

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11

Paper 11 (Open Books)

General comments

There was a considerable increase in the entry for the paper this session, and Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to Questions 7 and 13.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely from the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambment and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed. One reported: 'I do not think I saw one candidate who used the word 'audience' (it was always 'reader') and of the 150 essays I marked on Richard III's soliloquy only one candidate mentioned (and that in passing) that the audience would be able to see Richard's deformity.'

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the

characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This text had clearly been much enjoyed. It is often difficult to explain why something is funny but most candidates attacked the question with relish and showed real understanding of the incongruities and contrasts in the situation, commenting on Jack's naiveté and attempts to take a moral stand compared with the cheerful immorality and criminality of the rest of the family. The best answers commented in detail on the writing, for instance on the sinister sub-text to Orlando's comments about insurance and on his gesticulations. They also saw the inappropriateness of his showing round of the family photographs. Weaker answers tended to repeat the same point – that Jack does not understand what is going on – with reference to different parts of the extract.

Question 2

This was a less popular question but those who chose it knew the character of Anita well and appreciated her business skills.

Question 3

This question was also a minority choice but Poppy's devotion to Jack was clearly seen and candidates made a good attempt at capturing the voice of a character who is 'a bit of a mouse'.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Questions 4-6

Very few candidates offered this text. Examiners reported that those who did usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and responded in detail to the extract.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. The best answers to this question explored what Parris's words as well as his confused and extreme physical reactions reveal about his character and state of mind, and they identified the 'weasel' quality of the words that Abigail uses to excuse herself. They also explored the way in which much of the power of the extract derives from the audience being plunged into the middle of a highly fraught situation. It was a striking feature of this question that many less successful answers entirely ignored Abigail, and seemed unaware of the implications of mentions of witchcraft and unnatural events. There also seemed to be little concern for the situation of Betty except in the best answers and few made reference to the calling of Hale.

Question 8

Candidates generally made very good choices of 'moments', the 'yellow bird' incident and Proctor's tearing of his confession being favourites. Good answers adopted similar techniques as for the passage-based questions, going beyond narrative and exploring the dynamics of the situations and the implications in terms of the whole text.

Question 9

There were some excellent Danforths capturing in appropriate language the austerity and harshness of the character and his conviction that he is right, but there were also some miscalculations. Some candidates wanted to allow him the self-knowledge that he and his court were at fault but made him far too remorseful and contrite. Some candidates appeared to confuse him with Hale.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

Those candidates who attempted to take a balanced view of Leonato were most successful here. The words 'at this point in the play' give the steer to consider whether his behaviour in the extract is typical or whether it represents a departure from his normal behaviour. There was a lot of emphasis on his concern for his honour, rather than for his child, and a good deal of hostility towards him as a result. Those candidates who responded to his courage in challenging Claudio and condemned the way in which he is dismissed by Claudio and Don Pedro tended to score more highly.

Question 11

There were some very pleasing responses to this question, though most limited themselves to Dogberry alone. Even weaker answers responded to his malapropisms; better ones saw his importance to the plot and to the comic relief he provides; the best considered his crucial role in vindicating Hero.

Question 12

Answers showed that the character of Beatrice was well known, and most of these empathic responses were appropriate, though some were overly sentimental and gushing. The most successful saw that her feelings about Claudio would be conflicting and her feelings for Benedick something of a mystery to her. Those who created something of her feistiness and acerbity scored highly. There were some excellent attempts to recreate some of the word-play that she has indulged in with Benedick.

Richard III

Question 13

This was overwhelmingly the most popular question on the play. There was abundant evidence that this extract had been studied in detail. The thrust of the question was on 'memorable beginning' and candidates who ignored the invitation to respond but merely explained the passage did not score very highly. The best answers engaged with the ambiguity of the character and saw how Richard enlists the audience on his side, creating admiration and revulsion in almost equal measure. There were some superb analyses of the language and imagery, showing the sarcasm and irony and also the humour of the character. Some answers did not refer to the specific plot to set Clarence and the King against each other.

Question 14

By contrast, relatively few responded to this task. Examiners who saw answers to it usually complimented candidates for their knowledge of and insight into the characters.

Question 15

This was also a minority choice but there were some good responses showing knowledge of the character and of events though sometimes only with reference to Richard's dream. The most successful answers demonstrated some of his sense of black irony. One or two attempted to write in iambic pentameters, but with limited success.

Journey's End

Question 16

Candidates who had studied this text generally demonstrated a great deal of engagement with the characters and their situation. There were some very careful and detailed explorations of this passage, looking not only at the situation of the naive young officer finding himself on the front line and the experienced officer trying to treat him kindly and warn him of changes to his hero, Stanhope, but also examining the subtext to the dialogue and the ways in which language and sentence structure is used.

Question 17

There were also some very good responses to this question. Good textual knowledge was in evidence and candidates had no difficulty in pulling out examples of stress-relieving techniques; but successful answers went beyond cataloguing them and were distinguished by a sense of the author's purpose and the condemnation of war that is exhibited through these techniques.

Question 18

There were fewer responses to this question but very good knowledge of the character was usually demonstrated and candidates did not seem to find it difficult to create a suitable voice, incorporating many of Hibbert's idiosyncrasies of speech. None were convinced that his neuralgia was genuine.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves from Part 3

Question 19

There was a great range of achievement here, from those answers which merely gave a sort of paraphrase, not addressing 'state of mind', to those that focused tightly on the terms of the question, analysing the language and imagery in a great deal of detail. Some candidates got themselves tangled up in Darwinist theories and lost focus on the task; some, rather mysteriously and not entirely convincingly, interpreted it as an anti-war poem. The important thing was to see the changing moods and the way in which the imagery reflects them. Few candidates saw that the last stanza offers some hope through personal relationships.

Question 20

There were no real problems with the understanding of *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* and *Report to Wordsworth*, though a number of candidates seemed to have no idea who Wordsworth was and therefore missed the point of the title and the opening sentence and also of the full significances of the references to Proteus, Triton and Neptune. They were generally able to focus on the descriptions of 'human destruction', however, though sometimes without bringing out the force of the poets' grief and anger, in other words without responding to 'powerfully'. A significant number tackling this question tended to give rather generalised responses.

Question 21

Similarly, responses to *Amends* and *Full Moon and Little Frieda* often overlooked the word 'memorably' though there were some sensitive responses to the imagery of *Amends* recognising the 'healing qualities' of the sounds. Relatively few saw some of the darker notes of the Hughes and some candidates only explained the poem in terms of the poet's response to the development of his child into a woman.

John Keats: *Poems*

Question 22

While there was some extremely impressive work in response to this question, it was also clear that a lot of candidates had struggled to understand this poem and indeed surprising that many never mentioned the nightingale in offering up their explanation of Keats's feelings. In weaker answers there was a tendency to digress into accounts of Keats's illness, the death of his brother, his relationship with Fanny Brawne and his own imminent demise - completely losing focus on the question. Candidates must work from the poem itself and pay close attention to the words. 'Vividly' should have provided enough of a steer.

Question 23

Since *The Eve of St Agnes* is a poem with a very strong narrative, it might have been expected that candidates would find it easier to write about, but too many did not get beyond the narrative and ignored the direction to identify its dramatic elements. In the most successful answers, the opening of the poem was used as a starting point followed by the dramatic escape of the couple and there was some detailed textual support.

Question 24

This was usually the most successful of the three Keats questions. The poem was very well known and candidates usually had no difficulty in finding plenty to say, though only the best answers explored the shifting moods of the poem.

Section C: *Prose*

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some excellent answers. Candidates engaged with the text and the task and were able to explore Elizabeth's confused emotions with detailed analytical responses and plenty of supporting quotation. Answers were differentiated by the amount of detail and by the awareness of Austen's method, for example by the way in which she takes the reader into Elizabeth's thoughts, using rhetorical questions and exclamations.

Question 26

Some candidates attacked this question with relish, constructing persuasive and convincing arguments giving a range of examples of marriages but using Elizabeth and Darcy as the exemplification of the perfect union, consisting of love, respect, knowledge of each other and themselves – and incidentally financial security. Weaker answers tended to be limited in the examples that they chose and over-general in their exploration of them.

Question 27

There were some amusing impersonations of Charlotte waiting for Elizabeth. Many caught her quiet pragmatism and her ability to send Mr Collins into the garden when she wanted to have a little peace. Her gratitude for the security that has been granted her was often clearly conveyed, and, in the best answers, sometimes the mask was allowed to slip and she revealed her dislike of her husband and his patroness.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text was rarely answered on, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. They tended to fare best on **Question 29**, which goes to the heart of the novel, and produced some wide-ranging and detailed discussions. There were very few attempts to empathise with Father Gilligan in **Question 30**.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31-33

There were very few responses to this text. Candidates seemed to find the extract in **Question 31** approachable, though the main shortcoming was to stop before the material on India. So there was plenty of material on 'frustration with his wife' but little on 'with life in India'. There were far too few responses to the other questions to make general comment appropriate.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was a very popular text. Responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the tensions and also a sense of context and of implications for the future. Weaker answers picked out only a few details from the passage and sometimes digressed into assertions about Hardy's unhappy marriage and how this is reflected in the relationship between Bathsheba and Troy.

Question 35

Many excellent answers were seen on this task. Such answers gave a balanced and sympathetic and thoughtful response supported by well selected details. In some Centres, Boldwood was given a very hard time, almost all of the candidates thinking he deserved what happened to him.

Question 36

This was a less popular question, possibly because candidates found a voice for Gabriel a little elusive, but there were some very good answers which used the text very efficiently and captured quite a few echoes.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Questions 37-39

Only a few candidates had studied this text. They fared reasonably well with the passage-based **Question 37**. It required some degree of back-reference and they showed good knowledge of the novel on the whole and seemed to enjoy pointing out why Matenge got his just desserts. Very few were able to do more than narrate the story of Makhaya and Paulina; much more focus on the 'how?' was required. There were very few attempts to create a voice for Gilbert in **Question 39**.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

This extract was central to the story and candidates explored it in detail and with understanding. The best answers understood the failed hopes and potential represented by Ethan's study and the symbolism of the piece of paper and cushion. They saw that the hopelessness of his life derives from his own inadequacies as well as from his restricted surroundings and his awful wife.

Question 41

Some candidates tended to write about Ethan's specific difficulties here, but most had a detailed knowledge of the climate, the poverty and the loneliness of Starkfield. Weaker answers relied on general assertion

Question 42

Many candidates really went to town on Zeena, producing some of the best empathic responses on the paper. Her voice was replicated very accurately with just the right note of querulousness and maliciousness.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 43

This extract seemed very accessible and candidates usually caught the changing and contrasting emotions of Mr Wills and also those of the narrator. Better answers explored the violence of the language showing how fearsome Mr Wills is to the narrator and his father ('insane with anger', 'his teeth gripped over his lower lip') and how this contrasts so dramatically with his collapse into tears. They also commented on the effect on the narrator and on his changed perception of Mr Wills and also on his guilt in the realisation of the significance of what he had thought was merely a prank. Answers were differentiated by the extent to which they focused on the word 'dramatic'.

Question 44

Mrs Croft was the most popular of the characters but all answers showed sound knowledge of the stories even if there was little response to why the character chosen was particularly memorable.

Question 45

There were some very successful answers on John in *The Yellow Wallpaper* capturing his slightly arrogant but despairing attitude towards his wife in a suitably doctorly voice.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12

Paper 12 (Open Books)

General comments

Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to the Shakespeare passages.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely from the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambment and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed.

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This was the most popular of the three Ayckbourn questions. Many caught the absurdity and the cross purposes of Jack and Anita, the farcical quality of Giorgio hiding in the wardrobe, and the sharpness of her responses. What is more, in the best answers there was a clear sense of dramatic technique at work.

Question 2

There were so very few responses to this question that general comment is not appropriate.

Question 3

Most candidates wrote fairly successfully as Jack, though weaker answers failed to capture all the detail that is indicated by Ayckbourn. More successful one showed a good understanding of him and there was much foreshadowing of what he was about to find out. Candidates clearly understood the ironies. The voice seemed reasonably easy to assume.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

Only a small number of Centres offered this text. Candidates usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and they responded in detail to the extract.

Question 5

Overall, this was not quite as successfully attempted as Question 4. Most, however, found plenty of detail to draw on and wrote with insight and understanding.

