

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/01
Paper 1 (Open Books)

General comments

Examiners found that all tasks differentiated well, offering something to all, but at the same time giving the opportunity for the more able to demonstrate an insightful grasp of the issues raised by the task in relation to the text. Some very accomplished and sensitive work was produced at the top of the range. (There was some particularly impressive empathic work.) However, certain questions seemed to attract more than their fair share of limited responses from candidates who did not study the question wording with due care. This was most noticeable in the Poetry section. In **Question 20**, for example, quite a few clearly saw only the apparent invitation to convey their excitement about a poem and did not notice that the question spelled out the paramount need to engage with the poem's *words*. Even more surprising were the significant number of candidates who mis-read **Question 17**, thinking that it was an invitation to write on Richard's corruption rather than on those around him. Elsewhere, parts of the question which required close engagement with the detail of the text and its literary language were overlooked by many. As in previous sessions, Examiners felt that there was sometimes a failure to realise the centrality to many tasks of words such as *vividly*, *memorable*, *shocking*, *terrifying*, and *amusing*. It is worth stressing that these words in effect require the candidate to show a detailed and personal response to the writer's craft, crucial to the achievement of marks in the higher bands.

Sometimes there was little sense given of appreciating drama as something performed in a theatre in front of an audience. Hence, for instance, stage directions were treated as if they were part of a novel and indeed sometimes in drama answers it seemed telling (rather than a mere slip of the pen) that the word *novel* was used so often in referring to a set text.

While it was reassuring to find more candidates are attempting to address questions directly rather than wasting time on irrelevancies, Examiners noted that some are still writing quite lengthy preambles which do little more than go through the details of the task and then finish with a summary of what has already been said. Many, of course, did not waste time like this but plunged straight in, sometimes with some truly impressive responses to the task which were a pleasure to read.

In the passage-based (asterisked) tasks, it was obvious that candidates had been well prepared to engage with a passage's detail, although many answers just moved through the passage line by line, doing little more than describe and give basic explanation. More effective answers were usually those that provided some sort of meaningful context and then used the material of the extract to probe its meaning and effect.

Rubric infringements were extremely rare.

The most popular texts were *Lord of the Flies*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Crucible*, *Richard III* and the selection from *Songs of Ourselves*.

Comments on specific questions

A Small Family Business

Question 1

Most candidates grasped what was going on in this scene in its basics and were quite often able to respond in some degree to Hough's effrontery. However, not all were able to link it to the word *shocking*. As usual, difficulty was experienced in regard to the humour, of the way it becomes clear just how much Jack is out of his depth here.

Question 2

There was some good work submitted here. Candidates seemed to enjoy arguing out the possible responses to Jack that the drama offers. Others simply offered a character sketch with little engagement with dramatic detail.

Question 3

The relatively few empathic responses attempted here were generally quite successful at capturing Anita's voice and showing awareness of her likely attitudes at the end of the play.

A Raisin in the Sun

Question 4

Some strong work was seen from candidates who worked with the text and managed to bring out the salient features of Walter's feelings. However, the majority were less certain when it came to engaging with the dramatic power of Hansberry's writing.

Question 5

Not surprisingly the prime candidate for this task was Mama. There were few answers which were unable to bring out some of the reasons why the audience is encouraged to admire her; unfortunately, a number did this at arm's length from the detail of the dramatic role she has in the play. There were also some quite convincing arguments on behalf of Ruth and Beneatha and even Walter. Surprisingly, the latter produced some of the most strongly argued responses, perhaps because a case really had to be made, given his behaviour in much of the drama. A few did not seem to see the need for this and simply wrote a character sketch, which in the circumstances was hardly a convincing response to the task.

Question 6

There were some quite convincing assumptions of the character of Lindner. If there was a failing in some, it was that he had been taken far too much at face value and was made into a much too reasonable figure, devoid, for example, of racist opinions.

My Mother Said I Never Should

There was only a very limited amount of work on this play. The answers generally showed knowledge of the text and some response to situation and character, but some had very little material that was pertinent to the task and there was quite often confusion as to the precise relationship between the characters, particularly in **Question 9**, the empathic task.

The Crucible

Question 10

This was an immensely popular question and was quite often done well. Higher-scoring candidates involved themselves enthusiastically with the mounting drama, capturing the way the intensity of the scene developed by looking in detail at the dialogue and action. However, in this respect (and as in some previous sessions) Examiners noted excessive reliance on Miller's stage directions, with candidates continuing to treat them as if an audience would be aware of them and that they would be part of their dramatic experience as written. There were also instances of near total misunderstanding of Miller's fundamental purposes. To suggest that it is horrifying that the Devil is present in Salem is to miss a central point; what is really horrifying here is that adults are caught up in a hysteria based upon at best self-delusion and at worst blatant fabrication.

Question 11

Though this task was, by contrast, far less popular, most answers showed some reasonable knowledge of Danforth. However, not very many managed really to engage with him as a terrifying dramatic character. For instance, few made his twisted logic a focus for the answer. Too often, if there was detail, it was offered simply as undeveloped quotation and reference in which the dramatic effect of what he says and does was not really explored.



Question 12

In general most candidates had a reasonable grasp of the general situation. However, a rather hazy grasp of the context quite often emerged and it was difficult for some to capture an authentic voice. Elizabeth was made to sound on occasions like Abigail.

As You Like It

Question 13

There were some good answers to this question, but more often candidates who tackled it were unable to grasp the tone and meaning of the word-play and hence they often quite misread the relationship between Audrey and Touchstone.

Question 14

This task was better done. Most candidates showed a basic knowledge of the relationship. However, many answers developed into a simple narrative and did not deliver anything meaningful in regard to the relationship's dramatic significance. A few did not even advance beyond the opening scene.

Question 15

This was not very popular but generally was quite well done. The situation was usually understood and Duke Senior's benevolence was often quite well captured.

