

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/05
Coursework

Key messages

- Centres should check that tasks meet the requirements of the syllabus and enable candidates to meet the criteria in the band descriptors.
- Teachers should annotate each assignment carefully to point out strengths and weaknesses, and to provide a clear justification for the award of the mark given to each assignment.
- Where there is more than one teacher in a centre, there should be evidence of internal moderation with brief explanations provided for any adjustments made to marks.

General comments

In addition to this report, centres will receive individual reports on their internal moderation of candidate work. This general report draws together the main points contained within the centre reports.

Successful critical essay assignments maintained a clear focus on the task and sustained a convincing critical analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Less successful assignments often made general assertions, logging language features rather than analysing effects closely. They occasionally included extraneous contextual material which got in the way of addressing the task set. Sometimes points were made randomly, with candidates finding it difficult to develop points in an effective manner. There were examples of candidates listing the connotations of specific words without referring to the context in which they were used in the text itself or describing their effects.

For the most part, tasks set by centres allowed candidates to meet the relevant band descriptors, though some assignments lacked an explicit direction to consider the effects of the writing in critical responses to texts. Examples of tasks that target the syllabus's assessment objectives can be found in the Set Texts question papers. Teachers are advised to look at the command and question words used in these papers in order to construct suitable assignment titles that direct candidates to meet the assessment objectives. Further examples can be found in the *Coursework Training Handbook* available on the Teacher Support website.

Effective moderation was in evidence in those centres where the teachers had made marginal and summative comments to justify marks awarded and also provided concise explanations for marks adjusted as a result of internal moderation. Clean copies of candidate work (i.e. devoid of teacher annotation) or assignments bearing unfocused ticking are unhelpful to the moderation process.

Checklist of good practice

The following checklist is re-printed from the June 2017 report:

- 1 The individual record card should be stapled (or secured by treasury tag) at the top left corner to the written assignments in the order they appear on the card. Only one staple or tag is required. Plastic wallets, cardboard folders and paper clips should **not** be used.
- 2 Critical essays should begin with the **full** title of the critical essay task.
- 3 Empathic responses should begin with the name of the character **and** the chosen moment.
- 4 Each assignment should have focused ticking, marginal annotation and summative comments (the latter may be at the end of the assignment or on the individual record card). Clean copies of written work should not be submitted.
- 5 Where marks have been altered as a result of internal moderation, a concise rationale for the change should be made after the summative comment.
- 6 Copies of non-mainstream poems and stories should be sent with the folders.
- 7 All paperwork should be free from arithmetic and transcription errors.
- 8 The sample should be posted to reach Cambridge by the deadline stated in the Cambridge Handbook.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11
Poetry and Prose 11

Key messages

Successful responses will:

- answer the question that has been set
- focus on the key words of the question
- demonstrate a detailed knowledge of set texts
- substantiate points with pertinent textual reference
- comment on the detail of quotations
- explore how writers achieve their effects through language, structure and form.

In order to do well, candidates should be discouraged from:

- writing about the topic without addressing the key words of the question
- writing excessively lengthy introductions
- writing lengthy conclusions that repeat points already made
- including extraneous background information that does not illuminate either text or task
- making unsupported assertions
- logging literary devices without explaining their effects
- using inert quotation.

General comments

Thank you to all teachers and candidates who have worked hard for this examination; to the teachers who have helped candidates to be able to communicate their knowledge, understanding and response effectively and to the candidates who have studied their texts conscientiously and derived enjoyment from them.

In this examination session, there was a wide range of quality in the scripts submitted. Better responses demonstrated thorough knowledge, understanding of the sub-text and authors' intentions, and an ability to write fluently and convincingly in response to the questions. Weaker responses generally showed some evidence that the texts had been read and a general understanding of what they were about but were unable to develop ideas or to support them. In such answers to passage-based questions, responses needed to make more direct references to the extracts which are printed for the purpose of detailed examination. Middle Band answers could generally have been improved by using more of the material provided in the extracts and by concentrating on the effects created by the writers' word choices. Often answers started with assertions that a particular figure of speech, such as personification, was responsible for making a passage or poem moving or vivid or striking, but without going on to explore the reasons why. A large number of responses were seen which devoted a paragraph each to several poetic devices such as personification, similes, assonance and alliterations, giving examples, but avoiding discussion of the meaning of the poem or the mood that is created. Generic comments about the length of sentences, paragraphs and stanzas, without further discussion of their effects, added very little to precise analysis of texts.

The passage-based questions were more popular generally in this session. In some instances, candidates who know a text well, provided that they can organise their thoughts and keep them relevant to the question, would have perhaps benefitted from attempting the essay question. The same amount of quotation is not expected as for a passage-based question since this is a closed book examination, though detailed supporting reference is important. This can often be indicated by the citing of a small but relevant detail which indicates thorough knowledge.

There were very few rubric infringements, although in many cases candidates did not allow enough time to finish the second answer. There were some signs of planning, but responses would have benefitted in general from more time spent on planning and organising ideas and arguments before beginning.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

Candidates often spent too much time on this first question, leaving little time to respond to the prose section. Candidates should be advised to balance time sensibly.

Responses were generally ineffective when making comments about punctuation, line length and line structure without any convincing or developed link to meaning. Examples include: ‘... uses commas to strikingly portray thoughts about love’, ‘... the rhyme pattern is catchy and shows love has a sense of rhythm’, ‘... the poet uses commas and full stops throughout the poem which is striking’, or listing the rhyme pattern. Such comments can be effective if developed beyond simple observation or generalisation; better responses linked such points to the thrust of the question and to the wider meaning of the poem. Many in this series incorrectly called lines ‘verses’.

Quotations were often well utilised, although copying out of large tracts of a poem does not demonstrate understanding or meet the requirements of the band descriptors.

There were many answers which showed real empathy with the poets’ feelings and situations, leading to some original personal interpretations. Weaker responses often began by answering the question with sentences such as ‘The poet makes his feelings clear through the use of adverbs’ or adjectives or punctuation, etc. This approach skews a response when meaning is forced into an artificial construct. Successful responses will engage with the key words in the question rather than technique spotting without further exploration.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: *Cold in the Earth*

Candidates found it difficult to address the whole poem. All candidates appeared to understand the themes of loss and memory, the conflicted desire to/not to move on, and the effect of time. Answers focused on grief, which all abilities could address and some very good ones found plenty to say about the poet’s grieving process. Differentiation came through understanding of such images as Angora and ‘rapturous pain’. There were some language references, usually from the first verse: winters, the Sun/Star, and the use of repetition. Personification was much in evidence – as it was in all the poetry answers. All levels of answer attempted to respond to ‘moving’.

Question 2: *Because I Could Not Stop For Death*

This was a popular question and responses were often effective. A common feature of weaker responses was a general reading of the poem without focusing on the figure of Death, and some candidates also wrote generally about Death as an abstract concept rather than a personified figure. The interpretation of the poem as a ‘date’ between the poet and Death was commonly seen, and worked reasonably well as a foundation for answers because it involved consideration of corroborating details of language such as pronoun use. Most effective answers focused on character, the journey, and the relationship with the speaker. There was some good use of textual detail and language comment, for example single/plural first person, the uses of dashes, the house/grave and the key aspect of personification. There was less response to ‘vivid’, however. The best answers noted the implications of ‘quivering’ and ‘chill dews’ as examples of vivid imagery.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *Love (III)*

Most candidates understood the religious frame of reference in response to this question but there was a widespread tendency to take the question as inviting a discussion of everything the speaker says in the poem as being his thoughts and feelings, and therefore just straightforwardly explaining the poem. Other candidates were distracted by their wish to explore theological ideas or discuss the benevolence of God as a character in the poem. Candidates found it relatively easy to chart the poet’s progression of feeling from guilt to the acceptance of forgiveness, including the ‘meat’ image. The ‘how’ in the question proved more challenging. There was a tendency for candidates to describe beliefs rather than analysing the text, though there were successful commentaries on the phrases showing diffidence and love, and the use of questions/dialogue. Quite a few asserted that the shape of the poem was like a church, although they could not link this to an effect, and many ignored the final part of the poem.

Question 4: *Song*

Weak answers tended to read the poem at a literal level and discussed the problems of having children. Competent answers, however, explained Wroth's views and commented on elements of language such as the feathers and the wolf, though many speculated about her personal life rather than focusing on the effects of the expression of the views here. A few answers recognised 'amusing' elements such as the effect of the rhyme scheme, the comparison with a baby, or the irony throughout. Most candidates wrote about what was 'interesting' rather than specifically 'amusing' here. 'Amusing' is an important word in the discussion of literature and has featured regularly on the syllabus. Candidates should be prepared to respond to amusing elements of texts.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Collected Poems*

Question 5: *Catrin*

Candidates appeared to find this poem challenging, often struggling to understand the images of a hospital room and red rope, and past and present. More could have been made of the parent/'defiant' daughter; weaker candidates appeared to miss the subtlety behind the idea of conflicted separation and growing up. The mother's complex feelings often seemed hard to grasp for candidates, leading to generalisations about love.

Question 6: *Pipistrelle*

Few responses were seen to this question, making extended comment inappropriate.

Section B: Prose

Generally candidates responded positively to the texts and questions. Interesting personal responses to character and theme were evident, but there are still some cases where knowledge is not used to answer the question. Responses demonstrated a welcome move away from narrative retelling, but there were still instances of narrative being the focus rather than sound analysis. Some candidates used the extract to answer an essay question, even when instructed not to. Doing this will be self-limiting as it does not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the set texts. There were some sound efforts to comment on language and structure in both essay and extract questions, although there is still room for further development here.

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease*

Question 7

Many candidates' knowledge of this text was not confident, although the question was popular. Generally, understanding of the extract was not secure, but nearly all could see the scene's significance, sometimes becoming side-tracked into writing at length about causes and consequences and Obi's story elsewhere in the novel. Not all candidates realised what was going on with the policeman. Those that focused on Obi and/or bribery were often good at articulating the complexity of his feelings of guilt here.

Question 8

Few responses were seen to this question. Candidates often struggled to find enough knowledge to write a full response, resorting to general comments about the role of women in Nigeria.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Question 9

There were few responses to this question. Responses often demonstrated a lack of textual knowledge, but showed better understanding of Fanny's feelings.

Question 10

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

WILLA CATHER: *My Antonia*

Question 11

Some answers were seen to this question, some of which showed confusion between town and hired girls, especially when quoting from the extract. Others conflated hired girls with immigrants generally. There were, however, answers which followed Jim's thinking through the passage and offered a relevant comparison between the two types of girl; this approach was generally effective.

Question 12

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

There was evidence of confusion over the meaning of 'unpleasant' in responses to this question. It became clear to Examiners that this was often interpreted as 'displeased' or 'angry' and candidates were given credit for this approach when it was fully supported and explored. Answers were generally lacking in detail and depth; some tended to describe, at some length, who said what and how they felt about it, leading to a narrative approach. A few strong responses gave some developed analysis of how the Squire is unpleasant at this point in the novel, particularly towards his sons.

Question 14

Some answers required more detail but did understand the role the inn played in Silas' desperate entrance into village social life, writing about causes and consequences at length. Stronger responses demonstrated clear awareness of how the visits changed Silas' life.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

This question was generally well answered, with responses seen across the ability range. Candidates responded well to and identified with Stephen's state of mind, and many focused on the drama by successfully writing dramatically themselves. Weaker answers were vague about what was dramatic here, and others became quite repetitive accounts of the family's questioning and Stephen's silence. Stronger answers developed ideas about Stephen's need to protect Keith, what the extract reveals about his family, and the way the games turn serious at this point. There was some very good discussion of significant details such as Keith's mother's cravat and what it is hiding, the resonance of Stephen's father's dislike of bullying, and even the casual discovery by Geoff of the missing emergency rations. There was effective comment on the context, Stephen's attempt to sneak upstairs and the parents' reactions (with many differentiating between the two parents). Language was often addressed, with the questions/silence contrast, use of dialogue and short sentences being indicators of strong understanding.

Question 16

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

This question was often done well, with a detailed exploration of Thornhill's emotional reaction to the land, his realisation that his dreams are not out of reach and that, despite being a poor man, he has a chance of making something of his life. Strong answers picked up the point that he is afraid of articulating his responses but that Blackwood is able to read his thoughts. Some candidates noted the social significance of the land being like an English country estate, and Blackwood's prophetic remarks about co-existence, and went on to comment on the significance of them later. Almost all candidates were able to see the significance of this moment as a turning point in Will's life. The strongest answers explored details of the writing conscientiously. The way in which Thornhill's viewpoint is conveyed and the terseness of Blackwood's utterances, to which Will is unable to respond, were worthy of comment, as was the sensuousness of the description of the river and the land.

Question 18

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

Few responses were seen to this question. Responses generally lacked in detail and exploration of the passage. There was often confusion of characters, and the context was misunderstood at times. Krishna's feelings were not always grasped or explored securely; it was perhaps difficult for candidates to tease out his feelings beyond the literal.

Question 20

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

This was a popular question which differentiated between candidates and produced a full range of responses. Most answers could find at least two reasons to be sympathetic towards Conradin, and it wasn't too difficult to develop ideas by considering, for example, his imprisonment in the garden which should have symbolised his freedom, or commenting on the use of the term 'the Woman'. Some weaker answers narrated the story and asserted that it caused sympathy; stronger answers were more critical about readers' reactions to Conradin, and discussed how sad it is that he is actually afraid of the best thing in his life (Sredni Vashtar), and the complexities of his invented religion as a symbol of his utter loneliness and isolation. Few made any mention of what happens later, or identified the story as humorous in any way. Some gave whole paragraphs on personal response not related to the text. In some cases every point/quotation was interspersed with general 'feeling sorry for' comments, often at the expense of textual reference. Better answers also wrote about atmosphere in the garden/the shed/an implied darkness.

Question 22

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

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General comments

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There were very few rubric infringements, although in many cases candidates did not allow enough time to finish the second answer. There were some signs of planning, but responses would have benefitted in general from more time spent on planning and organising ideas and arguments before beginning.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

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Quotations were often well utilised, although copying out of large tracts of a poem does not demonstrate understanding or meet the requirements of the band descriptors.

There were many answers which showed real empathy with the poets' feelings and situations, leading to some original personal interpretations. Weaker responses often began by answering the question with sentences such as 'The poet makes his feelings clear through the use of adverbs' or adjectives or punctuation, etc. This approach skews a response when meaning is forced into an artificial construct. Successful responses will engage with the key words in the question rather than technique spotting without further exploration.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: *Tears, Idle Tears*

Most candidates were able to articulate some meaningful ideas about how and why sadness is conveyed. There was some general confusion about the 'first beam glittering on a sail' and the 'pipe of half-awakened birds'. A number of responses spent considerable time mentioning techniques rather than words or language to explain their view. As a result, some answers did not analyse the language adequately to identify clearly the 'deep feelings of sadness'. Weaker responses, for example, might have stated that he finds the days 'fresh' or 'strange' without explaining what these words might convey about his sadness, or that 'divine despair' shows he is sad deep down without considering the use of 'divine'. Better responses discussed how the poet's language conveyed sadness, linking the ideas in the poem to the language used to convey them. As was the case with many questions in this section, quotations tended to be overlong; concise and relevant quotation followed by consideration of particular words is required to demonstrate understanding.

Question 2: *Attack*

This question produced generally strong responses which showed understanding and sensitivity. They were often able to focus clearly on the feelings of hopelessness within the poem. Language was considered in detail and depth, and candidates really seemed to engage with the poet's experience. As a shorter poem, most found time to consider all of the images in at least some detail. Many found it difficult to write effectively about Sassoon's use of militaristic vocabulary and the use of the final *cri de coeur*.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *Stabat Mater*

Some candidates commented effectively on the meaning and origin of the title and, when fully explored, it helped to inform their interpretations of the poem. Many responses failed to grasp the complexity of the relationship between the parents. A significant number of candidates felt that the phrase 'from his loving wife' was evidence of a poor relationship or that it showed fear and that she was 'under his thumb', but without explaining their interpretation. Some made a lot of the fact that the narrator calls his parents 'Mother' and 'Father' rather than 'mom' (sic) or 'dad', to show lack of a close relationship, without considering whether this might not be appropriate in the poem. Many largely ignored the need to discuss 'moving' or referenced it loosely in regards to any impressions, regardless of whether they were moving or not.

