

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31

Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- All questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding; answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.
- Candidates should use secure detailed references and quotations to support points.
- The most successful answers clearly focus on the author's choices of language and literary methods.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should examine the selected extract in great detail.

General comments

There were some excellent responses to questions in this examination series, with the most confident candidates constructing careful, structured arguments in response to the questions, supported by detailed analysis of the writing of the texts. The new poetry selection from *Songs of Ourselves* proved popular. Sometimes candidates showed themselves unaware of some of the literary conventions of Renaissance poetry, but others were able to comment thoughtfully on the sonnet form, for example. An understanding of sonnets also informed some of the discussion of Wilfred Owen's poetry, the other new text this examination series. In this case, historical context was usually used discriminatingly and purposefully, without obscuring attention to the poetry.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) Many candidates answering this question chose poems which feature specific objects, such as 'The Turnip Snedder', 'Helmet', 'The Harrow-Pin' and 'Wordsworth's Skates', exploring ways in which these items hold and provoke memories and take on symbolic value. Others looked at particular moments captured in verse, in poems such as 'The Nod', 'The Aerodrome' and 'Anahorish 1944', often leading to sympathetic readings which carefully explored the darker elements, the links and suggestions of strife, discord and warfare in the language and imagery. Less successful answers relied on paraphrase of poems, without demonstrating an awareness of the poetic means by which Heaney communicates and provokes the readers' responses.
- (b) A number of careful and detailed readings of 'Out of Shot' teased out the connections Heaney makes between historic violence enacted by Viking raiders, contemporary violence in the Middle East observed on television news and, implicitly, the violence of the Northern Ireland Troubles. Some candidates observed the irony of such a poem about violence being framed by references to sunshine and linked this with the poem's speaker being detached and safe, leaning on a gate on a 'bell-clear Sunday', but still surrounded historically and geographically by violence. Such answers often noted the use of the sonnet form, the use of the ubiquitous donkey as a symbol and the punning irony of the poem's title. It was, for many, though, a puzzling poem and some candidates struggled to give a coherent account of its meaning and methods.

Question 2 Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question drew a large number of responses, with the best clearly addressing the question. Essays which discussed the presentation of war did not attract high marks. Successful answers clearly selected poems and areas of poems which specifically presented soldiers at war. The strongest candidates shaped their answer by identifying contrasting ways in which Owen presents soldiers at war; though comparison was not a requirement of the question, it helped many

candidates structure their argument. There was a number of informed and detailed responses, using poems such as 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'The Dead Beat', 'Inspection' and 'Exposure', which explored the experience of war for the soldiers as being both destructive and reductive. Owen's realistic and brutal presentation of the soldiers' plight in terms of their physical, emotional and mental suffering was explored effectively. The strongest responses closely examined ways in which Owen uses language, imagery and form to present the horrors and their results.

- (b) Answers on '1914' were often usefully informed by pertinent references to the historical context of the First World War and the significance of the date in the poem's title, but many did not understand the references within the poem to Greece and Rome. Most answers noted the starkness of the two-word opening and the metaphor of the tornado. Beyond that, less confident responses tended to paraphrase the poem, unsuccessfully where Owen's references were not sufficiently understood. More successful answers examined the detached mood and lofty tone of the poem, considering its philosophical reflection of the transitions between despair and hope. Several answers showed perceptive awareness of the structure and tone of the poem, avoiding the over-simplistic view that the sestet is optimistic, and noting how the final couplet with its horrifying image of 'blood for seed', recaptures the dark mood of the octet.

Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Successful answers used the word 'different' in the title as a prompt to look at contrasting aspects of humanity, with appropriate poems. Such answers also considered the poetic means – voice, language, form, imagery – by which the aspects were communicated, leading to thoughtful consideration of such poems as 'Written the Night Before His Execution', 'The Author's Epitaph, Made by Himself', Wroth's 'Sonnet 19', 'What is our Life?', Spencer's 'Sonnet 75' and 'A Mind Content'. Weaker answers to this question paraphrased each poem in turn and identified which aspect of human nature was being presented.
- (b) This was an overwhelmingly popular choice, though it was not always done well. Many answers featured simple paraphrase, biographical assertion and very literal understanding of 'breast' in the final stanza. There was little sense of the wider, non-biographical 16th century context and the conventions of such poetry. Stronger answers noted the retrospective nature of the poem indicated by its opening phrase and noted the tone of self-awareness in such language as 'scorn' and 'prouder', while there seems to be relish in the repetition of 'How many'. Such close attention to the language and structure of the poem was a feature of stronger answers, which noted not only the repetition of the refrain, but its changing use as the poem progresses, the big shift occurring when it is voiced by Cupid in the third stanza.

