wrote competently about Brutus, ignoring the crux of the actual question: the extent to which our view of Brutus *changes*. Frequently, the question was interpreted as being ‘how does Brutus change during the play’, rather than how the audience’s view of him changes. Consequently, many weaker responses were basically character descriptions. A number of responses attempted to answer the question using the question 4 extract – often compounding the difficulty this created by assuming Decius and Brutus were one and the same. Relatively few candidates moved far beyond the opening scenes of the play to consider Brutus following the death of Caesar. The best answers were very well informed; often with excellent textual recall. Most candidates – but by no means all – were aware of the honourable nature of Brutus and explored to some effect how an honourable man could kill his friend and how this affected their response to him. Many argued that he never lost his honourable nature throughout and were able to quote Antony’s eulogy at the end of the play in support. Some candidates saw Brutus as power-hungry and unscrupulous, and were never able to supply textual evidence for their opinion.

Question 6

Most answers found difficulty in capturing a voice for Octavius, although his ambition was recognised. Of the few candidates who attempted to assume the voice, a number were unable to tie the speech to the relevant ‘moment’ of the play and used general material from later than the immediate post-meeting moment asked about. Several mistook the moment, and had Octavius hurrying back to Rome to prevent the assassination of Caesar. Many did capture something of Octavius’s strength of purpose and determination even when the voice was not distinctive.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

Question 7

The extract proved accessible for most candidates who chose this option, and most were able to identify some of the ways in which it was entertaining. Few were able to go on to analyse how the language of the extract enhanced the effect. Better answers tended to identify the contribution Ariel made to the overall comedy, thereby showing awareness of the play in performance. Some candidates offered interesting ideas on the scene as a parody of colonisation, but these ideas needed to be linked to the question to gain full credit. For ‘entertaining’, most candidates read ‘humorous’. Some simply said that the scene is funny because three characters are drunk, bickering and rowdy, and confused by Ariel’s intervention. Almost all responses noted that it was amusing that Ariel was behind the confusion of the passage, and many noted the amusing violence – though most needed to argue more fully why and how the violence was actually amusing. Differentiation came from the extent to which the comic richness of the language was explored – what the characters call, and how they address, one another; the best answers sensed serious foundations – to do with power, status etc. – of this comic richness. The best answers were able to offer a good range of material and mention Shakespeare’s authorial presence behind the action or the language of its presentation.

Question 8

This was often handled well, particularly by those candidates who recognised that the ‘How far’ in the question implied that a balanced response was expected. Nearly all candidates found something to say about Prospero’s treatment of Miranda, Ariel and Caliban. Often, this was little more than narrative, and often relied disproportionately on Prospero’s account to Miranda of their arrival on the island. Many candidates simply wrote about how Prospero was admirable – as a father and/or as a slave-master. Better candidates were able to offer much more, and even explore these two basic points in more subtle and thoughtful detail. Some saw him as an evil coloniser, while others saw him as a god-like figure dispensing forgiveness rather than revenge.

Question 9

Some candidates found difficulty in developing a voice for Sebastian. This difficulty was compounded by a failure to identify the character correctly – several candidates wrote as Ferdinand. Some more successful responses displayed considerable knowledge of Sebastian and his part in proceedings, although there were some who offered an unregenerate character wanting to get back to Naples to have another go at Alonso.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Question 10

Some of the candidates who offered responses to this question were able to identify quite clearly the moments of comedy and the best of these were also able to discuss reasonably effectively how Wilde was able to make these hilarious. There were comments on the visual humour in Cecily's treatment of Gwendolen and the use of language parallels. Most candidates were able to respond relevantly though many still find it very hard to show how something is 'hilarious' or the ways in which Wilde makes it so, largely because they are unable to explore in sufficient detail the language he uses in doing this. Many forgot that it is a play, and ignored the stage directions – some believing that Gwendolen's 'Detestable girl! But I require tea!' is heard by Cecily. Others interpreted the tea party as a misunderstanding, rather than combat as a result of a prior misunderstanding. The best responses sensed social satire and critique. Weaker answers focused on Victorian social criticism in general terms, and this also contributed to the lack of success in answering this question.

Question 11

Very few candidates attempted this question, and those who did showed at best a rather shaky grasp of the character and of what he did that was amusing. Good candidates were able to point to the humour of this mature man of the cloth deeply and simpering in love and his eagerness to please Jack and Algernon. Again, some candidates wrote about the role of the church in Victorian times, missing the (much simpler) point.

Question 12

There were a few good Lady Bracknell's, the voice ringing true(ish) and with suitable content, but too many moved beyond the specified moment to give a summary of the ensuing scene. Lady Bracknell's overbearing voice eluded most, often being replaced by an unconvincingly worried mother or aunt. Her need for Algernon's musical services was mentioned by only a few, and there was often an anachronistic knowledge of Mr Worthing's circumstances. Conversely, cucumber sandwiches loomed large.

SECTION B: POETRY

THOMAS HARDY: *Selected Poems*

Question 13

Answers tended to be descriptive, with little consideration of the 'feelings' in the question. Good answers discussed the speaker's feelings of isolation, and possibly bitterness, by consideration of the language used, the night setting of the poem, the passing of the motor car and the despair of the conclusion, considering the words and images of the poem and the effects created. Weaker answers read the poem as an autobiographical episode, (e.g. the poet is waiting for his wife to return from hospital) and did not distinguish between poet and speaker. Those who kept Hardy –the man- out of it were more successful in engaging with language and technique.

Question 14

Answers met with some success as they seemed to understand some of the thematic concerns on display, in particular the idea of the permanence of basic human emotions.

Question 15

This was not well tackled. Most answers chose *The Going*, and focused in general biographical terms on Hardy's life and marriage rather than engaging with the poem itself. Very little sense of the writing emerged from answers, and there was little attempt to deal with 'vividly'.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: from Part 4

Question 16

Weaker answers showed little understanding of Bhatt's feelings or how she conveys these. There were also some very hazy ideas of what 'culture' means. Candidates might have performed better if they had begun by defining their own terms as examiners allowed a wide range of interpretations of the word. Very few candidates attempted to answer the question, offering instead general narration or paraphrase of the first 18 lines of the poem, often ignoring the final section altogether. Weaker answers offered a kind of translation of the poem, but often in doing so revealed a lack of understanding. Many made no comment at all about colonisation in the second stanza. Better answers were able to reveal a basic understanding of the content, and show some awareness of Bhatt's anger in the second stanza. Some noted the different form of the second stanza but made little analysis of the language. A few good responses were able to get down to looking at the poet's word choices and show how these revealed feelings 'vividly'. In these good answers, where the poem had clearly been studied in detail, responses interpreted lines from the poem as metaphors for different attitudes to cultures and provided effective argument supported by relevant quotation. For most, where the final 10 lines of the poem were considered at all, this took the form of a series of vague generalisations about colonialism.