Question 4: *Lovers' Infiniteness*

This was a popular choice and there was a wide range of responses; some showing little understanding and others making solid attempts at analysis in response to the question, with varying degrees of success. Many of those who did look at language discussed 'If yet', 'Or' and 'Yet' as showing his confusion and evolving thoughts – this was an effective point but was often lengthy and excluded consideration of other language points. Few, for example, tackled the 'ground, thy heart' metaphor; those who did were often more successful in ranging across the poem.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Collected Poems*

Few responses were seen to this set text, making extended comment inappropriate. Those who had studied it showed real engagement with the poems and generally wrote about them effectively.

Question 5: *Neighbours*

The candidates who attempted this poem made good attempts to focus on language. Some were aware of the effects of the Chernobyl accident, though often at the expense of explaining 'the democracy of the virus'. Contextual information should be used judiciously to support discussion of texts where appropriate; lengthy contextual explanation in itself does not meet the assessment criteria. In weaker responses, the impact of the experience in the poem was often underplayed and the signs of optimism ignored.

Question 6: *Still Life*

Candidates endeavoured to focus on 'movingly' and mentioned it frequently but many found it difficult to write about the emotion/feelings within a friendship with no explanation of the concept of 'polishing' a friendship, the central metaphor of the poem. Stronger responses focused well on the question and explored the imagery of the sea, the still life and the tree in some detail.

Section B: Prose

Generally candidates responded well to the texts and questions. Interesting personal responses to character and theme were evident, though there were some cases where appropriate knowledge was not used to answer the question. Most candidates moved away from a purely narrative approach, though there was still extensive recounting of narrative on some texts. Some used the extract to answer an essay question, even when instructed not to; this approach is self-limiting as it shows a lack of knowledge and confident understanding of the text and question. The new texts seem to be appreciated and were, in most cases, effectively explored. Sound efforts were made to comment on language and structure in both essay and passage-based questions, although there is room for further development here.

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease*

Question 7

This question was generally answered well. Candidates showed secure knowledge of the context of the conversation but the temptation was often to write about this rather than the dynamic and drama of the exchange itself. Successful responses focused on features such as Obi's hesitation, the comparison of his father's laughter with that of a masked ancestral spirit, and both characters' tactics in trying to direct the course of the conversation. Almost all mentioned the awful laugh, but few made much of this in their explanation, missing an opportunity to discuss language. Some misread the 'miserable worm' sentence, saying it was awful that Isaac should call his son such a thing to his face. A regular misunderstanding was over the Christianity versus traditional culture argument, which is at the heart of the latter part of the extract. A significant number of candidates thought that Isaac did not want Obi to marry Clara because this is not what Christians do, instead of understanding that Obi's reference to the Bible is saying the opposite. This made it difficult for candidates to make sense of the last part of the extract, with many resorting to repeating long quotations without comment or simply ignoring the end of the passage.

Question 8

A significant number attempted this question. Nearly all showed sound knowledge and understanding of the text. Most were very scathing about Christopher, his womanising and perceived lack of support for Obi; better responses produced a more balanced view and were able to see his attractive qualities. Weaker answers were often characterised by a lack of detail or quotation from the text, though some candidates did use pertinent quotations and references to inform and support their ideas.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Few responses were seen to this set text, making extended comment inappropriate.

Question 9

Most responses were able to identify and support their view of the type of character that Mary Crawford is. Some, however, did not mention the letter that is central to the task. Focus on the task and close consideration of the passage were key features of strong answers here.

Question 10

Of the limited number of responses seen to this question, few were able to pinpoint specific characteristics they could use to write about Fanny's parents and textual detail was limited. Stronger responses tended to consider the contrasts between the Prices and Bertrams in some detail.

WILLA CATHER: *My Antonia*

There were insufficient responses to these questions to make meaningful comment.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

The 'powerful moment' element of the task was seized upon in some responses, with candidates able to choose effective quotations to support their comments. Candidates found the passage accessible enough to discern what was self-righteous about Godfrey but less so when considering the effect on Silas and Eppie. All understood the context, but many spent too long narrating the circumstances leading up to this climax and, in particular, why Godfrey does not deserve Eppie. Though all understood that it was a powerful moment, weaker answers tended to describe or narrate the extract rather than look at language and technique, which were characteristic of better responses.

Question 14

Few responses were seen to this question. Most fell into narrative in places in order to respond to the task, appearing to find it difficult to mention specific areas of the novel in which we see Dolly Winthrop as likable. All understood and articulated that she was 'kind', 'helpful' and therefore very likeable, and all came up with suitable examples but few developed these sufficiently or used quotation to support these points.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

Although candidates understood that Stephen was acting and talking childishly, frequently they could not articulate why or to what effect. There were lots of comments such as 'It is childish when Stephen says his father is a German spy/that grown-ups can be sisters', without then adding an explanation or exploring how Frayn conveys this childishness. Successful answers identified his vivid imagination and his short attention span, with the most successful focusing on the language and syntax of his thoughts in revealing his childishness.

Question 16

Responses to this question often demonstrated detailed knowledge of the text and most were able to produce a balanced response supported with relevant references and apt quotations. The best answers were able to show how the reader's view is conditioned by Frayn's portrayal of Keith through Stephen's consciousness.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

Responses often engaged with the writing in the extract and most understood how to tackle the task. They were able to choose valid quotations to support the tension, noise and action central to the passage. However, there was often not enough attention given to the effects of the words used by Grenville to increase the intensity of the situation as the passage progressed.

Question 18

Of the limited number of responses seen to this question, some were able to show in detail how Will lost as much as he gained in his victory over the native Australians. Others needed to range more widely across the text to demonstrate knowledge. Weaker responses would have benefitted from greater inclusion of textual detail to support ideas.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

This question had a wide range of responses. Better responses used all of the extract and were able to answer the question with suitable examples and some understanding of how the relationship had altered since Susila's death. A significant number spent too long narrating the story up to this point, without a focus on the passage or consideration of the language. Careful reading was required to avoid, for example, thinking that Susila's words from the past are spoken by Krishna. Analysis of the relationship needed to be expressed precisely; weaker responses made use of simplistic terms such as 'good', 'nice' or 'cute', often without supportive evidence or analysis of language.

Question 20

This question was mainly well-answered. Candidates showed sound knowledge of the text and the two systems with a good range of examples and quotations.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

This passage-based question provided a wealth of material from which to choose, but very few detailed responses were seen. Responses generally ignored the ending of the question 'to Da-duh' and wrote about why it was a striking introduction; weaker answers hardly mentioned her at all. Successful responses will focus clearly and precisely on the terms of the question and respond to what is being asked. Many candidates here focused instead on 'themes', such as 'urbanisation versus traditional or rural', and these invariably had little to offer as a response to the question. Those that did focus on 'Da-duh' made straightforward comments, such as 'she is shown to be very old' or not a 'nice' person, without looking in detail at the language or what phrases such as 'unrelenting struggle', 'painfully erect' and 'like a lizard's tongue' might suggest about her character. Many fell into narration, sometimes to the end of the story; focus on the ideas and language in the passage is needed to succeed in passage-based responses.

Question 22

Few responses were seen to this question. Those seen showed secure knowledge of the story, though they often needed more focus on the words 'vivid impression' and on the complexity of the narrative viewpoint in order to achieve highly.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13
Poetry and Prose 13

Key messages

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General comments

Thank you to all teachers and candidates who have worked hard for this examination; to the teachers who have helped candidates to be able to communicate their knowledge, understanding and response effectively and to the candidates who have studied their texts conscientiously and derived enjoyment from them.

In this examination session, there was a wide range of quality in the scripts submitted. Better responses demonstrated thorough knowledge, understanding of the sub-text and authors' intentions, and an ability to write fluently and convincingly in response to the questions. Weaker responses generally showed some evidence that the texts had been read and a general understanding of what they were about but were unable to develop ideas or to support them. In such answers to passage-based questions, responses needed to make more direct references to the extracts which are printed for the purpose of detailed examination. Middle Band answers could generally have been improved by using more of the material provided in the extracts and by concentrating on the effects created by the writers' word choices. Often answers started with assertions that a particular figure of speech, such as personification, was responsible for making a passage or poem moving or vivid or striking, but without going on to explore the reasons why. A large number of responses were seen which devoted a paragraph each to several poetic devices such as personification, similes, assonance and alliterations, giving examples, but avoiding discussion of the meaning of the poem or the mood that is created. Generic comments about the length of sentences, paragraphs and stanzas, without further discussion of their effects, added very little to precise analysis of texts.

The passage-based questions were more popular generally in this session. In some instances, candidates who know a text well, provided that they can organise their thoughts and keep them relevant to the question, would have perhaps benefitted from attempting the essay question. The same amount of quotation is not expected as for a passage-based question since this is a closed book examination, though detailed supporting reference is important. This can often be indicated by the citing of a small but relevant detail which indicates thorough knowledge.

There were very few rubric infringements, although in many cases candidates did not allow enough time to finish the second answer. There were some signs of planning, but responses would have benefitted in general from more time spent on planning and organising ideas and arguments before beginning.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

Candidates often spent too much time on this first question, leaving little time to respond to the prose section. Candidates should be advised to balance time sensibly.

Responses were generally ineffective when making comments about punctuation, line length and line structure without any convincing or developed link to meaning. Examples include: '... uses commas to strikingly portray thoughts about love', '... the rhyme pattern is catchy and shows love has a sense of rhythm', '... the poet uses commas and full stops throughout the poem which is striking', or listing the rhyme pattern. Such comments can be effective if developed beyond simple observation or generalisation; better responses linked such points to the thrust of the question and to the wider meaning of the poem. Many in this series incorrectly called lines 'verses'.

Quotations were often well utilised, although copying out of large tracts of a poem does not demonstrate understanding or meet the requirements of the band descriptors.

There were many answers which showed real empathy with the poets' feelings and situations, leading to some original personal interpretations. Weaker responses often began by answering the question with sentences such as 'The poet makes his feelings clear through the use of adverbs' or adjectives or punctuation, etc. This approach skews a response when meaning is forced into an artificial construct. Successful responses will engage with the key words in the question rather than technique spotting without further exploration.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: *Friend*

The strongest responses explored the ways in which Tuwhare vividly conveys the speaker's memories of the landscape, the building of the fort and the tree-climbing. These responses showed a keen appreciation of the sense that the past was a much better time than the present, and they explored the use of direct address, the language suggesting finality and the speaker's need for reassurance from his friend. Less effective responses tended to describe the content without reference to the question's key word 'vividly', sometimes making generic comments about the poem's structure that could be true of most poems.

Question 2: *Anthem for Doomed Youth*

The most successful responses addressed the question's key focus on how Owen 'powerfully communicate[s] feelings about war'. Less successful responses tended to work through the poem, explaining its content and occasionally some of the techniques Owen uses to convey it. There was often competent analysis of the description of the noises (the personification of the guns and rifles) and less often analysis of the description of the mourners in the sestet. Stronger responses tailored their analysis to the specific demands of the question. In less effective responses, language features were listed rather than explored, and general effects of the rhyme scheme were asserted but with little regard to the question. In a few responses, Owen's supposed feelings were described but without convincing textual support from the poem.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *Father Returning Home*

There was, in successful responses, a sensitive and perceptive appreciation of the father's tiredness and the sense of estrangement from both his family and wider modern-day life. These responses explored the use of similes, the references to the father's eyes, and the significance of the poem's title and the father's dream at the end of the poem. Most responses captured the monotony and bleakness of his life: the silent commute, the mud-stained raincoat, the weak tea and stale chapatti. Some candidates offered speculative readings, assuming that the father was a labourer because of his soggy and muddy clothes, and that he worked long hours purely for the love of his family and that the books in his bag were to help him secure better employment but these interpretations were rarely substantiated by close reference to the text. Interpretation and personal response are encouraged if supported by apt textual detail.

Question 4: *Last Sonnet*

This was a less popular choice than **Question 3**. Most responses were able to comment on the description of the bright star and what it does and the cosmic nature of what the bright star watches over. Only the strongest responses were able to engage with powerful effects of Keats's use of simile and religious imagery, and the contrast between permanence and transience. The least successful responses described the content of the poem in the order it appears without reference to the question and occasionally with insufficient regard to the actual detail of the poem.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Collected Poems*

Question 5: *Musician*

There were only a few responses to this poetry text. The strongest responses explored the striking ways in which Clarke captures her son's obsessive playing, cut off from the world against the almost surreal backdrop of the falling snow in that 'bitterest winter'. Some responses strayed from the focus on the musician to explore at length the presentation of the mother.

Question 6: *Journey*

There were few responses to this question, which tended to be quite specific in their interpretation, where the darkness refers to a crisis in the speaker's relationship with the driver. This interpretation was most often asserted, without the candidate supplying references to areas of the poem that might support such a reading.

Section B: Prose

Generally candidates responded positively to the texts and questions. Interesting personal responses to character and theme were evident, but there are still some cases where knowledge is not used to answer the question. Responses demonstrated a welcome move away from narrative retelling, but there were still instances of narrative being the focus rather than sound analysis. Some candidates used the extract to answer an essay question, even when instructed not to. Doing this will be self-limiting as it does not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the set texts. There were some sound efforts to comment on language and structure in both essay and extract questions, although there is still room for further development here.

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease*

Question 7

Stronger responses explored the extent to which Obi's alienation is conveyed by his inability to communicate with honesty about his feelings to his father and Obi's sense of powerlessness to change their circumstances. The most successful responses analysed closely Achebe's use of narrative viewpoint. Most responses were able to comment on aspects of the description of the physical condition of Obi's parents and the shock Obi feels at seeing their physical deterioration. There was generally an understanding of the sense of Obi looking at this once familiar world with the eyes of an outsider. Some answers, however, tracked the content of the extract very closely without selecting pertinent details of Achebe's writing that might address the question's key words 'so moving'.

Question 8

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Question 9

The few responses to this text were answers to **Question 9**. Most candidates readily recognised Mrs Norris's selfishness, duplicity and self-pity, qualities revealed in abundance in the extract. Stronger responses explored aspects of the dialogue by which means her character is revealed in the extract, and were able to address how Austen 'entertainingly reveals' her character at this particular moment. Attention was paid to the length of Mrs Norris's utterances compared with those of Lady Bertram and her tendency to use clichéd expressions ('dear departed', 'sole desire'). All responses noted some key character traits, though weaker answers did so in a descriptive way without linking their points to the question.

Question 10

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

WILLA CATHER: *My Antonia*

There were insufficient responses to **Questions 11** and **12** to make meaningful comment.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

The 'moving' nature of the extract was generally understood, with most commenting on the heart-warming change of Silas's status in the village and noting the significance of the moment in marking a step towards Silas learning to trust again. The strongest responses explored the language used to describe the baby, Dolly's homespun philosophy given in her distinctive dialect, and occasionally the impact of the authorial voice. Most responses were aware of the context: the way Eppie found her way to Silas's cottage and his intention to keep her. Less successful responses showed at least some basic knowledge of plot and character but struggled to select material from the extract with which to address the question directly or convincingly.

Question 14

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

Most candidates were able to explain why Mr Hayward was so disturbing at this moment in the novel and were aware of the significance of the 'thermos' in the wider plot. There was a general dislike of Keith's father, with most able to comment on the simile 'like an ogre in his cave', the thin smile with its veneer of humour, the undertone of menace when addressing Keith as 'old bean' and the imminence of the beating. Stronger responses explored precise ways in which Frayn's writing reveals Stephen's fear, creates sympathy for Keith and portrays the malign nature of the father.