Richard III

Question 16

This was a very popular question, attempted with varying success. Often the soliloquy was seen simply as further evidence of Richard's villainy and occasionally there was even lack of knowledge of the context. Some candidates thought that Lady Anne had still to be persuaded into matrimony. Conversely, there were some notable answers which responded with relish to Richard's amazement at his success, to his irony and to his wit, making great play of the way he is making the audience complicit to his thoughts. These candidates were at all times exploring with evident pleasure the detail of the language.

Question 17

There were a few who wrote convincingly about such figures as Buckingham, Hastings, Stanley, Catesby, Lady Anne, and Tyrrel. Overall, though, this task was rather poorly done, usually because the question wording was ignored. On the face of it, it is difficult to see how the task can be translated as an invitation to write about Richard himself – but a number did precisely that, sometimes hardly even mentioning other characters. Perhaps those with a hazy knowledge of anything beyond the central figure tended to choose this task, determined to offload prepared material at any cost.

Question 18

Stanley's voice is not particularly developed in the play but his equivocal role and situation is clear enough – of a man between a rock and a hard place – and most caught that well. Some answers made too much of his supposed allegiance to Richmond. At Bosworth he awaits the outcome, though some might argue that is because of his son. Some thought wrongly that at this stage his son has already been taken as a hostage. In fact, it happens after he delivers the news.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

The majority of the poetry answers were on this question. Few candidates failed to deliver the basic point of the poem. In fact, there was often quite a strong response to Shelley's message. Quite a few went far beyond that, doing what the question asked in laying out in detail the poet's feelings, stanza by stanza. (A significant number inappropriately used the word 'paragraph' instead of 'stanza' or 'verse'.) The best answers saw the figures of speech and explored them in detail; in weaker answers, phrases such as *stingless drones* tended simply to be noted. The strongest answers charted the changes of tone throughout



the poem. They saw the significant shift at the poem's end, how the tone shifts to something almost like derision of the downtrodden's apparent acceptance of their servile state.

Question 20

There were occasions when a candidate had a clear grasp of the poem but neglected to use the material to bring out the character of the speaker, which the question required. Those who did read the question, however, often showed a detailed engagement with the voice of the poem and the words which create that voice. At times candidates became very muddled as to who was speaking in *Little Boy Crying*, some even trying to argue that the boy is the speaker throughout.

Question 21

This task was intended to stimulate candidates to engage with lines which had made the greatest impact upon them in two poems of their choice. Sometimes that was the result but more often it just led to general protestation of enthusiasm about a poem as a whole.

Keats, Selected Poems

This was a markedly less popular choice for the poetry section than the *Songs of Ourselves* selection. As with that, candidates fared best when they were able to explore effects of the poet's language in relation to the question, as opposed to stating unsupported generalities.

Question 22

There were a small number of effective responses which recognised Keats's ability to create atmosphere. By contrast, others simply paraphrased the extract, demonstrating little real understanding.

Question 23

Ode to a Nightingale was a more popular choice than *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. There were some pleasing responses along with a more significant number which simply ran through the chosen poem instead of engaging with the requirement to consider how Keats appeals to the reader's senses.

Question 24

Of those few who tackled this task, most referred to Keats's writing in general rather than to the set extract from *Endymion*.

Things Fall Apart

Question 25

Many answers gave some very good reasons why Okonkwo should be thought to be right to be full of hate. Sometimes this did not journey much beyond a simple list, but quite a number looked at the detail of the extract and made a very convincing argument. Conversely, a few answers paid little attention to the extract at all, simply writing a general attack upon racism and colonialism. Interestingly some who took this line seemed to think that the court messengers were white. It was also interesting to read thoughtful answers which suggested that right in the passage was not simply to be found with Okonkwo and his comrades.

Question 26

This was not a popular question and was seldom done well. Candidates had difficulty in providing a focus for their answers and tended to drift from one feature to another without much attempt to explore what made them memorable. If there was such an attempt, it was rarely questioning of the values implicit in tribal culture.

Question 27

This was probably the most successful empathic task on the paper. There were some very impressive assumptions which brought out in the voice all Okonkwo's contempt for his father's life and values and his determination to be quite different. His situation was not always fully grasped, though. Some failed to note that he had already made something of his life. Some kindly disposed candidates felt inappropriately that he must have some compassion for his father.

Pride and Prejudice

Question 28

Some candidates took delight in the way Austen sets off husband and wife against one another. Their answers brought many of the marvellous ironies to life. Conversely, those who struggled to appreciate the ironies tended just to describe the situation without being at all able to penetrate to the amusement it produces.

Question 29

There were some good answers to this. As usual, high reward only went to those who picked up on the particular features which, though often hidden, are the central reasons for Darcy's being worthy of Elizabeth's love. Some answers tended just to write a character sketch plotting their way through the novel, though curiously often not reaching Pemberley.

Question 30

This empathic task was highly popular and was often very well done. Lady Catherine's fury, her feelings of impotence and her hateful snobbery often fully emerged, as did her hauteur. Curiously, a few thought that at this stage she would probably accept the inevitable quite swiftly, welcome the pair at Rosings and visit Pemberley. This is not so, as the end of the novel makes plain.

The God Boy

There was far too little work submitted on this text for meaningful general comment to be made.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Question 34

The very few who attempted this task usually found some difficulty in relating to the artist and possible buyers.

Question 35

This was answered well by candidates who chose appropriate subjects for their 'weak-willed and unhappy' men. Some chose inappropriately, though, and hence found difficulty in justifying their choices.

Question 36

While this had a relatively small take-up, this task elicited some competent responses which caught David accurately.

Lord of the Flies

Question 37

Some candidates did little more than make general comments without engaging with the detail of the writing, and a few surprisingly had little apparent sense of the context. Nevertheless, generally there was some really good work on this extract, notable for catching the way in which what is unspoken or that which Ralph does not wish to be articulated is what makes this moment in the novel so terrifying. Much emphasis was given to Roger's sharpening of the stick at both ends and of what that brought to mind in the reader.