Question 17

Only the most successful responses adapted their knowledge and understanding of *Pike* to consider the focus of the question on the poet's feelings about nature. Many candidates were able to describe in detail the poetic creation of the pike but very few then applied that to Hughes' feelings about nature, in other words they were unable to make the necessary intellectual leap from narrative to supported speculation. Some misread the question as being about the nature of the pike. Understanding of the poem also suffered from imposed readings, for example that the pike was a representation of human nature, beautiful on the outside but evil within. Sadly, therefore, some good candidates might have let themselves down by simply not reading the question.

Question 18

The two 'planners' poems were popular and appropriate choices to tackle the question. Weaker answers tended to write in general terms about city life, with little or no consideration of the 'strong reactions' mentioned in the question. Candidates were well prepared, but instead of being selective and focusing on 'strong reactions and aspects of city life', in order to answer the question, some wrote everything they knew about their poem.

SECTION C: PROSE

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

Question 19

This question generated an interesting range of responses. Many candidates were shocked at Babamukuru's violence towards his daughter, although for many, his use of the term 'whore' was more shocking than the physical violence displayed. In some answers, this was accepted as reasonable parental behaviour, and the shock was that his daughter should retaliate in kind. Weaker responses were directed towards the behaviour of the characters, and how that behaviour reflected some of the themes of the novel, at the expense of consideration of the detail of the extract. Some very good answers dealt with the surprise because of what they had previously come to expect of the characters, and wrote relevantly about the fact that Maiguru and Chido had to intervene; better candidates were able to explore the language in detail, and sometimes effectively separated the shocking from the surprising to good effect. Such answers were well-reasoned and supported with a good range of relevant material drawn from across the whole passage.

Question 20

This was another example of a question where many candidates ignored 'To what extent' and instead listed ways in which Jeremiah is weak. Most recognised his laziness and his treatment of Tambu, often relating this to some of the themes of the novel, for instance, arguing that he could get away with this behaviour because of the patriarchal society. Few considered his subservient position in the wider family hierarchy, or his treatment of his wife and her sister, or his willingness to take credit for the achievements of others.

Question 21

Generally the 'moment' was well understood but some candidates confused this with the moment covered in question 19, thereby creating a good deal of confusion. There were some strong responses from candidates who recognised Babamukuru's intense sense of his own importance as head of the family and captured a credible conflict between his desire to keep his public image undisturbed and a sense of irritation or distress at his wife's rebellion. Many of the better responses were able to capture the weighty, self-important tone of the character whilst still conveying concern, anxiety, and – some suggested – slight feelings of guilt and remorse. A good range of relevant reference was necessary here, and better candidates were able to supply this.

ANITA DESAI: Fasting, Feasting

Question 22

This question elicited some excellent responses. Some candidates used the question as an opportunity to write, often with some passion, about the treatment of women in some traditional Indian societies, without paying much, if any, attention to the extract itself or to Desai's writing. There were some excellent close readings, with attention paid to lighting, tone, time, unfolding, point of view, structure as well as pointing out the uncertainties about Anamika's death and the lack of reaction of her relatives. Weaker answers merely summarised the extract without considering what was 'disturbing' about this moment.

Question 23

Most answers found something relevant to say. Many were able to find enough textual references to demonstrate ways in which Uma's life was full of disappointment. There was a good deal of condemnation of Mamapapa for their repressive treatment of their daughter, often linked to generalisations about the role of women in Indian society. Relatively few went on to offer a balanced assessment – implied by the word 'fair' in the question. Those who did tended to take account of her moments of escape from the confines of the family.

Question 24

As with several of the empathic questions in the Prose section of the paper, less successful answers sometimes confused what the character would think and what the candidate thought they ought to think. In the case of Arun, several candidates thought that regret at leaving the Patton household would figure prominently, and that he would be feeling overwhelmingly grateful to Mrs Patton in particular for her care for him. Most candidates showed reasonable knowledge of the events in the American part of the novel, but were not always able to convince that they had understood their significance.

KIRAN DESAI: Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 25

Candidates made good use of the passage to show how different a light on the Brigadier's character it throws and there were some perceptive responses. Sound selection of material to prove what the Brigadier is normally like, here at the outset of the passage and elsewhere earlier in the novel, was contrasted efficiently with the surprisingly soft and in some ways vulnerable man he appears once he espies the bird. Better candidates made very good use of the contrast and best answers got down to looking at individual words and phrases, revealing a genuine engagement with Desai's writing. Weaker answers did not really identify the surprise of the revelation of another side to his character, but offered description or paraphrase.

Question 26

This question presented difficulties for candidates who did not understand the term ‘self-important’. Examiners accepted a broad definition of the term, and some successful answers were written about Pinkie and Mr Chawla in particular. Some candidates wrote about substantial parts of the novel, stretching the meaning of the term ‘moment’, and for some, ‘ridiculous’ was addressed only by implication.

Question 27

The empathetic question was frequently attempted with some success. Many candidates appreciated the different aspects of Sampath’s character, and often achieved an appropriate voice. Others stressed guilt, regret and shame, reflecting perhaps what the candidates thought Sampath ought to have been feeling. The best answers reflected his lack of regret, his pleasure about his performance at the wedding, and the prospect of freedom from the oppressions in his life, with, sometimes, some anxieties about what his father might say. Generally, at whatever level of achievement, candidates communicated their enjoyment of this particular text.

GEORGE ELIOT: Silas Marner

Question 28

Most candidates managed to identify and highlight parts of the extract which showed Dunsey’s unpleasantness quite well, although comments on Eliot’s use of language were sparse. There was a general appreciation of the situation between the brothers and supporting quotation was often selected quite effectively, although there was a tendency for candidates to move from considering the extract to offering a narrative of subsequent events. Better responses were able to focus on the language used by Eliot, almost always picked up on the way even the dog reacts to the villainous Dunstan, and often even Dunstan’s body language. Generally most candidates were able to make some relevant response to this question.

Question 29

Some candidates who attempted this question struggled with the meaning of ‘amusing’ even though it is a term that has been used on this syllabus for a long time. For some, it appeared to mean ‘amazing’, for others ‘pleasingly instructive’. Some candidates selected completely inappropriate moments e.g. Dunsey robbing Marner and attempted to create convoluted arguments to justify their choice. Most answers offered narrative accounts of incidents – often Lantern Yard and the arrival of Eppie – with no attempt to explain or explore how and why they were amusing. There were a few attempts to use the extract and suggest the humour in that.