Question 16

There were few responses to this question. Common choices of moments which Frayn makes 'particularly entertaining' were the moment Stephen and Keith are going through Keith's mother's diary and interactions between Stephen and Barbara Berrill. Answers tended to narrate and describe the chosen moments without explicitly tailoring their material to the key words of the question.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

Most responses to this question were able to comment on what is revealed of the characters of Lucas and Yates, and the cleverness of Mr Knapp. Only the strongest responses explored how Grenville powerfully conveys the inherent drama and tension of this criminal trial. The torment of Yates, perhaps because coming later in the extract, was often overlooked or dealt with in a perfunctory manner: few pointed out that he is a picture of misery on the witness stand, caught between the potential wrath of his employer and his reluctance to condemn a man to death. Some candidates reflected effectively on Will's realisation that his very life is dependent upon the outcome of a verbal battle between Knapp and Lucas.

Question 18

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

Most candidates noted the significance of the fact that Krishna's life is about to change forever; he is beginning to realise how trivial and petty his time at college has been in comparison with the promise of a new life with his wife and child. Many candidates pointed out his new seriousness which contrasts with the general flippancy of his interactions with his colleagues. The dry and arcane debate he is asked to arbitrate on makes him even more purposeful in seeking a home for his family. Stronger responses explored the language used in Krishna's comments about his room and the effect of the first person narrative voice through which his thoughts and feelings are conveyed.

Question 20

There were few responses to this question. They tended to offer a character sketch rather than a considered argument in response to the question set. Mention was made of Susila's pride in her housekeeping, her conversations about literature and poetry, and her forbearance when ill. Few responses, however, explored with confidence her posthumous role as a spirit communicating with Krishna. Generally, answers were narrative in thrust, with assertions added about Susila's likeability rather than a detailed evaluation of Narayan's presentation of the character.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

Most candidates were able to find much to write about in response to this question. Most understood the concept of prison as it relates to Tommy's situation and also his purpose in trying to intervene in the girl's life. Less successful, however, was the attempt by many to convey the dramatic nature of the final incidents in the shop. In particular, many overlooked the significance of the girl sticking her tongue out at him and how this is likely to have impacted upon Tommy.

Question 22

A few responses to this question were seen, showing some basic knowledge of the story but insufficient consideration of the horror of war and the extremes to which it makes people go.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/21
Drama 21

Key messages

- Strong responses showed detailed knowledge of their set texts, including the chronology of the plot, and could make a confident response to the use of language.
- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question and avoided narrative.
- Convincing answers showed explicit knowledge of the context in passage-based questions and the ability, in discursive answers, to select relevant material, using direct quotation in support.
- Strong candidates looked at the text in detail in answer to passage-based questions, commented on the author's effects and used quotations in support of points.
- Successful answers avoided redundant introductions which gave excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage were commonly seen in the most successful answers.

General comments

This is the last session for both *An Inspector Calls* and *The Merchant of Venice*: these have been replaced, for first examination in 2018, by *The Winslow Boy* by Terence Rattigan and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set texts and it was clear that they often enjoyed and engaged with the characters and themes. The strongest responses directed their material to the specific demands of the question. Less successful responses often started with lengthy, courtesy introductions: e.g. 'In this essay, I am going to...' and wrote conclusions which simply repeated points already made. Candidates should be advised to address the key word/s of the question from the start. Candidates who do allow time for deconstructing the question, thinking about the text and planning their response, are more able to give an overview of the text, addressing the question in their introductions. This is particularly important for passage-based questions as some candidates do not consider the entire passage. Those who move immediately into writing are often still unsure of the requirements of the task and the relevant textual detail required as they write, resulting in a loss of focus and contradiction of their own earlier comments.

This session there were fewer candidates who focused on stage directions and punctuation without some exploration of them in context. However, it was noted that a number of candidates commented on directing the scene – how characters would dress, speak or move on stage, which invariably had little relevance to the question and consequently did not meet the assessment criteria. Candidates need to be reminded that to show understanding of the text as performance, the dramatic impact of stage directions, dialogue and characters' actions should be explored without assuming the director's role.

Most candidates used their time well, there were few brief answers and fewer candidates seemed determined to offer a pre-prepared response. There were very few rubric infringements on Paper 2 this session. There is still a need, however, for candidates to number their questions correctly and to spend the same amount of time on each question on Paper 2.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE and R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

To answer the question fully, candidates needed to focus on both what was 'dramatic' and 'revealing' for the audience. Weaker responses worked through the passage narrating events at a literal level. Most could comment on what was happening and understood this was an introduction to Drummond but there was often little acknowledgement or exploration of the dramatic impact his name and description create. Often candidates ignored the start of the passage, missing completely Hornbeck's significance at this point. Stronger responses correctly identified the imagery used in terms of biblical references, 'David and Goliath', and the diabolical imagery used, exploring the dramatic impact on Mrs and Mr Brady and other characters. These responses showed more understanding of the significance of the moment, looking at the town's prejudices and the significance of liberal thinking versus narrow-minded fundamentalism, particularly in their aligning Drummond with the devil and trying to find ways of excluding him. Brady's surprising positive comments to Drummond's entry were features of the best responses and these were able to quote and analyse the text effectively to support comments.

Question 2

Weaker responses to this question wrote individual character studies and failed to look at the differences in the presentation of Drummond and Brady. Some relied exclusively on the passage from **Question 1** for information. The most successful responses focused on the characters' beliefs, background and the trial, exploring what they revealed about the differences between the two men.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This was the most popular text and question. It was generally well answered with candidates understanding the revelation of Eddie's over-protectiveness and the shifting moods and tone, especially of Beatrice. The best answers related this clearly to the rest of the play whilst exploring the passage and the staging closely: both the characters' reactions in the stage directions and their dialogue. These were also able to differentiate between 'striking' and 'revealing'. Weaker responses tended to summarise or paraphrase what the characters said and there was some confusion about Eddie's relationship to Catherine. A number of candidates sought to discuss the themes of the play such as manliness or wrote about the subservient role of women in the American/Sicilian culture, usually at the expense of analysing the passage.

Question 4

Weaker responses to this question lacked focus on 'significant' and limited comment to Alfieri being a lawyer and the narrator, with some textual reference to his introduction to Red Hook and the community. The best responses were able to identify and discuss the different roles Alfieri had as narrator, character, advisor to Eddie and the 'bridge' between the Italian and American cultures, an in-between in terms of Sicilian justice and American law. The very best were able to comment on his breaking of the fourth wall and his connection with the audience, informing them from the start of the tragedy about to unfold and his helplessness to do anything to prevent it. There were also some good responses to Miller's use of the Greek chorus and imagery used by Alfieri.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

The AO4 requirement for candidates to make 'a personal response' was explicitly addressed in the question but many candidates misinterpreted this and wrote about what the characters were feeling rather than their personal or an audience's responses to the characters' behaviour. Almost all candidates understood what was happening in this scene and knew its context but, except by implicit comment on Sheila's different response, failed to address the terms of the question. Some candidates expressed opinions which could not be supported by textual evidence, such as feeling sympathy and relief for the family as they had been tricked by the Inspector. Most candidates understood there was a generational divide and that Sheila was the character who had learned the most and was therefore most deserving of the audience's sympathy. The most successful answers expressed a strong personal response; anger, disgust and frustration with the

Birlings and Gerald, understanding Mr and Mrs Birling's arrogance and desire to keep their public image intact and exploring Priestley's use of language and dramatic tone. There was some confusion about Gerald and many candidates omitted to mention him, or Eric, at all whilst some wrote about how to direct and produce the scene on stage – lighting effects, sounds and positioning of actors - which had no relevance to the task.

Question 6

The most successful responses to this question considered the structuring of the play, building up to Eric's revelation and the Inspector's final speech. They were able to differentiate between personal and social responsibility and analysed the characters' responses to both the death of Eva/Daisy and their level of acceptance, or not, of responsibility. The best responses showed understanding of Priestley's presentation of Socialism versus Capitalism, used textual evidence from across the whole play and linked the Inspector's quoted words and his final speech to the play's 'message'. Others looked at the 'chain reaction' idea and not only explored how the Birlings and Gerald contributed to Eva/Daisy's suicide but were able to support comments with specific reference to the text and quotation. Weaker answers based their responses on the passage and were narrative in approach, failing to engage with the idea of responsibility in general.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

There were insufficient responses to this set text to make meaningful comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

To answer this question fully, candidates had to respond to what was 'entertaining' in the passage and to explore it as an 'ending to the play'. Weaker responses gave the context and little of the passage or had only a very basic plot level understanding of what was happening. Antonio's being 'dumb' was misinterpreted as a modern idiom rather than his being speechless at the return of his ships and wealth. Most commented on Gratiano's double entendre and could see how entertaining this would be to the audience but failed to consider the wider context of the passage as an ending to the play. Better responses could clearly explain the humour of the dramatic irony with the resolution of the ring plot but also looked at the happy endings achieved by such characters as Antonio, Jessica and Lorenzo. Some were entertained by the irony in the way the women control the men in this scene, something unexpected in Shakespeare's day where the women characters were played by young men. The most successful responses explored the genre, with the 'happy ending' to be expected, understood the comic relief after the trial scene and how the loose ends were tied up very satisfactorily for all but Shylock. A few candidates acknowledged the contrast between the end for Shylock and the end for Antonio, and whether each was deserved. Consideration of the ambiguity of the language and the humour of the exchanges were features of the best responses.

Question 10

Many candidates found it difficult to isolate two moments. A few candidates failed to read the emboldened rider to the question, '**Do not use the passage in Question *9 in answering this question**', and used the passage as a disturbing moment where Portia and Nerissa lied to and mocked the two men. Where they were able to choose two apt moments, they stated they were disturbing but provided little detail or textual reference to support their choices fully. Better responses chose Shylock being abused and his obsession with money, which, it was argued he valued more than his daughter. A number of candidates focused on Shylock's 'hath not a Jew' speech and how badly he was treated simply because he was Jewish. There was some response to how Shylock was driven by revenge and the 'disturbing' elements came from his desire to kill Antonio whether he received the bond or not.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/22
Drama 22

Key messages

- Strong candidates showed detailed knowledge of their set texts and could make a confident response to the language.
- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question and avoided narrative.
- Convincing answers revealed implicit knowledge of the context in passage-based questions and the ability, in discursive answers, to select relevant material, using direct quotation in support.
- Well-prepared candidates considered the text in detail in answer to passage-based questions, commented on the author's effects and used quotations from the passage in support.
- Successful answers avoided redundant introductions which gave excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage, watched by an audience, enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates this session showed a lively engagement with their set texts.

Successful answers showed detailed knowledge supported by an ability to place a passage and to use direct textual evidence in the form of quotation. Such responses went beyond an ability to merely decode meaning to comment on both dramatic and literary effects. The key elements of the question were answered directly, without the use of redundant introductions, giving Examiners information of which they are aware, such as the names of the author and the characters. Strong passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and, when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the question. An implicit knowledge of the context of the scene and an ability to analyse the language and dramatic effects of the passage were the characteristics of high level responses. Effective responses to discursive questions referred to specific moments in the play to support their well-constructed arguments, with some direct quotation from the text.

Some candidates could have performed more successfully if, in passage-based responses, they had focused on the passage itself and not on what happened before it and after it or only commenting on the themes that they thought emerged in the passage. There was some evidence, in the Shakespeare texts in particular, that candidates did not understand what was being said in sufficient depth to answer the question. There were answers which understood what was happening but described this instead of writing an analysis of it based on the question asked.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects remains the hallmark of the strongest responses.

There was evidence this session of some candidates not knowing the plot of their set text in sufficient detail and some confused the names of the characters.

Strong candidates showed awareness of authorial intention, particularly in writing about *An Inspector Calls*. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* were hampered regularly by lengthy comment on how an Elizabethan audience would respond compared to a modern audience, when it is the candidate's own personal response that is required.

There were fewer rubric infringements on Paper 22 this session, but these still occur and candidates need to be made aware that they cannot answer two passage-based or two discursive questions. There were also instances of questions being labelled incorrectly. The importance of labelling the responses as identified in the paper cannot be underestimated.

Candidates should be seriously discouraged from using line references in lieu of quotations. Examiners cannot discern which words and phrases the candidate thinks are relevant and this approach does not allow for close consideration of the language.

A significant number of candidates are using material from the printed passage in order to answer the discursive question. This limits the range of material they consider and usually leads to low achievement.

Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

The strongest responses to this question knew the context of the passage and considered both the drama and the significance of the moment. They considered Drummond's dramatic change of tactic, the responses of the spectators and reactions of Davenport and Brady. The significance to the play of the expert witnesses being dismissed, Brady never having read Darwin and his willingness to take the stand, with disastrous consequences for him, were fully understood. Less competent responses wrote about the general issues in the play rather than relating these closely to the passage and made limited comment on the dramatic effects of the scene.

Question 2

There were many well-developed responses to Bert Cates, supported by specific reference to the text. Most candidates chose to admire his kindness in preventing Rachel from being cross-examined, his anger at the treatment of the Stebbins family, his integrity in sticking to his beliefs, persistence when the town is against him and independence of mind. These points were supported by quotation or close textual reference. Less effective responses made rather bland and repetitive comments about his courage and humility, as if there is no development in his character during the play, and made erroneous and unsupported assertions about him never doubting and keeping quiet throughout the trial. Some candidates thought he won the case.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This is a key moment in the play and strong candidates recognised the powerful imagery and foreshadowing, the symbolic use of the phone booth and the nature of the conflict between Eddie and Alfieri. Responses were less effective when candidates explained the context in great detail, without concentrating sufficiently on the passage itself, or when they speculated at length about Alfieri's role as narrator and the role of the law, forgetting to answer the question itself in the process.

Question 4

There were many generalised answers to this question which made assertions about the caring nature of their relationship and the women's support for one another, with only limited textual support. Effective answers understood that Beatrice may be encouraging Catherine's independence and marriage out of self-interest and commented on the crucial scene between them where Beatrice reprimands Catherine for inadvertently encouraging Eddie's attraction to her. Few answers looked at the relationship from Catherine's point-of-view and some focused almost exclusively on the women's relationships with Eddie. The word 'memorable' in the question aimed to steer candidates towards the more dramatic moments between them and some took this up by considering the moment when Beatrice is torn between loyalty to Eddie and attending Catherine's wedding.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

It was important here for candidates to know what had happened immediately before the passage at the end of Act One, but this was often not mentioned; many candidates either did not know, or had forgotten, that Sheila has already worked out that Gerald knew Eva/Daisy and that was why he was absent the previous summer. Because this was missing from some responses, it resulted in the main argument, that Sheila and the audience had no idea what Gerald was about to say, being flawed. There were a number of candidates who successfully explored the dramatic impact of the Inspector's standing at the door in silence, but few were able to comment effectively on Sheila's words 'You see? What did I tell you?' instead focusing on her 'hysterical laugh' and often misunderstanding it.

Most candidates recognised the conflict between the Gerald and Sheila, the tension created by the fact that the play had started off as a happy occasion celebrating their engagement which was now ironically coming to an end. Less successful answers relied on a generalised narrative overview of the passage, without sufficient focus on the tension and how it is created.

Question 6

The strongest answers focused on the key words in the question: 'memorable...victim', whereas less successful responses retold Eva's story and did not pay sufficient attention to the question. Many answers would have been improved by addressing the text as drama and not referring to it and writing about it as a novel. The focus for 'memorably' often became the political / social issues rather than any dramatic impact on stage, though there were also convincing responses to her 'symbolic' significance as an oppressed woman and member of the working class. The strongest answers were able to respond successfully to the impact of the Inspector's emotive words when describing Eva's death or to its impact on the plot, rather than stating that everyone was involved with her and this drove the plot in general terms.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

This question was answered effectively when candidates understood that Cambridge, Scroop and Grey are traitors who have conspired with the French against King Henry. Strong responses could then select the irony and ambiguity in Henry's speeches, comment on the tension of the test he sets up for the three men and comment on their 'false flattery'. Some candidates explained the situation clearly but without any focus on the question. Others seemed unaware of the plot of the play and therefore found little to say of any relevance.