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

- (a) There were many well-rehearsed, engaged responses to this question. Most candidates acknowledged Olanna's central role in serving Adichie's dual purpose of narrating the political history of the horrors of the Biafran war with the human story of love, survival and identity. Most candidates noted the war as a turning point in the development of Olanna's character, exploring her growth from the earlier beautiful, intelligent, wealthy, woman whose role is mainly to complement Odenigbo, to her multifaceted roles of wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend, lover and inspirational educator and leader during the war. There were perceptive observations on how she is shaped and changed by war and infidelity, commenting thoughtfully on Olanna as a foil to Odenigbo, how her growth in power and confidence mirrors his decline into alcoholism and despair. Weaker answers featured descriptions of who Olanna is and what she does with little understanding of the literary term 'role'. Candidates always need to think about how an author presents a character, which means too that quotations are essential to support ideas.
- (b) This prompted some very good responses, where candidates commented thoughtfully on small details within the overall passage – the effect of the word 'cradling', for example, in line 30, the position in which Odenigbo reads, and the repeated use of 'sah'. Most candidates commented on Ugwu's sense of wonder at the sheer size of Odenigbo's house; his sense of inadequacy and doubt as to whether he would be able to satisfy his employer; and his fascination with Odenigbo's speech (one candidate commenting that the use of the word 'feathery' suggested his words were 'soft – like a string of words floating'.) Analytical answers considered the implications of the 'piercingly' white ceiling, the overwhelming brightness of the room and the use of the word 'alien' to describe the furniture. There was some intelligent discussion of ways in which Adichie controls

point of view in the novel and how it influences the reader's experience. This was often augmented by putting this episode into the context of the whole novel, recognising the frequent references to books as a foreshadowing of how books and education will become so important to Ugwu, and how the master/servant relationship evident here develops into something much more balanced later in the narrative.

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

- (a) Fielding was a popular choice of character and most essays demonstrated a sympathetic response to him, but many of these essays discussed him as if they were discussing a particular friend, rather than a literary character in a novel. More successful responses noted specific situations in which Fielding is placed by Forster, such as the bridge party, his own tea party, the Club, his visit to the sick Aziz, Aziz's trial and befriending Adela afterwards. Candidates generally saw him presented as a man of tolerance, open-mindedness, intelligence and honesty. Essays noted his growing separation from his own compatriots and the loss of his friendship with Aziz, leaving him isolated, failing fully to connect with either race. Some candidates commented on the parallels with Forster's own life and values; his cynical view of the British in India, shared by Forster, was also noted by many candidates.
- (b) The passage proved a popular option and strong responses recognised the subtlety of Forster's characterisation in this extract; neither character is presented as the 'villain' but both engage the reader's sympathies at different points. Some less assured answers missed the nuances of tone, drawing a less subtle, critical picture of the characters. Successful candidates commented precisely on the stiff formality of the characters' dialogue and some noted telling details beyond the dialogue, such as the metaphoric implications of the 'declining' sun and the 'premonition of night'. Others saw the 'colourless grass' and the 'little green bird' as symbolic. Some sophisticated responses noted Forster's use of free indirect thought to reveal what Ronny and Adela cannot say to each other in lines 3-4, 19-21 and 24-26 for example, while the third person narrative provides gentle humour in lines 26-27 and 48-49.

Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) This question was answered quite successfully by those candidates who attempted it. 'The Bath' was the most popular story for this question, with 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', 'The Lady in the Looking Glass' and 'Sredni Vashtar' also featuring. Answers often included useful quotations to support discussion of 'ways in which' the characters are presented, with intelligent comments on, for example, the symbolic significance of descriptions of the bath and the letters in the Woolf story. Many candidates were successful in structuring their essays through comparison, looking at a sympathetic portrayal of the difficulties of age in 'The Bath' and a stereotypical evil witch in 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' or an embittered aunt in 'Sredni Vashtar'.
- (b) On the whole, this passage prompted candidates to consider the writing in detail, and so tended to produce sound answers. Strong responses explored not just the characterisation of the old woman but also Hawthorne's use of sounds and setting. Few exploited all the opportunities of the passage but candidates appreciated Hawthorne's archaic lexis and his use of auditory as well as visual imagery. Successful responses responded to what the sounds signify in terms of what the reader knows or imagines of the lady and her history, thus demonstrating the power of the 'hag' to summon up these sounds. Several answers commented on the final sentence, noting how 'a sweet hour's sport' and 'chuckling' convey the old woman's sinister delight in the macabre events that have taken place.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were very few answers to this question. Among those who did attempt it, there was little consideration of the quoted words in the question, leading to a rather general consideration of the 'detached observer', often comprising little more than paraphrase of what is observed.
- (b) Candidates answering on Heaney overwhelmingly chose this question, though a surprising number were unaware that the poem is a version of a poem by Rilke, assuming that the Rilke of the title was the identity of the man in the poem. A knowledge of Rilke was not necessary to write well on the poem, however, and many answers contained thoughtful comments on the structure of the quatrains and the development of the speaker's train of thought through them. The strongest responses understood the significance of the moment – the arrival of the son at the scene of the fire, observed by others, as his recognition of the disaster robs him of his security, past and identity. These ideas were carefully linked to Heaney's use of sentences, enjambment, alliteration and the contrast between the tones of the different stanzas. Less successful answers offered uncertain paraphrase, missing the son's loss and resultant displacement, the role of the children's ignorance, nature's bemused witnessing of the scene, and the overall sense of alienation by one who is touched by difference.

Question 2 Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Candidates found the topic of physical suffering very accessible, with a number of relevant poems to choose from. Candidates who dealt with their chosen poems narratively were less successful than those who pursued an analytical angle, picking up on the key word 'explores'. Success also depended on detailed knowledge of the poems and their poetic methods. Favoured poems were 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'The Sentry', 'The Last Laugh' and 'Disabled'. The first of these in particular seemed to have impressed candidates with its vivid imagery. Several were able to support their argument with quotations such as 'Bent double', 'blood-shod' and 'froth-corrupted

lungs', while those who used 'Disabled' were able to note the bitter irony in the presentation of the young man, who used to be proud of injury sustained playing football, now having no legs.

- (b) Fewer candidates attempted the question on the 'Sonnet' and some struggled with the poem's imagery. More successful responses noted that the poem is addressed to the gun, the tone initially implying its power and greatness. The strongest essays addressed the moral ambiguity of the celebration of the weapon's power in the sonnet's octet and the revaluation of the sestet. Candidates who noted the force of the final couplet, driven by 'God curse thee', tended to write well about the poem.

Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) A wide range of poems was used by candidates in answers to this question, though surprisingly poems such as 'The Flowers That on the Banks...' and 'Spring, the Sweet Spring' were seldom seen. Candidates usually showed sound knowledge but did not always look closely at the demands of the question. A number of candidates listed the natural imagery, often with much careful detail, but did not consider how the imagery is used to develop the poems' ideas. It can be useful for candidates to highlight the key words of a question to ensure that they direct their answer towards it.
- (b) A number of candidates provided much biographical information about Mary Wroth, which seldom contributed usefully to their answers. Others relied on paraphrase, but these often struggled, as a number of candidates did not recognise that the speaker of the poem addresses 'torments' themselves, rather than a lover, and therefore misinterpreted aspects of the poem. Successful responses looked carefully at the language of the poem and were able to pick out the diction of distress; fewer were able to comment usefully on the poem's form.

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

- (a) There were some perceptive discussions about the characterisation of Kainene; most essays juxtaposed her with her sister, contrasting their different characters and roles. Strong answers drew on comprehensive, detailed knowledge of the text and were able to discuss the axis between prudence and passion in terms of romantic and political choices in the novel. Kainene's detachment and independence was noted and several candidates explored the implications of her relationship with Richard very fruitfully. There was a suggestion that, as the novel's most independent woman, she represents Biafra, and therefore her disappearance at the end of the novel is crucial.
- (b) A greater number of candidates responded to the passage question. Less ambitious and successful answers described Ugwu's meeting with Olanna rather than commenting on the way it is presented. The most confident candidates recognised that the third person narrative is directed through Ugwu's perspective, giving the reader a strong understanding of his responses to Olanna. His changing views of her were often carefully charted, considering the dispelling of his preconceptions prior to meeting her and his admiration, demonstrating his own emerging adolescent sexuality. The comments on her shapeliness and the use of food imagery were noted. Some successful answers linked the passage to developments later in the text, explaining how the relationship between Ugwu and Olanna develops into one of mutual value and trust.