Question 30

Answers seemed to find difficulty in locating the precise moment and often wrote about parties in general, with little success in finding a voice for the character. There were some attempts which showed some grasp of events, although seldom was Nancy’s shyness conveyed. Instead, she was often portrayed as something of an envious man-hunter.

SUSAN HILL: I'm the King of the Castle

Question 31

Most candidates were able to discuss Kingshaw’s feeling of having escaped, and signs that he had not and generally they were keen to point out the relative tranquillity of the relationship between Kingshaw and Hooper in this section. They were alive to the contrast with their relationship at Warings. Better answers explored the language, and there were some detailed examples of analysis which showed sensitivity to the symbolism. In weaker answers there was too much narration of the story and too little attention to the important term in the question: ‘powerfully conveys’.

Question 32

Answers sometimes offered some relevant textual detail, showing how Mr Hooper treated Kingshaw, and made comments about how he did not understand his own son. There was often quite a lot of assertion made without sufficient arguing of the point in hand. Better candidates were able to offer a wider range of relevant reference and offered more fully developed responses.

Question 33

Candidates generally caught the moment well, and imagined plausible thoughts in a suitable voice. There was often a sound enough general nastiness in the voice of Hooper and some villainous threats of how he planned to follow and to terrorise Kingshay, but closer detail would have made some answers much more impressive, and helped to develop the voice still further.

From Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

The Rain Horse was frequently attempted and there were some good responses. These were characterised by close inspection of the passage and good, clear analysis of the writer's use of language. Better answers were able to link the weather with the incident to good effect, and were able to make clear the man's vulnerability. There were some very useful responses to the descriptions of the horse which create a surreal effect. Most answers, even weaker ones, made some relevant observations in connection with the question here, and there was a strong sense of engagement with the strangeness of this powerful moment in the story. Weaker responses sometimes appeared to have approached the extract as an 'unseen', showing only limited understanding of events and their significance.

Question 35

Sandpiper was the most frequently chosen of the stories and there were some very good answers which went beyond itemising the ways in which the narrator feels alienated, to consider the imagery and symbolism of the story, for example the white wall and the sand and the sea. Responses on *At Hiruharama* seldom moved beyond mere narration, with at best a brief comment about remoteness. A minority of candidates ignored the 'either/or' of the question and wrote about both texts, which was inevitably self-penalising.

Question 36

Even more than with Sampath (question 27), responses to this empathetic question were weakened by the candidates' tendency to express what they thought Randolph ought to be thinking rather than what he would most probably think. Consequently, there were many Randolphs wracked with grief and remorse. Better answers achieved a suitably pompous voice in which to convey the snobbishness and nastiness of the character. At times, Randolph was portrayed as just abusive and there was insufficient detail included from the text to make it anything but a very nasty, hateful child cursing his dead mother. At the opposite end of the spectrum there were some responses which seemed to show some love and remorse at his treatment of his mother when she was alive, though the textual evidence for this approach is not readily available and none was ever offered. Better answers were able to produce a good deal of reference to the concerns of the text and reveal a snobbish, domineering and unpleasant man who has had and still has no time whatsoever for his ignorant and common mother. In these answers, the arrogance and snobbishness of Randolph's tone were well captured, often skilfully using textual echo, and thus made for a powerful response to character and moment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43

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Key messages

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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A: DRAMA

Arthur Miller: All My Sons

Question 1

Most candidates could identify aspects of how Miller conveyed George's guilt and anger, citing stage directions, dialogue and the characters themselves. The best answers showed understanding of George's personal guilt at not having visited or written to his father, how he tries to make Ann share that feeling of guilt, his certainty that his father was framed, and the final confrontation with Chris. An understanding of the text as drama was also conveyed. Weaker responses focused on stage directions and punctuation without relevant textual support or exploration of the text itself.

Question 2

Candidates engaged with the character, Joe, and had no difficulty in pinpointing at least a few disagreeable features of his character though points were not always supported with textual detail. Weaker answers wrote in general about Joe, and the plot of the play, rather than remaining focused on the question, and some candidates considered Miller as a character rather than as the playwright. Good responses explored how the use of language can create effects.

Question 3

Only a few responses were seen. Most who attempted this question were able to convey some appropriate aspects of Kate's thinking.

William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar

Question 4

There were some very good responses, characterised by sound understanding of the relationship. Generally, there was clear understanding of this scene, and even weaker candidates were able to grasp some aspects of what was 'moving'. Some focused entirely on Portia's perspective and showed her devotion and concern but ignored Brutus's appreciation of his wife and his tender words. The best responses were able to highlight some of the deeper implications of the extract, describing Portia's changing strategies with sensitivity. Weaker responses narrated the scene and included lengthy explanations about gender inequality, losing sight of both the passage and question.

Question 5

The best responses selected a range of examples of omens and the supernatural, and analysed their dramatic impact. The Soothsayer's warning, the weather, Calpurnia's dream and Caesar's ghost were cited. They identified the idea of foreshadowing and explored how tension, dramatic irony and suspense are created for the audience. Weaker responses listed key events or re-told the plot.

Question 6

Most answers showed knowledge of Antony's situation, expressing suitable thoughts and feelings. His relationship with Caesar, initial shock, and his loathing of the conspirators figured largely. The best answers included his planning ahead and desire for vengeance with a few using background knowledge to create a convincing context for his words.

William Shakespeare: The Tempest

Question 7

Most candidates were able to comment in general on the relationship between Ferdinand and Prospero but missed some of the deeper implications. Understanding of the satisfaction felt by the audience when Prospero agrees to the marriage was shown and the dramatic threats made to Ferdinand explored. Though Prospero's love for Miranda was appreciated, only the very best candidates analysed the language closely. Ferdinand was often recognised as suitably honourable. Better answers included an understanding of the wider theme of reconciliation and the requirement for a resolution, and the dramatic and satisfying aspects of the scene. Many candidates ignored Ariel's 'dramatic' role in this scene in receiving Prospero's orders and the 'satisfying' implication of his 'last service'.

Question 8

Most responses showed some awareness of the comedy and were able to comment on the entertaining aspects of Trinculo and Stefano. In less successful answers, assertions were made about humour, but were not supported, and where references to the text were made, the language and humour were not explored. General comments were made about the pair, frequently retelling their parts, but they lacked detailed support and development. Some better answers gave some detailed analysis of the slapstick humour.

Question 9

Only a few responded to this question but most answered this well, showing understanding of Gonzalo's character and perspective. His good nature and shock at seeing Prospero were conveyed.

Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

This was a popular question. There was a tendency in weaker answers to write about the Victorians, social and historical background and Wilde's personal life without linking the information to the terms of the question. Most candidates were able to identify what they claimed were hilarious features but did not really show understanding of the humour, moving through the passage identifying key phrases, but failing to draw out the significance. Whilst there was an effort to consider how the audience is engaged, many struggled to be precise in their response to how the humour works. There was quite a lot of repetition, possibly because the interaction in the passage keeps going back to the issue of the cigarette case.