Question 8

Most candidates wisely chose Henry's Harfleur speech, the Agincourt speech or the night before Agincourt. Few, however, looked at Williams's dramatic speech about battle or the Chorus's and the Constable of France's description of the state of the English troops and what the French would do to them in battle.

Many chose the tennis balls scene, which does have powerful descriptions of war, and was a good choice if candidates were able to make specific reference to the text. Less successful responses seemed to interpret the question as meaning 'preparation for war' and wrote about the Archbishops and their motives for persuading Henry to invade France.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

There were some very strong answers to this question which considered the contrasting presentation of Portia and Shylock. Such responses explored in detail the language of Portia's plea for mercy, Shylock's stubborn refusal to give it and the way in which both characters expressed their views. Too many candidates, however, did not pay sufficient attention to the passage. They spent too long giving the context and moving on to what happens next or too long establishing what we already know about Portia and Shylock.

There were some misconceptions and misreadings such as: Portia was asking for justice; that she did not offer Shylock the money as the law would not allow it; that Jews do not believe in God or heaven; that she criticised Shylock for wearing an odd suit. If candidates had understood and written about what Portia says, how she says it and why she says it, their answers would have been more successful.

Strong responses saw that Portia is beginning to manipulate Shylock but many wanted him to be sympathetic here which was counter to how Shakespeare portrays him in this passage. Perceptive candidates understood this and commented on his terse, stubborn responses and his obsession with revenge. Only the strongest commented on 'crave' and his triumphalism when he thinks that Portia is on his side.

Question 10

There were many strong answers to this question which showed knowledge of the issues surrounding Bassanio and balanced their response accordingly. The strongest looked at the language, especially his propensity to use the imagery of finance and his various linguistic contributions to the theme of appearance versus reality. They weighed up his spendthrift, risk-taking quality, his 'use' of Antonio, his awareness of Portia's wealth and his giving away the symbolic ring against his choosing the right casket, his obvious attraction to Portia, his loyalty to his friends.

Less successful answers also used some balance but structured their essays so that the first positive view of him was then contradicted by a negative view without any comment of conclusion. The least successful answers misinterpreted the question as meaning whether other characters in the play liked him; wrote unsupported praise; made unsubstantiated claims about his willingness to risk his life for Antonio or asserted that he was never unpleasant to Shylock.

Most candidates found plenty to say, gave some balance in their assessment and clearly found Bassanio an interesting character.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/23
Drama 23

Key messages

- Strong responses showed detailed knowledge of their set texts, including the chronology of the plot, and could make a confident response to the use of language.
- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question and avoided narrative.
- Convincing answers showed explicit knowledge of the context in passage-based questions and the ability, in discursive answers, to select relevant material, using direct quotation in support.
- Strong candidates looked at the text in detail in answer to passage-based questions, commented on the author's effects and used quotations in support of points.
- Successful answers avoided redundant introductions which gave excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage were commonly seen in the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates this session showed enjoyment of the texts in their personal responses to the characters, the ideas and the drama of the texts. Candidates often showed a detailed knowledge of the text in their selection of relevant material to support their personal response. A notable feature of strong answers was the ability to integrate apt quotation and make clear how the text supports the answer. In the most successful responses, candidates expressed their views in well-developed and reasoned argument.

Successful answers addressed the question asked. Where candidates were asked to consider two aspects of a passage, they needed to make a response to each one, such as in **Question 9**, where candidates were asked to consider both the drama and significance of the passage, or in **Question 7**, where candidates were asked about both the English army and the French knights in *Henry V*. Candidates who only made a response to one aspect of a question limited their answer. Strong answers focused on the terms of the question, including terms such as: 'vividly', 'strikingly' and 'powerfully', which are intended to help the candidate to consider the writing and the author's intent. There was a tendency for some to veer away from the question asked. For example, in answer to **Question 6** on *An Inspector Calls*, some candidates wrote at length on how they found Eva Smith's painful death moving, when the question asked them to consider the drama of the Inspector's investigative methods. Candidates who lost focus on the question limited their answers.

This session there were some highly successful answers on passages from all texts, most notably from Miller's *A View from the Bridge* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. These strong answers showed an awareness of context, an understanding of the dialogue, and considered how characters speak and react to one another on stage. They analysed the author's intended effects and likely audience response. They used detail from the passage, including many short quotations, and considered their effect in the passage. Weaker answers often spent too long at the start narrating events from the play, or giving extraneous details on the author's life or the historical and cultural period of the play. Sometimes they ended with lengthy conclusions which repeated much of the answer. This limited the amount of the answer which was focused on answering the question.

There were some very successful responses to discursive questions: especially notable were some on Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, and Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *The Merchant of Venice*. These answers used a well-constructed argument developed over a range of points, supported by brief and apt quotations from the text. Candidates needed to know the whole text well to be able to select the most suitable material to answer a particular question. For example, when answering **Question 8**, candidates who selected material from Henry's soliloquy before the battle of Agincourt were able to offer the insight of Henry's own thoughts on the conflict between his role as king and his personal feelings, as interpreted by Shakespeare.

An appreciation of the dramatic staging of the text, as indicated by language and structure, lifted answers at all levels. These answers included an explicit response to the success of dramatic features, such as the setting of the play, the action on stage, dialogue between characters and likely audience response. For example, candidates answering **Question 3** on Miller's *A View from the Bridge* often quoted the stage direction which shows that Eddie 'paces up and down'. Good answers related this to the question on tension, by saying that it shows the audience Eddie's discomfort at the thought of Rodolpho and Catherine dating, thus causing conflict.

Some rubric infringements were seen this session. On Paper 2, candidates need to know that they cannot answer two passage-based or two discursive questions. There were also some infringements of the instructions for **Question 6** on *An Inspector Calls*, where the instructions read: '**Do not use the passage in Question 5 in answering this question**'. Comments on material from the passage for **Question 5** had to be discounted from answers to **Question 6**, which resulted in limited responses.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE and R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Good answers set the passage briefly in context: the verdict of the trial has been given and Cates has been found guilty. Some candidates gave a lengthier narrative account which was not needed. Most candidates found these aspects moving: that Cates is uncertain whether he has won or lost, that Rachel develops as an independent thinker, and the death of Brady. Strong candidates developed their analysis to show how the authors make them moving. For example, there were developed personal responses to Rachel's comparison of a thought to a child which 'has to be born'. Some candidates focused on the moving announcement of Brady's death, 'quiet' as it is, amongst the celebrations, together with Drummond's honest acknowledgement of Brady's standing as he 'can't imagine a world without Matthew Harrison Brady.' The use of Brady's full name here gives him dignity in death. Weaker responses often expressed confusion over whether Cates won or lost the trial; some explained creationism, evolutionism or freedom of thought at the expense of a consideration of what is moving. Some candidates provided a general commentary on the text: these responses were limited because of their lack of focus on the question.

Question 2

Strong responses here were able to compose a cogent argument. They often equated his greatness with his popularity with the people of Hillsboro, who claim: 'If it's good enough for Matthew Brady, it's good enough for us'. The fact that he ran for Presidential candidate three times was seen as an indication of his sense of public service; or alternatively as an example of his determination to pursue fame at all costs. He was mostly appreciated as a voice of reason when he intervenes as Reverend Brown's zealotry gets out of hand. Candidates' arguments were more convincing when they were closely supported from the text. The best responses selected the most appropriate material and integrated brief quotation. Basic responses gave a general character study which were limited because they ignored the question of Brady's 'greatness', while other responses were limited because textual reference was not used to support the views expressed.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Candidates found much tension in the passage. Stronger answers showed an understanding of context and staging. They commented on Eddie's insult to Marco's wife, with heightened tension in Eddie's mocking laughter contrasting with Marco's 'blushing' innocence. They identified conflict between Eddie and all the other characters, because of Eddie's dislike of Rodolpho's dating Catherine, because Marco and Rodolpho need to be grateful to Eddie, and because Beatrice forcefully criticises Eddie. Some answers focused on the

tension shown in stage directions for Eddie: *'paces up and down'*, *'holding back a voice full of anger'*, *'freezes'*. Weaker answers often simply listed stage directions, while better answers placed them in context and showed how they create tension. Thus, Eddie freezing when Catherine asks Rodolpho to dance makes the tension clear to the audience because Eddie shows his horror at Catherine choosing to defy him. Some candidates provided a general commentary on the text, sometimes identifying patterns of speech such as pauses and ellipses, or punctuation such as question and exclamation marks, and asserting that they caused tension. These responses were often limited because candidates needed to consider their context and effect.

Question 4

Basic answers to this question took a narrative approach and tracked the events leading to Eddie's death, often taking as their main point the fact that Eddie took a knife to the confrontation with Marco, so it was his own fault he was killed. Better answers were able to consider aspects of Eddie's character which led him to behave as he does; they considered Eddie's attitudes to his wife, to family, and to honour in his Red Hook community. The strongest answers explored how Miller has structured the play, using Alfieri as a chorus to create a fatalistic atmosphere by suggesting from the start that events will run their *'bloody course'*; Alfieri conveys the sense of inevitability by his powerlessness to intervene and by his sensible legal advice to Eddie, which Eddie then ignores. The best answers supported their points with brief, apt quotation from the text.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

Good answers set the passage briefly in context: Birling has just described his sacking of Eva, but Gerald, Sheila and Eric are unaware of their involvement. Some candidates gave a lengthier narrative account which was not needed. Strong answers looked at the subtleties of the stage directions and explored the writing carefully. They considered the Inspector's authority in his dealings with the Birlings, as evidenced in his speech and stage directions. He does not try to be polite but states the truth: *'The girl's dead though'*. He challenges the truth of Gerald's assertion that they don't know anything and the stage directions in which he looks slowly at each character reinforce his omniscience by implying each one is guilty. His terse brief answers to Mr Birling show he cannot be deflected from his duty. Mr Birling's attitude to the Inspector changes to apologetic when he realises he is not the only one involved. Sheila shows compliance with the Inspector's views by criticising her father and sympathising with Eva, as does Eric. Many candidates found it difficult to focus on the question, and wrote at length about the socio-historical background to the play, or Priestley's ideas of socialism, which limited their answers.

Question 6

This question asks candidates to explore how the Inspector conducts his investigation. Strong answers selected from a range of his methods. Popular choices were: his *'one person and one enquiry at a time'* approach, which not only focuses all attention on each guilty person in turn, but also allows for the dramatic build-up of intensity during the play; Priestley's use of dramatic irony as the audience increasingly understands that each character is guilty before they admit it themselves; how the Inspector dramatically makes use of Eva's photograph and diary; his persistent asking of questions coupled with his omniscience; the shocking lack of deference for the middle classes shown in his blunt, almost rude replies to the Birlings; and the dramatic way he makes Eva's life experiences universal. Successful answers focused on 'powerfully dramatic' and supported their points with brief quotation or brief reference to the text. Some weaker responses ignored the instruction not to use the passage from **Question 5** in answering **Question 6**, and so limited their answers. Others lost focus on the drama of the Inspector's investigative methods and retold the story, or wrote at length about Priestley's ideas of socialism.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most good answers began by briefly confirming the context of the passage as the moment before the battle and before Henry's Agincourt speech. They identified the characters in the passage as French commanders showing overconfidence in their own fighting abilities, together with an underestimation of the English. Having established the context, good candidates were able to explore the passage in detail and analyse selected parts of the writing and the effects accurately. Strong answers explored the vividness of the language in boastful phrases such as: *'your fair show shall suck away their souls'* or *'The vapour of our*

valour will o'erturn them'; and they explored the effects of images such as *'Big Mars'* as a mocking reference to Henry and the English horsemen ridiculed as *'fixed candlesticks'*. A common misreading was *'poor jades'* as referring to the Englishmen rather than their horses. Good responses considered Shakespeare's dramatic purpose of making the English victory more remarkable. Weaker answers here mistook the context or thought one of the speakers was English; not all were able to analyse the language in detail, and simply paraphrased a few lines. Some were not certain of the general meaning.

Question 8

Candidates needed to know the play well in order to make the best selection of material to answer this question. Some candidates spent too long contrasting Henry's youth with his role as king, which was only relevant up to a point. Candidates often selected the unmasking of the three traitors and their sentencing, and the hanging of Bardolph as examples of moments where Henry has to hide his personal feelings and act as king. Strong answers explored these moments in detail and quoted briefly to support points. Candidates who aptly selected Henry's soliloquy before Agincourt were able to use Henry's own thoughts on the burdens of kingship to answer the question. The best answers showed an awareness of Shakespeare's methods, such as the use of soliloquy for Henry to dramatically address the audience directly.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

Good answers briefly placed the passage in context: this is the first choice of a casket in the play. They saw the situation as dramatic because the stakes for the suitor are high: the suitor who makes the correct choice gains the right to marry Portia, but if he fails, he is unable to marry anyone. They saw the significance as being that the correct choice would change the plot: Portia would be unable to marry Bassanio. Weaker answers gave a lengthy explanation of the casket text. Many candidates commented on the suspense as Morocco debates his choice, while stronger answers explored Morocco's language. They analysed his high-flown language on the hardships of crossing sea and desert, and of Portia, described as *'so rich a gem'* and *'angel'*, and the significance of his equating the worth of Portia to the value of gold. Stronger answers saw a contrast between Morocco's overblown language and the mocking couplets on the scroll. Many candidates pointed out the significance of the theme of appearance versus reality, with stronger responses developing their comments to explore the proverbial *'All that glitters is not gold'*. Portia's dismissal of Morocco tended to be seen as 'racism', with many missing the ambiguity of *'complexion'*.

Question 10

This was a popular question and most candidates were able to offer a reasoned personal response supported by textual reference. Candidates knew the play well and most were able to make a relevant selection of supporting material, with many quoting aptly. The strongest answers formed well-constructed arguments in support of their choice. Most felt more sympathy for Shylock, citing anti-Semitism especially from Antonio, whose treatment of Shylock as he spat and kicked him, and promised to do so again, was often quoted. Candidates felt that Shylock was betrayed by his daughter, who did not even leave him his wife's ring as a memento. They considered his treatment in court to be unfair, as he is cheated out of his *'pound of flesh'*, his fortune and his religion, and ends up with nothing. More balanced answers considered how far Shylock's treatment was deserved. Some felt more sympathy for Jessica, because of her father's oppressive treatment of keeping her indoors, and thought she was forced to run away. Weaker answers became narrative; some became side-tracked into comparing the possible reactions of Elizabethan and modern audiences, without tying this directly to the question.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31
Drama (Open Text) 31

Key messages

- Strong responses showed detailed knowledge of their set texts, including the chronology of the plot, and could make a confident response to the use of language.
- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question and avoided narrative.
- Convincing answers showed explicit knowledge of the context in passage-based questions and the ability, in discursive answers, to select relevant material, using direct quotation in support.
- Strong candidates looked at the text in detail in answer to passage-based questions, commented on the author's effects and used quotations in support of points.
- Successful answers avoided redundant introductions which gave excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage were commonly seen in the most successful answers.

General comments

This is the last session for both *An Inspector Calls* and *The Merchant of Venice*: these have been replaced, for first examination in 2018, by *The Winslow Boy* by Terence Rattigan and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set texts and it was clear that they often enjoyed and engaged with the characters and themes. The strongest responses directed their material to the specific demands of the question. Less successful responses often started with lengthy, courtesy introductions: e.g. 'In this essay, I am going to...' and wrote conclusions which simply repeated points already made. Candidates should be advised to address the key word/s of the question from the start. Candidates who do allow time for deconstructing the question, thinking about the text and planning their response, are more able to give an overview of the text, addressing the question in their introductions. This is particularly important for passage-based questions as some candidates do not consider the entire passage. Those who move immediately into writing are often still unsure of the requirements of the task and the relevant textual detail required as they write, resulting in a loss of focus and contradiction of their own earlier comments.