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

- (a) Responses varied between those which used the quotations in the question as keys to a structured essay, and those who wrote more generally about Ronny. The latter group tended to describe the character rather judgmentally, seeing Ronny as representing the worst faults of the Anglo-Indians. More considered responses recognised a more complex character and developed an argument which related Ronny to the pressures of Anglo-Indian society, exploring his character within the wider historical and social context. Using the question's quoted suggestions, such answers considered the qualities described and considered them in the light of Ronny's behaviour. Some saw him as a more understanding and sympathetic character in the final stages of the novel.
- (b) Almost all candidates were able to place the passage accurately within the novel and identify its narrative importance. There was plenty of careful analysis of Forster's presentation of Adela's thought processes and the way these were linked to the dialogue. While some essays drifted towards general essays on Adela, most were able to select telling details from the passage, often

arguing that her inappropriate questions to Aziz stem from her sublimated attraction towards him as she struggles with doubt about her relationship with Ronny. Strong responses noted how the third person narrative reveals Adela's thoughts, showing her innocence as she moves towards the offensive question. Candidates often noted that Forster is shifting the reader's perspective of Adela: a woman who has seen marriage as a commonsense arrangement but suddenly realises that she has not considered love. Some noted that Forster used the symbol of the rock over which Adela 'toiled' as the turning point in her realisation. Further interesting observations were made on the way in which the listing of events indicates Adela's need for order, the way in which apparent certainty is undermined by the introduction of rhetorical questions in lines 13-14, and the powerful effect of the sudden realisation of the hollowness of her relationship with Ronny, conveyed through the dramatic exclamations of lines 19-20.

Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) This was not a popular question, but stories effectively chosen included 'Elephant', 'The Bath', 'The Enemy', 'Real Time', 'Report on the Threatened City' and 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass'. The strongest responses showed a developed awareness of how the narrative voice shapes the way readers respond to the story, making the 'alien' point of view of 'Report on the Threatened City' a particularly useful choice. Some discussed the voice in 'The Bath' very well, with careful exploration of the development of the story and the sense of desperation and loneliness captured by the free indirect discourse within the third person narrative. Some candidates viewed the narrative voice as that of the main character, which is sometimes importantly not the case, making these answers unsuccessful.
- (b) A number of candidates merely retold the entire story, ignoring the extract as a specific focus. Others paraphrased the extract itself, but neither of these approaches was successful. Stronger answers considered ways in which the third person narrator reveals Tommy's innermost thoughts as well as describes his actions, in this way communicating his desires and hopes in dealing with the girl who steals the sweets. Many candidates explored the passage very well, focusing effectively on the ending, the importance of Tommy's past and his relationship with Rosa.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) This question did not attract many responses, but poems like 'The Clip', 'The Lift' and 'The Nod' were favoured choices. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the content of the poems, describing the subjects being observed. More successful answers looked closely at the language and poetic methods employed by Heaney to present the observation and considered the implications – the suggestions of distrust and violence in 'The Nod' or the intrusive surveillance helicopter in 'The Lift'.
- (b) There were far more answers on 'Anahorish 1944'. Candidates generally recognised the significance of the date and the reason for the presence of American soldiers en route to Normandy. A number looked at the violence of the slaughter of the pigs, noting diction such as 'killing', 'gutter-blood', 'slaughterhouse' and 'squealing', though surprisingly few made the connection between this slaughter and that to which the soldiers are heading. More alert responses noted the innocence and anonymity of the 'Sunburnt' soldiers handing out sweets, compared with their implied fate as they head towards the war.

Question 2 Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This was a popular question, with a wide range of poems cited, such as 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'Exposure', 'The Letter' and 'The Sentry' among others. Successful candidates showed an appreciation of different kinds of hardships suffered by soldiers, including physical, mental, separation from loved ones and a lack of care from superiors. Strong responses showed an understanding not just of these differences, but also of different poetic means of communication, discussing, for example, the diction of a descriptive poem and the creation of the voice of a soldier-speaker.