Question 11

A few really good answers were seen. Most were able to give an account of Gwendolen's character, but found it more difficult to say why Jack was lucky to be marrying her. Weaker candidates wrote a general character description with limited attention to the question. The very best answers considered the precise terms of the question, 'How far...' and produced a developed, balanced response.

Question 12

Most responses managed to capture at least some aspect of her romantic ideas and shallowness.

SECTION B: POETRY

Thomas Hardy: Selected Poems

Question 13

In the poem the speaker is bitter and appears to have been betrayed. His lover is described in very unattractive terms and his life has been ruined, and the very best answers explored this, responding to the effects of colour, and the weather. There were some very weak responses which showed hardly any knowledge of the poem. Most of the weaker answers introduced their responses with detailed biographical notes on Hardy's relationship with Emma rather than focusing on the terms of the question, and the poem, itself. There were a few good responses, characterised by clear points, relevant support and demonstrating understanding of the language and how Hardy's 'disappointment' in love was portrayed. Weaker candidates tended to work through the verses, commenting on language features but not supporting their points or explain how they are effective.

Question 14

The best responses engaged with the language and explored the contrast between the opulence of the ship and vanity of the people and the image of the ship lying at the bottom of the sea. Well-selected detail was integrated in these responses. Weaker answers worked through the poem, narrating events and making general, unsupported statements and personal comments.

Question 15

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

Songs of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

This was generally well done. Candidates engaged with the poem and nearly all explored some aspects of the imagery, supporting comments with integrated, relevant quotations, with the very best making insightful comments on the poet's feelings and how these were conveyed. Weaker candidates, however, spent too much time on the poet's background and contextualisation of 'The Planners' without linking this closely to the terms of the question. A general overview was given and there were some that focused entirely on the rhythm and rhyme, ignoring the meaning of the poem completely.

Question 17

Discussion of *Horses* was better than on *Summer Farm* which was characterised by quite vague and generalised statements, lacking textual detail. Many candidates did not quite understand this poem and offered a variety of personal opinions including comments on the importance of metaphysical attitudes to life. Candidates seem to have been fascinated by some of the images in this poem, especially the wobbling ducks and what some perceived as a 'one-eyed hen' but had difficulty in describing the significance. Many candidates found it difficult to identify the specific 'moment' for the poems and tended to just work through the poems with no attention to the question, particularly with *Horses*. However, there were some excellent responses demonstrating critical understanding of both language and poetic devices. Weaker candidates attempted to argue that the moment was the 'Industrial Revolution' when Muir was a boy and were clearly unable to support and develop this line of argument.

Question 18

There were some excellent responses to both *Hunting Snake*, and *Pike*, where candidates engaged with what they found 'surprising', sustaining and supporting ideas with integrated references and critical understanding of how the poets achieved effects. Most recognised the mixed feelings of the voice of the poems and some expressed their own sense of fascination with both animals depicted. Weaker candidates worked through the poems with little attention to the question. Some less successful answers argued generally that *Hunting Snake* was a metaphor for the cultural issues between the Australian Aborigine and the white colonists but did not support ideas, explore effects created, or link ideas to the question.

SECTION C: PROSE

Tsitsi Dangarembga: Nervous Conditions

Question 19

Although there were some good answers to this question where candidates expressed immense satisfaction that Tambu's hard work was rewarded by the scholarship and quoted Babamukuru's words of praise, it generally seemed to be difficult for candidates to highlight points that were 'satisfying' and 'amusing'. Many responses were very general and worked through the passage with little attention to the terms of the question or the language of the passage. The nuances of the passage, like Jeremiah's attitude to Babamukuru, were often missed. Quite a few responses commented on racial attitudes but could have made their points more relevant to the passage.

Question 20

Most responses focused on general issues such as gender inequality and racial or colonial issues rather than selecting points which developed the idea of the rebelliousness of the girls. A few candidates wrote about both girls rather than just one and limited responses to straightforward character studies. Only a few chose to write about Lucia but these were amongst the best responses as they could identify what made her 'memorably rebellious' and detailed her progress and determination through the novel to successfully receiving an education, employment and ultimately, a degree of independence.

Question 21

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

Anita Desai: Fasting, Feasting

Question 22

Some candidates were highly critical of 'MamaPapa' for their poor parenting skills including their different attitude to the birth of a boy than to the birth of their daughters, the forced feeding and the general obsession and nervousness in dealing with Arun. A few candidates were particularly angered at the fact that they continued to socialise, leaving Arun at home in the care of an older sister. The best responses were able to support points with close reference to the text, exploring Uma's perspective and looking at the deeper implications of the language and text. Weaker answers were able to identify points from working through the passage but did not relate them directly enough to the question.

Question 23

Candidates seemed to enjoy picking out the problems in the Patton family. There was a range of 'problems' that candidates identified, with some relevant observations and examples to support arguments. For some weak answers, this question ended up being a narrative response and some lost focus on the question completely, describing in length their personal views on issues such as bulimia and what they perceived as the American obsession with food as an indication of wealth and status.

Question 24

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

Kiran Desai: Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 25

There were some entertaining and enjoyable responses, which picked out the key parts of the passage that were amusing. Nearly all candidates commented appropriately on the poor CMO, and drew out details from the passage such as the 'missile', his special tea, the irony of his own health when he was supposed to be in charge of the health of the district. Nearly all candidates commented on the 'horrible, horrible onion juice', and expressed sympathy for the CMO. Generally this was very well done.

Question 26

This question was not as popular and though most responses were able to explain some characteristics of Pinky and Sampath, few of these responded to the ‘clash’ between their personalities. There was a tendency for candidates to write two character studies and then to comment on their differences. The very best responses explored their amusing clashes citing, for example, the bicycle run, Sampath’s disrobing at the wedding and their experiences with monkeys.

Question 27

A few responses were seen, most of which were able to connect with Mr Chawla’s despair at his son’s behaviour.

George Eliot: Silas Marner

Question 28

Most candidates were able to connect with some ‘moving’ aspects of the passage. The context of the passage was clearly understood and there was a general understanding of Dolly’s kindness and the significance of her visit. Most candidates were able to highlight some relevant points from the passage with textual detail in support, and the best explored how the writer achieved effects through language and situation. Weaker candidates retold the passage, failing to comment on what was ‘moving’ or supporting points with textual detail.

Question 29

A few responses were seen and these tended to be character profiles or narrative responses, lacking focus on what made Nancy Cass such an impressive character.