Question 6

The small number of candidates tackling this empathic task had internalised Doris's problems and wrote convincingly in her voice.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. Most candidates were able to identify the tensions and hatreds but there was a tendency to rely on stage directions rather than examine the scene as drama.

Question 8

This was a popular question which drew out some very sympathetic responses to Elizabeth seeing her as 'a loyal and loving wife' though the best answers showed why a less complimentary view of her might be taken. There were some very well argued and supported answers.



Question 9

This was not a particularly popular question as candidates seemed to have a less than clear view of the character. There was some confusion between Parris, Hale and Danforth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. It is a central moment in the play and a very dramatic one and good answers explored it in detail, analysing the language and seeing the subtleties. Weaker answers merely told the story or paraphrased, not homing in on and analysing the detail.

Question 11

Weaker answers to this question produced flat character sketches. Though candidates knew a lot about Benedick, unless they focused on the key words here 'loveable' and 'hero', both requiring strong personal response, they were unlikely to do well.

Question 12

Those who got the character and the time right did well. Too many candidates made him too and also in possession of knowledge of events that had not yet happened. A surprising number did not refer to Dogberry and the Watch.

Richard III

Question 13

This question may have deterred less confident candidates since it is directed to a specific characteristic of the writing, but those who attempted it had no difficulty in identifying the difference between the surface dialogue and what is really going on. Richard and Buckingham are both acting parts to the Mayor and ultimately to each other. With the benefit of hindsight, another layer of irony emerges.

Question 14

Examiners reported that generally this question was not answered well, possibly because candidates did not have sufficient detailed knowledge of the two characters. Some candidates ignored Hastings altogether.

Question 15

Candidates took on the role of Clarence with some relish showing how little understanding he has of his brothers and making some deliciously ironic observations. Though Clarence does not have a particularly distinctive voice in the play they were generally able to create the right notes of outrage and disappointment as well as admiration for Richard; some did this very well.

Journey's End

Question 16

Some candidates focused more on the printed word (i.e. the stage directions as written) rather than on the highly dramatic stage action and its likely effect on the audience, but there were some very engaged and sensitive responses to the situation.

Question 17

This was a less popular question on the text, but there were some good balanced responses showing a sound understanding of the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh.

Question 18

Many candidates wrote in a suitable voice for Raleigh but seemed unsure as to whether or not he was angry about Stanhope's seizure of his letter. The best answers showed an awareness of the ironies of the situation.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves from Part 3

Question 19

This was an extremely popular question and the poem was well understood, though here was a prime example of many candidates being diverted into assertions about the unhappiness of Hardy's marriage instead of focusing on the words of the poem. The best answers responded extremely sensitively to the bleakness of the imagery and to the music of the words.

Questions 20 and 21

These questions were answered by only a few candidates. *On The Grasshopper and the Cricket* was perhaps the most usual choice, though candidates found it difficult to focus on the 'delight in nature' part of the question and merely offloaded more general learnt interpretations.

John Keats: Poems

Question 22

This question was very popular and did not seem to present any particular difficulties to those who attempted it. Most candidates were able to comment on the sounds and silences, on the 'sleeping dragons' and on the ghostly imagery in stanza 41. The better answers picked up the deathly allusions in the final stanza in particular.

Question 23

Ode on Melancholy was quite well understood, though candidates had difficulty in making more than one general point that pleasure and pain are inextricably linked. As always, they fared best when they focused on the quality of the imagery and there were some superb responses showing full engagement with the words and the feelings – with the poetry itself.

Question 24

This was not such a popular question, but the poem was generally well known and the knight's story sympathetically discussed.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was by far the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some highly accomplished answers. Candidates gave lively responses to the ridiculousness of Mr Collins' proposal, the more sophisticated also seeing the nastiness of his veiled comments about the entailment. The best answers commented on the way in which Austen makes us empathise with Elizabeth and on the unwitting self-ridicule of some of Collins's assertions ('Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!)). Many answers showed excellent appreciation of the writer's technique.



Question 26

This proved far less popular than Question 25. Weaker candidates merely offloaded 'my Elizabeth Bennet essay', while more successful ones focused on the phrase 'appealing and lively' and constructed an argument around it.

Question 27

There were some very convincing Mr Bennets, capturing just the right amount of pride in his two favourite daughters and exasperation with his wife and the younger ones in a suitable wry and humorous tone, but there were quite a few overly sentimental responses showing very little appreciation of the character. It was also surprising that at this particular moment many answers made no reference to the shame over Lydia and gratitude to Darcy.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text studied in very few Centres, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. The passage-based **Question 28** was usually well answered as was the empathic **Question 30**, though on the surface it might have appeared a more demanding task. **Question 29** produced the best answers with candidates writing well about Jimmy's dysfunctional family and the causes of his (at times appalling) behaviour.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31

The questions on this text were popular, though in response to this question a significant number of candidates contented themselves with a run-through of the passage. Tighter focus on the phrase 'boredom and frustrations' was needed and closer examination of the words; there is some extremely sensuous writing in the extract, particularly in the first paragraph: 'there was no breeze: it was hot, the air hung upon them like a damp towel, gagging him...'

Question 32

Many candidates did little more than identify the distractions faced by Suno. Most responses were very general nature and did not address the question with any specificity.

Question 33

This produced answers of varying quality: while many caught the artist's mixture of desperation and annoyance well, others used the task as a mouthpiece for thinly veiled regurgitation of plot.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was another very popular text and responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the character of Troy and the way in which he manipulates the helpless Bathsheba here.

Question 35

This question required candidates to range widely through the novel and the amount of textual knowledge that they brought to it was very impressive. The phrasing of this type of question gave a clear structure for their arguments and there were some very balanced and thoughtful responses. As ever, answers which merely trotted out a character sketch of Bathsheba were not very successful.



Question 36

This was a less popular question, though many candidates managed to capture Boldwood's complex feelings and the sense of a man 'on the edge' here through their own use of language

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This was the least popular of the three questions. Candidates who chose this question performed reasonably well, though the key word in the question 'sad' was sometimes not adequately addressed.

Question 38

This question elicited some good responses as candidates recognised the crucial role that women played in tending to crops and live-stock in an assiduous and dependable way.

Question 39

Sensitive answers captured Paulina's disheartened mood as she worries that her dream of finding a husband with a man she is clearly taken with may not be fulfilled.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Those who chose the passage-based question had some difficulty in dealing with the key words 'intriguing' and 'gripping'. A full knowledge of the novel was required in order to show the appropriateness of these two concepts.

Question 41

Very few attempted this. Answers were not impressive as focused details in support were often lacking.

Question 42

Most opting for this task made a very creditable attempt at Ethan, as they incorporated into their portrayal the stark contrast of the early flush of marriage with the later reality as Zeena turns into something of a dragon.

from Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

Most answers responded sensitively to La Guma's presentation of violence and racism, and many mined the passage well in terms of language and method.

Question 44

Some candidates struggled to go beyond general and vague observations here and there was a tendency to comment on contemporary events rather than on the story. The word 'striking' should have directed them to the quality of the description and the language, and a sound approach would have been to select a few relevant parts of the story and to have commented on them in detail.

Question 45

This was generally handled competently, though most candidates restricted themselves to a diatribe against the boy. It was surprising how many did not refer to her lost love or try to probe the reasons for the violence of her reactions against the boy.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/02
Coursework

General comments

As in previous sessions, all Centres entering this component will receive a short report on their own submission and administration.

There was a significant increase in the number of Centres opting for coursework and in the great majority of cases internal administration and moderation of the coursework had been sound. The overwhelming majority of the work submitted was evidence of how much effort candidates had put into preparing their folders. Once again Moderators read a number of truly outstanding assignments in which candidates showed a quite marvellous engagement with the text they had been reading and the confidence to communicate unselfconsciously the effect it had had on them. There was actually very little work which suggested that the candidates had not really tried to produce a folder which would do justice to their abilities.

Centres are reminded of the advice in the syllabus booklet: *'Assignments should be between 600 and 1000 words. This is a guideline. Candidates must not confuse length with quality. Although no assignment is penalised per se because of its length, assignments significantly under or over this word count guidance may be self-penalising.'*

There were a very few instances of Centres not paying sufficient attention to the requirements for work in a folder, which are set out in the syllabus. These mainly involved cases of candidates writing on a single poem or short story for an assignment despite the requirement that a minimum of two should feature.

Some external Moderators noted the variability of standard of annotation between Centres and even between sets within a Centre. Occasionally annotation was sparse and cursory, occasionally it was non-existent. Moderators noted that sometimes an assignment's quite major failures of understanding were not remarked upon. To reiterate a point made in previous sessions: Teacher annotation is important on two levels. Firstly, annotation is immensely helpful to external Moderators in gauging whether there is a meeting of minds regarding the quality of work and allows Centres the chance of persuading external Moderators to see things from their point of view. Secondly, annotation effectively means that the teacher is validating the work as the candidate's own.

There was some evidence of candidates being over-rewarded for displaying knowledge of technical and at times abstruse terminology at the expense of demonstrating personal engagement with the text. No reward goes to the display of this kind of knowledge *per se*. The key criterion for reward is based on the candidate showing response to literary effect and exploring how the writer achieves that. That in turn can best be communicated if the candidate is encouraged to demonstrate insight and communicate delight and excitement. That distinguishes the best IGCSE literature coursework.

Moderators noted some work which was clearly the product of over-rigid preparation within the Centre which as a result gives little scope for personal response. On such occasions a Moderator would read assignment after assignment on the same task in which the structure and language was written as if from a template. Such an approach hardly fulfils the broader aims of coursework which is to encourage wider reading and to give some freedom to the candidate to follow their own line. Of course, the teacher's input is likely to be crucial but in instances like this it might be doubted whether there is much candidate input at all.

In the rare cases where significant scaling downwards of marks was required, it was usually because candidates, in answering the question set, had no opportunity to satisfy some of the assessment criteria for the higher grades. Encouraging candidates to achieve all they might in their assignments makes the appropriate framing of assignments crucial. For the highest reward candidates need to show the ability to probe literary language, and yet external Moderators encountered some instances of tasks providing no such explicit requirement. Such assignments asked candidates simply to show basic understanding of theme and character, in the worst instances doing no more than inviting simple narrative. The framing of some

comparative tasks in poetry assignments tended to drive candidates away from detailed engagement with poetic language towards the pedestrian stating of the obvious connections between poems' content. Very occasionally, tasks gave little opportunity to meet any of the assessment criteria. Empathic tasks which invited a creative response with the text simply as starting point came into this category. An empathic task must be founded firmly in the detail of the text, its characters and themes, and give multiple opportunity to enter the imaginative world of the text's language. It is very difficult to do this in regard to a poem since here the response to the detail of the language is everything. For instance, the invitation to write a story arising out of a poem can afford little evidence of engagement with the poem's language. For guidance on suitable task setting one can do worse than look at the form questions take in the examination paper. There it will be noticed that empathic tasks are never set on poetry. For further advice Centres are referred to the Coursework Training Handbook available from CIE Publications.

Finally a word needs to be said about the way Centres carried out the internal moderation and presented the folders. In places, there is still some room for improvement. This relates in particular to annotation, as mentioned above, and to the filling in of the Candidate Record Card. Moderators still came across irrelevant character references under Teacher Comments on the latter when what is required for external moderation purposes is comment on how the teacher thinks the folder satisfies all, some, or few of the assessment criteria. There were cases of comments so brief as to be useless as a guide and sometimes they were barely legible. Fortunately, such shortcomings were very rare. Otherwise, administration was generally excellent. There were no instances where the order of merit was found to be questionable, and significant scaling adjustments were rarely needed. All of this was a tribute to the care taken by Centres in fulfilling their professional duty and they are to be congratulated.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31
Unseen (Alternative to
Coursework)

General comments

Examiners were delighted with the range of responses by the very diverse candidature of this paper to the two unseen texts. Poetry and Prose questions present candidates with different kinds of challenge, and the more successful candidates took time to make a decision about which questions should best suit their individual skills. Centres should encourage candidates to make their own choice, which is easier if they have had plenty of practice. The availability of past papers from Teacher Support should further help Centres to prepare candidates for the new format of the paper, and the standardised format of question papers and mark schemes. A revised mark scheme this summer allowed further discrimination between candidates at the higher end of the mark range. Examiners were pleased to see many higher band responses, and the number of candidates who found it very difficult to shape a coherent personal or literary response was relatively low.