- (b) Few candidates wrote about 'The End', a poem with which some struggled. A number noted the sonnet form, broken into separate stanzas, but few were able to comment on ways the form is exploited. More successful responses noted the possible interpretations of the poem's title and the archaic diction and rather bombastic style, which is associated with Owen's earlier verse.

Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There was a small number of responses to this question. Candidates choosing it tended to opt for poems which explore change in relationships, such as 'When I Was Fair and Young', 'They Flee From Me' or Spenser's 'Sonnet 75'. Weaker answers described the changes, lapsing into paraphrase of the poems, paying little attention to 'ways' in which the change is explored in the poetry. Successful responses considered how the language of the poems creates mood and tone, while candidates who chose one or more sonnets were often able to comment on the poets' use of the form.
- (b) More candidates chose to answer on 'Weep You No More Sad Fountains', often interpreting the poem as a response to the death of a child, arguing that 'sleep' is a frequently used metaphor for death. It was seen as an optimistic poem, moving towards resolution and acceptance. Candidates usually looked at the language of the poem in some detail in order to support their interpretation, but very few considered the poem's distinctive form.

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

- (a) Very few candidates attempted this question. Eberechi is the early key to Ugwu's developing sexuality, the girl for whom he longs but who remains unattainable. Her calm admission of her pragmatic relationship with an army officer is also important in Ugwu's loss of hope, the presentation of the results of war and another sexual relationship among the range in the novel. It is significant that Ugwu's last action in the novel is to send a letter to Eberechi, but Richard holds from him the news of her death in the war.
- (b) There were few answers on this text. The passage presents the developing unrest framed by domestic activities as Ugwu attempts to retain normality with setting the table and bathing Baby. Candidates could have commented on the retrospective references to Miss Adebayo's frantic visit and Odenigbo's reactions to the news announcements before the arrival of 'the hollow-eyed men' at the end of the passage. Alert candidates might have picked out that the unease also affects Baby and particularly Ugwu, whose lack of complete control is indicated by such as small detail of his lack of certainty over Baby's nightclothes.

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

- (a) There were few responses to this question. The Collector, Mr Turton, is the central administrator of Chandrapore and thus comes to represent the English and English values in the novel. Candidates could have cited a number of important episodes where his character is revealed, such as his early conversation with Adela and the bridge party which he organises. His response to the alleged assault on Adela perhaps comes to define his character, and with it, English views of India and Indians. He could have been viewed as a role model for Ronny and contrasted with Fielding.
- (b) Few candidates responded to this question. It offered many opportunities, as a central episode in the novel, where Adela admits her error in the court case. The passage began with 'A new and unknown sensation protected her' and ended with her retraction of the accusation, so offered much material on the presentation of her state of mind. The narrative first explores her mental state before the dialogue breaks in. Adela's dialogue is punctuated by dashes and ellipses as she hesitates, interspersed with narrative comments which show her memory's working and her growing doubt.

Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) There were few responses to this question. 'The Enemy', 'Sredni Vashtar' and 'The Prison' were very suitable stories, though 'Elephant' and 'Report on the Threatened City' could also have been used effectively. The children in the stories are very different, as some feature in the stories as characters while others are only referred to, so there was ample opportunity for the comparison which the question demanded.

- (b) Most candidates answering on the short stories chose to respond to this question. While less confident candidates relied on summary or paraphrase of the passage, there was also some sensitive writing which showed appreciation of the old woman's predicament and the way in which it is communicated. Successful answers noted the way the third person narrative slips in and out of the character's mind and thoughts and commented on the careful preparation for the bath, 'step by step', suggesting the way she is intimidated by such a simple domestic activity. Her bathing and enjoyment of the water, then her delaying getting out, were all noted. Alert answers noted the language of physical difficulty and fear in the second half of the extract, culminating in the 'wild drum-beat' as she strikes the sides of the bath in panic. The dark undertones of death and burial in the metaphorical presentation of the bath were noted in a number of perceptive answers.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates should deal firmly with the dramatic qualities of the texts.
- Time is well spent on planning a coherent answer, with a shaped argument.
- Discussions about characters' choice of language or the way in which they speak (syntax etc.) often focuses debate at a high level.