Question 38

Candidates who had a detailed knowledge of the novel were able to tackle the approach demanded by the question. They were able to explore with precision the moments when Piggy's influence was at its greatest. There were, by contrast, many who simply wrote the history of Piggy which sometimes happened to impinge on Ralph. Some who clearly had a most uncertain grasp of the novel beyond its early pages made out Piggy's importance to be simply the object of Ralph's ridicule.



Question 39

This was another successful empathic task, though sometimes answers were not convincing. Most caught something of Jack's inherent attitudes and his confident arrogant voice. However, quite a few were not sufficiently attentive to the precise situation of the task. They made out Jack already to be in furious opposition to Ralph, which is not the case just after the exploration of the island. A few answers were so uncertain of the detail of the novel that they placed Jack at the moment when he first leads the choristers out of the jungle.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Question 40

Very few attempted this question. Many of those who did simply re-told what was in the passage, gaining only modest reward.

Question 41

This was the most popular of the three Hardy questions. Candidates at all levels of ability showed sympathy to Fanny in view of her harsh, unrelenting suffering.

Question 42

This was far less popular, but it elicited some convincing displays of Bathsheba's spirit and independence.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 43

There were some good attempts at this task, fully bringing out the developing drama of the moment. A pleasing number saw that a signal part of the drama was Scout's lack of understanding of the mortal danger in which the family find themselves. Conversely there were a number who paid little attention to the detail of Lee's writing and merely described the general situation, sometimes even getting that wrong by casting Scout in the role of knowledgeable rather than unwitting heroine.

Question 44

This was another one of those tasks which, for good reward, requires some detailed grasp of the novel throughout its length and the ability to create a line of argument supported by specific detail to show how Scout develops into a girl of understanding by the end of the book. Not very many seemed up to the task. Answers often simply listed a number of incidents in the novel which had something to do with Scout's character and maturation; these were usually loosely connected within an answer, and sometimes not even that.

Question 45

This produced many lively responses which captured much of Ewell's expectations of the trial, his rage, his thirst for blood and his detestation of Atticus. In many answers his tone of voice and crudity was captured well. Some candidates, however, seemed rather to hold back, giving him thoughts and expressions which were way above his intellectual capabilities.

Into the Wind

Question 46

Quite a few candidates responded well to this extract, in particular catching exactly the prying nature of the town and its stifling constrictions on women. However, an understanding of Lilian was harder to come by, perhaps because at times it is inferred rather than stated. Hence, only those accustomed to read with real attention succeeded. Quite a few did not grasp how some of this telling detail speaks of an independent, not to say spirited woman, not inclined to be ruled by the conventions of this small-minded town.



Question 47

Overall, the work on *The Lemon Orchard* was more successful than that on *Samphire*. For the former, most conveyed successfully the attitudes of the man's tormentors and some wrote with insight how even the setting intensifies this. Only the best candidates, however, saw how the victim's hate is communicated as well even in his silence. In *Samphire* most were able to chart just how detestable the husband was and to make some comment upon him being worthy of hate, but they often struggled to trace the way the author is constantly hinting at Molly being a character silently reaching the end of her tether.

Question 48

Some caught very well Tom's male chauvinist assumptions that he is entitled to the woman's attentions simply because he thinks he has been better behaved than his mates. They also caught his rage when the woman clearly does not see it his way and effectively humiliates him. In other answers candidates hit the wrong note, quite missing the offence he takes at the treatment he receives and making him into some romantic who has been rejected by the love of his life.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/02

Coursework

Each Centre will receive a short individual report on its submission. The purpose of this report is to pick out a few overall features of the work presented and of the way the component was administered.

Once again this session, there was much quality work on display, some of it very impressive indeed. Centres are to be congratulated on the work and on its presentation.

It was clear that the majority of candidates had approached their assignments with seriousness and industry. Just occasionally there was still a feeling of over-dependence on commonly prepared material which somewhat diminished the possibilities for individual thought and opinion. The wish that candidates should put their best feet forward is understandable but over-insistent guidance may not always achieve that goal and may instead inhibit personal engagement.

It is helpful to the candidates to choose texts within their ability range. For example, some candidates simply did not understand the sub-text of stories on which they had elected to write, which limited their response to the text.

It was noted that some essays on drama tended to rely too heavily on stage directions at the expense of exploring dialogue, especially when dealing with feelings. There was still a tendency to consider dramatic effect on 'the reader' rather than the audience.

Overall, there was an improvement in the standard of task-setting. However, there were still instances of tasks which hindered the candidates from fulfilling all the assessment objectives. For example, to invite a candidate simply to write about a character and then to criticise that candidate for not engaging with the *writing* seems somewhat harsh; such a requirement to engage with the writer's craft must be made manifest in the task itself. It is quite simply done. Instead of asking for a character sketch, one has only to frame a task in something like the following format: *How does author X portray the character Y in the play/novel?*

There is no requirement for direct comparison of texts. In poetry in particular, furthermore, there is a risk that it might divert candidates from engaging with the features which make each poem unique. Some Centres imposed a 'linking' theme: e.g. 'Discuss the theme of money in two poems', but this sometimes resulted in the choice of poems where the given theme was only peripherally relevant (e.g. in using poems from the *Songs of Ourselves* anthology linking 'money' in 'the Storyteller' to 'Spectator ab Extra').

There were on occasions teacher annotations which asserted that the candidates had closely engaged with poetic language when they had simply noted features and failed to explore the reasons for the powerful effect of those features.

The task setting in the empathic mode was more convincing this session. Centres seem to have grasped the necessity of it being rooted in the characters of the text and also in a situation which is actual in the text and not invented. Perhaps a word of caution is needed here in regard to the language demands this kind of assignment makes upon the candidate. For those who have problems with idiomatic English it may be difficult to achieve the top two bands of the assessment criteria because they will struggle to find an authentic voice for the character, a key factor in the assessment at this level.