Teachers are reminded that there are some small changes for the exam from year 2011 to the time allocation for the paper, and to the overall weighting of this component, as detailed in the 2011 Syllabus. An important issues for Centres to address in the context of the slightly reduced time allocated to the paper next year will be the use of reading time. There are some candidates who disadvantage themselves by the construction of whole draft answers, which are often then copied word for word, or leave them with little time for their final response. However, a more common problem is the response which is far too long and repetitive. Well-constructed answers, focused on the stem question and often making effective use of the bullet points, are much more successful than those which shape a narrative which only gradually comes towards interpretative judgment. Such answers need not be longer than about three sides of A4 paper. A degree of open-minded exploration is encouraged by the paper, and essential when dealing with complex texts, and candidates are understandably reluctant to commit themselves to a reading of an ambiguous text which might be 'wrong'. However, literary response does need a clear sense of direction, good paragraphing and a judicious blend of personal engagement and critical analysis. Candidates would achieve this more easily, and would be less likely to misinterpret aspects of the text, if they genuinely spent 15 to 20 minutes annotating the question paper and constructing a plan before beginning their final response. A good starting point would be to divide each text into four or five sections in order to perceive how it is structured and developed, and to begin writing only once the relationship between each part of the text and its overall meaning is understood. The question and bullets will usually help here. While it is always tempting to try to construct a narrative, and to say what the text is 'about', poetry often resists the notion of clear narrative meaning; poets write lyrically because they want to explore ambiguous emotions. Inevitably when selecting prose extracts, narrative is not the primary concern: there are very few complete prose texts short enough and rich enough to make up a whole question. The setter's interest is therefore likely to be in description, dialogue, characterisation, narrative voice, tone and mood. The prose passage may well be selected from a work of literary non-fiction rather than a novel or a short story. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the focus of the question will always be on the impact of the writing rather than the content, and that candidates need to read the prose as literature, consciously crafted by the writer for a particular range of effects on the reader.

It is easier when writing about a short and complex poem to avoid the problems of paraphrase and rewriting of the original which sometimes hold back candidates from producing strong responses to prose. However, poetry can have other dangers: it is an elusive form of expression, and candidates are much more likely to succeed if they work from the text outwards, exploring the implications of the poet's choice of diction and imagery, instead of trying to impose a meaning and bending the text to fit that reading. This June there were many candidates attempting to 'crack the code' of the poem by finding a hidden or concealed narrative. Poems in fact often owe their success to hinting and suggesting at such a narrative but leaving the readers to shape their own response to the emotional world that the poem draws them into. Candidates who identify more readily with narrative than emotional or lyrical expression might have had greater success with the prose. Ambivalence of feeling is less likely to be embedded in the structure of prose, which makes it a little

easier to construct an answer. However, what distinguishes good answers to the prose question is how precisely candidates can identify similarly literary questions about tone and impact, and the degree to which they can be answered by close reading of the language of the text.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

'When We Two Parted' was the more popular choice in this paper. Byron's lyric engages with feelings of love, rejection, and bitterness which clearly had an appeal for the candidates. However, Byron's biographers and scholars continue to disagree about exactly when the poem was written and to whom it is addressed, and its interest lies as much in what is left unsaid as in what is explicit. It is important to remember that Examiners assess the quality of the candidates' engagement with literature rather than the conclusion they come to, so candidates are free to make their own judgements about the kind of relationship portrayed in the poem. When the question refers to 'the poet', it means the conventional lyrical persona, not the writer of the poem: in Byron's case, he is self-consciously constructing a lyrical voice for the unhappy lover addressing his beloved in ways calculated to make her feel his bitterness and regret. While most candidates picked up a sense of mourning in the poem, fewer felt that the love affair itself might be something he regrets, while nevertheless astutely picking up just how strongly his lingering and mixed emotions towards the beloved are expressed. Many candidates saw the person addressed as the poet's wife and many thought that the lover had literally died, and found it hard to disentangle what was descriptive and what was figurative. The bullet points attempted to take candidates through different stages of the implied narrative – a morning parting of the ways, his reaction when he hears her name now, and his speculation about what he might feel in the future – and careful attention to these, and to the glosses, ought to have helped candidates overcome any barriers presented by a nineteenth-century text. However, there were other difficulties, not least with the phrase 'light is thy fame' which prompted some candidates to imagine her basking in the bright in bright flashlights of modern-day celebrity, instead of being the victim of gossip. Candidates did better with the phrase 'share in its shame', with an understanding of the embarrassment and humiliation of a relationship the poet regrets.

As the emotions of the poem are so mixed, it was quite valid for candidates to view the phrase 'Half broken-hearted' in a variety of ways. The description in the first stanza does imply a one-sided relationship, but it also suggests that it was one the poet always felt ambivalent about. The imagery of coldness suggests a lack of passion, and imagery of death and ghostliness does haunt the entire poem. It is the death of a relationship, rather than the death of the beloved, which is the subject of the text. As one candidate put it: 'The loss of colour in her cheeks shows the reader that the poet feels his lover lost her passion and flush of love, but it also ascribes to her an ethereal beauty as though she had become dead to him, a ghost'. This was a perceptive way to handle the Gothic imagery embedded in the text, with the notion of a lover haunted by feelings he cannot entirely lay to rest.

Relatively few candidates commented effectively on the rhythm of the text: the rhythmic variations are much more interesting than the base rhythm and rhyme. Stronger candidates heard the stresses placed on 'Pale' at the beginning of line 5, 'cold' at the end and 'Colder' at the beginning of line 6, and noted similar inversions in the last two stanzas. At times the incantatory rhythm sounds close to a curse! Stronger candidates embedded comment on rhythm and form within their answers instead of adding a separate paragraph. A rich response to sounds, imagery and the tone of address was rewarded, even when candidates came up with unusual interpretations. More successful candidates saw that there was something 'secret' or even forbidden about the love portrayed, and that this lyric might be a way of expressing unspoken emotions or unfinished feelings. On the whole, however, everyone found something to say – extent of clarity of exposition, and ability to engage deeper metaphorical meaning allowed Examiners to discriminate across the bands. Many candidates understood and also appreciated the emotion of the situation, the sadness of parting, the grief of betrayal, the pain of the need to hide emotion, many finding links with their own lives and experience.

Capable candidates commented on the use of the past tense in 'Why wert thou so dear?' They were also struck by the repetition of 'long' and how this reinforced the obsessive tone of the poem. A few were also able to see how the stress on those words affected the rhythm of the line, and some noticed the incongruity of the word 'rue' in what could otherwise have been a clichéd love statement. Close attention to language allowed the first two bullet points to be addressed effectively. The third bullet point in this type of question usually invites an evaluative judgment on the text as a whole. Here, appreciation of the last stanza was significant as it explains why so much of the poem voices an unexpressed 'silence' and makes the bitterness of her 'deception' explicit. Almost all candidates appreciated the circularity of emotions expressed through

the repetition in the final line of the sentiments and wordless grief of the second line. Most felt the poet's feelings had not changed, or, in the contemporary vernacular, that he had failed to 'move on'. However, there were also interesting interpretations of ways in which this expression of 'silence and tears' might show a change over time and even exact a form of revenge!

The remarkable ingenuity, attention to detail and sensitivity to tone which good candidates brought to this poem made many scripts a real pleasure to read.

Question 2

There were many high quality responses to this extract. Less able candidates tended to stick diligently to the bullet points and used them well to structure their responses. More able candidates were able to synthesise their ideas and write engagingly about the workings of a child's imagination and the almost disappointing journey towards arrival at adulthood. Some responses were quite poignant as they described the lost domain of childhood innocence and myth and the advent of the cold and rational adult world of fact. Bruce Chatwin's prose famously combines fact and myth and this opening to *In Patagonia* is an implicit justification of his method, proving that both can be equally persistent and powerful when shaped by a creative imaginative response.

It was especially important to pay attention to key words in the stem question, which candidates should be encouraged to identify and highlight or underline. While the bullet points assist the candidate in the construction of a response to the shape of the text, the key words are 'How' and 'changing': for stronger candidates the emphasis was initially on the way in which the writer's language recreated the viewpoint of the young boy and his imaginative and fantastic response to the stories he was told by his family. They then analysed ways in which he expresses the gradual development of the less colourful but more precise world of adult fact. Responses generally demonstrated some engagement (sometimes implicit) with the imagination of the young boy and the language chosen to express it. Not all defined that a change in attitude was brought about by the classroom incident, but put it down (where they defined it) to growing up. A few astute candidates responded to qualities such as irony and humour; many settled for generalised comments which veered more towards comment on the content rather than the language as such, or made generalised comments on the language – while some reward might be merited, it was not likely to put them into the top bands. The best saw that the boy was determined to prove his teacher wrong and discover the real facts, and that while the 'piece of brontosaurus' proves to be a fiction, the facts behind it remain compelling and of interest. Some used the gloss to realise that there was still enough glamour in the 'skin and bones' of the last paragraph to inspire the narrator to set off on his travels, and interest the reader in his book!

It is important to see that this is the way literary non-fiction works: the writing recreates the boy's development and does not simply tell a story. Instead it encourages us to look, with humour and irony, at how stories and myths are created and relate this to the inquisitive nature of the boy. The writing recreates the boy's imaginative projection of his own desire for adventure (and his fears) and later his determination to discover the truth and overcome his shame. If candidates instead only explored *what* the different stories and accounts were, as distinct from *how* the writer uses them to show the advancement of the boy's understanding, they were unlikely to access the higher marks.

Good answers explored the image of the 'brontosaurus' with its 'claws and fangs and a malicious green light in its eyes', crashing through the boy's bedroom in his waking dreams. They sometimes went on to contrast this with the science teacher's image of the reptile 'placidly eating weed in a lake' later in the passage, finding humour as well as bathos here. Some saw the factual improbability of the story of its preservation, as well as the unlikely myth about its destruction. There were good responses to the detail with which the boy in his imagination creates a heroic image of 'Charley Milward the Sailor' derived from Boys' Own stories. Only a few picked up the ironically self-mocking humour of the one-line paragraph 'Fortunately cousin Charley had posted a scrap to my grandmother'.

Some took the stories rather literally or were over-critical of the boy's family for lying to him, when the passage makes it clear how much they fed his imagination and his interest in the stories behind the cabinet of curiosities in his grandmother's house. However, all candidates seemed to enjoy the idea of 'sorting the story out' and getting to the facts. Stronger responses saw that although the truth was prosaic in comparison with childish fantasy it was not uninteresting, and that the writer's more adult style expresses that succinctly. Many felt that he simply lost interest in the 'brontosaurus' once it had been identified as a mere mylodon, whereas the best were able to hear the adult voice at work behind the descriptions of the child's viewpoint, sustaining and transforming the nature of the reader's interest. Good answers engaged with ways in which the writer portrays the difference between the world of the child and the realities of adult life. One candidate

put this especially memorably: 'we all have epiphanies forced upon us that will darken and foreshadow our once merry lives. Welcome to adulthood, brontosaurus boy.'

It is proof of the power and importance of good literature that it communicates so powerfully across different cultures and speaks to our personal experience. These questions succeeded in drawing interesting responses from candidates of all abilities. Candidates responded imaginatively and with a sense of recognition notwithstanding their own very different backgrounds, and invariably were able to find something to connect with in their chosen text.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Unseen (Alternative to
Coursework)

General comments

Examiners were pleased with the range of responses by the very diverse candidature of this paper to the two unseen texts. Poetry and Prose questions present candidates with different kinds of challenge, and the more successful candidates took time to make a decision about which questions should best suit their individual skills. Centres should encourage candidates to make their own choice, which is easier if they have had plenty of practice. The availability of past papers from Teacher Support should further help Centres to prepare candidates for the new format of the paper, and the standardised format of question papers and mark schemes. A revised mark scheme this summer allowed further discrimination between candidates at the higher end of the mark range. Examiners were pleased to see many higher band responses, and the number of candidates who found it very difficult to shape a coherent personal or literary response was relatively low.