General comments

As always, candidates who are willing to engage with the dramatic qualities of the texts through discussion of form, structure and language show that they have a firm understanding of both content and of the writer's strategies. The best responses show strong commitment to dealing precisely with the terms of the question by adducing examples and offering crisp, relevant analysis. At the very top end, analysis often leads to perceptive originality about the texts.

Less convincing responses often show similar characteristics, but there is perhaps a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples are not being fully explored. At this level, responses can be over-long, a sign that candidates have not made judicious selection of what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and this is not, of course, expected. What is expected is that candidates should frame a discussion that allows them to show knowledge and understanding of the text through the shaping of a clearly progressing and structured argument.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded appropriately. Answers at this level were not without some analysis of text, but points did not cohere into a clear argument or were rather simplistic. Candidates sometimes need to be aware that feature spotting needs to be supplemented by analytical discussion.

In passage-based questions, the best responses took a strategic view of the moment presented, rather than a chronological approach. They often paid careful attention to the stage business of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to the words spoken. They noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but could analyse how that transfers into a dramatic effect when realised on stage.

Many candidates could have done more to discuss choices of language or syntax. Some scripts showed little evidence of understanding that went beyond plot. Others, at the very bottom, were often brief, irrelevant, or confused in expression.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) At all levels there was understanding of aspects of the threat that Nick poses to George and Martha. Sophisticated answers ranged over a series of possibilities. There was discussion of how Nick undermines George both sexually and in terms of his profession as well as demonstration of how he represents a world of lost possibilities for Martha. The best answers also often discussed ways in which the threat is more imagined than real, as George and Martha project their insecurities onto Nick. A few responses focused interestingly on Nick's obvious inadequacies and realised that the parallels of situation between the couples might undermine Nick's role as a

genuine threat. Some readings were rather inflexibly focused on his symbolic significance. Responses that dealt squarely with the word 'dramatise', often by looking at particular moments, tended to do better than those that dealt with the issue through character study or a general view of Nick as a symbol.

- (b) The best answers on this question paid close attention to detail of both language and action, often noting how the tension in the scene is created through George and Martha pushing at boundaries, pausing to see the effect, and then carrying on. Understanding of this particular moment as the culmination of the action so far was an important element of more successful answers. A number of candidates attempted to deal with the significance of the song, but many got caught up in the reference to Virginia Woolf (and wanted to talk about her) rather than in the fact that the song parallels Martha's monologue and is George's means of shutting out uncomfortable thoughts. Less successful answers often gave an account of the passage, with focus on the various ways in which the imaginary son is introduced in the scene. References to the action such as George having his back to Martha or breaking a bottle often helped support discussions of how the battle is being waged here. The role of Nick and Honey in the scene was often ignored.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) A pleasing distinction was frequently made between the settings, with court or Athens as the rational world of laws and the woods as the place where irrationality, illusion and magic reigned. In Athens things were seen as clear cut and regulated – anti-love and patriarchal (Theseus' speech 'I wooed thee with my sword' and Hermia being forced to marry according to another's will) – whereas in the woods there is the possibility of love via the lovers' flights and some possibility of comic resolution amidst darkness and confusion, a reversal of law, and of the Athenian established hierarchies. There were useful comments on the value systems of the two worlds, particularly with reference to equality between the sexes: though Titania is subdued by Oberon's trick, she was viewed as a strong rebellious female character, whereas in Athens all women – even Hippolyta the Amazon – were seen as powerless. Strong answers often discussed the differences of language, metaphor and preoccupations in the two places. There were many convincing discussions about how the court and country are paralleled with each other, as well as contrasted. Less successful answers often responded to the question by plot telling or through limited discussion of the most obvious contrasts.
- (b) Most responses identified two or three facets of 'world' and/or 'values' before moving through the dialogue occasionally picking out evidence to prove aspects such as 'loyalty' 'through serving the king or queen. Useful contrast was often made between Puck's love of pranks/laughter ('I jest to Oberon') and his energetic and slightly malevolent dynamism compared to the more delicate workings of Titania's servants, with their smallness of size (hiding in acorn cups). Better responses were characterised by some awareness of language and its differences from the world of Athens – the lyricism in the fairies' speeches perhaps denoting beauty or harmony or sounding magical because of the alliteration, rhythm and rhymes; also the preponderance of nature images – that the fairy world is mythical because it explains natural phenomena (the dew) or other unexplained events – cosmic disorder being seen because of Titania and Oberon's dispute. Some responses noted parallels between the fairy world and Athens (this fairy world has a human emotion of jealousy at its centre) or Elizabethan England (in terms of a perceived 'workers' and 'royalty' hierarchy).