Candidates should be encouraged to write at a suitable length for the scope of their ideas and once or twice the Moderators felt that they detected examples of candidates being forced to curtail the full development of their material. Teachers are reminded that the guideline for assignment length has now been expanded to be between 600-1000 words.

As last year, the presentation of the folders was largely excellent. The folders were without fail clearly packaged, and no Centre failed this time round to carry out the basic administration tasks. In the great majority of cases, the Student Record Card comments were helpful to the Moderator. However, there were

times when there could have been more annotation on the essays. There still seems to be a tendency to wish to present the assignment in the neatest and cleanest manner possible. For the purposes of validation it is essential to have plenty of the evidence that the teacher has responded in detail to the assignment, even if some of the comments may be critical. No external Moderator is going to be swayed adversely simply because the teacher has offered critical advice to the candidate. Indeed, the Moderator is more likely to look askance at things which do not appear to have been noted. Comments in assignments which, for example, assert that Richard III dies in the war against Hastings or that there is no mention of the Colonel's wife in *Daughters of the Late Colonel* should really be picked up and noted in the annotation of the assignment.

There were still a few details of administration which might have been improved in some cases. Most commonly, it was still not always made clear on the Student Record Card whether one was looking at the original mark or the one after internal moderation. It should be the latter but it is perfectly reasonable, indeed helpful, if the original is shown and then crossed out with the moderated one beside it. That indicates in the clearest manner possible that internal moderation has occurred and that some alteration has taken place.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/03
Alternative to Coursework
(Unseen)

General comments

Answers were almost equally divided between the poem and the prose.

Overall, Examiners were delighted with the quality of commentary. Candidates clearly engaged with both the subject matter and the expression of the writing, and most were able to appreciate layers of meaning beneath the surface of these texts. Even though both were meditative rather than narrative pieces of writing, candidates generally used the questions, bullet points and supporting material carefully to structure their responses. Very weak answers were relatively rare: although there were some notable confusions, most candidates achieved a general level of understanding. Many commented with some thoroughness on aspects of language and the writer's craft, and some answers were remarkable for their originality, sensitivity, perception and penetration of response.

Most candidates realise the importance of engaging with what writers say and how they say it, and are able to shape their own reading around the language of the text. Few now approach texts with a checklist of 'features' merely to be logged as absent or present, and most see the need to move beyond paraphrase, and use quotation as a way of directing comment on the effectiveness of diction, imagery and tone. Many candidates made a very impressive range of points within the brief compass of a two- or three-side essay.

However, there are still some aspects of candidates' approach to the paper which would benefit from further direction. There remain too many who write over-lengthy introductions simply repeating the terms of the question. While candidates are right to make their first priority a response to the question, it would be better if they used their own words to show understanding, while an initial exploration of ways in which the issues raised by the question are reflected in the writing is the mark of a top-grade candidate who appreciates the writer's use of language. A clear and focused overview containing a synthesis of the text's emotional impact and means of expression almost invariably leads to an organised and sustained essay. Some candidates still waste time preparing an almost identical fair copy, rarely any more or less legible than the first version. It is much better to spend time annotating the passages on the question paper, or writing a brief plan. Long repetitive responses penalise themselves through lack of concise and directed critical argument. (Some Centres persist in using twelve- or even sixteen-side answer booklets which might encourage Candidates to produce over-lengthy answers; in this exam about three sides (writing on both sides of the paper) is usually enough if the response is tightly argued and well-supported.

There were a few candidates who answered both questions, and many more who might have paid more attention to other aspects of the rubric. The rubric before the question is intended to help candidates avoid basic errors of understanding because they are not reading the texts in context. Therefore the rubric for the poem made it clear that it was about 'going to sleep' not a dream, and suggested the central importance of the comparison with entering a forest. Similarly the rubric for the prose succinctly told candidates the age, gender, nationality and religious background of Leah. Candidates who read this should not have confused Leah with Anatole, and might even have picked up the Messianic nature of the father's vision.

Most candidates now appreciate that the question is in bold, and usually asks the question 'how?' Answers are generally discriminated by the degree to which they go beyond commentary or purely personal response and answer the question through minute comment on choice of word, image or tone. The best candidates use very short (often single-word) quotations embedded within their sentences. Quotation supports the candidate's own statement and is succeeded by an explanation of the ways in which that particular word or image illustrates an idea or feeling, and why it was chosen by the writer. The bullet points tend to follow a formula: the first bullet point offers a way into the text through an aspect of the writing, the second highlights a particular aspect of the ways in which the text develops and the third allows a personal response to the text as a whole, linking different aspects of the writing. Most candidates cope competently with the first and third bullet points, although some write individual responses to the third which have little to do with the text, when

the idea behind it is to link what the candidate has already read and written to their individual response to the question. The second bullet point is often a discriminator between stronger and less strong candidates: only the better readers see the importance of development and progression in a piece of writing, and how this is often achieved by subtle changes in form, tone, organisation and expression. While most candidates can make thoughtful comment on language, far fewer are able to address the form and structure of a piece of writing. They might profitably spend more time dividing the text into three or four sections and looking at development and change within the text in order to ensure that their answers do not become repetitive.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Edward Thomas's poem was one of his last and is often read within collections of First World War poetry, but it is interesting to read the poem without this context, as the writing of a poet obsessed with wandering, walking and pathways. It was certainly not necessary to identify an elegiac note within the poem, although many did so, and one or two interestingly compared the poem with 'The Road Not Taken', a poem about Thomas by his friend Robert Frost. One candidate concluded: "The poet's intention was perhaps to remind us of the messy and occasionally mindless nature of real life and of the need to succumb to the numbness of sleep to achieve individual peace of mind." Another thought that Thomas conveyed a "sense of satisfaction in the peace that he experiences in the emotionless void of sleep." Such responses show impressive engagement with the complex and often ambivalent mood of the text.