Teachers are reminded that there are some small changes for the exam from year 2011 to the time allocation for the paper, and to the overall weighting of this component, as detailed in the 2011 Syllabus. An important issues for Centres to address in the context of the slightly reduced time allocated to the paper next year will be the use of reading time. There are some candidates who disadvantage themselves by the construction of whole draft answers, which are often then copied word for word, or leave them with little time for their final response. However, a more common problem is the response which is far too long and repetitive. Well-constructed answers, focused on the stem question and often making effective use of the bullet points, are much more successful than those which shape a narrative which only gradually comes towards interpretative judgment. Such answers need not be longer than about three sides of A4 paper. A degree of open-minded exploration is encouraged by the paper, and essential when dealing with complex texts, and candidates are understandably reluctant to commit themselves to a reading of an ambiguous text which might be 'wrong'. However, literary response does need a clear sense of direction, good paragraphing and a judicious blend of personal engagement and critical analysis. Candidates would achieve this more easily, and would be less likely to misinterpret aspects of the text, if they genuinely spent 15 to 20 minutes annotating the question paper and constructing a plan before beginning their final response. A good starting point would be to divide each text into four or five sections in order to perceive how it is structured and developed, and to begin writing only once the relationship between each part of the text and its overall meaning is understood. The question and bullets will usually help here. While it is always tempting to try to construct a narrative, and to say what the text is 'about', poetry often resists the notion of clear narrative meaning; poets write lyrically because they want to explore ambiguous emotions. Inevitably when selecting prose extracts, narrative is not the primary concern: there are very few complete prose texts short enough and rich enough to make up a whole question. The setter's interest is therefore likely to be in description, dialogue, characterisation, narrative voice, tone and mood. The prose passage may well be selected from a work of literary non-fiction rather than a novel or a short story. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the focus of the question will always be on the impact of the writing rather than the content, and that candidates need to read the prose as literature, consciously crafted by the writer for a particular range of effects on the reader.

It is easier when writing about a short and complex poem to avoid the problems of paraphrase and rewriting of the original which sometimes hold back candidates from producing strong responses to prose. However, poetry can have other dangers: it is an elusive form of expression, and candidates are much more likely to succeed if they work from the text outwards, exploring the implications of the poet's choice of diction and imagery, instead of trying to impose a meaning and bending the text to fit that reading. This June there were many candidates attempting to 'crack the code' of the poem by finding a hidden or concealed narrative. Poems in fact often owe their success to hinting and suggesting at such a narrative but leaving the readers to shape their own response to the emotional world that the poem draws them into. Candidates who identify more readily with narrative than emotional or lyrical expression might have had greater success with the prose. Ambivalence of feeling is less likely to be embedded in the structure of prose, which makes it a little

easier to construct an answer. However, what distinguishes good answers to the prose question is how precisely candidates can identify similarly literary questions about tone and impact, and the degree to which they can be answered by close reading of the language of the text.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Although relatively short, 'Emergency Kit' is an elusive and ambiguous poem. Candidates found it difficult to shape an overview of the speaker's 'approach to life's challenges' and many found it difficult to distinguish between the voice of the speaker and any possible implied criticism of him by the poet. Missing the poem's possible ironies, they tended to shape a personal response to the speaker's attitude to life, either approving of his exuberance and social mobility or criticising him for undue optimism and confidence, or pessimism and cowardice. These personal responses are valid, especially if grounded in some thoroughness of analysis of the language and images the speaker uses. However, this was a good example of a text which could be better understood through application of the bullet points. These encouraged candidates to work their way outwards towards an evaluative answer to the stem question through a close look at the poem's 'images'.

Good candidates realised that the poem is constructed around a metaphorical journey and that each stage of the journey needed to be unravelled. The different parts of the kit allowed them to spend time considering the implications of each metaphor. Any such engagement was rewarded, even when interpretations differed considerably. The 'laughter box' intrigued candidates: some saw it as a way of overcoming bullying or mockery by joining in or getting the last laugh, although some saw the mechanical nature of such laughter as implicit criticism of its artificiality. Many noticed the independence of the speaker: while some saw this as confidence, others read him as an outsider, or someone who is holding his true personality back: 'I don't want to surrender all I have.'

Some read the references to forest and tribes rather literally. A surprising number were only able to see the 'towering company' of men or trees as some sort of corporation based in a tower block. This could be made into an interesting comment on the pressure of conformity, but the success of the images in this stanza lies in their universality and curious lack of specificity. The speaker wants to strut with the tallest, but retract his artificial legs in places where the tall were sacrificed to the gods. Some interestingly saw this as his unwillingness to stand up and be counted, or take real responsibility for his pretensions. Others applauded his conformity to society's norms. One or two wrote that the image of a moving stump is rather poignant: it suggests his adaptability, but it also suggests that he cannot grow naturally, and that some part of his identity has been lopped off. Curiously, they found it easier to understand why he might want to be artificially taller and not wish to be looked down on than why he might sometimes need to 'collapse the long legs' in order to survive.

Candidates enjoyed speculating about the speaker's lifesaver: were these his friends or his attitude, or something he was keeping in reserve? Stronger answers were ones which revelled in these questions and mysteries and did not strive too hard for certainty. Some felt that the idea of having this 'installed' in his body also made him more machine than man. Candidates had difficulty in correctly identifying the lines which allude to tribal superstitions about witches and 'offerings', although they could appreciate their figurative meaning. This was probably just as well, as the implications of 'evil' and the symbolism of the 'snake from nowhere' were sometimes a distraction for those who read too literally. Better answers focused on the aggression of the speaker here: he seems to get his retaliation in first, in a poisonous form, rather than passively accept being hunted down.

The best answers really needed to make sense of the final four lines, which are highly ambiguous. Many candidates identified the confident way in which the speaker addresses and involves the reader of the poem, inviting us to share his response to life. They were rightly disturbed by the contrast between this outward exuberance about a 'party' and 'unending dream' and the defensiveness of wearing a sponge in your tongue to avoid losing control. Only the very best really explored the implications of the final line: is the speaker right to think that others are out to cheat him, or is he really cheating himself of the opportunity to genuinely have a life? The poem is poised between two readings, and allows readers to make their choice, just as the speaker has done. What was exciting for Examiners was to read the very different personal responses possible to this elusive but interesting text, even among candidates from the same Centre. They often connected the poem's images of life as stalking or being stalked through a jungle or a laughing party to their own experiences and to life at school or in community. These were often powerful personal responses when connected to the language and expression of the text. Many recognised that the text is designed to be read in more than one way. The best also linked the poem to its title and saw the poem as a response to living in

difficult times and difficult places, seeing its applicability to a range of difficult cultural situations. They explored underlying ideas about identity and conformity, and where individual freedom lay within that spectrum. Such answers showed depth of commitment and personal engagement as well as enthusiasm.

Question 2

It was a real pleasure for Examiners to see how skilfully candidates from a variety of cultural backgrounds explored the humour and even the satire implicit in this passage. It provided further proof of the universality of the best literature texts; hence a text grounded in the language and context of (in this case) nineteenth-century England can have an appeal to young readers today in different parts of the world. Indeed, many were very quick to pick up the extract's mockery of the pretensions, incompetence, corruption and venality of quasi-governmental institutions, and even related this to their own lives or cultures. The question and bullet points clearly helped candidates not just to see what is going on, but also to respond to language and the way it guides the reader's response. They were encouraged to produce a shaped answer exploring the significance and implications of description and dialogue, how our sympathies are shaped by characterisation and the overall purpose of the passages. Unsurprisingly, the last bullet point caused most difficulty: many interpreted Barnacle Junior or Clennam as 'angry' rather than the author, and had difficulty identifying the narrator's voice and bias. The ones who did picked up sarcasm and implication from the descriptive passages and realised that 'the misguided young Barnacle' is purposely made ridiculous, although few saw the symbolic resonance in the fact that he has made himself temporarily blind to circumstance and impaired his vision in a vain and pretentious attempt to appear more mature and stately than he really is.

Some had difficulty timing their responses and never really moved beyond the description to explore the dynamics of the dialogue. Some struggled to locate an authorial voice at all, and contented themselves with a narrative response, with a few comments on character. Stronger answers dealt with characterisation, instead of treating Barnacle Junior and Clennam as real people, and appreciated why the reader is encouraged to side with the latter. Most were able to write effectively about the rudeness of being kept waiting 'where the department seemed to keep its wind', the nepotism of the Barnacles, and how Barnacle Junior struggles to fill his father's position as much as he struggles with his eyeglass.

There was particularly sensitive close analysis of what might be implied by the handsome furniture of the office (not a lot of work done, and the comforts supplied by the taxpayer) with much more emphasis on 'stately suggestions' than actually doing anything with the mass of paperwork. One or two commented on the expensive implications of the heavy leather-bound paternalistic office, with its careless approach to filing. Similarly candidates enjoyed the descriptions of young Barnacle, suggesting that he was a young bird unlikely to take wing and fly without the support of his father, and that his efforts to look mature and superior only made him more frightened at the prospect of losing face. This showed how good descriptive writing really allows plenty of scope for detailed interpretation. Stronger candidates were able to link these implications to the attack made by the whole text on the incompetence and corruption of the department. They realised that it was easy to see why nothing actually got done, and appreciated that Clennam only gets Barnacle's address because his son makes a mistake, distracted by his problems with his monocle, and literally 'turns a blind eye' to what he has done.

Not all candidates had the deductive ability or confidence to get so far. What was pleasing, however, was to see how many took on the difficult task of explaining what made the passage funny, and the ways in which they made it clear that they had enjoyed the writing. Many appreciated the more sober and understated presence of Arthur Clennam and commented on the importance of the contrast his polite persistence presents to the more colourful and caricatured character he encounters. Candidates enjoyed detailing the imperfections of both the Circumlocution Office and Barnacle Junior, and what was implied as well as made explicit by the visual impression we are given of each of them. They appreciated the determination and intelligence of Clennam's responses in the dialogue, while also enjoying the comedy of the falling eyeglass, and the way it punctuates the pretensions of office. Many could therefore identify the satirical implications of the text, even if they did not use that exact critical term. Many saw the piece as an attack on bureaucracy and the rudeness of officialdom and even suggested that such attacks were still needed today. These responses were highly enjoyable to read, as were scripts which made an individual response to the comedy both of character and situation. Some made enjoyable comment on the aptness of the name 'Barnacle' and the best commented on the writer's use of parenthesis to inject an authorial voice and make his own allegiances clear.

It is proof of the power and importance of good literature that it communicates so powerfully across different cultures and speaks to our personal experience. These questions succeeded in drawing interesting responses from candidates of all abilities. Candidates responded imaginatively and with a sense of

recognition notwithstanding their own very different backgrounds, and invariably were able to find something to connect with in their chosen text.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41
Paper 41 (Closed Books)

General comments

There was a considerable increase in the entry for the paper this session, and Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to **Questions 7 and 13**.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely from the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambement and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed. One reported: 'I do not think I saw one candidate who used the word 'audience' (it was always 'reader') and of the 150 essays I marked on Richard III's soliloquy only one candidate mentioned (and that in passing) that the audience would be able to see Richard's deformity.'

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This text had clearly been much enjoyed. It is often difficult to explain why something is funny but most candidates attacked the question with relish and showed real understanding of the incongruities and contrasts in the situation, commenting on Jack's naiveté and attempts to take a moral stand compared with the cheerful immorality and criminality of the rest of the family. The best answers commented in detail on the writing, for instance on the sinister sub-text to Orlando's comments about insurance and on his gesticulations. They also saw the inappropriateness of his showing round of the family photographs. Weaker answers tended to repeat the same point – that Jack does not understand what is going on – with reference to different parts of the extract.

Question 2

This was a less popular question but those who chose it knew the character of Anita well and appreciated her business skills.

Question 3

This question was also a minority choice but Poppy's devotion to Jack was clearly seen and candidates made a good attempt at capturing the voice of a character who is 'a bit of a mouse'.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Questions 4-6

Very few candidates offered this text. Examiners reported that those who did usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and responded in detail to the extract.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. The best answers to this question explored what Parris's words as well as his confused and extreme physical reactions reveal about his character and state of mind, and they identified the 'weasel' quality of the words that Abigail uses to excuse herself. They also explored the way in which much of the power of the extract derives from the audience being plunged into the middle of a highly fraught situation. It was a striking feature of this question that many less successful answers entirely ignored Abigail, and seemed unaware of the implications of mentions of witchcraft and unnatural events. There also seemed to be little concern for the situation of Betty except in the best answers and few made reference to the calling of Hale.

Question 8

Candidates generally made very good choices of 'moments', the 'yellow bird' incident and Proctor's tearing of his confession being favourites. Good answers adopted similar techniques as for the passage-based questions, going beyond narrative and exploring the dynamics of the situations and the implications in terms of the whole text.