This session there were fewer candidates who focused on stage directions and punctuation without some exploration of them in context. However, it was noted that a number of candidates commented on directing the scene – how characters would dress, speak or move on stage, which invariably had little relevance to the question and consequently did not meet the assessment criteria. Candidates need to be reminded that to show understanding of the text as performance, the dramatic impact of stage directions, dialogue and characters' actions should be explored without assuming the director's role.

Most candidates used their time well, there were few brief answers and fewer candidates seemed determined to offer a pre-prepared response.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE and R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

To answer the question fully, candidates needed to focus on both what was 'dramatic' and 'revealing' for the audience. Weaker responses worked through the passage narrating events at a literal level. Most could comment on what was happening and understood this was an introduction to Drummond but there was often little acknowledgement or exploration of the dramatic impact his name and description create. Often candidates ignored the start of the passage, missing completely Hornbeck's significance at this point. Stronger responses correctly identified the imagery used in terms of biblical references, 'David and Goliath', and the diabolical imagery used, exploring the dramatic impact on Mrs and Mr Brady and other characters. These responses showed more understanding of the significance of the moment, looking at the town's prejudices and the significance of liberal thinking versus narrow-minded fundamentalism, particularly in their aligning Drummond with the devil and trying to find ways of excluding him. Brady's surprising positive comments to Drummond's entry were features of the best responses and these were able to quote and analyse the text effectively to support comments.

Question 2

Weaker responses to this question wrote individual character studies and failed to look at the differences in the presentation of Drummond and Brady. Some relied exclusively on the passage from **Question 1** for information. The most successful responses focused on the characters' beliefs, background and the trial, exploring what they revealed about the differences between the two men.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This was the most popular text and question. It was generally well answered with candidates understanding the revelation of Eddie's over-protectiveness and the shifting moods and tone, especially of Beatrice. The best answers related this clearly to the rest of the play whilst exploring the passage and the staging closely: both the characters' reactions in the stage directions and their dialogue. These were also able to differentiate between 'striking' and 'revealing'. Weaker responses tended to summarise or paraphrase what the characters said and there was some confusion about Eddie's relationship to Catherine. A number of candidates sought to discuss the themes of the play such as manliness or wrote about the subservient role of women in the American/Sicilian culture, usually at the expense of analysing the passage.

Question 4

Weaker responses to this question lacked focus on 'significant' and limited comment to Alfieri being a lawyer and the narrator, with some textual reference to his introduction to Red Hook and the community. The best responses were able to identify and discuss the different roles Alfieri had as narrator, character, advisor to Eddie and the 'bridge' between the Italian and American cultures, an in-between in terms of Sicilian justice and American law. The very best were able to comment on his breaking of the fourth wall and his connection with the audience, informing them from the start of the tragedy about to unfold and his helplessness to do anything to prevent it. There were also some good responses to Miller's use of the Greek chorus and imagery used by Alfieri.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

The AO4 requirement for candidates to make 'a personal response' was explicitly addressed in the question but many candidates misinterpreted this and wrote about what the characters were feeling rather than their personal or an audience's responses to the characters' behaviour. Almost all candidates understood what was happening in this scene and knew its context but, except by implicit comment on Sheila's different response, failed to address the terms of the question. Some candidates expressed opinions which could not be supported by textual evidence, such as feeling sympathy and relief for the family as they had been tricked by the Inspector. Most candidates understood there was a generational divide and that Sheila was the character who had learned the most and was therefore most deserving of the audience's sympathy. The most successful answers expressed a strong personal response; anger, disgust and frustration with the

Birlings and Gerald, understanding Mr and Mrs Birling's arrogance and desire to keep their public image intact and exploring Priestley's use of language and dramatic tone. There was some confusion about Gerald and many candidates omitted to mention him, or Eric, at all whilst some wrote about how to direct and produce the scene on stage – lighting effects, sounds and positioning of actors - which had no relevance to the task.

Question 6

The most successful responses to this question considered the structuring of the play, building up to Eric's revelation and the Inspector's final speech. They were able to differentiate between personal and social responsibility and analysed the characters' responses to both the death of Eva/Daisy and their level of acceptance, or not, of responsibility. The best responses showed understanding of Priestley's presentation of Socialism versus Capitalism, used textual evidence from across the whole play and linked the Inspector's quoted words and his final speech to the play's 'message'. Others looked at the 'chain reaction' idea and not only explored how the Birlings and Gerald contributed to Eva/Daisy's suicide but were able to support comments with specific reference to the text and quotation. Weaker answers based their responses on the passage and were narrative in approach, failing to engage with the idea of responsibility in general.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

There were insufficient responses to this set text to make meaningful comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

To answer this question fully, candidates had to respond to what was 'entertaining' in the passage and to explore it as an 'ending to the play'. Weaker responses gave the context and little of the passage or had only a very basic plot level understanding of what was happening. Antonio's being 'dumb' was misinterpreted as a modern idiom rather than his being speechless at the return of his ships and wealth. Most commented on Gratiano's double entendre and could see how entertaining this would be to the audience but failed to consider the wider context of the passage as an ending to the play. Better responses could clearly explain the humour of the dramatic irony with the resolution of the ring plot but also looked at the happy endings achieved by such characters as Antonio, Jessica and Lorenzo. Some were entertained by the irony in the way the women control the men in this scene, something unexpected in Shakespeare's day where the women characters were played by young men. The most successful responses explored the genre, with the 'happy ending' to be expected, understood the comic relief after the trial scene and how the loose ends were tied up very satisfactorily for all but Shylock. A few candidates acknowledged the contrast between the end for Shylock and the end for Antonio, and whether each was deserved. Consideration of the ambiguity of the language and the humour of the exchanges were features of the best responses.

Question 10

Many candidates found it difficult to isolate two moments. A few candidates failed to read the emboldened rider to the question, '**Do not use the passage in Question *9 in answering this question**', and used the passage as a disturbing moment where Portia and Nerissa lied to and mocked the two men. Where they were able to choose two apt moments, they stated they were disturbing but provided little detail or textual reference to support their choices fully. Better responses chose Shylock being abused and his obsession with money, which, it was argued he valued more than his daughter. A number of candidates focused on Shylock's 'hath not a Jew' speech and how badly he was treated simply because he was Jewish. There was some response to how Shylock was driven by revenge and the 'disturbing' elements came from his desire to kill Antonio whether he received the bond or not.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Drama 32

Key messages

- Strong candidates showed detailed knowledge of their set texts and could make a confident response to the language.
- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question and avoided narrative.
- Convincing answers revealed implicit knowledge of the context in passage-based questions and the ability, in discursive answers, to select relevant material, using direct quotation in support.
- Well-prepared candidates considered the text in detail in answer to passage-based questions, commented on the author's effects and used quotations from the passage in support.
- Successful answers avoided redundant introductions which gave excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage, watched by an audience, enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates this session showed a lively engagement with their set texts.

Successful answers showed detailed knowledge supported by an ability to place a passage and to use direct textual evidence in the form of quotation. Such responses went beyond an ability to merely decode meaning to comment on both dramatic and literary effects. The key elements of the question were answered directly, without the use of redundant introductions, giving Examiners information of which they are aware, such as the names of the author and the characters. Strong passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and, when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the question. An implicit knowledge of the context of the scene and an ability to analyse the language and dramatic effects of the passage were the characteristics of high level responses. Effective responses to discursive questions referred to specific moments in the play to support their well-constructed arguments, with some direct quotation from the text.

Some candidates could have performed more successfully if, in passage-based responses, they had focused on the passage itself and not on what happened before it and after it or only commenting on the themes that they thought emerged in the passage. There was some evidence, in the Shakespeare texts in particular, that candidates did not understand what was being said in sufficient depth to answer the question. There were answers which understood what was happening but described this instead of writing an analysis of it based on the question asked.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects remains the hallmark of the strongest responses.

There was evidence this session of some candidates not knowing the plot of their set text in sufficient detail and some confused the names of the characters.

Strong candidates showed awareness of authorial intention, particularly in writing about *An Inspector Calls*. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* were hampered regularly by lengthy comment on how an Elizabethan audience would respond compared to a modern audience, when it is the candidate's own personal response that is required.

Candidates should be seriously discouraged from using line references in lieu of quotations. Examiners cannot discern which words and phrases the candidate thinks are relevant and this approach does not allow for close consideration of the language.

A significant number of candidates are using material from the printed passage in order to answer the discursive question. This limits the range of material they consider and usually leads to low achievement.

Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

The strongest responses to this question knew the context of the passage and considered both the drama and the significance of the moment. They considered Drummond's dramatic change of tactic, the responses of the spectators and reactions of Davenport and Brady. The significance to the play of the expert witnesses being dismissed, Brady never having read Darwin and his willingness to take the stand, with disastrous consequences for him, were fully understood. Less competent responses wrote about the general issues in the play rather than relating these closely to the passage and made limited comment on the dramatic effects of the scene.

Question 2

There were many well-developed responses to Bert Cates, supported by specific reference to the text. Most candidates chose to admire his kindness in preventing Rachel from being cross-examined, his anger at the treatment of the Stebbins family, his integrity in sticking to his beliefs, persistence when the town is against him and independence of mind. These points were supported by quotation or close textual reference. Less effective responses made rather bland and repetitive comments about his courage and humility, as if there is no development in his character during the play, and made erroneous and unsupported assertions about him never doubting and keeping quiet throughout the trial. Some candidates thought he won the case.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This is a key moment in the play and strong candidates recognised the powerful imagery and foreshadowing, the symbolic use of the phone booth and the nature of the conflict between Eddie and Alfieri. Responses were less effective when candidates explained the context in great detail, without concentrating sufficiently on the passage itself, or when they speculated at length about Alfieri's role as narrator and the role of the law, forgetting to answer the question itself in the process.

Question 4

There were many generalised answers to this question which made assertions about the caring nature of their relationship and the women's support for one another, with only limited textual support. Effective answers understood that Beatrice may be encouraging Catherine's independence and marriage out of self-interest and commented on the crucial scene between them where Beatrice reprimands Catherine for inadvertently encouraging Eddie's attraction to her. Few answers looked at the relationship from Catherine's point-of-view and some focused almost exclusively on the women's relationships with Eddie. The word 'memorable' in the question aimed to steer candidates towards the more dramatic moments between them and some took this up by considering the moment when Beatrice is torn between loyalty to Eddie and attending Catherine's wedding.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

It was important here for candidates to know what had happened immediately before the passage at the end of Act One, but this was often not mentioned; many candidates either did not know, or had forgotten, that Sheila has already worked out that Gerald knew Eva/Daisy and that was why he was absent the previous summer. Because this was missing from some responses, it resulted in the main argument, that Sheila and the audience had no idea what Gerald was about to say, being flawed. There were a number of candidates who successfully explored the dramatic impact of the Inspector's standing at the door in silence, but few were able to comment effectively on Sheila's words 'You see? What did I tell you?' instead focusing on her 'hysterical laugh' and often misunderstanding it.

Most candidates recognised the conflict between the Gerald and Sheila, the tension created by the fact that the play had started off as a happy occasion celebrating their engagement which was now ironically coming to an end. Less successful answers relied on a generalised narrative overview of the passage, without sufficient focus on the tension and how it is created.

Question 6

The strongest answers focused on the key words in the question: 'memorable...victim', whereas less successful responses retold Eva's story and did not pay sufficient attention to the question. Many answers would have been improved by addressing the text as drama and not referring to it and writing about it as a novel. The focus for 'memorably' often became the political / social issues rather than any dramatic impact on stage, though there were also convincing responses to her 'symbolic' significance as an oppressed woman and member of the working class. The strongest answers were able to respond successfully to the impact of the Inspector's emotive words when describing Eva's death or to its impact on the plot, rather than stating that everyone was involved with her and this drove the plot in general terms.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

This question was answered effectively when candidates understood that Cambridge, Scroop and Grey are traitors who have conspired with the French against King Henry. Strong responses could then select the irony and ambiguity in Henry's speeches, comment on the tension of the test he sets up for the three men and comment on their 'false flattery'. Some candidates explained the situation clearly but without any focus on the question. Others seemed unaware of the plot of the play and therefore found little to say of any relevance.

Question 8

Most candidates wisely chose Henry's Harfleur speech, the Agincourt speech or the night before Agincourt. Few, however, looked at Williams's dramatic speech about battle or the Chorus's and the Constable of France's description of the state of the English troops and what the French would do to them in battle.

Many chose the tennis balls scene, which does have powerful descriptions of war, and was a good choice if candidates were able to make specific reference to the text. Less successful responses seemed to interpret the question as meaning 'preparation for war' and wrote about the Archbishops and their motives for persuading Henry to invade France.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

There were some very strong answers to this question which considered the contrasting presentation of Portia and Shylock. Such responses explored in detail the language of Portia's plea for mercy, Shylock's stubborn refusal to give it and the way in which both characters expressed their views. Too many candidates, however, did not pay sufficient attention to the passage. They spent too long giving the context and moving on to what happens next or too long establishing what we already know about Portia and Shylock.

There were some misconceptions and misreadings such as: Portia was asking for justice; that she did not offer Shylock the money as the law would not allow it; that Jews do not believe in God or heaven; that she criticised Shylock for wearing an odd suit. If candidates had understood and written about what Portia says, how she says it and why she says it, their answers would have been more successful.

Strong responses saw that Portia is beginning to manipulate Shylock but many wanted him to be sympathetic here which was counter to how Shakespeare portrays him in this passage. Perceptive candidates understood this and commented on his terse, stubborn responses and his obsession with revenge. Only the strongest commented on 'crave' and his triumphalism when he thinks that Portia is on his side.

Question 10

There were many strong answers to this question which showed knowledge of the issues surrounding Bassanio and balanced their response accordingly. The strongest looked at the language, especially his propensity to use the imagery of finance and his various linguistic contributions to the theme of appearance versus reality. They weighed up his spendthrift, risk-taking quality, his 'use' of Antonio, his awareness of Portia's wealth and his giving away the symbolic ring against his choosing the right casket, his obvious attraction to Portia, his loyalty to his friends.

Less successful answers also used some balance but structured their essays so that the first positive view of him was then contradicted by a negative view without any comment of conclusion. The least successful answers misinterpreted the question as meaning whether other characters in the play liked him; wrote unsupported praise; made unsubstantiated claims about his willingness to risk his life for Antonio or asserted that he was never unpleasant to Shylock.

Most candidates found plenty to say, gave some balance in their assessment and clearly found Bassanio an interesting character.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33
Drama (Open Text) 33

Key messages

- Strong responses showed detailed knowledge of their set texts, including the chronology of the plot, and could make a confident response to the use of language.
- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question and avoided narrative.
- Convincing answers showed explicit knowledge of the context in passage-based questions and the ability, in discursive answers, to select relevant material, using direct quotation in support.
- Strong candidates looked at the text in detail in answer to passage-based questions, commented on the author's effects and used quotations in support of points.
- Successful answers avoided redundant introductions which gave excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage were commonly seen in the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates this session showed enjoyment of the texts in their personal responses to the characters, the ideas and the drama of the texts. Candidates often showed a detailed knowledge of the text in their selection of relevant material to support their personal response. A notable feature of strong answers was the ability to integrate apt quotation and make clear how the text supports the answer. In the most successful responses, candidates expressed their views in well-developed and reasoned argument.

Successful answers addressed the question asked. Where candidates were asked to consider two aspects of a passage, they needed to make a response to each one, such as in **Question 9**, where candidates were asked to consider both the drama and significance of the passage, or in **Question 7**, where candidates were asked about both the English army and the French knights in *Henry V*. Candidates who only made a response to one aspect of a question limited their answer. Strong answers focused on the terms of the question, including terms such as: 'vividly', 'strikingly' and 'powerfully', which are intended to help the candidate to consider the writing and the author's intent. There was a tendency for some to veer away from the question asked. For example, in answer to **Question 6** on *An Inspector Calls*, some candidates wrote at length on how they found Eva Smith's painful death moving, when the question asked them to consider the drama of the Inspector's investigative methods. Candidates who lost focus on the question limited their answers.