The best answers saw progression and development in the poem: from language which evokes the dark, sinister, deep deceptions of entanglement in the forest, towards a conscious choice of submission to the inevitable oblivion. Only a small minority saw the importance of verse form. Many noticed the hypnotic, even soporific, repetitiveness of rhyme and rhythm, and many commented sensitively on the alternation of enjambment and end-stopping. However, the variations and irregularities of form are possibly more important, not least the effect of the short final lines to each stanza, and especially the poignantly curtailed final line. Nor did many pay explicit attention to the short line 'Here love ends – ' or what is implied by the use of the dash. A common mistake was to ignore the words 'up to' and the use of the past tense in the second stanza. This inattentive reading led to responses which failed to see that the stanza applies to waking hours, and consequently too many were sidetracked into seeing this as a dream vision and writing about dreaming. Some thought that the poet was waking up after sleep. Careful reading will make it clear that the poet remains 'on the border of sleep' throughout the poem. Stronger candidates saw that the poet is neither uncomplicatedly positive, nor alarmed, by the idea of sleep. The better answers tackled stanza three sensitively and realised that he asserts that both pleasant and unpleasant aspects of life end in sleep, and they were able to link this to Thomas's willing embrace of escape from the everyday world in the final two stanzas. The very best engaged with the imagery of the final stanzas in deeply interesting ways. For example, some saw the towers as emblematic of strength and security, some as bulky and sinister, representing the power of sleep. Some commented on the paradox of hearing silence or on the personification of sleep as a commanding military presence. Such candidates traced patterns of compulsion, surrender, abandonment and submission throughout the poem, whether as something the persona welcomed, or as something dark and terrifying, related to imagery of loss and sinking. Many linked sleep to death, and to the acceptance of fate. Such interpretations certainly fit what we know of the poet, but it is precisely the strength of the poem that it can encourage such a range of possible readings, all of which were highly rewarded by Examiners.

Successful candidates:

- engaged explicitly with the question and suggested a range of different feelings
- avoided over-simplification: many noticed the way in which the poet uses paradox, oppositions or antonyms (straight/winding, soon/late, despair/ambition, pleasure/trouble, enter/leave, silence/hear) to convey ambiguity or ambivalence
- saw patterns in the rhyme and rhythm of the verse
- explored central images and analysed their possible effects
- focused on the effects of significant details and changes, e.g. the return to use of the first-person and a more intimate tone in the final two stanzas
- saw the poem as a journey of thought and were able to map progression
- used the final bullet point for a personal response grounded in the poem
- avoided a linear stanza-by-stanza approach, but instead read the poem thematically and moved confidently between different stanzas to provide textual support for a number of observations.

Less successful candidates:

- looked only at a few aspects of the poem, usually the opening of stanza three
- tended to read the poem literally rather than metaphorically
- explored a limited range of possible feelings, simplifying the poem as merely joyful or fearful
- tended towards narrative paraphrase, or made lengthy quotations from the text without further comment, analysis or development: this is to ignore the 'how' element to the question
- logged the presence of linguistic features such as alliteration or assonance without correctly identifying them or commenting on their effect
- were often sidetracked into sweeping discussions about dreams and lost contact with the text altogether.

Question 2

The question was in two parts in order to deal with two different aspects of the passage. This begins with Leah as narrator telling us how difficult she found it to articulate her response to Anatole's question in words and providing a complex series of similes and metaphors to capture that cultural difference. What she says to Anatole is much simpler, as she is trying to articulate that difference succinctly and in language adapted to his very different experience of the world, but not because he is ignorant or immature. His response is amused, rather than bemused: he understands the impossibility of what Leah's father is attempting and Leah finds a memorable and amusing way to express this too. The last part of the passage shows her expressing her concern at the growing rift with her father and how she confides in Anatole about this.

Most candidates clearly enjoyed writing about cultural difference, difficulties in communication, an embarrassing father, and about Leah's adolescent desire to fit in with those around her. These were clearly emotions many could understand very well and which appealed to them. Many answers were highly engaged and sensitive. As ever, the discriminating factor was the degree to which candidates could demonstrate conscious awareness of the writer at work. Those who were able to comment on the narrative voice, and saw Leah as constructed by the writer to dramatise that cultural clash, were likely to be especially highly rewarded. Others found it more difficult to distinguish between different aspects of the text: the descriptive passage was referred to by some candidates, but rarely explored in real detail or seen as different in style from the dialogue. Only the strongest answers also included some reference to humour, and realised that Anatole is amused by Leah's descriptions and that she plays up to this. While plenty could address the third bullet point more confidently than the second, they did not always see that Leah's discomfort with her father is closely connected to the ways in which he rides roughshod (or rubber-shod) over the cultural differences she has explained to Anatole. However, there were many excellent answers which showed acute appreciation of ways in which her explanations highlight that the crucial difference between the two inheres in their response to the natural world and human beings' place within it. The very strongest saw the colonialist assumptions behind the father's attitude, and his attempt to 'bring [the Congo] up to snuff'. Some also picked up an implicit criticism of the sterility of nature in the USA and the limitations of the American response to the natural world in Leah's sharp and mocking similes. While most candidates were able to see the differences between the Congo and the USA, only better candidates looked carefully at how Leah expresses these, and only the very best could see the implications of this for the way she relates both to her current situation and to her family. They appreciated that Anatole picks this up, and sees both the struggle Leah's father will have in fulfilling his vocation, and the unhappiness of Leah's mother. Some candidates thought that Leah, as a fifteen-year old, would automatically be aggrieved at moving to the Congo and would hate it. However, the majority understood how her understanding of the world is developing and broadening, and appreciated the sophistication of her language and the emotional range the character expresses. They saw the way in which experience can challenge presumptions, and they approached the complexity of feelings in this text in a highly mature way.