Question 9

There were some excellent Danforths capturing in appropriate language the austerity and harshness of the character and his conviction that he is right, but there were also some miscalculations. Some candidates wanted to allow him the self-knowledge that he and his court were at fault but made him far too remorseful and contrite. Some candidates appeared to confuse him with Hale.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

Those candidates who attempted to take a balanced view of Leonato were most successful here. The words 'at this point in the play' give the steer to consider whether his behaviour in the extract is typical or whether it represents a departure from his normal behaviour. There was a lot of emphasis on his concern for his honour, rather than for his child, and a good deal of hostility towards him as a result. Those candidates who responded to his courage in challenging Claudio and condemned the way in which he is dismissed by Claudio and Don Pedro tended to score more highly.

Question 11

There were some very pleasing responses to this question, though most limited themselves to Dogberry alone. Even weaker answers responded to his malapropisms; better ones saw his importance to the plot and to the comic relief he provides; the best considered his crucial role in vindicating Hero.

Question 12

Answers showed that the character of Beatrice was well known, and most of these empathic responses were appropriate, though some were overly sentimental and gushing. The most successful saw that her feelings about Claudio would be conflicting and her feelings for Benedick something of a mystery to her. Those who created something of her feistiness and acerbity scored highly. There were some excellent attempts to recreate some of the word-play that she has indulged in with Benedick.

Richard III

Question 13

This was overwhelmingly the most popular question on the play. There was abundant evidence that this extract had been studied in detail. The thrust of the question was on 'memorable beginning' and candidates who ignored the invitation to respond but merely explained the passage did not score very highly. The best answers engaged with the ambiguity of the character and saw how Richard enlists the audience on his side, creating admiration and revulsion in almost equal measure. There were some superb analyses of the language and imagery, showing the sarcasm and irony and also the humour of the character. Some answers did not refer to the specific plot to set Clarence and the King against each other.

Question 14

By contrast, relatively few responded to this task. Examiners who saw answers to it usually complimented candidates for their knowledge of and insight into the characters.

Question 15

This was also a minority choice but there were some good responses showing knowledge of the character and of events though sometimes only with reference to Richard's dream. The most successful answers demonstrated some of his sense of black irony. One or two attempted to write in iambic pentameters, but with limited success.

Journey's End

Question 16

Candidates who had studied this text generally demonstrated a great deal of engagement with the characters and their situation. There were some very careful and detailed explorations of this passage, looking not only at the situation of the naive young officer finding himself on the front line and the experienced officer trying to treat him kindly and warn him of changes to his hero, Stanhope, but also examining the subtext to the dialogue and the ways in which language and sentence structure is used.

Question 17

There were also some very good responses to this question. Good textual knowledge was in evidence and candidates had no difficulty in pulling out examples of stress-relieving techniques; but successful answers went beyond cataloguing them and were distinguished by a sense of the author's purpose and the condemnation of war that is exhibited through these techniques.

Question 18

There were fewer responses to this question but very good knowledge of the character was usually demonstrated and candidates did not seem to find it difficult to create a suitable voice, incorporating many of Hibbert's idiosyncrasies of speech. None were convinced that his neuralgia was genuine.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves from Part 3

Question 19

There was a great range of achievement here, from those answers which merely gave a sort of paraphrase, not addressing 'state of mind', to those that focused tightly on the terms of the question, analysing the language and imagery in a great deal of detail. Some candidates got themselves tangled up in Darwinist theories and lost focus on the task; some, rather mysteriously and not entirely convincingly, interpreted it as an anti-war poem. The important thing was to see the changing moods and the way in which the imagery reflects them. Few candidates saw that the last stanza offers some hope through personal relationships.

Question 20

There were no real problems with the understanding of *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* and *Report to Wordsworth*, though a number of candidates seemed to have no idea who Wordsworth was and therefore missed the point of the title and the opening sentence and also of the full significances of the references to Proteus, Triton and Neptune. They were generally able to focus on the descriptions of 'human destruction', however, though sometimes without bringing out the force of the poets' grief and anger, in other words without responding to 'powerfully'. A significant number tackling this question tended to give rather generalised responses.

Question 21

Similarly, responses to *Amends* and *Full Moon and Little Frieda* often overlooked the word 'memorably' though there were some sensitive responses to the imagery of *Amends* recognising the 'healing qualities' of the sounds. Relatively few saw some of the darker notes of the Hughes and some candidates only explained the poem in terms of the poet's response to the development of his child into a woman.

John Keats: *Poems*

Question 22

While there was some extremely impressive work in response to this question, it was also clear that a lot of candidates had struggled to understand this poem and indeed surprising that many never mentioned the nightingale in offering up their explanation of Keats's feelings. In weaker answers there was a tendency to digress into accounts of Keats's illness, the death of his brother, his relationship with Fanny Brawne and his own imminent demise – completely losing focus on the question. Candidates must work from the poem itself and pay close attention to the words. 'Vividly' should have provided enough of a steer.

Question 23

Since *The Eve of St Agnes* is a poem with a very strong narrative, it might have been expected that candidates would find it easier to write about, but too many did not get beyond the narrative and ignored the direction to identify its dramatic elements. In the most successful answers, the opening of the poem was used as a starting point followed by the dramatic escape of the couple and there was some detailed textual support.

Question 24

This was usually the most successful of the three Keats questions. The poem was very well known and candidates usually had no difficulty in finding plenty to say, though only the best answers explored the shifting moods of the poem.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some excellent answers. Candidates engaged with the text and the task and were able to explore Elizabeth's confused emotions with detailed analytical responses and plenty of supporting quotation. Answers were differentiated by the amount of detail and by the awareness of Austen's method, for example by the way in which she takes the reader into Elizabeth's thoughts, using rhetorical questions and exclamations.

Question 26

Some candidates attacked this question with relish, constructing persuasive and convincing arguments giving a range of examples of marriages but using Elizabeth and Darcy as the exemplification of the perfect union, consisting of love, respect, knowledge of each other and themselves – and incidentally financial security. Weaker answers tended to be limited in the examples that they chose and over-general in their exploration of them.

Question 27

There were some amusing impersonations of Charlotte waiting for Elizabeth. Many caught her quiet pragmatism and her ability to send Mr Collins into the garden when she wanted to have a little peace. Her gratitude for the security that has been granted her was often clearly conveyed, and, in the best answers, sometimes the mask was allowed to slip and she revealed her dislike of her husband and his patroness.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text was rarely answered on, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. They tended to fare best on **Question 29**, which goes to the heart of the novel, and produced some wide-ranging and detailed discussions. There were very few attempts to empathise with Father Gilligan in **Question 30**.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31-33

There were very few responses to this text. Candidates seemed to find the extract in **Question 31** approachable, though the main shortcoming was to stop before the material on India. So there was plenty of material on 'frustration with his wife' but little on 'with life in India'. There were far too few responses to the other questions to make general comment appropriate.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was a very popular text. Responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the tensions and also a sense of context and of implications for the future. Weaker answers picked out only a few details from the passage and sometimes digressed into assertions about Hardy's unhappy marriage and how this is reflected in the relationship between Bathsheba and Troy.

Question 35

Many excellent answers were seen on this task. Such answers gave a balanced and sympathetic and thoughtful response supported by well selected details. In some Centres, Boldwood was given a very hard time, almost all of the candidates thinking he deserved what happened to him.

Question 36

This was a less popular question, possibly because candidates found a voice for Gabriel a little elusive, but there were some very good answers which used the text very efficiently and captured quite a few echoes.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Questions 37-39

Only a few candidates had studied this text. They fared reasonably well with the passage-based **Question 37**. It required some degree of back-reference and they showed good knowledge of the novel on the whole and seemed to enjoy pointing out why Matenge got his just desserts. Very few were able to do more than narrate the story of Makhaya and Paulina; much more focus on the 'how?' was required. There were very few attempts to create a voice for Gilbert in **Question 39**.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

This extract was central to the story and candidates explored it in detail and with understanding. The best answers understood the failed hopes and potential represented by Ethan's study and the symbolism of the piece of paper and cushion. They saw that the hopelessness of his life derives from his own inadequacies as well as from his restricted surroundings and his awful wife.

Question 41

Some candidates tended to write about Ethan's specific difficulties here, but most had a detailed knowledge of the climate, the poverty and the loneliness of Starkfield. Weaker answers relied on general assertion

Question 42

Many candidates really went to town on Zeena, producing some of the best empathic responses on the paper. Her voice was replicated very accurately with just the right note of querulousness and maliciousness.

from Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

This extract seemed very accessible and candidates usually caught the changing and contrasting emotions of Mr Wills and also those of the narrator. Better answers explored the violence of the language showing how fearsome Mr Wills is to the narrator and his father ('insane with anger', 'his teeth gripped over his lower lip') and how this contrasts so dramatically with his collapse into tears. They also commented on the effect on the narrator and on his changed perception of Mr Wills and also on his guilt in the realisation of the significance of what he had thought was merely a prank. Answers were differentiated by the extent to which they focused on the word 'dramatic'.

Question 44

Mrs Croft was the most popular of the characters but all answers showed sound knowledge of the stories even if there was little response to why the character chosen was particularly memorable.

Question 45

There were some very successful answers on John in *The Yellow Wallpaper* capturing his slightly arrogant but despairing attitude towards his wife in a suitably doctorly voice.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42

Paper 42 (Closed Books)

General comments

Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to the Shakespeare passages.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely from the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambment and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed.

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This was the most popular of the three Ayckbourn questions. Many caught the absurdity and the cross purposes of Jack and Anita, the farcical quality of Giorgio hiding in the wardrobe, and the sharpness of her responses. What is more, in the best answers there was a clear sense of dramatic technique at work.

Question 2

There were so very few responses to this question that general comment is not appropriate.

Question 3

Most candidates wrote fairly successfully as Jack, though weaker answers failed to capture all the detail that is indicated by Ayckbourn. More successful one showed a good understanding of him and there was much foreshadowing of what he was about to find out. Candidates clearly understood the ironies. The voice seemed reasonably easy to assume.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

Only a small number of Centres offered this text. Candidates usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and they responded in detail to the extract.

Question 5

Overall, this was not quite as successfully attempted as **Question 4**. Most, however, found plenty of detail to draw on and wrote with insight and understanding.

Question 6

The small number of candidates tackling this empathic task had internalised Doris's problems and wrote convincingly in her voice.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. Most candidates were able to identify the tensions and hatreds but there was a tendency to rely on stage directions rather than examine the scene as drama.

Question 8

This was a popular question which drew out some very sympathetic responses to Elizabeth seeing her as 'a loyal and loving wife' though the best answers showed why a less complimentary view of her might be taken. There were some very well argued and supported answers.

Question 9

This was not a particularly popular question as candidates seemed to have a less than clear view of the character. There was some confusion between Parris, Hale and Danforth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. It is a central moment in the play and a very dramatic one and good answers explored it in detail, analysing the language and seeing the subtleties. Weaker answers merely told the story or paraphrased, not homing in on and analysing the detail.

Question 11

Weaker answers to this question produced flat character sketches. Though candidates knew a lot about Benedick, unless they focused on the key words here 'loveable' and 'hero', both requiring strong personal response, they were unlikely to do well.

Question 12

Those who got the character and the time right did well. Too many candidates made him too and also in possession of knowledge of events that had not yet happened. A surprising number did not refer to Dogberry and the Watch.

Richard III

Question 13

This question may have deterred less confident candidates since it is directed to a specific characteristic of the writing, but those who attempted it had no difficulty in identifying the difference between the surface dialogue and what is really going on. Richard and Buckingham are both acting parts to the Mayor and ultimately to each other. With the benefit of hindsight, another layer of irony emerges.

Question 14

Examiners reported that generally this question was not answered well, possibly because candidates did not have sufficient detailed knowledge of the two characters. Some candidates ignored Hastings altogether.

Question 15

Candidates took on the role of Clarence with some relish showing how little understanding he has of his brothers and making some deliciously ironic observations. Though Clarence does not have a particularly distinctive voice in the play they were generally able to create the right notes of outrage and disappointment as well as admiration for Richard; some did this very well.

Journey's End

Question 16

Some candidates focused more on the printed word (i.e. the stage directions as written) rather than on the highly dramatic stage action and its likely effect on the audience, but there were some very engaged and sensitive responses to the situation.

Question 17

This was a less popular question on the text, but there were some good balanced responses showing a sound understanding of the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh.