This session there were some highly successful answers on passages from all texts, most notably from Miller's *A View from the Bridge* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. These strong answers showed an awareness of context, an understanding of the dialogue, and considered how characters speak and react to one another on stage. They analysed the author's intended effects and likely audience response. They used detail from the passage, including many short quotations, and considered their effect in the passage. Weaker answers often spent too long at the start narrating events from the play, or giving extraneous details on the author's life or the historical and cultural period of the play. Sometimes they ended with lengthy conclusions which repeated much of the answer. This limited the amount of the answer which was focused on answering the question.

There were some very successful responses to discursive questions: especially notable were some on Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, and Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *The Merchant of Venice*. These answers used a well-constructed argument developed over a range of points, supported by brief and apt quotations from the text. Candidates needed to know the whole text well to be able to select the most suitable material to answer a particular question. For example, when answering **Question 8**, candidates who selected material from Henry's soliloquy before the battle of Agincourt were able to offer the insight of Henry's own thoughts on the conflict between his role as king and his personal feelings, as interpreted by Shakespeare.

An appreciation of the dramatic staging of the text, as indicated by language and structure, lifted answers at all levels. These answers included an explicit response to the success of dramatic features, such as the setting of the play, the action on stage, dialogue between characters and likely audience response. For example, candidates answering **Question 3** on Miller's *A View from the Bridge* often quoted the stage direction which shows that Eddie 'paces up and down'. Good answers related this to the question on tension, by saying that it shows the audience Eddie's discomfort at the thought of Rodolpho and Catherine dating, thus causing conflict.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE and R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Good answers set the passage briefly in context: the verdict of the trial has been given and Cates has been found guilty. Some candidates gave a lengthier narrative account which was not needed. Most candidates found these aspects moving: that Cates is uncertain whether he has won or lost, that Rachel develops as an independent thinker, and the death of Brady. Strong candidates developed their analysis to show how the authors make them moving. For example, there were developed personal responses to Rachel's comparison of a thought to a child which 'has to be born'. Some candidates focused on the moving announcement of Brady's death, 'quiet' as it is, amongst the celebrations, together with Drummond's honest acknowledgement of Brady's standing as he 'can't imagine a world without Matthew Harrison Brady.' The use of Brady's full name here gives him dignity in death. Weaker responses often expressed confusion over whether Cates won or lost the trial; some explained creationism, evolutionism or freedom of thought at the expense of a consideration of what is moving. Some candidates provided a general commentary on the text: these responses were limited because of their lack of focus on the question.

Question 2

Strong responses here were able to compose a cogent argument. They often equated his greatness with his popularity with the people of Hillsboro, who claim: 'If it's good enough for Matthew Brady, it's good enough for us'. The fact that he ran for Presidential candidate three times was seen as an indication of his sense of public service; or alternatively as an example of his determination to pursue fame at all costs. He was mostly appreciated as a voice of reason when he intervenes as Reverend Brown's zealotry gets out of hand. Candidates' arguments were more convincing when they were closely supported from the text. The best responses selected the most appropriate material and integrated brief quotation. Basic responses gave a general character study which were limited because they ignored the question of Brady's 'greatness', while other responses were limited because textual reference was not used to support the views expressed.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Candidates found much tension in the passage. Stronger answers showed an understanding of context and staging. They commented on Eddie's insult to Marco's wife, with heightened tension in Eddie's mocking laughter contrasting with Marco's 'blushing' innocence. They identified conflict between Eddie and all the other characters, because of Eddie's dislike of Rodolpho's dating Catherine, because Marco and Rodolpho need to be grateful to Eddie, and because Beatrice forcefully criticises Eddie. Some answers focused on the tension shown in stage directions for Eddie: 'paces up and down', 'holding back a voice full of anger', 'freezes'. Weaker answers often simply listed stage directions, while better answers placed them in context and showed how they create tension. Thus, Eddie freezing when Catherine asks Rodolpho to dance makes the tension clear to the audience because Eddie shows his horror at Catherine choosing to defy him. Some candidates provided a general commentary on the text, sometimes identifying patterns of speech such as pauses and ellipses, or punctuation such as question and exclamation marks, and asserting that they

caused tension. These responses were often limited because candidates needed to consider their context and effect.

Question 4

Basic answers to this question took a narrative approach and tracked the events leading to Eddie's death, often taking as their main point the fact that Eddie took a knife to the confrontation with Marco, so it was his own fault he was killed. Better answers were able to consider aspects of Eddie's character which led him to behave as he does; they considered Eddie's attitudes to his wife, to family, and to honour in his Red Hook community. The strongest answers explored how Miller has structured the play, using Alfieri as a chorus to create a fatalistic atmosphere by suggesting from the start that events will run their *'bloody course'*; Alfieri conveys the sense of inevitability by his powerlessness to intervene and by his sensible legal advice to Eddie, which Eddie then ignores. The best answers supported their points with brief, apt quotation from the text.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

Good answers set the passage briefly in context: Birling has just described his sacking of Eva, but Gerald, Sheila and Eric are unaware of their involvement. Some candidates gave a lengthier narrative account which was not needed. Strong answers looked at the subtleties of the stage directions and explored the writing carefully. They considered the Inspector's authority in his dealings with the Birlings, as evidenced in his speech and stage directions. He does not try to be polite but states the truth: *'The girl's dead though'*. He challenges the truth of Gerald's assertion that they don't know anything and the stage directions in which he looks slowly at each character reinforce his omniscience by implying each one is guilty. His terse brief answers to Mr Birling show he cannot be deflected from his duty. Mr Birling's attitude to the Inspector changes to apologetic when he realises he is not the only one involved. Sheila shows compliance with the Inspector's views by criticising her father and sympathising with Eva, as does Eric. Many candidates found it difficult to focus on the question, and wrote at length about the socio-historical background to the play, or Priestley's ideas of socialism, which limited their answers.

Question 6

This question asks candidates to explore how the Inspector conducts his investigation. Strong answers selected from a range of his methods. Popular choices were: his *'one person and one enquiry at a time'* approach, which not only focuses all attention on each guilty person in turn, but also allows for the dramatic build-up of intensity during the play; Priestley's use of dramatic irony as the audience increasingly understands that each character is guilty before they admit it themselves; how the Inspector dramatically makes use of Eva's photograph and diary; his persistent asking of questions coupled with his omniscience; the shocking lack of deference for the middle classes shown in his blunt, almost rude replies to the Birlings; and the dramatic way he makes Eva's life experiences universal. Successful answers focused on 'powerfully dramatic' and supported their points with brief quotation or brief reference to the text. Some weaker responses ignored the instruction not to use the passage from **Question 5** in answering **Question 6**, and so limited their answers. Others lost focus on the drama of the Inspector's investigative methods and retold the story, or wrote at length about Priestley's ideas of socialism.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most good answers began by briefly confirming the context of the passage as the moment before the battle and before Henry's Agincourt speech. They identified the characters in the passage as French commanders showing overconfidence in their own fighting abilities, together with an underestimation of the English. Having established the context, good candidates were able to explore the passage in detail and analyse selected parts of the writing and the effects accurately. Strong answers explored the vividness of the language in boastful phrases such as: *'your fair show shall suck away their souls'* or *'The vapour of our valour will o'erturn them'*; and they explored the effects of images such as *'Big Mars'* as a mocking reference to Henry and the English horsemen ridiculed as *'fixed candlesticks'*. A common misreading was *'poor jades'* as referring to the Englishmen rather than their horses. Good responses considered Shakespeare's dramatic purpose of making the English victory more remarkable. Weaker answers here mistook the context or thought one of the speakers was English; not all were able to analyse the language in detail, and simply paraphrased a few lines. Some were not certain of the general meaning.

Question 8

Candidates needed to know the play well in order to make the best selection of material to answer this question. Some candidates spent too long contrasting Henry's youth with his role as king, which was only relevant up to a point. Candidates often selected the unmasking of the three traitors and their sentencing, and the hanging of Bardolph as examples of moments where Henry has to hide his personal feelings and act as king. Strong answers explored these moments in detail and quoted briefly to support points. Candidates who aptly selected Henry's soliloquy before Agincourt were able to use Henry's own thoughts on the burdens of kingship to answer the question. The best answers showed an awareness of Shakespeare's methods, such as the use of soliloquy for Henry to dramatically address the audience directly.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

Good answers briefly placed the passage in context: this is the first choice of a casket in the play. They saw the situation as dramatic because the stakes for the suitor are high: the suitor who makes the correct choice gains the right to marry Portia, but if he fails, he is unable to marry anyone. They saw the significance as being that the correct choice would change the plot: Portia would be unable to marry Bassanio. Weaker answers gave a lengthy explanation of the casket text. Many candidates commented on the suspense as Morocco debates his choice, while stronger answers explored Morocco's language. They analysed his high-flown language on the hardships of crossing sea and desert, and of Portia, described as '*so rich a gem*' and '*angel*', and the significance of his equating the worth of Portia to the value of gold. Stronger answers saw a contrast between Morocco's overblown language and the mocking couplets on the scroll. Many candidates pointed out the significance of the theme of appearance versus reality, with stronger responses developing their comments to explore the proverbial '*All that glisters is not gold*'. Portia's dismissal of Morocco tended to be seen as 'racism', with many missing the ambiguity of '*complexion*'.

Question 10

This was a popular question and most candidates were able to offer a reasoned personal response supported by textual reference. Candidates knew the play well and most were able to make a relevant selection of supporting material, with many quoting aptly. The strongest answers formed well-constructed arguments in support of their choice. Most felt more sympathy for Shylock, citing anti-Semitism especially from Antonio, whose treatment of Shylock as he spat and kicked him, and promised to do so again, was often quoted. Candidates felt that Shylock was betrayed by his daughter, who did not even leave him his wife's ring as a memento. They considered his treatment in court to be unfair, as he is cheated out of his '*pound of flesh*', his fortune and his religion, and ends up with nothing. More balanced answers considered how far Shylock's treatment was deserved. Some felt more sympathy for Jessica, because of her father's oppressive treatment of keeping her indoors, and thought she was forced to run away. Weaker answers became narrative; some became side-tracked into comparing the possible reactions of Elizabethan and modern audiences, without tying this directly to the question.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41
Unseen 41

Key messages

- Careful reading of the introductory rubric, question and bullet points can prevent misunderstanding the text and task.
- Quotation should be frequent but brief, and used to illustrate points about the writer's use of language.
- Personal response to literature comes from understanding of the writer's purpose and methods, and appreciation of their effect on the reader.
- Poetry and extracts from fiction and literary non-fiction use similar techniques of structure and language although they differ in genre and form.

General comments

Candidates took various valid approaches to tackle the unseen literature in this series, and found plenty to connect with their own literary skills and experiences when writing about the extracts. Candidates approached the extracts with individuality and candour, and the freshness of their responses, and the development of their skills, often showed that they had been well-prepared. Candidates are clearly taught to think for themselves in this component but to pay particular attention to the writer's craft.

Careful attention to the question and bullet points can prevent misunderstandings about both the text and the task. Any important factual information about the genre of the piece of writing, the identities of characters, or what is portrayed in the passage will be given in the rubric preceding the question. **Question 2** is sometimes set on a passage from a literary non-fiction text, rather than from a novel or short story. Candidates should consider the literary qualities of the writing, and relate them to the nature of the genre if possible: memoirs, for instance, are written to recreate very individual and intimate memories and share them with readers, but their construct is just as literary and artistic as that of a poem.

The question is written to address the Assessment Objectives for this subject, and the focus is explicitly on *how* the text works, and not just on what it says. Candidates need to write about the ways in which writers use language to achieve highly. Deeper implications of the narrative also need to be considered for a higher mark: these are often about the relationship between the experience described and the attitude of the writer or persona. Good answers are likely to explore beyond surface meaning, whether in poetry or prose, and consider the writer's craft and purpose. An adverb such as 'amusingly', 'strikingly' or 'memorable' is often included in order to encourage a personal response guided by the effect the writing is intended to have on the reader. Attentive reading of the question will help candidates to appreciate the tone and direction of the writing.

Similarly, the bullet points are intended to help candidates to construct their response. They are not obligatory, and do not need to be followed as a paragraph plan, but equal attention to each bullet point will ensure that the full text and the Assessment Objectives are addressed. One bullet point usually draws attention to a particular feature of the writing and the final bullet point often encourages candidates to consider the way a text ends and the relationship of that ending to the text as a whole.

Most candidates are aware of the need to use quotations in order to show how the words of the text support their ideas and interpretations. Quotation should be placed within quotation marks and embedded within the candidate's answer; close paraphrase and the copying of large sections of the text are both unnecessary. Effective quotations are often short, and support comment on the writer's choice of words and the reader's response to them. However, individual words should not be taken out of context: their meaning in the text depends on their place in a sentence or stanza, and the stronger responses work carefully through the extract instead of picking out individual words or features of the writing without showing overall understanding.

Personal response (AO4) at the highest level involves critical skills such as synthesis, evaluation and interpretation. An interpretation is valid if it can be supported by the language of the text, and especially if driven by close analysis of the effects of the writing. Candidates should not be afraid to express a personal opinion, but need to ensure that this is a thoughtful one, connected to the emotions and ideas expressed by the writer.

Genre, form and structure are explicitly part of the assessment of this subject (AO3), and in this paper stronger candidates should be taught to explore larger structures, as well as the writer's choice of words or images. Sentence structures (syntax) are worth closer consideration in poetry as well as prose, though the identification of a certain type of sentence structure ('short sentences' etc.) is not considered analysis without further comment on the effect of such usage. Prose writers also use extended metaphors, and carefully consider word order and rhythm. There are no marks simply for spotting literary techniques without comment on their effect. Words such as caesura, enjambment, personification and free verse have very precise definitions, and it would be better if candidates avoided them rather than misused them or used them too generally. Every pause is not a *caesura*, and both that term and *enjambment* cannot be applied to prose. Imagery applying human qualities to nature is not necessarily personification, and not all unrhymed verse is free. The word 'image' benefits from tight definition in literary criticism, but can be used in prose as well as poetry.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

'Genetics' by Sinead Morrissey, the Northern Irish poet awarded the T. S. Eliot prize in 2014 and the Forward Prize for her latest collection, attracted answers covering a range of achievement and although few candidates discussed the form of the poem, most did appreciate that the poem depends for many of its effects upon repeated ideas as well as upon the repeated motifs of hands, palms and fingers.

The question asked specifically about the poet's use of imagery and how that imagery conveys 'the links between her past and her future'. The majority of candidates attempted to meet the question directly and they used the bullet-pointed suggestions to help them to construct a useful response.

Candidates seemed to engage with the initial concept that every child is a product of its biological parents and inherits different specific features from each. As always, the key discriminator was the candidate's ability to explore ways in which the writer uses language, imagery and structure to convey something beyond this 'scientific' fact and to offer a more developed interpretation of the poem and of the writer's intended meanings.

Some candidates recognised the overt point, that the words 'hands' and 'palms' are repeated, and commented upon the emphasis this gives to the words, without considering that the whole line, or at least the gist of it, was also repeated as this is the key structural feature of this particular verse form. Better responses began to consider the subtle changes in the wording from stanza to stanza, which reflect the shifts in the poet's argument, her changing focus and moods.

In some weaker answers, candidates became entangled in their own hunt for meaning behind the anatomical differences between palms and fingers. At a basic level this included observations such as 'the palm is round and flat; the fingers are separated from one another'; while other, more subtle responses suggested the interdependence of palms and fingers and how the hand cannot function without full co-operation between them.