Successful candidates:

- tackled both strands of the question explicitly and allowed enough time for the second part
- recognised the difference between Leah's thoughts and her speech
- understood the reasons for limitations in Anatole's understanding and explored the interaction and relationship between Leah and Anatole in some detail
- engaged with the liveliness of the dialogue and picked up subtle clues from the paralinguistic descriptions both to Leah's struggles and Anatole's amusement
- wrestled with Leah's complex and contradictory feelings (for the Congo, for the USA, for her father, about herself...) without oversimplifying them
- realised that Anatole's experience of the world outside the Congo is limited but identified his sardonic, rather knowing responses to Leah's 'parables'

- explored central images in detail and suggested a range of effects and meanings ('little mice squirming...like kings on thrones...a blue-green dream...rubber tires on a horse...')
- were specific about what exactly Leah finds 'crazy'
- understood the subtlety and centrality of Leah's conclusion: 'The point I was trying to make...'
- noted the unhappiness of Leah's mother
- found humour as well as irony in the writing.

Less successful candidates:

- had difficulty balancing out the two strands of the question, writing about one aspect (often the second) better than the other
- tended to narrate and paraphrase, or summarised what happened without tackling the question explicitly
- focused on the differences between the two countries rather than Leah's attempts to describe them
- found it difficult to pin down the difference between what Leah thinks and what she says, not paying enough attention to the difference between description and dialogue
- ignored the vital role of Anatole in the dialogue or remained confused about the ages and genders of Leah and Anatole. Some thought Anatole a little boy, or lacking in education and understanding
- were uncertain as to when Leah's thoughts switched from the Congo to the USA and vice-versa
- oversimplified Leah's feelings – as homesickness, or disgust at the Congo's lack of development
- had difficulty in engaging with the style and techniques of the writing, often quoting from the text without further analysis or exploration of the effectiveness of the writing
- had difficulty in distinguishing between the metaphorical and literal, thinking that manioc was literally grown in the USA or that Leah's father wanted to put rubber bands around a horse
- ignored the second strand of the question or ran out of time before considering the family
- did not understand the full implication of Leah's father being 'determined to plant his American garden in the Congo and how this might be connected to the cultural differences noted in response to the first half of the question

Finally, Examiners were highly gratified by the way in which candidates usually responded to these demanding and complex passages. The standard of answers seems to continue to improve: very weak answers were rare and the best showed extraordinary perception and insight, showing how literary study continues to inspire very able Candidates while also providing something to engage with for candidates with a wide range of abilities. Centres are clearly preparing candidates very well indeed, and there is a developing appreciation of the skills the examination is designed to demonstrate.



LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/04

Paper 4 (Closed Books)

General comments

Examiners found that all tasks differentiated well, offering something to all, but at the same time giving the opportunity for the more able to demonstrate an insightful grasp of the issues raised by the task in relation to the text. Some very accomplished and sensitive work was produced at the top of the range. (There was some particularly impressive empathic work.) However, certain questions seemed to attract more than their fair share of limited responses from candidates who did not study the question wording with due care. This was most noticeable in the Poetry section. In **Question 20**, for example, quite a few clearly saw only the apparent invitation to convey their excitement about a poem and did not notice that the question spelled out the paramount need to engage with the poem's *words*. Even more surprising were the significant number of candidates who mis-read **Question 17**, thinking that it was an invitation to write on Richard's corruption rather than on those around him. Elsewhere, parts of the question which required close engagement with the detail of the text and its literary language were overlooked by many. As in previous sessions, Examiners felt that there was sometimes a failure to realise the centrality to many tasks of words such as *vividly*, *memorable*, *shocking*, *terrifying*, and *amusing*. It is worth stressing that these words in effect require the candidate to show a detailed and personal response to the writer's craft, crucial to the achievement of marks in the higher bands.

Sometimes there was little sense given of appreciating drama as something performed in a theatre in front of an audience. Hence, for instance, stage directions were treated as if they were part of a novel and indeed sometimes in drama answers it seemed telling (rather than a mere slip of the pen) that the word *novel* was used so often in referring to a set text.

While it was reassuring to find more candidates are attempting to address questions directly rather than wasting time on irrelevancies, Examiners noted that some are still writing quite lengthy preambles which do little more than go through the details of the task and then finish with a summary of what has already been said. Many, of course, did not waste time like this but plunged straight in, sometimes with some truly impressive responses to the task which were a pleasure to read.

In the passage-based (asterisked) tasks, it was obvious that candidates had been well prepared to engage with a passage's detail, although many answers just moved through the passage line by line, doing little more than describe and give basic explanation. More effective answers were usually those that provided some sort of meaningful context and then used the material of the extract to probe its meaning and effect.

Rubric infringements were extremely rare.

The most popular texts were *Lord of the Flies*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Crucible*, *Richard III* and the selection from *Songs of Ourselves*.

Comments on specific questions

A Small Family Business

Question 1

Most candidates grasped what was going on in this scene in its basics and were quite often able to respond in some degree to Hough's effrontery. However, not all were able to link it to the word *shocking*. As usual, difficulty was experienced in regard to the humour, of the way it becomes clear just how much Jack is out of his depth here.



Question 2

There was some good work submitted here. Candidates seemed to enjoy arguing out the possible responses to Jack that the drama offers. Others simply offered a character sketch with little engagement with dramatic detail.

Question 3

The relatively few empathic responses attempted here were generally quite successful at capturing Anita's voice and showing awareness of her likely attitudes at the end of the play.

A Raisin in the Sun

Question 4

Some strong work was seen from candidates who worked with the text and managed to bring out the salient features of Walter's feelings. However, the majority were less certain when it came to engaging with the dramatic power of Hansberry's writing.

Question 5

Not surprisingly the prime candidate for this task was Mama. There were few answers which were unable to bring out some of the reasons why the audience is encouraged to admire her; unfortunately, a number did this at arm's length from the detail of the dramatic role she has in the play. There were also some quite convincing arguments on behalf of Ruth and Beneatha and even Walter. Surprisingly, the latter produced some of the most strongly argued responses, perhaps because a case really had to be made, given his behaviour in much of the drama. A few did not seem to see the need for this and simply wrote a character sketch, which in the circumstances was hardly a convincing response to the task.