Question 30

Most answers were able to convey Eppie’s affection for Silas and how Lantern Yard had changed with some suitable features of her voice. Some weaker responses showed knowledge of the novel but did not reveal anything about Eppie.

Susan Hill: I’m the King of the Castle

Question 31

This was generally very well done. Candidates engaged with both the question and passage. Most candidates were well prepared and understood the difficulties in the relationship between father and son. There was a wide range in quality of responses and some of the best answers were able to analyse literary features in the passage as well the nuances of their conversations and actions. Weaker answers were able to at least note some of the instances of the strained relationship.

Question 32

Very few candidates were able to identify two suitable ‘moments’, of the ‘countryside’ which were ‘particularly powerful’. Some responses wrote about buildings or places, Warings, the castle, or the ‘Red Room’ and others offered very vague information about Hang Wood or the ‘field’ or the ‘stream’. In a few cases, candidates only described one situation. Many candidates chose to write about Warings with little reference to countryside, though they were able to write about at least one appropriate moment, for example, episodes in Hang Wood, Kingshaw’s experience with the crow in the cornfield or life on Fielding’s farm. Generally, weaker answers did not support their statements with sufficient detail or explain how Hill made their chosen moment powerful.

Question 33

A few responses were seen and these were able to capture a little of Mrs Kingshaw’s relief, shallowness and misguided idea of what a happy family they would make.

From Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

There were some interesting ideas developed about the generation gap, post-war class system and the ‘coming of age’ story the text provokes. Most responses picked out a few relevant points from the passage though not always exploring how it made it such an effective ending. A number of responses made quite general comments outside the passage including a range of views about the effects of the war. The best responses focused on the determination of the gang to carry out their ingenious plan, whatever their motives, the paradox of making Mr Thomas comfortable with a blanket and food whilst destroying his home and the humour in the repetition of, ‘There’s nothing personal...’ from both the adult driver and young boys. These responses were supported by close detail to the writing.

Question 35

Most candidates identified some reasons why Harold’s father was so unpleasant, citing his ‘two faces’, mocking of Harold’s job and hair loss, as well as the empty string of questions about his family without waiting for a reply to any of them. His hypocrisy in criticising and despising Harold, despite his own bankruptcy, and feigned lack of interest in money were also highlighted. There was much insight into Pritchett’s writing with interesting analysis of the language, for example, to describe his ‘two faces’ and the ‘silver topped pencil’ poised to make calculations once Harold mentioned his ability to raise some money. The very best explored the ‘fly’ and the significance of the title.

Question 36

There were so few answers to this question that it is not possible to make comment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/51

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

Key Messages

- In response to passage-based questions candidates needed to select material from the whole passage, support their views with quotations from it and make some response to the author's craft.
- In writing about drama texts, some consideration of features of the genre such as stage directions, entrances, exits, dialogue and action would have enriched answers.
- The strongest answers to discursive questions came from candidates who formed a clear line of argument, used wide-ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- Many answers would have benefitted from a closer response to the wording of the question, most notably to 'memorable' and 'dramatic'.
- The strongest empathic answers remained anchored to the prescribed moment, maintained a credibly circumscribed point-of-view and sustained a voice which rang true in terms of language and tone.
- The ability to consider writer's effects was the hallmark of a strong response.

General Comments

Candidates conveyed engagement and enjoyment of their set texts, especially of *The Siege*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Candidates showed good knowledge of their set texts and a high level of engagement with them. Passage-based questions were chosen by the majority of candidates and were answered well when candidates looked at the passage as a whole and commented fully on the author's methods. There was a tendency to explain the context or the general background to the passage at some length which detracted from the quality of the response. Candidates would be advised to give immediate attention to the passage itself.

When writing about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* most candidates were aware of the comedy and commented effectively on the set passage. Some still need to gain confidence in assessing the methods Shakespeare uses to entertain and amuse the audience. Those who could identify dramatic irony, visual humour, the comedy of reversals and contrasts as well as the use of hyperbole had a vocabulary with which to express their ideas. In response to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* attention to the action in the stage directions and the language the characters use would reap rewards. Candidates showed strong engagement with the characterisation but need to remember that they are writing about a play, not a novel.

There were some lively responses to empathic questions with strong candidates finding the voices of John Thorpe, Marina Petrovna and Brick, and one candidate wrote effectively and appropriately as Theseus.

There were few infringements of the rubric or inadequate responses. Candidates would be advised not to write over-lengthy plans, count words or write introductions and conclusions which give biographical information, rewrite the question or repeat, at some length, points already made.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 51

Northanger Abbey

Question 1

Candidates who answered this question understood the parody of the Gothic novel but could have explored the humour in the passage in greater detail. Some were distracted by discussing Catherine's love of Gothic novels and friendship with Isabella at the expense of analysis of the passage.

Question 2

There was an awareness of Isabella's mercenary motivation but fewer candidates commented on her shallowness. Some tried to write a balanced response to her character without fully engaging with how Austen made them feel about her. Few commented on the contrast between Isabella and Catherine or Eleanor Tilney.

Question 3

Many candidates managed to convey Thorpe's boastfulness, pique, contempt for Henry and desire for revenge. Most, however, saw him as being genuinely in love with Catherine which seems a fundamental misreading of his character. Few mentioned his blackening of Catherine's character to the General.

Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems

Question 4, Question 5 and Question 6

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

The Siege

Question 7

The most successful answers to this question commented on: the danger to Anna; the fact that the man is well fed and Anna's consequent vulnerability; the creation of suspense and the knowledge that if Anna dies, so does Kolya. Responses would have been improved by a closer focus on the writing.

Question 8

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

There were some very credible recreations of Marina which featured her grief, her past relationships with Mikhail and Vera, her key concerns and her admiration for Anna's fortitude and her artistic skills. Less secure answers stayed in the present and said little about Mikhail.

Poems Deep and Dangerous

Question 10, Question 11 and Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 13

Candidates found plenty to say about the comedy in the scene. The dramatic reversal/dramatic irony caused by the love potion was fully explored along with Demetrius's hyperbole, Helena's comic reaction and the verbal sparring between Demetrius and Lysander. Fewer candidates explored the language of the passage

in detail. Less successful responses explained the context of the scene in too much detail and confused potion/poison.

Question 14

This question was answered competently by most. Candidates examined the rehearsal scenes, the contrast between Bottom headed like an ass with the ethereal Titania, the dramatic irony and the hilarious amateurishness of the play within a play. Some answers were rather carried away by the class differences between the mechanicals and the nobles of Athens.

Question 15

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Question 16

Stevenson's methods were often clearly outlined with comment on Poole's obvious fear and suspenseful delay in stating the problem, the pathetic fallacy on the journey to Jekyll's house and the reaction of the servants on their arrival. The strongest answers supported points with apt quotations such as: 'wild, cold, seasonable night', 'flecked the blood into the face', and 'huddled together like a flock of sheep'. The main weaknesses were lack of comment on the effects of the pathetic fallacy or only considering the opening of the extract.