Question 18

Many candidates wrote in a suitable voice for Raleigh but seemed unsure as to whether or not he was angry about Stanhope's seizure of his letter. The best answers showed an awareness of the ironies of the situation.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves from Part 3

Question 19

This was an extremely popular question and the poem was well understood, though here was a prime example of many candidates being diverted into assertions about the unhappiness of Hardy's marriage instead of focusing on the words of the poem. The best answers responded extremely sensitively to the bleakness of the imagery and to the music of the words.

Questions 20 and 21

These questions were answered by only a few candidates. *On The Grasshopper and the Cricket* was perhaps the most usual choice, though candidates found it difficult to focus on the 'delight in nature' part of the question and merely offloaded more general learnt interpretations.

John Keats: Poems

Question 22

This question was very popular and did not seem to present any particular difficulties to those who attempted it. Most candidates were able to comment on the sounds and silences, on the 'sleeping dragons' and on the ghostly imagery in stanza 41. The better answers picked up the deathly allusions in the final stanza in particular.

Question 23

Ode on Melancholy was quite well understood, though candidates had difficulty in making more than one general point that pleasure and pain are inextricably linked. As always, they fared best when they focused on the quality of the imagery and there were some superb responses showing full engagement with the words and the feelings – with the poetry itself.

Question 24

This was not such a popular question, but the poem was generally well known and the knight's story sympathetically discussed.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was by far the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some highly accomplished answers. Candidates gave lively responses to the ridiculousness of Mr Collins' proposal, the more sophisticated also seeing the nastiness of his veiled comments about the entailment. The best answers commented on the way in which Austen makes us empathise with Elizabeth and on the unwitting self-ridicule of some of Collins's assertions ('Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!)). Many answers showed excellent appreciation of the writer's technique.



Question 26

This proved far less popular than **Question 25**. Weaker candidates merely offloaded ‘my Elizabeth Bennet essay’, while more successful ones focused on the phrase ‘appealing and lively’ and constructed an argument around it.

Question 27

There were some very convincing Mr Bennets, capturing just the right amount of pride in his two favourite daughters and exasperation with his wife and the younger ones in a suitable wry and humorous tone, but there were quite a few overly sentimental responses showing very little appreciation of the character. It was also surprising that at this particular moment many answers made no reference to the shame over Lydia and gratitude to Darcy.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text studied in very few Centres, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. The passage-based **Question 28** was usually well answered as was the empathic **Question 30**, though on the surface it might have appeared a more demanding task. **Question 29** produced the best answers with candidates writing well about Jimmy’s dysfunctional family and the causes of his (at times appalling) behaviour.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31

The questions on this text were popular, though in response to this question a significant number of candidates contented themselves with a run-through of the passage. Tighter focus on the phrase ‘boredom and frustrations’ was needed and closer examination of the words; there is some extremely sensuous writing in the extract, particularly in the first paragraph: ‘there was no breeze: it was hot, the air hung upon them like a damp towel, gagging him...’.

Question 32

Many candidates did little more than identify the distractions faced by Suno. Most responses were very general nature and did not address the question with any specificity.

Question 33

This produced answers of varying quality: while many caught the artist’s mixture of desperation and annoyance well, others used the task as a mouthpiece for thinly veiled regurgitation of plot.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was another very popular text and responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the character of Troy and the way in which he manipulates the helpless Bathsheba here.

Question 35

This question required candidates to range widely through the novel and the amount of textual knowledge that they brought to it was very impressive. The phrasing of this type of question gave a clear structure for their arguments and there were some very balanced and thoughtful responses. As ever, answers which merely trotted out a character sketch of Bathsheba were not very successful.

Question 36

This was a less popular question, though many candidates managed to capture Boldwood’s complex feelings and the sense of a man ‘on the edge’ here through their own use of language

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This was the least popular of the three questions. Candidates who chose this question performed reasonably well, though the key word in the question 'sad' was sometimes not adequately addressed.

Question 38

This question elicited some good responses as candidates recognised the crucial role that women played in tending to crops and live-stock in an assiduous and dependable way.

Question 39

Sensitive answers captured Paulina's disheartened mood as she worries that her dream of finding a husband with a man she is clearly taken with may not be fulfilled.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Those who chose the passage-based question had some difficulty in dealing with the key words 'intriguing' and 'gripping'. A full knowledge of the novel was required in order to show the appropriateness of these two concepts.

Question 41

Very few attempted this. Answers were not impressive as focused details in support were often lacking.

Question 42

Most opting for this task made a very creditable attempt at Ethan, as they incorporated into their portrayal the stark contrast of the early flush of marriage with the later reality as Zeena turns into something of a dragon.

from Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

Most answers responded sensitively to La Guma's presentation of violence and racism, and many mined the passage well in terms of language and method.

Question 44

Some candidates struggled to go beyond general and vague observations here and there was a tendency to comment on contemporary events rather than on the story. The word 'striking' should have directed them to the quality of the description and the language, and a sound approach would have been to select a few relevant parts of the story and to have commented on them in detail.

Question 45

This was generally handled competently, though most candidates restricted themselves to a diatribe against the boy. It was surprising how many did not refer to her lost love or try to probe the reasons for the violence of her reactions against the boy.



LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43

Paper 43 (Closed Books)

General comments

Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to the Shakespeare passages.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely from the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambment and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed.

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This was the most popular of the three Ayckbourn questions. Many caught the absurdity and the cross purposes of Jack and Anita, the farcical quality of Giorgio hiding in the wardrobe, and the sharpness of her responses. What is more, in the best answers there was a clear sense of dramatic technique at work.

Question 2

There were so very few responses to this question that general comment is not appropriate.

Question 3

Most candidates wrote fairly successfully as Jack, though weaker answers failed to capture all the detail that is indicated by Ayckbourn. More successful one showed a good understanding of him and there was much foreshadowing of what he was about to find out. Candidates clearly understood the ironies. The voice seemed reasonably easy to assume.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

Only a small number of Centres offered this text. Candidates usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and they responded in detail to the extract.

Question 5

Overall, this was not quite as successfully attempted as Question 4. Most, however, found plenty of detail to draw on and wrote with insight and understanding.

Question 6

The small number of candidates tackling this empathic task had internalised Doris's problems and wrote convincingly in her voice.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. Most candidates were able to identify the tensions and hatreds but there was a tendency to rely on stage directions rather than examine the scene as drama.

Question 8

This was a popular question which drew out some very sympathetic responses to Elizabeth seeing her as 'a loyal and loving wife' though the best answers showed why a less complimentary view of her might be taken. There were some very well argued and supported answers.

Question 9

This was not a particularly popular question as candidates seemed to have a less than clear view of the character. There was some confusion between Parris, Hale and Danforth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. It is a central moment in the play and a very dramatic one and good answers explored it in detail, analysing the language and seeing the subtleties. Weaker answers merely told the story or paraphrased, not homing in on and analysing the detail.

Question 11

Weaker answers to this question produced flat character sketches. Though candidates knew a lot about Benedick, unless they focused on the key words here 'loveable' and 'hero', both requiring strong personal response, they were unlikely to do well.

Question 12

Those who got the character and the time right did well. Too many candidates made him too and also in possession of knowledge of events that had not yet happened. A surprising number did not refer to Dogberry and the Watch.

Richard III

Question 13

This question may have deterred less confident candidates since it is directed to a specific characteristic of the writing, but those who attempted it had no difficulty in identifying the difference between the surface dialogue and what is really going on. Richard and Buckingham are both acting parts to the Mayor and ultimately to each other. With the benefit of hindsight, another layer of irony emerges.

Question 14

Examiners reported that generally this question was not answered well, possibly because candidates did not have sufficient detailed knowledge of the two characters. Some candidates ignored Hastings altogether.

Question 15

Candidates took on the role of Clarence with some relish showing how little understanding he has of his brothers and making some deliciously ironic observations. Though Clarence does not have a particularly distinctive voice in the play they were generally able to create the right notes of outrage and disappointment as well as admiration for Richard; some did this very well.

Journey's End

Question 16

Some candidates focused more on the printed word (i.e. the stage directions as written) rather than on the highly dramatic stage action and its likely effect on the audience, but there were some very engaged and sensitive responses to the situation.

Question 17

This was a less popular question on the text, but there were some good balanced responses showing a sound understanding of the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh.

Question 18

Many candidates wrote in a suitable voice for Raleigh but seemed unsure as to whether or not he was angry about Stanhope's seizure of his letter. The best answers showed an awareness of the ironies of the situation.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves from Part 3

Question 19

This was an extremely popular question and the poem was well understood, though here was a prime example of many candidates being diverted into assertions about the unhappiness of Hardy's marriage instead of focusing on the words of the poem. The best answers responded extremely sensitively to the bleakness of the imagery and to the music of the words.

Questions 20 and 21

These questions were answered by only a few candidates. *On The Grasshopper and the Cricket* was perhaps the most usual choice, though candidates found it difficult to focus on the 'delight in nature' part of the question and merely offloaded more general learnt interpretations.

John Keats: Poems

Question 22

This question was very popular and did not seem to present any particular difficulties to those who attempted it. Most candidates were able to comment on the sounds and silences, on the 'sleeping dragons' and on the ghostly imagery in stanza 41. The better answers picked up the deathly allusions in the final stanza in particular.

Question 23

Ode on Melancholy was quite well understood, though candidates had difficulty in making more than one general point that pleasure and pain are inextricably linked. As always, they fared best when they focused on the quality of the imagery and there were some superb responses showing full engagement with the words and the feelings – with the poetry itself.

Question 24

This was not such a popular question, but the poem was generally well known and the knight's story sympathetically discussed.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was by far the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some highly accomplished answers. Candidates gave lively responses to the ridiculousness of Mr Collins' proposal, the more sophisticated also seeing the nastiness of his veiled comments about the entailment. The best answers commented on the way in which Austen makes us empathise with Elizabeth and on the unwitting self-ridicule of some of Collins's assertions ('Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!)). Many answers showed excellent appreciation of the writer's technique.

Question 26

This proved far less popular than Question 25. Weaker candidates merely offloaded 'my Elizabeth Bennet essay', while more successful ones focused on the phrase 'appealing and lively' and constructed an argument around it.

Question 27

There were some very convincing Mr Bennets, capturing just the right amount of pride in his two favourite daughters and exasperation with his wife and the younger ones in a suitable wry and humorous tone, but there were quite a few overly sentimental responses showing very little appreciation of the character. It was also surprising that at this particular moment many answers made no reference to the shame over Lydia and gratitude to Darcy.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text studied in very few Centres, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. The passage-based **Question 28** was usually well answered as was the empathic **Question 30**, though on the surface it might have appeared a more demanding task. **Question 29** produced the best answers with candidates writing well about Jimmy's dysfunctional family and the causes of his (at times appalling) behaviour.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31

The questions on this text were popular, though in response to this question a significant number of candidates contented themselves with a run-through of the passage. Tighter focus on the phrase 'boredom and frustrations' was needed and closer examination of the words; there is some extremely sensuous writing in the extract, particularly in the first paragraph: 'there was no breeze: it was hot, the air hung upon them like a damp towel, gagging him...'

Question 32

Many candidates did little more than identify the distractions faced by Suno. Most responses were very general nature and did not address the question with any specificity.

Question 33

This produced answers of varying quality: while many caught the artist's mixture of desperation and annoyance well, others used the task as a mouthpiece for thinly veiled regurgitation of plot.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was another very popular text and responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the character of Troy and the way in which he manipulates the helpless Bathsheba here.

Question 35

This question required candidates to range widely through the novel and the amount of textual knowledge that they brought to it was very impressive. The phrasing of this type of question gave a clear structure for their arguments and there were some very balanced and thoughtful responses. As ever, answers which merely trotted out a character sketch of Bathsheba were not very successful.

Question 36

This was a less popular question, though many candidates managed to capture Boldwood's complex feelings and the sense of a man 'on the edge' here through their own use of language

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This was the least popular of the three questions. Candidates who chose this question performed reasonably well, though the key word in the question 'sad' was sometimes not adequately addressed.

Question 38

This question elicited some good responses as candidates recognised the crucial role that women played in tending to crops and live-stock in an assiduous and dependable way.

Question 39

Sensitive answers captured Paulina's disheartened mood as she worries that her dream of finding a husband with a man she is clearly taken with may not be fulfilled.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Those who chose the passage-based question had some difficulty in dealing with the key words 'intriguing' and 'gripping'. A full knowledge of the novel was required in order to show the appropriateness of these two concepts.

Question 41

Very few attempted this. Answers were not impressive as focused details in support were often lacking.