Question 6

There were some quite convincing assumptions of the character of Lindner. If there was a failing in some, it was that he had been taken far too much at face value and was made into a much too reasonable figure, devoid, for example, of racist opinions.

My Mother Said I Never Should

There was only a very limited amount of work on this play. The answers generally showed knowledge of the text and some response to situation and character, but some had very little material that was pertinent to the task and there was quite often confusion as to the precise relationship between the characters, particularly in **Question 9**, the empathic task.

The Crucible

Question 10

This was an immensely popular question and was quite often done well. Higher-scoring candidates involved themselves enthusiastically with the mounting drama, capturing the way the intensity of the scene developed by looking in detail at the dialogue and action. However, in this respect (and as in some previous sessions) Examiners noted excessive reliance on Miller's stage directions, with candidates continuing to treat them as if an audience would be aware of them and that they would be part of their dramatic experience as written. There were also instances of near total misunderstanding of Miller's fundamental purposes. To suggest that it is horrifying that the Devil is present in Salem is to miss a central point; what is really horrifying here is that adults are caught up in a hysteria based upon at best self-delusion and at worst blatant fabrication.

Question 11

Though this task was, by contrast, far less popular, most answers showed some reasonable knowledge of Danforth. However, not very many managed really to engage with him as a terrifying dramatic character. For instance, few made his twisted logic a focus for the answer. Too often, if there was detail, it was offered simply as undeveloped quotation and reference in which the dramatic effect of what he says and does was not really explored.

Question 12

In general most candidates had a reasonable grasp of the general situation. However, a rather hazy grasp of the context quite often emerged and it was difficult for some to capture an authentic voice. Elizabeth was made to sound on occasions like Abigail.

As You Like It

Question 13

There were some good answers to this question, but more often candidates who tackled it were unable to grasp the tone and meaning of the word-play and hence they often quite misread the relationship between Audrey and Touchstone.

Question 14

This task was better done. Most candidates showed a basic knowledge of the relationship. However, many answers developed into a simple narrative and did not deliver anything meaningful in regard to the relationship's dramatic significance. A few did not even advance beyond the opening scene.

Question 15

This was not very popular but generally was quite well done. The situation was usually understood and Duke Senior's benevolence was often quite well captured.

Richard III

Question 16

This was a very popular question, attempted with varying success. Often the soliloquy was seen simply as further evidence of Richard's villainy and occasionally there was even lack of knowledge of the context. Some candidates thought that Lady Anne had still to be persuaded into matrimony. Conversely, there were some notable answers which responded with relish to Richard's amazement at his success, to his irony and to his wit, making great play of the way he is making the audience complicit to his thoughts. These candidates were at all times exploring with evident pleasure the detail of the language.

Question 17

There were a few who wrote convincingly about such figures as Buckingham, Hastings, Stanley, Catesby, Lady Anne, and Tyrrel. Overall, though, this task was rather poorly done, usually because the question wording was ignored. On the face of it, it is difficult to see how the task can be translated as an invitation to write about Richard himself – but a number did precisely that, sometimes hardly even mentioning other characters. Perhaps those with a hazy knowledge of anything beyond the central figure tended to choose this task, determined to offload prepared material at any cost.

Question 18

Stanley's voice is not particularly developed in the play but his equivocal role and situation is clear enough – of a man between a rock and a hard place – and most caught that well. Some answers made too much of his supposed allegiance to Richmond. At Bosworth he awaits the outcome, though some might argue that is because of his son. Some thought wrongly that at this stage his son has already been taken as a hostage. In fact, it happens after he delivers the news.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

The majority of the poetry answers were on this question. Few candidates failed to deliver the basic point of the poem. In fact, there was often quite a strong response to Shelley's message. Quite a few went far beyond that, doing what the question asked in laying out in detail the poet's feelings, stanza by stanza. (A significant number inappropriately used the word 'paragraph' instead of 'stanza' or 'verse'.) The best answers saw the figures of speech and explored them in detail; in weaker answers, phrases such as *stingless drones* tended simply to be noted. The strongest answers charted the changes of tone throughout



the poem. They saw the significant shift at the poem's end, how the tone shifts to something almost like derision of the downtrodden's apparent acceptance of their servile state.

Question 20

There were occasions when a candidate had a clear grasp of the poem but neglected to use the material to bring out the character of the speaker, which the question required. Those who did read the question, however, often showed a detailed engagement with the voice of the poem and the words which create that voice. At times candidates became very muddled as to who was speaking in *Little Boy Crying*, some even trying to argue that the boy is the speaker throughout.

Question 21

This task was intended to stimulate candidates to engage with lines which had made the greatest impact upon them in two poems of their choice. Sometimes that was the result but more often it just led to general protestation of enthusiasm about a poem as a whole.

Keats, Selected Poems

This was a markedly less popular choice for the poetry section than the *Songs of Ourselves* selection. As with that, candidates fared best when they were able to explore effects of the poet's language in relation to the question, as opposed to stating unsupported generalities.

Question 22

There were a small number of effective responses which recognised Keats's ability to create atmosphere. By contrast, others simply paraphrased the extract, demonstrating little real understanding.

Question 23

Ode to a Nightingale was a more popular choice than *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. There were some pleasing responses along with a more significant number which simply ran through the chosen poem instead of engaging with the requirement to consider how Keats appeals to the reader's senses.

Question 24

Of those few who tackled this task, most referred to Keats's writing in general rather than to the set extract from *Endymion*.

Things Fall Apart

Question 25

Many answers gave some very good reasons why Okonkwo should be thought to be right to be full of hate. Sometimes this did not journey much beyond a simple list, but quite a number looked at the detail of the extract and made a very convincing argument. Conversely, a few answers paid little attention to the extract at all, simply writing a general attack upon racism and colonialism. Interestingly some who took this line seemed to think that the court messengers were white. It was also interesting to read thoughtful answers which suggested that right in the passage was not simply to be found with Okonkwo and his comrades.