Question 17

There were some engaged personal responses to this question and arguments were often clear. Candidates were less successful at giving close reference to relevant moments from the novel to support their feelings for Jekyll and at giving an analysis of the style.

Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

In general the revelations in the scene were assessed in greater detail than its dramatic qualities. The strongest answers, inevitably, considered both parts of the question in some depth. Candidates considered: Maggie's grasp of the issues of inheritance, Big Daddy's cancer, Brick and Maggie's relationship and Brick's drinking. The dramatic drawer slamming, Maggie's refusal to leave Brick, and entry into the fray with Mae and Gooper were explored in less detail. Candidates did not quite see that Brick is not as indifferent to Big Daddy's state of health as he appears to be.

Question 20

Few candidates really responded to the question 'What does Williams make you feel...' by evaluation or judgment of Big Daddy. Most described what he did with hardly any commenting on his treatment of Big Mama, or of his hard work building up the ranch, or his ingrained rudeness to most people. Few mentioned his almost enlightened attitude to his previous bosses and their relationship, and so his attitude to Skipper and Brick. There was little response to dramatic method or precise textual support used. Candidates were generally surprisingly kind in their assessment of him.

Question 21

Most responses conveyed some of the joy of Brick's presumed drunken euphoria as he goes to jump hurdles, presumably to re-live some of the triumph of his younger fitter days, although none reflected on his former athleticism, nor whether he missed those days or not. Some were fairly honest about Skipper and Maggie, some either did not know or understand or were deliberately being dishonest to themselves. Some responses ignored Skipper and Maggie and just portrayed a Brick who did not care about anything.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/52

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

Key Messages

- In response to passage-based questions candidates needed to establish the context quickly and economically, select material from the whole passage, support their views with quotations from it and make some response to the author's craft.
- In writing about drama texts, some consideration of features of the genre such as stage directions, entrances, exits, dialogue and action would have enriched answers.
- The strongest answers to discursive questions came from candidates who formed a clear line of argument, used wide-ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- Many answers would have benefitted from a closer response to the wording of the question, most notably to 'memorable' and 'dramatic'.
- The strongest empathic answers remained anchored to the prescribed moment, maintained a credibly circumscribed point-of-view and sustained a voice which rang true in terms of language and tone.
- In all three genres the ability to consider writer's effects was the hallmark of a strong response.

General Comments

The most popular texts this session were *The Siege*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

Candidates showed good knowledge of their set texts and a high level of engagement with them. Passage-based questions were chosen by the majority of candidates and were answered well when candidates looked at the passage as a whole and commented fully on the author's methods. There was a tendency to explain the context of the passage at some length or to digress into consideration of themes, which detracted from the quality of the response. Candidates would be advised to give immediate attention to the passage itself.

When writing about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* candidates were aware of the comedy but still needed to gain confidence in assessing the methods Shakespeare uses to entertain and amuse the audience. Those who could identify dramatic irony, visual humour, the comedy of reversals and contrasts as well as the use of puns, hyperbole and malapropisms had a vocabulary with which to express their ideas. In response to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* attention to the action in the stage directions and the language the characters use would reap rewards. Candidates showed detailed knowledge and strong engagement with the characterisation and the themes, but should have remembered that they were writing about a play, not a novel.

There were some lively responses to empathic questions with strong candidates capturing the voices of Anna, Puck, Dr Jekyll and Mae. It was impressive to see candidates reflecting the tone and style of texts from different countries, written in different eras, in their recreation of a character.

There were few infringements of the rubric or inadequate responses. Candidates would be advised not to write over-lengthy plans, count words or write introductions and conclusions which give biographical information, rewrite the question or repeat, at some length, points already made.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 52

Northanger Abbey

Question 1

The strongest answers showed sharp awareness of context and Catherine's thought processes. Less successful responses focused on Catherine as an unlikely Gothic heroine in rather general terms. More attention needed to be paid to how Austen conveyed Catherine's distress through the language of the passage.

Question 2

Responses showed a good knowledge of Eleanor's character but were less successful in providing precise details from the novel.

Question 3

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems

Question 4

Strong answers exhibited empathy for the apparent suffering and pain of separation conveyed by the imagery in the poem. Less detailed responses often discussed the candidates' own experiences of prayer, and identified poetic devices without exploring their effect.

Question 5 and Question 6

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

The Siege

Question 7

The most successful answers to this question commented on how the desperation for food was conveyed by the writing: Dunmore's use of short sentences and questioning at the opening of the dialogue; and the description of Anna's shock when she fears the meat is human ('blanches', 'stiff with horror'). There was comment on the effects of malnutrition in Kolya's 'sharp' face and in his failure to remember what meat was. Less effective answers outlined the situation in Leningrad in a general way without fully exploring the passage itself, or wrote too much about the guinea-pig or cannibalism at the expense of looking at the second half of the extract.

Question 8

The strongest responses commented on Anna and Andrei's seemingly fated meeting and love at first sight. The most common evidence cited for the moving nature of their relationship was Anna's desire to dance with Andrei and stated willingness to sit with him if he were to die. There were many narrative answers which needed to find more wide-ranging and specific reference to support their views. Some focused too much on love triumphing over adversity rather than on the question set. The best answers produced some sensitive personal comment.

Question 9

In general, candidates showed good knowledge of the text in reconstructing Anna's feelings about her visit to Evgenia. The best saw that gratitude, sympathy for the loss of her son and understanding of her survival tactics would dominate her thoughts. Less convincing responses were over-critical of her resorting to prostitution, or ignored it, and were confused about the identity of her child. The closeness of the girls' bond was seldom fully conveyed.

Poems Deep and Dangerous

Question 10

The strongest answers supported points with comment on the language of the poem, such as the terms outlining the exactitude of Heaney's father's skill and exploring the implications of 'stumbled'. The best answers noted the affection and the son's feeling of inferiority against his father's skill. There were narrative responses which showed sound knowledge of content but did not engage with the poetry. The key discriminator was attention to the role reversal in the final stanza.

Question 11 and Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 13

This question was well answered when candidates focused clearly on how the humour works. The Mechanicals' literal view of art and general incompetence; the dramatic irony and visual comedy of Bottom being unaware of his transformation; the contrast between the 'hempen homespuns' and the mercurial, articulate fairy and the precise humour of the malapropisms were elements of strong answers. Less successful answers referred to the comic elements in the plot and the language but made no developed comment on their effectiveness. There were some generalised responses with little quotation from the passage, and many did not mention Puck's intervention. Many candidates referred to the earlier scene where Bottom wants to play every part. Much was made of the working class origins of the Mechanicals and that the audience were meant to laugh at them - this view perhaps underestimating the joy Shakespeare also finds in their enthusiasm and innocence?