Question 42

Most opting for this task made a very creditable attempt at Ethan, as they incorporated into their portrayal the stark contrast of the early flush of marriage with the later reality as Zeena turns into something of a dragon.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 43

Most answers responded sensitively to La Guma's presentation of violence and racism, and many mined the passage well in terms of language and method.

Question 44

Some candidates struggled to go beyond general and vague observations here and there was a tendency to comment on contemporary events rather than on the story. The word 'striking' should have directed them to the quality of the description and the language, and a sound approach would have been to select a few relevant parts of the story and to have commented on them in detail.

Question 45

This was generally handled competently, though most candidates restricted themselves to a diatribe against the boy. It was surprising how many did not refer to her lost love or try to probe the reasons for the violence of her reactions against the boy.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/51

Paper 51 (Closed Books – B)

General Comments

Centres have made an impressive start in preparing candidates for this new component. Candidates generally showed sound knowledge of the set texts and personal response to characterisation and theme. Many responses were engaged and enthusiastic. They were often well constructed, thorough and sustained.

There are areas in each type of question, however, where performance could be improved. In answering passage-based questions, candidates would be better advised not to spend time putting the passage into its context in excessive detail. The focus should be on the passage itself and its language in particular. In some cases answers considered the plot and themes of the novel as a whole rather than making a detailed analysis of the passage. This is an approach more suited to the discursive question, which, in turn, requires a well-constructed argument and precise reference to the text. Whereas answers to discursive questions often demonstrated thought and balance, some needed more precise textual reference to support the views expressed. Learning and using some key quotations would allow candidates to make their responses more convincing. Supporting points with specific moments from the text is essential for high reward.

Empathic questions were answered very successfully when candidates wrote in the voice of the character and identified the moment in the text carefully. Weaker answers captured the character's attitudes but not the voice and failed to underpin the response with textual detail or echoes of what the character says in the text. The least successful answers tended to be entirely narrative. In poetry answers most candidates grasped the meaning of the poems and showed knowledge of Heaney's relationships with his family, the farming tradition and the natural world. It is vital, however, that they also have the skills to analyse the imagery, diction and structure of the poems - with particular emphasis on their effect. Mere recognition of poetic terminology is of little help in writing a successful response. Selection of particularly effective diction, simile and metaphor and a simple comment on why the poet chose to use these would at the very least ensure adequate reward.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Whose Life is it Anyway?

Question 1

Responses to Dr Emerson varied. Some candidates claimed that this passage might have been Clark's attempt to present a more rounded character by offering the audience a favourable view of him before presenting him in a different light later on. A few candidates regarded his conduct here as consistent with his uncompromising portrayal elsewhere. The same piece of evidence - discussion of the cardiac unit over the phone with Jenkins - was used for both interpretations. While most candidates argued that this showed Dr Emerson's caring professionalism, a very small number of candidates argued that the reliance upon machine monitors as opposed to nurses revealed his lack of personal touch and his need for control. Weaker answers tended to see his interest as purely financial rather than as saving money to be spent elsewhere on patient care. There was a dividing line in viewpoint over the Valium medication as to whether it was good medical practice or an abuse of Ken's civil liberties. Fewer candidates than expected commented on his attitude towards Dr Scott here, in terms of how Emerson deals with a colleague challenging his views.



Question 2

All responses to this question acknowledged some sympathy for Ken. The more candidates showed their appreciation for Clark's literary techniques in creating this sympathy, the greater the success of the answer. Points in strong answers included: Ken's age; the ending of his relationship with his fiancée; the premature end of his career as a sculptor; the severity of his injury; his zest for an active life; his wit and humour and the ethics of keeping someone alive against their will. Very strong responses showed how these new realities of Ken's life were poignantly contrasted with Ken's previous life or the relationship between John and Kay Sadler

Question 3 was generally answered well with candidates finding a suitable voice and responding to Sister Anderson's care and concern for Ken.

Lord of the Flies

Question 4 was generally answered very successfully. Even weaker candidates could respond to what was powerful and disturbing in this highly charged passage. The strongest answers knew that this was a pivotal moment in the text and that the awareness of a 'beast within' - evil as an integral part of the human condition - is at its zenith here. This disturbing concept was supported by an awareness of the passage's powerful language. Candidates cited Simon's physical condition, the horror of the pig's head and its intimidating and patronising tone and details such as the forest echoing with a parody of its laughter. Subtle points were made such as Simon becoming like the Lord of the Flies as he realises that evil is a 'part of you' and he 'falls into' its black mouth, representing the spreading evil. Many saw the foreshadowing of Simon's death as extremely disturbing and poignant. Less successful answers tended to write about the context instead of the passage, paraphrased it or explained what it was about instead of focusing on its disturbing qualities. Some struggled with the 'reality' of the pig's head speaking to Simon or wrote about him being a Christ-like figure at length. One misinterpretation was that 'Simon shook' (line 14), meant that he shook his head in disagreement rather than in fear.

Question 5 was answered well when candidates could pinpoint what had gone wrong on the island (letting the fire go out, the division of the group, the beast, the deaths of Simon and Piggy) and could make an evaluation of the extent to which Jack was responsible for this. Jack's jealousy of Ralph, hunger for power and obsession with hunting were counterbalanced by some of Ralph's failures as a leader and the evil inherent within all the boys. Good answers selected details such as Roger's increasing realisation that no rules existed to curb his psychopathic tendencies and that he was responsible for killing Piggy, with Jack's tacit approval. The strongest answers recognised that all the boys were involved in Simon's death. Weaker answers could not pinpoint the things that went wrong or refer closely to them and tended to write a character sketch of Jack rather than answer the question set.

Question 6

Candidates here were distinguished by their ability to write in Piggy's voice and capture the precise moment in the text. Most candidates conveyed something of Piggy's character and situation: his longing for Auntie's sweet shop, for 'grown-up' rules and direction and safety; desire for order on the island; anxiety over Jack; wondering why no-one likes him or listens to him; worries over 'assmar'; how to make sundials; concerns over rescue. In weaker answers Piggy's voice was too educated and sophisticated. This was a disappointing aspect of some answers by clearly well prepared candidates. Piggy has a particularly distinctive voice and it needed to be captured for high reward. Most mentioned eating 'meat' (as in the question), but some Piggys did not particularly 'want meat because crabs and fruit would do' which was unconvincing. Many did not see that Jack had refused to let Piggy have meat, and that Simon gave him his portion, or that the ship just gone past and the fire was out. Less convincing responses did not mention that Jack had just punched Piggy in the stomach and slapped his face so that his 'specs' flew off and broke on the rocks. Answers that did incorporate such details were well rewarded.

A Raisin in the Sun

Question 7

The best answers commented on the very different reactions to the pregnancy from each of the three women here, culminating in Ruth's collapse. Weaker answers tended to address the question by quoting the stage directions such as 'dejection', 'dispiritedly', 'wearily', and 'dully', without further comment and development to consider why the character feels this way. Some weaker answers had problems distinguishing who said what, and so had Mama questioning Ruth, instead of Beneatha. Some thought Ruth had had an abortion and, in line 31, was doubling over in physical pain from the procedure. On the other hand, many candidates missed the implication that Ruth had considered terminating the pregnancy. Some did not consider their poverty and small size of the apartment when thinking of Ruth and Beneatha's reactions. Candidates who paid more attention to the writer's techniques and the key terms 'tense and emotional' produced the best work. Some, however, exploited these opportunities, such as the understatement 'everything is going to be fine', the obfuscation 'she' (the doctor) and the 'silence' in line 20.

Question 8 was generally well done, with candidates using considerable textual evidence. The best answers rose to the challenge and responded sensitively to Walter's dilemma: seeking to assert his dignity and entrepreneurship in the face of adversity – his poverty, his personal betrayal by Willy, his own betrayal of his father's 'flesh'. These answers also exposed the pathos of 'his' investment in competition with the Younger family as a whole.

Less effective answers did not consider the consequences of his stupidity for others. Many did not mention Beneatha's thwarted education and her dreams of becoming a doctor.

Question 9

The majority of candidates emulated Mama's passionate and compassionate voice and this question was generally answered well. Some candidates, however, overstated the contrast between the new house and old apartment, having the Youngers moving into a mansion with a huge garden. Some did not see the significance of the new house beyond that it offered more space and light - the importance symbolically to Mama and to African Americans in general - of owning their own land, which cannot be taken away from them, was missed. Strong responses profitably considered the symbolism of light here. Answers tended to be fairly long and some candidates rushed in, instead of selecting the best material for their answer. Weaker responses tended to be repetitive. The best answers conveyed both Mama's strength in opposing Lindner and her religious convictions.

Death of a Naturalist

Question 10

Answers to this question were most effective when candidates understood the central nautical metaphor. If this was missed then they found it difficult to convey Heaney's sense of being at a loss without the presence of his wife. Most, however, managed adequate comment on how this metaphor was used - even if they only paraphrased it. Strong candidates linked up the nautical expressions throughout and produced coherent overviews to the poem. There were some misunderstandings such as the temporary rather than permanent nature of the departure. Some candidates rightly selected 'flower-tender / Voice' but comments were barely adequate here, just saying her voice was 'sweet'. Only the strongest answers considered why the poem was 'such an emotional love poem', as asked by the question. The stronger answers also explored Heaney's use of antithesis: the 'quiet' and 'easy' love in the 'Lady's' 'presence', contrasted with the disorientation of her 'absence' – the 'emptiness', feeling 'unmoored' and 'mutiny'. There was some unnecessary and unproductive speculation about the identity of the 'Lady' in the poem.

Question 11

An appreciation of Heaney's use of language was once again the key to success. Candidates who could comment on his blending of memory, subtle use of action and use of the senses were rewarded highly. *Churning Day* was the more popular of two poems but *Blackberry Picking* was generally handled competently.

Question 12 was tackled by far too few candidates to make general comment appropriate.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 13 was answered most effectively by candidates who focused on 'vivid' and looked at the language used to describe Aunt Alexandra, as well as appreciating that she is being satirised here. Strong candidates selected words that showed her strength of conviction such as 'royal prerogative' and 'let any moral come along and she would uphold it', understood her prejudices and appreciated her lack of humour in response to Atticus's jibe about her preoccupation with heredity. They showed both her pride and possible racism in not allowing Calpurnia to make the delicacies. The more a candidate challenged the apparent worthiness of her character – in other words, those who understood the irony of Scout's narrative – the more reward the answer attracted. This was usually expressed as a form of character contrast: Atticus's liberalism as opposed to his sister's conservatism. Many competent answers concentrated only on her sterling qualities of activity and community spirit. Weaker answers here tended to describe rather than analyse or to be brief and unsupported by close reference to the passage.

Question 14

This was answered well when candidates could make specific references to moments such as: Miss Maudie's refusal to attend the trial of Tom Robinson; her support of Atticus at the Missionary Tea Party; her honesty and friendliness towards Jem and Scout when talking about Boo Radley; her reaction to the fire at her house. Strong answers showed care and engagement. Weaker answers tended to generalise about her kindness and lack of prejudice (without specific support) and to miss her more acerbic qualities. Some candidates focused on her role in the novel rather than on her character, though the best managed to combine both in their comments.

Question 15

There were some excellent answers to this question. Strong candidates captured Atticus's doubts and concerns, whereas less effective answers tended to make him smug and self-congratulatory. Many used lawyer-like words and phrases such as 'firstly... moreover... notwithstanding... on the other hand... however, in conclusion'. These worked well in setting the tone. The amount of detail included varied. Some Atticuses thought they had done as good a job raising the children as they could, and more or less left it at that. Some mentioned particular incidents such as Mrs Dubose but others used more detail than Atticus could have known. The best answers showed what his concerns would be at the end of the novel rather than, for example, Scout's reading issues at school right at the beginning. Concerns such as: the amount of time Atticus could spend with the children owing to his busy job; the effects of townspeople's criticism of him for defending Tom Robinson and how he underestimated the danger from Bob Ewell were explored effectively in good answers.

Nineteen Eighty-four

Question 16 produced very many strong answers. Candidates focused very well on Orwell's narrative techniques, with a good balance struck between character dialogue, interior monologue and authorial comment. The only noticeable weakness appeared to be a slight one-sidedness of focus, in that O'Brien's role was not fully exploited. Some had a sound overview of O'Brien entrapping Winston but were less effective in showing how this manifested itself in the extract.