Question 26

This was not a popular question and was seldom done well. Candidates had difficulty in providing a focus for their answers and tended to drift from one feature to another without much attempt to explore what made them memorable. If there was such an attempt, it was rarely questioning of the values implicit in tribal culture.

Question 27

This was probably the most successful empathic task on the paper. There were some very impressive assumptions which brought out in the voice all Okonkwo's contempt for his father's life and values and his determination to be quite different. His situation was not always fully grasped, though. Some failed to note

that he had already made something of his life. Some kindly disposed candidates felt inappropriately that he must have some compassion for his father.

Pride and Prejudice

Question 28

Some candidates took delight in the way Austen sets off husband and wife against one another. Their answers brought many of the marvellous ironies to life. Conversely, those who struggled to appreciate the ironies tended just to describe the situation without being at all able to penetrate to the amusement it produces.

Question 29

There were some good answers to this. As usual, high reward only went to those who picked up on the particular features which, though often hidden, are the central reasons for Darcy's being worthy of Elizabeth's love. Some answers tended just to write a character sketch plotting their way through the novel, though curiously often not reaching Pemberley.

Question 30

This empathic task was highly popular and was often very well done. Lady Catherine's fury, her feelings of impotence and her hateful snobbery often fully emerged, as did her hauteur. Curiously, a few thought that at this stage she would probably accept the inevitable quite swiftly, welcome the pair at Rosings and visit Pemberley. This is not so, as the end of the novel makes plain.

The God Boy

There was far too little work submitted on this text for meaningful general comment to be made.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Question 34

The very few who attempted this task usually found some difficulty in relating to the artist and possible buyers.

Question 35

This was answered well by candidates who chose appropriate subjects for their 'weak-willed and unhappy' men. Some chose inappropriately, though, and hence found difficulty in justifying their choices.

Question 36

While this had a relatively small take-up, this task elicited some competent responses which caught David accurately.

Lord of the Flies

Question 37

Some candidates did little more than make general comments without engaging with the detail of the writing, and a few surprisingly had little apparent sense of the context. Nevertheless, generally there was some really good work on this extract, notable for catching the way in which what is unspoken or that which Ralph does not wish to be articulated is what makes this moment in the novel so terrifying. Much emphasis was given to Roger's sharpening of the stick at both ends and of what that brought to mind in the reader.

Question 38

Candidates who had a detailed knowledge of the novel were able to tackle the approach demanded by the question. They were able to explore with precision the moments when Piggy's influence was at its greatest. There were, by contrast, many who simply wrote the history of Piggy which sometimes happened to impinge

on Ralph. Some who clearly had a most uncertain grasp of the novel beyond its early pages made out Piggy's importance to be simply the object of Ralph's ridicule.

Question 39

This was another successful empathic task, though sometimes answers were not convincing. Most caught something of Jack's inherent attitudes and his confident arrogant voice. However, quite a few were not sufficiently attentive to the precise situation of the task. They made out Jack already to be in furious opposition to Ralph, which is not the case just after the exploration of the island. A few answers were so uncertain of the detail of the novel that they placed Jack at the moment when he first leads the choristers out of the jungle.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Question 40

Very few attempted this question. Many of those who did simply re-told what was in the passage, gaining only modest reward.

Question 41

This was the most popular of the three Hardy questions. Candidates at all levels of ability showed sympathy to Fanny in view of her harsh, unrelenting suffering.

Question 42

This was far less popular, but it elicited some convincing displays of Bathsheba's spirit and independence.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 43

There were some good attempts at this task, fully bringing out the developing drama of the moment. A pleasing number saw that a signal part of the drama was Scout's lack of understanding of the mortal danger in which the family find themselves. Conversely there were a number who paid little attention to the detail of Lee's writing and merely described the general situation, sometimes even getting that wrong by casting Scout in the role of knowledgeable rather than unwitting heroine.

Question 44

This was another one of those tasks which, for good reward, requires some detailed grasp of the novel throughout its length and the ability to create a line of argument supported by specific detail to show how Scout develops into a girl of understanding by the end of the book. Not very many seemed up to the task. Answers often simply listed a number of incidents in the novel which had something to do with Scout's character and maturation; these were usually loosely connected within an answer, and sometimes not even that.

Question 45

This produced many lively responses which captured much of Ewell's expectations of the trial, his rage, his thirst for blood and his detestation of Atticus. In many answers his tone of voice and crudity was captured well. Some candidates, however, seemed rather to hold back, giving him thoughts and expressions which were way above his intellectual capabilities.

Into the Wind

Question 46

Quite a few candidates responded well to this extract, in particular catching exactly the prying nature of the town and its stifling constrictions on women. However, an understanding of Lilian was harder to come by, perhaps because at times it is inferred rather than stated. Hence, only those accustomed to read with real

attention succeeded. Quite a few did not grasp how some of this telling detail speaks of an independent, not to say spirited woman, not inclined to be ruled by the conventions of this small-minded town.

Question 47

Overall, the work on *The Lemon Orchard* was more successful than that on *Samphire*. For the former, most conveyed successfully the attitudes of the man's tormentors and some wrote with insight how even the setting intensifies this. Only the best candidates, however, saw how the victim's hate is communicated as well even in his silence. In *Samphire* most were able to chart just how detestable the husband was and to make some comment upon him being worthy of hate, but they often struggled to trace the way the author is constantly hinting at Molly being a character silently reaching the end of her tether.

Question 48

Some caught very well Tom's male chauvinist assumptions that he is entitled to the woman's attentions simply because he thinks he has been better behaved than his mates. They also caught his rage when the woman clearly does not see it his way and effectively humiliates him. In other answers candidates hit the wrong note, quite missing the offence he takes at the treatment he receives and making him into some romantic who has been rejected by the love of his life.