In the search for deeper implications, some drew implausible conclusions about the separate components of the hands; for example, one candidate suggested that fingers 'point the way ahead' and may suggest infidelity in the father while the 'feminine' palm simply waits passively for 'his' return. Such assertions could only have been made convincing by citing concrete textual support.

Most candidates noted the physical form of the poem, divided into six stanzas; some noticed that the final stanza has four lines rather than the three lines of all the other stanzas. Stronger answers offered an interpretation of why the poem concluded in this way, reiterating the refrain about knowing parents 'make us by our hands'. Better responses also noted the shift from first person singular to plural here as well as the shift from past to future.

Many candidates responded to the poet's use of repetition as a device to illuminate the journey of the persona, from dwelling upon her past to embracing (literally) her future. Some effectively acknowledged that this repetition went beyond the palms and fingers and included the persona's use of the repeated personal pronouns 'I' and 'me' even while, apparently, talking about her parents, which occurs at least once in every stanza.

Some candidates discussed the simplicity of the diction used and the way in which the childish 'game' re-enacted by her fingers and palms, in stanza four, is appropriate to a 'coming-of-age' poem as the persona moves from private introversion towards a public partnership.

The bullet points proved useful in helping candidates to navigate their way through different aspects of the text. For some, however, the second bullet prompted them to include too much personal comment about love, marriage, divorce or separation which led them away from the text and into the realms of anecdote or generalisation.

Examiners reported seeing answers which appeared to be influenced by the learner's own personal perceptions, so that, despite the jaunty rhythm of the poem, many candidates interpreted the tone as one of depression. Stronger answers used the poet's voice and choice of words to demonstrate more fully understanding of the tone of the poem. They were likely to refer to the line of the poem 'I lift them up and look at them with pleasure' as well as the rhythm and apparent tone of acceptance, rather than censure, in the persona's casual use of the conditional: 'They may have been repelled to separate lands ... may sleep with other lovers'.

Some candidates structured their answers according to the bullets and some structured them stanza-by-stanza. Successful candidates appeared to have read the poem and re-read the bullets to prompt their thought processes, but then went on to construct an argument of their own, covering the key areas suggested by the bullets but filtering them through their own interpretation.

Students who dealt with each stanza in turn were often able to trace the thought process of the poet as she completed her 'journey' from the initial contemplation of her hands to her request to her partner to 'take up the skin's demands'. This was a reasonable strategy. Weaker answers often adopted a methodical approach that betrayed a lack of understanding – especially of stanzas 3 and 4 – by omitting them completely.

Candidates found the image in the first two lines of stanza 3 challenging. A few made reasonable, plausible suggestions for the significance of the river and the quarry but for many, their understanding of the stanza depended upon a refusal to include the structural feature of enjambment in their interpretation. Of the candidates who tried to do something with the imagery in this stanza, most quoted the first line, such that the 'interpretation' becomes a very simple one – all that is left of their one-time love is friendship. While this satisfied some candidates as an interpretation of the 'deeper implications', the reading omitted the impact of the rest of the phrase. Candidates need to be aware that selective quotation can lead to misunderstanding which in turns makes the interpretation less convincing.

The third bullet and the final stanza also posed a difficulty to some candidates. The bullet (as well as the poem itself) suggests that the persona is addressing another person; some candidates struggled to identify who this person might be. While the majority identified a lover or future husband, others, perhaps confused by the word 'bequeath', made suggestions that the persona is addressing one or other of her (sometimes dead) parents or God. This reading was less prevalent amongst those who interpreted the 'skin's demands' as a reference to sensuality and physical need. For a number, this helped to derive meaning of the stanza itself.

Question 2

This passage is from Rose Macaulay's *The Fatal Shore*. Most candidates showed an awareness of this passage being a piece of descriptive travel writing. Most also showed an awareness of how the reader is engaged by the evocation of beauty and the sensuous enjoyment derived from it. Stronger answers showed awareness that the purpose of travel writing is to communicate the thoughts and emotions of the traveller, and engaged with her implicit feelings.

Candidates who attempted the prose were particularly prone to repeating the words from the question and the bullets as a method of keeping them on track in a passage where characterisation and action were not foregrounded. Such repetitions do not attract credit and only serve to prevent the candidate from developing their engagement with the writer's methods. Some candidates resorted to paraphrase, descriptive comment and narrative re-telling.

Comments on mood were fairly generalised and many candidates were able to appreciate and then replicate words equivalent to 'tranquil' or 'peaceful' but not probe beneath the surface of descriptions 'rich in colours and detail' to analyse the writer's craft. Whilst these observations were certainly not incorrect, these could be applied to almost any text in which very little happens within a picturesque setting.

The surface meaning of the passage and the simplicity of vocabulary like sea, beach, bay, path, white walls, pretty place, sunset, made the passage appear deceptively simple and some weaker answers contained little more than evidence of having read the passage quickly and noted adjectives. Where candidates were more focused, the first bullet elicited some effective work. There was some thoughtful engagement with how the beauty of Spain is evoked. Most candidates were aware it was a place of serenity and relaxation. There were some thoughtful comments on the use of metaphor and personification. Few drew a distinction between the natural beauty of the landscape and the man-made beauty of the cultivated gardens and hotel buildings. Many were unable to explain, with any clarity, the image of the firefly-devoured cheese.

A large number did not recognise that the writer actually talks of two geographical locations, Malaga and Torremolinos; the former may well be pretty from afar, in the night-time, but close up is not so impressive, 'one day will suffice' and the dusty avenues, *avenidas* and 'lumpy cathedral' are described as a contrast to what was (then) the naturally tranquil village Torremolinos. Many candidates failed to pick this up, and therefore missed the importance of the harmonious natural scene in Macaulay's description. The majority of candidates were convinced that 'everything' that the writer described was wonderful, that everything was like paradise and that the writer loved everything about her journey/holiday, in an indiscriminate fashion. These candidates often missed the point of the passage.

Bullet two was well handled, with many showing a good understanding of how the colours were being used, often in a symbolic way. Weaker responses tended to list the colours and then say in general terms that they were beautiful.

Lack of attention to detail proved the limiting factor on some responses that otherwise seemed to have had a reasonable grasp of some of the language play (colours of the garden; sunset; precious pearls and gold) and it was comparatively rare to find those candidates who started to engage with effects a little more deeply: 'golden' ... in a metaphor with 'pearl' '... shows a glorious colour with great value and prestige'. There was some interesting work on the writer's depiction of light and shadow.

Many candidates focused exclusively on the visual aspects that the writer described while they omitted any mention of human activity, either by the writer (bathing) or other travellers (three Englishmen with the Spanish *senoritas*, happily flirting; the local fishermen happily singing, as they worked). While it is to be expected that candidates have to make choices about where to focus in their response, Examiners reported that many candidates ignored aspects of the writer's experiences that were not described in terms of colour or light.

Many candidates failed to appreciate that there is a difference between references to 'beauty' in the first bullet (generally a visual feature) and to what makes Spain especially 'attractive' in the third bullet. Careful reading and thought about these separate demands could have opened the way to an exploration of the non-visual features, often linked to the people that the writer includes in her descriptions. Better answers commented on the writer's appreciation of the cultural dimension of the location, its 'Spanishness' and the cultivation of the idea of humans in some sort of harmony with nature. These candidates considered the contrasting sensory pleasure, described by the writer, of bathing at night as compared with the morning. They also sometimes considered the contrast in the writer's presentation of the peace of Torremolinos compared with the 'tented and populated beaches' of Malaga.

A significant number of candidates considered cultural influences as central to this piece, almost universally tied to either the odd Spanish words ('she seems to appreciate the culture of Spain as she uses words like 'senoritas' or 'playas') or the slightly speculative but nevertheless interesting 'she describes the sea as 'quiet' because elsewhere the sea is more aggressive'.

The strongest responses did not omit to comment on the final sentence of the passage which emphasises the very personal nature of the writer's experience, and some commented attentively on the image of 'the returning memory of a dream long forgotten' in order to appreciate that the passage describes an all-too temporary idyll rather than more material temptations of the travel brochure.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42
Unseen 42

Key messages

- Careful reading of the introductory rubric, question and bullet points can prevent misunderstanding the text and task.
- Quotation should be frequent but brief, and used to illustrate points about the writer's use of language.
- Personal response to literature comes from understanding of the writer's purpose and methods, and appreciation of their effect on the reader.
- Poetry and extracts from fiction and literary non-fiction use similar techniques of structure and language although they differ in genre and form.

General comments

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Wendy Cope's poem 'Being Boring' posed interesting challenges for candidates. The question was chosen in preference to the prose by about two-thirds of candidates, and the majority of scripts showed at least some engagement with the poem's language and imagery. Candidates seemed to appreciate the straightforward language and direct, colloquial tone, although they varied in the extent to which they could pick up underlying ironies. While many saw the regular stanza form as a representation of a regular, and perhaps dull, life, fewer could appreciate the jaunty and varied rhythms at odds with the profession that 'all this is very boring', or spotted the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes.

The wording of the question guided candidates towards the comedy in the poem, and indicated that the poet's happiness was genuine. A few found this hard to believe, and wanted to see this as a delusion or form of Stockholm syndrome, and tried to portray the relationship the poet is in as one that was abusive, repressive or deeply dull. Weaker responses ignored the relationship altogether, or invented their own narrative about a relationship which had been stormy but had then turned into a routine. Better answers took the poem at face value and then explored why the poet presents her happiness with this attitude.

Relatively few candidates wrote about the epigraph beneath the poem's title. Those who could appreciate the ironic humour of this epigram could also quickly understand that this explains how 'Being Boring' might actually be a blessing. Those who were able to see the connection with the relationship which has saved the poet from 'interesting times' went on to explore the poem as an ironic love poem, in which the word 'boring' is actually a synonym for 'happy'.

Candidates engaged well with the direct form of address, reinforced by the questions at the beginning of the first and final stanzas, and began to see the eccentricity and sometimes the humour in her obtuse answers. While many thought a reference to how 'the garden is growing' the quintessence of dullness, some made the link with 'a happier cabbage' and 'my vegetable spirits are soaring'. Some started to see how the poet might be presenting her version of 'vegetable love' as something growing, natural, fertile and worth nurturing.

Many found the banality of 'I had a slight cold but it's better today' a further antidote to anything interesting, and some refused to accept such optimism and contentment as genuine or adequate. However, subtler answers, aware of the structure of the poem as a whole, were able to relate this to the poem's narrative of turbulence in past relationships, and happiness with a more steady and improving trajectory. One candidate commented on how the poet 'eulogises her repetitive life': 'I get on with my work. He gets on with his'. Stronger responses could appreciate potential happiness in the couple's respectful separateness, while others saw this as proof of mutual coldness and antipathy. One or two reacted with horror at the idea that this could be a life at all. Stronger answers were able to hear the tone of the poem, exploring the informal, and slightly sardonic responses of the poet to her imagined interlocutor as a sign that she is not being entirely serious.

Assisted by the second bullet point, most were able to reflect with varying degrees of success on the structure of the poem, and how the stanzas addressed past, present and future. Building on the contrast with 'my turbulent past', candidates were able to see why the poet might express a preference for 'a safe mooring', although few were able to pick up the metaphors buried in these phrases. Most associated turbulence with air travel rather than storms, although this still allowed them to see that the poet may be metaphorically expressing the rocky nature of past passions. Better answers also engaged with the imagery of a 'tankful' of tears, and explored the tragic-comic mixture of vulnerability and hyperbole in this metaphor. Some pointed out how the alliteration, comic rhymes and upbeat rhythms stop us taking the poet too seriously here either. More exploration of the creative use of cliché ('No news is good news', 'steer well clear of me') might also have helped candidates with the tone of the poem.

Some expressed their disgust at the notion of 'a happier cabbage' and wondered why the poet would wish to compare herself to a vegetable most find dull, or to hint that she is unthinking, but those who could see the danger of turbulent emotions were better able to appreciate the imagery here. While some saw the repetitive patterns of the poem's refrain as further confirmation of dullness, most could see the irony that 'being boring' might be preferable to drama.

Good responses saw that the poem actually expresses joy. Some appreciated that she had redefined the word 'boring' and that her description of parties ('you drink and you listen and drink a bit more') made them sound just as boring as 'eating and sleeping and snoring'. Those with clear understanding of the tone of the poem were able to contrast the traumatic search for 'someone to stay home with' and the 'safe mooring' which meant there were no more storms or wrecks. Several commented on the irony of aspiring to 'go on and on' with a life so mundane, and at odds with more clichéd ideas of ambition, and came to see the wit and challenge expressed by the poem's tone as well as language.

The best responses were mature, assured and insightful, showing that the strongest candidates have little difficulty in appreciating the subtlety of a poem's details and deliberate ambiguities of tone.

Question 2

This passage from Patrick Leigh Fermor's *Between the Woods and the Water* describes one of his favourite anecdotes. Careful reading of the introductory rubric would have helped candidates to see that this is a highly literary retelling of a real-life experience, and is based on the recreation of a memory. The word 'encounter' in the question suggests that the effect of the experience on the young man is just as important as the eagle itself. There is much more to this kind of reflective writing than straightforward description, and strong answers benefitted from some reflection on the writer's purpose, and not just on the nature of the experience or object described.

Imaginative insight into the writer's purpose, the inspiring nature of this encounter for the solitary young man, alone in the natural world, and the exuberance with which he communicates it to the reader was relatively rare. Most answers worked through the bullet points, often struggling with the third, which was intended to invite them to reflect more on the meaning of the experience and the emotions felt by the boy, and how the man remembers his youthful exhilaration. Many answers focused more on the eagle itself. Very few, despite the references to the mountainside, noticed that what is especially unusual about the encounter is not just the writer's proximity to such a very large and rare bird, but also the fact that he is looking *down* on the bird, even when it takes flight, because he himself is so high, and in such a remote place.

Nevertheless, those responses that focused almost entirely on how the writer describes the eagle still showed an analytical appreciation of many aspects of the writing. Some noticed the extravagant complexity of the syntax, and the varied word order. Others noted the sensuous quality of the description, with its precise recapturing of the sounds as well as the sight of the great bird. Many looked at ways in which the eagle is compared to a human being, with 'hunched shoulders' and 'plus-four feathers', while at the same time being 'very large', 'enormous', 'tremendous' and otherworldly. Some productively connected his 'imperiously curved' beak with his masterful and regal appearance – 'this king and queen of birds'. A few noticed the intimacy of his grooming ritual, or *levée*, and were aware of the writer's fascination and sense of privilege in being allowed to witness this.

Good answers were conscious that sustaining suspense was an important part of the writer's purpose, as he prolongs the close-up and tells us 'I must have watched for a full twenty minutes'. A few suspected a degree of exaggeration for effect, but many were aware that he is keeping us waiting for the moment of lift-off. Analysis of sentence structures was rare. Where sentence structure was discussed, more emphasis was needed on the effects of these constructions rather than just references to them without consideration of the writer's purpose. The second sentence of the second paragraph is an enormously long and dynamic

depiction of the bird's take off; few looked at the sentence as whole and explored how this moment is prepared for and conveyed. However, many looked at individual parts of this description, from the eagle's casual exercises, as if an athlete limbering himself up, and preening, to his 'sudden impulse', and momentary, off-balance peril, concluding in fluent flight illustrated by the alliterative 'flight feathers fanning out'. Good responses caught the observer's breathless excitement and pleasure in each prolonged minute movement. The best noticed the coexistence of both strength and grace in the eagle 'showing that both qualities can coexist at the same time in beautiful cohesion'. Some engaged well with the harmony of the eagle and the sky, as he glides on 'an invisible air current', and this led a few to explore the wonders of nature and the accidental place of the human gaze in this portrait.