Question 17 was rarely answered well because candidates could not give specific examples from the text. The stronger answers looked at the effects on the proles of brainwashing, the lottery, shortages, the steamers and the Two Minutes Hate as an outlet for any aggression that could have been directed at The Party. The occasions when Winston interviews the various proles and realises that they cannot remember a 'better life' were useful evidence to answer this question.

Question 18

Answers that incorporated the wider political and social context of the novel tended to be effective here. Some candidates appeared fixated with Julia's interest in sex; this only became convincing when candidates linked this to an intentional attack on the repressive values of the State. There were many useful details from the text such as her earlier encounter with Winston, her wearing of the Junior Anti-Sex League sash and her ability to hide her true feelings. Some candidates had her knowing things Winston is yet to tell her. Many found her voice, though modern idioms such as 'Dob me in to The Party' crept in on occasion.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 19

Responses to this question were a little disappointing on the whole. Many candidates went no further than stating the Nurse to be caring, loving and a mother figure for Juliet. Some candidates picked up on the Nurse's private traumas such as her dead husband and daughter but fewer commented on her garrulousness, her bawdy humour and her sexually charged fixations. There were misconceptions. Some thought Lady Capulet did not know how old Juliet is. Some thought the Nurse to be extremely religious and god-fearing. Most criticised Lady Capulet for not bringing up her daughter, some saying it would not happen nowadays. Not many saw her as a servant, to be told what to do by Lady Capulet - hence Lady Capulet is rude to tell her to 'hold' her 'peace' in line 54. Surprisingly, few candidates commented on how much she said, on her digressions and repetitions, and inability to be quiet even when told to shut up. By far the majority just commented on her more positive attributes without any criticisms at all, no matter how mild. The main omission was an appreciation of the humour in Shakespeare's presentation.

Question 20 produced sound, if rather predictable answers. Romeo was seen as foolish as he was in love with Rosaline before Juliet, hence 'in love with love'. He was rash in marrying an enemy he had only just met and in killing Tybalt. Candidates struggled more with their understanding of 'hero' and 'tragedy'. Some seemed to take the line that it did not matter whether he was tragic/heroic or foolish and rash, because what happened was fated. Better answers examined his passion and the fact that he would rather die than be without Juliet. Weaker candidates misunderstood his behaviour at the end of the play thinking that he knew of Friar Lawrence's plan. Weaker candidates needed to respond personally to Shakespeare's presentation and to support their viewpoint more carefully.

Question 21

This produced worthy answers, yet many candidates resorted to comment on 'Who is to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?' rather than responding to what the question asked: 'explain your actions to the Prince'. Weaker candidates tended to survey the entire plot, with a little 'O Lord!' here and there. Not many showed any guilt or concern for their likely punishment. The best answers, as always, managed a convincing 'voice'. In the play Friar Lawrence says he'll take whatever punishment is due to him and the stronger answers reflected this. They used his speech to the Prince, remembered his desire to unite the families and reflected his comment to Juliet: 'A greater power than we can contradict hath thwarted our intents'. They were far from complacent about the deaths of two young people and reflected the guilt he felt at leaving Juliet to her fate.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/52
Paper 52 (Closed Books – B)

General comments

Centres have made an impressive start in preparing candidates for this new component. Candidates generally showed sound knowledge of the set texts and personal response to characterisation and theme. Many responses were engaged and enthusiastic. They were often well constructed, thorough and sustained.

There are areas in each type of question, however, where performance could be improved. In answering passage-based questions, candidates would be better advised not to spend time putting the passage into its context in excessive detail. The focus should be on the passage itself and its language in particular. In some cases answers considered the plot and themes of the novel as a whole rather than making a detailed analysis of the passage. This is an approach more suited to the discursive question, which, in turn, requires a well-constructed argument and precise reference to the text. Whereas answers to discursive questions often demonstrated thought and balance, some needed more precise textual reference to support the views expressed. Learning and using some key quotations would allow candidates to make their responses more convincing. Supporting points with specific moments from the text is essential for high reward.

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There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

Comments on specific questions

Whose Life is it Anyway?

Question 1

The strongest answers to this question understood Dr Travis's role at this point in the play and the 'Catch 22' situation Ken is in as regards to proving his sanity. Most candidates grasped the emotional qualities of Ken talking about releasing his fiancée and commented on how sad the scene is. Fewer analysed the contrast between his mother and father's attitude to his wanting to die or appreciated the stoicism of his mother. The tension in the scene was generally dealt with competently. The candidates saw Ken's anger at Travers reflecting his general antipathy towards professional people.

Question 2

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



Question 3

Answers to this question captured Dr. Emerson's professionalism, conviction and pride in his superior knowledge. His sense of responsibility towards his patients was reflected effectively and strong candidates understood that he wanted to use the Valium to bring Ken to an acceptance of his condition. Weaker responses could not place the moment and were unsure about the function of the drug.

Lord of the Flies

Question 4

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Some answers here simply described or listed the conflicts without exploring the emphasis on 'dramatically' in the task. Candidates who focused on Hansberry's use of stage directions fared better, as did those who addressed the social, racial, political, religious and economic conflicts rather than merely mother-daughter tension. Ruth's contribution to the source of conflict was dealt with sensitively by many.

Questions 8 and 9

There were very few responses to these questions but Examiners commented that these were very competently handled.

Death of a Naturalist

Question 10

The best answers kept a focus on Heaney's use of language to show the young boy's fear. They grasped the suggestion of danger in the 'armoury' of farming implements and the ominous description of the barn and creatures. Many commented on Heaney's fear of rats as shown in other poems. Sensitive answers commented on the 'burned like an oven' simile and on the claustrophobia created by 'cobwebs clogging up' with its effective alliteration. Weaker answers tended to want to identify 'what happens' and to paraphrase

parts of the poem rather inaccurately. One misconception was that the creature in the barn scuttled outside rather than the young Heaney.

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Candidates were able to see Heaney's admiration for his father and grandfather and the different path that Heaney had taken. Some, however, confused the two relatives, failed to support their points by reference to the language Heaney uses and did not analyse his feelings. Some thought that he was sneering at his father's skills. The best answers saw the full significance of Heaney 'digging' with his pen.

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In response to *Death of a Naturalist* candidates were able to look at how Heaney uses the senses to describe the sweltering flax dam, the buzz of the flies and the very texture of the 'gross-bellied frogs'. *Churning Day* was less well handled, with candidates tending to list and exemplify the senses presented in the poem rather than to explore them.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 13

This question appeared to engender genuine enthusiasm for the text and for Lee's authorial methods in creating excitement. Better answers explored the variety of Lee's techniques (description, setting, tone, dialogue, plotting), but placed emphasis on a key device: the narrative perspective of Scout's child-like point of view. In addition, these answers were not afraid to extend the key term in the question 'excitement' by including 'apprehension' and 'fear' – this demonstrated literary discrimination and distinction. Weaker candidates did not know the context, thought that Scout had gone with Jem, and did not understand that Nathan Radley had threatened to shoot any intruder. The best saw the danger of the situation, commented on the possibility of Atticus finding out and on the 'Gothic' atmosphere created. Details such as Jem's shirt tail 'bobbing like a small ghost' and his cot 'trembling' on his wordless return were appreciated in the most sensitive answers.

Question 14

The candidates who attempted this question demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the text and usually an intelligent and sensitive understanding of Atticus, with astute comments on his treatment of Calpurnia, his sister and even Walter Cunningham 'in his house' and his public behaviour as witnessed in court, the rabid dog scene on the street, protecting Tom from the lynch mob, actions at Miss Maudie's house and the fire incident. No one seriously took issue with the view expressed in the question. Candidates with perception were able to focus on a subject (such as Atticus's children or the Tom Robinson case) and show Atticus's values, often expressed as 'non-judgmental' in both environments. The most notable direct reference to Lee's writing was Atticus's empathetic philosophy of walking around in someone else's shoes. Weaker answers took 'in the public streets' very literally and did not understand that the question was asking about Atticus's integrity.

Question 15

Candidates who could identify the events of the Missionary Tea Party and use them in their answer fared best here. Some responses ranged too far back in the novel. Many missed Miss Maudie's anger at the hypocrisy of the Maycomb ladies ('His food does not stick going down does it?') but most saw her support of Scout and Aunt Alexandra. The strongest answers appreciated that the news of Tom Robinson's death and Aunt Alexandra and Scout's brave reactions to it would occupy a major place in Miss Maudie's thoughts. Candidates who captured her forthright views and acerbity rather than making her merely nice and kind reaped high reward.

Nineteen Eighty-four

Questions 16-18

There were very few responses to this text. Examiners who saw them reported that they were mainly thorough and competent, if a little lacking in engagement.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 19

Strong responses understood that this is a pivotal moment in the play. Candidates knew that Juliet had threatened to kill herself rather than marry Paris and that her desperation and that of Friar Lawrence is reflected in the powerful imagery of death. They also saw the rather extreme and risky nature of the Friar's plan. Juliet's enthusiasm for this doomed scheme was seen as a mark of her desperation and courage, as well as showing her love for Romeo. Misconceptions here were that Friar Lawrence is soliloquizing and that his responsibility is diminished by the star-crossed nature of Romeo and Juliet's love. Some candidates focused on context and narrative rather than the passage itself.

Question 20

This question evinced strong views on Lady Capulet. She tended to be judged by modern day standards with few candidates seeing that it was her duty as a parent to see her daughter successfully married and that to employ a nurse for Juliet would be common aristocratic practice. Most candidates found her cold and supported this well. They were less successful at finding evidence for her spitefulness, such as her threatening to send an assassin to poison Romeo in Mantua after the death of Tybalt and disowning Juliet after she refuses to marry Paris.

Question 21

Examiners reported a wide range of responses to this question. Most candidates captured the Nurse's attitude to Tybalt's death and her anger with Romeo at causing Juliet such distress. The best answers identified the context and knew what the Nurse's role was in seeking Romeo out. Candidates also saw that she would be beginning to be concerned about her role in bringing the lovers together and having been a rather irresponsible employee. Weaker answers tended to gush and over-emphasise her 'caring' side or simply could not pinpoint the moment.



LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/53

Paper 53 (Closed Books – B)

General comments

Centres have made an impressive start in preparing candidates for this new component. Candidates generally showed sound knowledge of the set texts and personal response to characterisation and theme. Many responses were engaged and enthusiastic. They were often well constructed, thorough and sustained.

There are areas in each type of question, however, where performance could be improved. In answering passage-based questions, candidates would be better advised not to spend time putting the passage into its context in excessive detail. The focus should be on the passage itself and its language in particular. In some cases answers considered the plot and themes of the novel as a whole rather than making a detailed analysis of the passage. This is an approach more suited to the discursive question, which, in turn, requires a well-constructed argument and precise reference to the text. Whereas answers to discursive questions often demonstrated thought and balance, some needed more precise textual reference to support the views expressed. Learning and using some key quotations would allow candidates to make their responses more convincing. Supporting points with specific moments from the text is essential for high reward.

Empathic questions were answered very successfully when candidates wrote in the voice of the character and identified the moment in the text carefully. Weaker answers captured the character's attitudes but not the voice and failed to underpin the response with textual detail or echoes of what the character says in the text. The least successful answers tended to be entirely narrative. In poetry answers most candidates grasped the meaning of the poems and showed knowledge of Heaney's relationships with his family, the farming tradition and the natural world. It is vital, however, that they also have the skills to analyse the imagery, diction and structure of the poems – with particular emphasis on their effect. Mere recognition of poetic terminology is of little help in writing a successful response. Selection of particularly effective diction, simile and metaphor and a simple comment on why the poet chose to use these would at the very least ensure adequate reward.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

Comments on specific questions

Whose Life is it Anyway?

Question 1

The strongest answers to this question understood Dr Travis's role at this point in the play and the 'Catch 22' situation Ken is in as regards to proving his sanity. Most candidates grasped the emotional qualities of Ken talking about releasing his fiancée and commented on how sad the scene is. Fewer analysed the contrast between his mother and father's attitude to his wanting to die or appreciated the stoicism of his mother. The tension in the scene was generally dealt with competently. The candidates saw Ken's anger at Travers reflecting his general antipathy towards professional people.

Question 2

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

Question 3

Answers to this question captured Dr. Emerson's professionalism, conviction and pride in his superior knowledge. His sense of responsibility towards his patients was reflected effectively and strong candidates understood that he wanted to use the Valium to bring Ken to an acceptance of his condition. Weaker responses could not place the moment and were unsure about the function of the drug.

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