Question 14

The strongest answers shaped an argument as to what made the changing fortunes of Helena and Hermia so memorable. The role reversals, dramatic ironies, feelings of betrayal and inferiority, comic stage fighting and entertaining insults featured in such responses. There were many almost purely narrative answers which were difficult to reward. Some candidates were also caught out in trying to explain the complexities of the plot, confusing the pairs of lovers. Candidates who had learned some apt and revealing key quotations stood out from the crowd.

Question 15

Most candidates had some awareness of the moment and managed to find an adequate voice for Puck. The best captured his lively delight in mischief, his contempt for humans, loyalty to Oberon and showed an awareness of the context. Many saw him deliberately leading Bottom towards Titania's bower but fewer commented on his observation of the Mechanicals' rehearsal. Less convincing answers expressed self-doubt and guilt, took credit for 'potisioning' Titania and projected the moment too far into the future.

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Question 16

Comment on the language which reveals the impact Hyde has made on Utterson was the main discriminator here. What had been to Utterson 'the pleasantest room in London' now induced shudders in the blood, nausea and a distaste for life. There was strong response to how Utterson's sense of evil was reflected in the imagery used to depict Hyde, his unease at Hyde having a key and over the clauses of the will, and the contrasting of his sins with any Jekyll may have committed. One perceptive candidate commented on how Utterson's whole outlook on life had been overturned by his meeting with Hyde. Many candidates selected material effectively here but were less confident in analysis of it. Attention to the final paragraph, where Utterson considers his own 'past iniquities', was often a discriminator. Less confident responses seized on any 'negative' detail and attributed it to Hyde and his impact or drifted into a general account of Hyde's nastiness.

Question 17

Successful answers saw how the general repulsion induced by Hyde and his propensity for violence made him fascinating, if repellent. Candidates showed the ability to debate the issues. There were some less effective long explanations of Jekyll's reasons for embarking on this project, which rather side-stepped the question. The best responses saw that Jekyll's torment made him just as interesting as his alter ego.

Question 18

The best recreations of Jekyll captured both his concern over Utterson's questions and his arrogance and confidence at this stage of the novel. There was a tendency to make him too detached from Utterson, undervaluing the strength of their friendship. There were some dual narratives in both Jekyll and Hyde's voices. Less confident responses were sketchy on the details of events, showed hostility to Utterson or misplaced the moment as much later in the novel.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

In general the significance of the scene was assessed in greater detail than its dramatic qualities. The strongest answers, inevitably, considered both parts of the question in some depth. The inheritance of the plantation, spying and Brick's alcoholism featured in most answers. Some considered the drama of Mae's eavesdropping (or dropping eaves, as one candidate charmingly put it) and the dramatic irony of Big Daddy's unawareness of his impending death. Response to Big Daddy's strong language and Mae's sycophantic 'mendacity' featured in the best answers. Less successful answers explained the background to the scene without exploring the passage or merely ignored the words 'dramatic' and 'significant'. Some candidates were not clear on the fact that Brick knows Big Daddy is dying. Although most answers were competent, many were not informed by a sense of the scene onstage.

Question 20

Most candidates chose two appropriate moments, though some referred to Maggie's feelings in general. The best answers found apt quotations and textual reference to support the points made and engaged with the intensity of her emotions by looking at the imagery she uses in her dialogues with Brick. There was some engaged personal comment and a degree of empathy with the character.

Question 21

Answers were distinguished by the extent to which they could capture Mae's voice. Most made her suitably catty about Maggie, patronising about Big Momma and contemptuous of Brick. Some candidates made her too omniscient and therefore more overt about her motives than she might be even in her own mind, whereas others made her too devoted to Gooper and soppy romantic. Weaker responses said little about the party and her children and did not mention Big Daddy's cancer. Most, however, showed sound textual knowledge and gave her appropriate thoughts and attitudes.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/53
Set Texts: Closed Books-B

Key Messages

- In response to passage-based questions candidates needed to select material from the whole passage, support their views with quotations from it and make some response to the author's craft.
- In writing about drama texts, some consideration of features of the genre such as stage directions, entrances, exits, dialogue and action would have enriched answers.
- The strongest answers to discursive questions came from candidates who formed a clear line of argument, used wide-ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- Many answers would have benefitted from a closer response to the wording of the question, most notably to 'moving' and 'dramatic'.
- The strongest empathic answers remained anchored to the prescribed moment, maintained a credibly circumscribed point-of view and sustained a voice which rang true in terms of language and tone.
- In all three genres the ability to consider writer's effects was the hallmark of a strong response. Work on poetry this session was particularly effective in this respect.

General Comments

Work on Carol Ann Duffy's poetry was generally impressive this session. Most candidates chose **Question 4** but there were also strong, detailed and enthusiastic individual responses to the other questions on these poems. Candidates had clearly been taught to engage with the language in an effective and individual way.

Both *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* produced responsive answers which looked at language, theme and stagecraft. There was also a tendency to generalise about the play in answer to the passage-based questions, where candidates would be better advised to pay close attention to the dialogue and to what is happening on stage. Many candidates wrote extensively and not always convincingly about the nature of the Elizabethan audience.

There was a similar issue in response to the prose texts where some candidates want to offload what they know about the historical or cultural background of the text, rather than concentrate on the passage given or on the question set. Candidates who can offer specific textual reference and direct quotation inevitably fare better in answer to the discursive questions.

There were some effective responses to empathic questions with strong candidates capturing the voices of Elizaveta Antonovna, Helena, Mr Utterson and Big Momma particularly well and generally showing sound knowledge of the text and the moment in question.

There were few infringements of the rubric or inadequate responses. Candidates had often planned their answers briefly but carefully but there was some evidence of lengthy planning which prevented the candidate from finishing the answer itself.

Comments on Specific Questions

Paper 53

Northanger Abbey

Question 1

In general, candidates needed to pay more attention to the entertaining aspects of the passage. Many understood the satire on Gothic heroines but did not fully support this with comic details from the extract. Comment on Catherine's amusing ordinariness needed development.

Question 2

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 3

All responses were well-rooted in the moment and sensibly divided their attention equally between the trip to Blaize Castle, and the inconvenienced Tilneys. The emphatic 'did' in the question was well picked up by candidates and covered in their tones of angst and fears of recriminations.

Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems

Question 4

There were many excellent answers to this question. These were characterised by: an exploration of the ambiguities in the title; comment on both the literal and metaphorical use of the clocks going back; awareness of the broken love-affair context; response to the pathetic fallacy and sensitive analysis of 'gnawed', 'unmendable rain', 'wrong part of town' and the imagery of death, light and darkness. Candidates engaged closely with feelings of disorientation, loss and regret. Less effective answers wrote about the gloomy atmosphere but detached this from the overall meaning of the poem. In such answers the commentary remained undeveloped: for example 'darkening' means 'it gets dark'. There were very few candidates, however, who did not respond to the power of this poem.

Question 5

Responses to this question chose 'In Mrs Tilscher's Class' and effectively contrasted the atmospheres of innocence and experience.

Question 6

Although not a popular choice, answers on 'Miles Away' were very strong with detailed analysis, sophisticated overview and personal response.

The Siege

Question 7

Strong answers to this question recognised that the passage is narrated initially from Andrei's point of view, that 'home' has been reduced to the mattress and that the physical love between Anna and Andrei has faded owing to malnutrition; but their spiritual unity is what makes the passage so moving. Such answers focused clearly on the wording of the question and made use of the simile 'like climbers bivouacked on an icy mountain' to comment on Dunmore's depiction of the extremity of the living conditions. Anna's determination to restore some normality and to care for Kolya were discussed along with the sadness that Kolya's physical and mental abilities were declining as starvation progressed. The physical details of the decline in health of the whole family tended to receive less attention.

Some candidates thought that Anna's point of view dominates and did not mention Andrei at all, whereas others read the decline of physical affection as meaning the couple no longer loved each other. The least effective answers wrote generally about conditions in Leningrad without referring to the passage in any detail.

Question 8

Anna's abilities as a survivor play a major part in the novel but many candidates seemed to be taken by surprise in response to this question. There were many very general essays on the situation in Russia without reference to Anna and what she does to survive, except in passing. Few, even strong, candidates mentioned the Lugar Line experience and the contrast between Anna and Katya or both Marina and Evgenia's comments on Anna as survivor. Candidates rarely addressed the issue of authorial control head-on. The best answers referred to incidents such as the retrieval of food from the dacha, the purchase of the burzhuika, and the collecting of firewood - all informed by a sense of Anna's courage and adaptability, realism and willingness to lie and use violence if necessary.

Question 9

There were some effective and credible recreations of Elizaveta Antonovna which captured her impatience with people and children in particular, and her fear of inadvertently betraying the party line. Candidates could perhaps have emphasised her love of organisation and lists more fully and the weaker answers were generalised. Most, however, showed an intelligent awareness of the political situation in the novel.

Poems Deep and Dangerous

Question 10, Question 11 and Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 13

This question was answered well when candidates understood the context of the conflict between Oberon and Titania, analysed the quick trading of insults, commented on the effect of the rhetorical questions and made some response to the accusations of infidelity. The real discriminator here, however, was the understanding of how the conflict between the couple has led to discord in the natural world. Some discussion of the powerful imagery Titania uses to convey this also merited high reward. Many answers ignored this part of the passage altogether and some thought Oberon's jealousy was caused by Titania's relationship with the Changeling Boy rather than with Theseus. Some candidates looked at the imagery of the moon in a general way without precise analysis of how her anger is affecting the pattern of seasons.

There were strong comments on the staging, with the couple entering from opposite sides with their own train, reflecting the conflict between them. Many answers looked at gender issues interestingly but perhaps overestimating this as a main topic of discussion for an Elizabethan audience.

Question 14

Candidates made apt choices of amusing moments, concentrating mainly on the fight between Helena and Hermia, Helena's pursuit of Demetrius, Bottom's relationship with Titania and the mechanicals' rehearsals and performance. There was some developed comment on the comedy with discussion of contrast, slapstick humour, dramatic irony, comic language and bad acting. There were relatively few purely narrative responses, though some candidates related the story of the moment and merely stated that it was amusing.

Question 15

Effective answers here expressed happiness that Demetrius had come to his senses, showed enthusiasm for the marriage but also expressed some confusion about what had happened in the woods. Less convincing Helens wrote about preparing for the wedding in a completely modern context with discussion of hair, dress and so on with little reference to the play. Some answers were unvaried and narrative.

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Question 16

The strongest answers wrote about the language of the passage, especially the descriptions of Hyde's ferocious attack, in some detail. They commented on the contrast between Carew and Hyde, the effect of the maid's perspective on events and on the demonic, visual, auditory and animal imagery used to convey

Hyde's evil. Hyde's utter lack of motive was also fully considered. The question was answered less well when candidates wrote too much on the 'Gothic' setting and Victorian notions of respectability, without reading closely or selecting material that focused on the question. Those who concentrated on how the events are portrayed rather than on what happens reaped the benefit.

Question 17

There was a tendency to generalise about duality in answer to this question. Many candidates gave an intelligent overview but were less successful in selecting detail from the novel where Jekyll's torment is vividly depicted. Those who gave apt references to Jekyll's moral, psychological and physiological distress were highly rewarded.

Question 18

The best answers captured Utterson's measured, lawyer's tone of voice, expressed his shock and sympathy and openly and honestly assessed his reaction to what Jekyll had done. The most convincing conveyed both grief and condemnation of Jekyll's scientific meddling.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

Most candidates made a better job of writing about what is revealing in the scene rather than what is moving. Those who commented on the early stage directions where Big Daddy shows a mixture of tenderness and embarrassment at revealing it, set themselves on the right track. The strongest answers also showed a sharp sense of context, looked at the language Brick uses to describe his drinking, the symbolism of the crutch and the irony of the dying Big Daddy 'straightening' Brick out. Less effective answers discussed what the scene reveals in rather general terms, filling in the background, rather than looking closely at the text. Surprisingly few candidates mentioned the section where Brick comments on the talks between father and son always going nowhere. Most saw this scene as them opening up to each other for the first time. Strong answers commented on Brick's growing honesty and where this might lead.

Question 20

All three married couples were considered but Maggie and Brick proved the most popular. Candidates tended to outline the dysfunctional nature of their relationship and the reasons for it with some reference to key moments or quotations such as the 'cage' image and the 'cat on a hot tin roof'. Maggie's lie about her pregnancy also featured. Answers would have been improved by attention to the intensity of the relationship, comment on the vividness of the portrayal and by some precise support from the text.

Question 21

Strong responses here showed knowledge of the precise moment in the play, capturing Big Momma's joy, religiosity, love of Big Daddy and Brick, whilst also finding a lively, convincing voice for her. Some candidates misplaced the moment to later in the play, made her too self-aware and insufficiently deluded about Big Daddy's feelings for her or too knowing; aware of events still to occur. Others expressed a dislike for Mae, Gooper and their children which is more characteristic of Maggie. There were many suitably relieved voices which captured much of her characteristic idiolect.