Some noticed the epic scale of the surroundings as well as the bird itself, referencing the 'great gulf', crossing 'the hypotenuse of shadow' and 'the flanks of the Banat mountains'. Many commented on the sudden surprise appearance of the eagle's mate, only belatedly revealed to the narrator and to us, and on the simile comparing them to 'ships in a mild swell' as a further indication of their size and navigational confidence and control. Some effectively noticed that the sunlight 'burnished their wings' making them truly golden. Most had something to say about 'their proper majesty' and the best connected this with the golden sunrise, their plumage and their mastery both of their surroundings and of the business of flight. Some stronger responses observed that the writer is almost paying homage to them, from a position of relative humility, even if he is looking down on them, compared to their 'aloof companionship'.

Good answers highlighted the writer's sense of tension, his patient watch and his concluding feelings of 'exaltation', realising that he is beside himself with excitement. For some candidates, the encounter took on an almost religious dimension: the writer is 'giving praise' and expressing 'awe'. This seems fair: this is a moment of unique and timeless experience. Stronger answers were also able to see the encounter as artistic, noting how the writer praises first the bird's colour and then his artistry in flight and movement. The most effective answers noticed the writer's anxiety as well as curiosity, leading up to the moment when he can sit back and watch, seeing the birds' majesty once restored to what seems its proper element, in the air.

Answers to prose questions such as this will be improved by more conscious attention to the writer's craft. The structure of passages as a whole, and the way in which they build towards a climax, should support the analysis of individual details. Reflection on how an extract ends, and the overall meaning and impact of the experience should inform a concluding evaluation. Good answers were usually carefully structured around the shape of the original, aware of how each part contributes to the whole. Planning is therefore important in order to appreciate how memories are constructed and why particular moments might be so rare and special.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43
Unseen 43

Key messages

- Careful reading of the introductory rubric, question and bullet points can prevent misunderstanding the text and task.
- Quotation should be frequent but brief, and used to illustrate points about the writer's use of language.
- Personal response to literature comes from understanding of the writer's purpose and methods, and appreciation of their effect on the reader.
- Poetry and extracts from fiction and literary non-fiction use similar techniques of structure and language although they differ in genre and form.

General comments

Candidates took various valid approaches to tackle the unseen literature in this series, and found plenty to connect with their own literary skills and experiences when writing about the extracts. Candidates approached the extracts with individuality and candour, and the freshness of their responses, and the development of their skills, often showed that they had been well-prepared. Candidates are clearly taught to think for themselves in this component but to pay particular attention to the writer's craft.

Careful attention to the question and bullet points can prevent misunderstandings about both the text and the task. Any important factual information about the genre of the piece of writing, the identities of characters, or what is portrayed in the passage will be given in the rubric preceding the question. **Question 2** is sometimes set on a passage from a literary non-fiction text, rather than from a novel or short story. Candidates should consider the literary qualities of the writing, and relate them to the nature of the genre if possible: memoirs, for instance, are written to recreate very individual and intimate memories and share them with readers, but their construct is just as literary and artistic as that of a poem.

The question is written to address the Assessment Objectives for this subject, and the focus is explicitly on *how* the text works, and not just on what it says. Candidates need to write about the ways in which writers use language to achieve highly. Deeper implications of the narrative also need to be considered for a higher mark: these are often about the relationship between the experience described and the attitude of the writer or persona. Good answers are likely to explore beyond surface meaning, whether in poetry or prose, and consider the writer's craft and purpose. An adverb such as 'amusingly', 'strikingly' or 'memorable' is often included in order to encourage a personal response guided by the effect the writing is intended to have on the reader. Attentive reading of the question will help candidates to appreciate the tone and direction of the writing.

Similarly, the bullet points are intended to help candidates to construct their response. They are not obligatory, and do not need to be followed as a paragraph plan, but equal attention to each bullet point will ensure that the full text and the Assessment Objectives are addressed. One bullet point usually draws attention to a particular feature of the writing and the final bullet point often encourages candidates to consider the way a text ends and the relationship of that ending to the text as a whole.

Most candidates are aware of the need to use quotations in order to show how the words of the text support their ideas and interpretations. Quotation should be placed within quotation marks and embedded within the candidate's answer; close paraphrase and the copying of large sections of the text are both unnecessary. Effective quotations are often short, and support comment on the writer's choice of words and the reader's response to them. However, individual words should not be taken out of context: their meaning in the text depends on their place in a sentence or stanza, and the stronger responses work carefully through the extract instead of picking out individual words or features of the writing without showing overall understanding.

Personal response (AO4) at the highest level involves critical skills such as synthesis, evaluation and interpretation. An interpretation is valid if it can be supported by the language of the text, and especially if driven by close analysis of the effects of the writing. Candidates should not be afraid to express a personal opinion, but need to ensure that this is a thoughtful one, connected to the emotions and ideas expressed by the writer.

Genre, form and structure are explicitly part of the assessment of this subject (AO3), and in this paper stronger candidates should be taught to explore larger structures, as well as the writer's choice of words or images. Sentence structures (syntax) are worth closer consideration in poetry as well as prose, though the identification of a certain type of sentence structure ('short sentences' etc.) is not considered analysis without further comment on the effect of such usage. Prose writers also use extended metaphors, and carefully consider word order and rhythm. There are no marks simply for spotting literary techniques without comment on their effect. Words such as caesura, enjambment, personification and free verse have very precise definitions, and it would be better if candidates avoided them rather than misused them or used them too generally. Every pause is not a *caesura*, and both that term and *enjambment* cannot be applied to prose. Imagery applying human qualities to nature is not necessarily personification, and not all unrhymed verse is free. The word 'image' benefits from tight definition in literary criticism, but can be used in prose as well as poetry.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

'The Far Side of the Island' by the Irish poet Paul Durcan was published in *The Art of Life* (2005). It is an challenging poem that proved to be popular, especially with candidates who understood and explored its imagery and implications in depth and detail. Ecological readings, investigating how the poem probes the relationship between humans and nature, were especially popular. Others explored intimations of mortality, the journey as a metaphor for life, or the drive over the mountain as representing a passage from depression to epiphany. The focus of the question was on the personal meaning which the journey steadily accumulates. However, as that meaning remains slightly out-of-reach, a range of interpretations were both valid and well expressed. Any reading supported by sensitive engagement with language, whatever the selection of material, was likely to be highly rewarded.

The bullet points assisted candidates in exploration of the poem's terrain, from the isolated mountain drive to the 'corkscrew' descent, so that the overall structure of the poem was clear to them. The third bullet point is clearly connected to the insight in the poem's penultimate sentence, and to the concluding rhetorical question. It gave candidates the opportunity to evaluate the meaning of the poem as a whole. Some candidates struggled with this and with the poet's implicit feelings. However, most were able to look back at the journey as an extended metaphor, and many had clearly achieved a confident overview of the meaning of the poem before they began. Such candidates wrote especially strong introductory paragraphs. Some chose to address the third bullet point in the course of their answers, interpreting imagery in a didactic way throughout. This is an entirely valid approach, although more tentative answers, making a gradual journey towards enlightenment, were perhaps closer to the mood and tone of the text itself. There were intelligent insights into ways in which the voyage is reflected in the apparently meandering, but tightly structured stanza form. This is not free verse, and although enjambment between lines illustrates the journey, every stanza is end-stopped.

Almost all quickly engaged with the imagery of the first stanza, and there were many interpretations of how the mountain resembled a hand, and the poet was consequently 'ensconced in nature's embrace'. Not all clearly understood what a plateau was, but many saw something sinister in the notion of 'being contained by its wrist and its fingertips'. Some linked this image of entrapment to the poet's 'brooding' mood. The idea that 'those twenty-five miles of in-betweenness' represent being in the moment, looking neither forwards or backwards, interested candidates. Some saw it as an opportunity to reflect, some as a melancholy reflection on middle age.

While the imagery and mood of the first stanza was quite successfully established, many were not able to engage effectively with the metaphors 'marrow of mortality hardens/In the bones of the nomad', and 'the orthopaedics of mortality'. Quite a number of candidates omitted commentary on the second stanza. They were still able to achieve highly, as we award positively all achievement against the Assessment Objectives, but this stanza emerged as a discriminator between good and very good answers.

There is no definitive answer to the meaning of the imagery here. Some used the phrases to speculate that the poet was a doctor or ill, but these interpretations were often too literal as they cannot be supported anywhere else in the poem. It was more productive to read the metaphor of the 'marrow of mortality' more abstractly, although some candidates were impressive in drawing out the implications of hardening marrow as declining mortality, or why the poet might characterise himself, or humanity at large, as 'the nomad'. The stronger answers looked over the line endings and thought about the meaning of the whole sentence, and how it portrayed the meaning of the journey to the poet. Many appreciated that he has a strong intimation that human mortality is finite against the backdrop of nature's vastness.

However, the vulnerability of nature itself, and how its own apparent infinity might be threatened by human intervention was a particular concern to candidates. Most were very sensitive to ecological readings of the natural world and found plenty to interest them in the third stanza. Picking out the poet's repetitions, they realised that he is brooding not just on mortality but also on the experience of being above 'the clouds', with a bird's-eye view of the wide expanse of nature and 'the earth's unconscious'. Most read 'unconscious' as an adjective rather than a noun. This is probably incorrect, but prompted readings which reflected on how the earth is unaware of its own diagnosis, and that its future may depend on more responsible human awareness. Such interpretations worked hard on the vision of 'no fences' and 'wildflowers as far as the eye can see', praising the poet's recreation of a landscape innocent of human intervention.

Most were able to locate the beginning of the penultimate stanza as a turning point. The word 'yet' is a clear indication that the poet's brooding mood lifts. Assisted by the second bullet point, candidate saw this and appreciated the way the poet's motions become more contented and relieved. Candidates found plenty of interest here: the implications of being on the 'far side', the way the poet repeats that he is 'peering down' from above, the metaphors of the 'Atlantic ocean rearing raw knuckles', the 'serpentine' 'corkscrew road' and the chiasmic chime of 'globally sad yet locally glad'. Many enjoyed the music of this internal rhyme, as well as exploring the reasons for mixed emotions in response to the journey, the arrival at a destination, the village itself, the fate of humanity or the way we respond to the natural world.

Good answers used the final stanza, the concluding question and the third bullet point as opportunities to think about what the poet has gained from what he describes as a chance experience. Many rightly described this as an epiphany. Some noted his steady progress past each 'cottage' and his appreciation that other humans are his neighbours. Some were impressed by the simplicity of the life depicted at the remote outport, contrasting this local, harmonious existence with the poet's (or reader's) larger global concerns. Many appreciated the way the poet eulogises 'company', emphasised by the inversion of the normal word order.

The poem elicited strong and varied responses because it is rich in visual description and so open to metaphorical interpretations, as long as these don't lose sight of the physical reality depicted in the text. Candidates who explored these metaphorical interpretations through close and apt reference to the language and structure of the poem achieved highly.

Question 2

Nearly half of the responses this series wrote about this passage from Lorna Sage's semi-autobiographical memoir *Bad Blood* (2000). Candidates found plenty to identify with in its account of pre-teen embarrassments and anxiety, both about physical appearance and fitting in. Many engaged with the vigorous writing and extravagant hyperboles. The strongest responses realised that such memories are presented dramatically and are not necessarily to be taken at face value, and were aware of the difference between the girl's emotions and experiences and how the writer characterised them, looking back at some (ironic) distance.

Using the bullet points, candidates were able to see the narrative as one of growth and progression, and appreciated the idea that wearing dental braces was a rite of passage and the visits to the dentist became an opportunity to mark personal development. Some struggled a little with the second bullet point, being over-eager to make fine distinctions between descriptions of the teeth and of the braces, but most understood that, taught by the dentist to view her physical differences objectively and academically, the girl regains her voice and is better able to accept other people's differences too, realising her own individuality.

The majority of candidates were quick to identify the hyperbole in the writer's description of her first school year as 'invisible as well as inaudible'. Realising this was not a literal description, they explored the internal feelings behind this description, and the rhetorically effective list which follows it. The writer had none of the qualities normally associated with high school popularity and consequently 'no friends'. Many showed deep understanding of the importance of external image at this age. Several noted the exaggeration of the 'lethal

shampoo' and the abrupt sentence 'Then there were the bugs'. The strongest answers were aware that the writer may be mocking her youthful self-consciousness, and is now able to look back on these experiences with self-deprecating humour.

Most were able to pick up the melodramatic presentation of 'a mouthful of complicated wires', although the strongest were aware of the overall arc of the passage and that the writer's attitudes to wearing braces were about to change significantly. Candidates had little difficulty in seeing the force of describing the teeth and braces as 'grotesque' and 'outlandish', and could accept and comment maturely on the politically incorrect likeness to natural 'deformity'. Many appreciated that the exaggeration here reflects the girl's self-disgust and self-consciousness as much as the assumed attitudes of others. Some realised the historical distance between the 1950s context and the modern world when the writer asserts that 'even wearing glasses made you vaguely repulsive and absurd'.

The best work often explored the complex image of the writer as 'tongue-tied, locked in my scold's bit'. They began to examine why being inaudible and voiceless might be especially painful to a writer, as well as the alliterative spitting sound made by the repeated fricatives. Some were prescient in identifying a feminist implication in portraying the braces as a punishment for outspoken women, although the number of answers that appreciated the significance of the writer's gender was relatively low. Nevertheless, there was little difficulty in sympathising with the girl's desire not to be looked at, and avoidance of potentially critical gazes.

Most understood the phrase 'rite of passage' and were able to identify this anecdote within the genre of *bildungsroman*. There was less appreciation of the writer's invocation of 'the land of Latin'. Many thought that she might have found Latin difficult to pronounce or speak out loud. However, they had less difficulty in seeing the significance of language such as 'agonising' and 'racked' to invoke the way she felt tortured by her difference, pointing out that if the braces hurt physically 'as well' they must also cause her emotional pain. The strong contrast, both structural and emotional, of the depiction of the visits to the dentist as an 'adventure' and a learning experience was clearly appreciated.

Using the second bullet point, many contrasted how the dentist encourages the girl to view her 'very cooked teeth' as not 'really mine' with her acute self-consciousness earlier in the passage. While a few thought the dentist's description rather improbable, most appreciated that he is both flattering her and expressing genuine 'scholarly' interest. Some were sensitive to the way in which the girl responds eagerly to his academic concern and proves 'teachable', thus gaining confidence in her own voice. This was illustrated with reference to 'lyrical descriptions' and the 'heroical project of righting them': such language contrasts sharply with images of 'genetic mayhem' and teeth 'stuck out and squeezed sideways'. Strong answers appreciated that similar alchemy is at work on the writer's own personality. Many identified the dentist with 'magic', and connected this with his own 'littleness'. A few picked up the fairytale elements of his portrayal, while others noted that alongside him the writer no longer feels 'small'.

There were many sharp observations from candidates, who contrasted the lack of embarrassment in the academic environment of the dentist's surgery with the judgemental attitudes of school. Several noticed the sensitivity of the writer's repetition of 'we never, never mentioned it', although not many noticed the direct contrast with the way the girl had colluded with the prejudices of her classmates earlier in the text. Many noticed that the girl is an apt pupil who links her learning with the dentist to 'the stages of human evolution we were doing at school'. Stronger responses noticed that the greatest evolution is in the narrator's own confidence and attitudes, and that this is what makes the encounter with the dentist important and significant. The penultimate sentence was an important one for the majority of candidates, but while many quoted it, fewer commented effectively on it. Those who did so sometimes noticed the mumbling alliteration of 'my miserable mouth' as imitating the girl's earlier self-pity and inarticulacy. Some were aware that the transformation 'into an emblem of progress' is a metaphor for the whole experience of learning to move on from pubescent self-consciousness. Some also appreciated that the girl is growing in other ways too, not only physically and emotionally but also culturally and intellectually: 'every appointment meant a visit to the big city, too'. Strong candidates were aware that this would lead to a broadening of the girl's attitudes and interests, and an escape from perceived provincial small-mindedness.

Better responses were those aware that prose writers use poetic techniques too, and that the implicit narrative of personal growth is as significant as the surface experiences of the young girl.