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Restricted answers on this question tended to confine themselves to a discussion of plot-centred ways in which Richard betrays his family and friends in his quest for power. Fuller responses referred more closely to the language of betrayal – the language used by and about Richard – and the dreams of Clarence and Stanley too. Acknowledgement of the fact that it is not only Richard who betrays was central to the best answers. Candidates who noted this were able to discuss the self-betrayal of Anne or recognise that the actions of the rebel Richmond are in fact a betrayal of obedience to the God appointed monarch. The best responses ranged across betrayals of ideals, families, consciences and countries, anchoring discussion firmly in specific moments from the play's action.

- (b) Virtually all responses showed understanding of the situation of the women shown here, mourning both for the country and for their own families. Most were familiar with the character and role of Queen Margaret as both an individual and as a bitter commentator on the action at various moments in the play. More could have been made of her decision to listen in on the conversation of the other two, commenting along the way, and of its effect in shaping an audience's response. More could have been made, too, of the weary desperation signalled by the Duchess and Queen Elizabeth sitting down by each other. Comments on the ways in which the women repeat and echo each other often recognised the feature without necessarily analysing on its effect. Only the best candidates signalled that although this is a moment of communal grief, it is still possible to see that the three women do not see their situation in quite the same way.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) The question on the ways in which Bolt portrays More as a family man enabled all candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the fundamental relationships in the play by showing how his principles conflict with the love for his family. Answers, of course, varied in complexity of analysis and in the range of examples adduced. At lower levels, candidates often omitted reference to the 'effects for the action as a whole.' Those who restricted themselves to character study of More were not fully responding to the various ways in which his loyalties are tested in the play. Better answers noted, both explicitly and implicitly, that Bolt creates More as a family man in order to demonstrate the magnitude of his moral choice and what he surrenders by making it. A number of candidates went through his various relationships one by one, an approach which allowed them to show knowledge but often lacked a strategic sense of the issue as a whole.
- (b) The best responses were able to demonstrate the great subtlety in the way what each of the three characters says and does is structured and modulated to show Cromwell in his true colours here. So, for example, the self-deprecation of Cromwell's 'I merely do things' or 'I stock my mind' is plainly offset by his active manipulation of both Rich and Chapuys. This is then given a further twist after the departure of Chapuys, as Cromwell demonstrates his ability to ask ambiguous questions which lead others on: 'Are you coming in my direction, Rich?' Better answers ranged across action, reaction, appearance and reality, hidden motivation, foreshadowing etc. Less engaged responses gave an account of the scene that showed some understanding of character and situation and saw some aspects of Cromwell's manipulation.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Simpler responses to this question understood the dramatic irony of Lady Chiltern having to go back on her dictum as the action of the play progresses. Others, rather more simplistically still, delivered a character study of Lady Chiltern, with little reference to the question. More sophisticated responses often saw the statement as being Wilde working to engineer poetic justice, with Lady Chiltern altering her principles and thus getting a happy resolution. Contrasts with Mrs Cheveley's inflexibility and ultimate destiny were often made. Better answers, however, noted that the action of the play shows how the issue refers to a wider range of characters. Lord Goring, for example, responds to the Chiltern crisis by turning away from his dandyish principle that nothing should be taken seriously, in order to save the marriage; the action of the play also brings about his own marriage and his conversion into 'An Ideal Husband.' Candidates who tracked the pain of the process of altering principles (or a lack of them) in Sir Robert were able to produce well-supported discussion of the way the issue is dramatised. Very good answers often commented on the ending of the play as avoiding many of the issues that Lady Chiltern's remark initiates by tidying things up – slightly too easily – into a happy ending.
- (b) Answers that tracked the development of the scene often understood the general outline but needed to engage with suitable detail of language and action. Others became overly concerned with the sound of the chair falling in the next room. More sophisticated responses engaged with the dramatic situation and with Lord Goring's attempts to conceal the identity of the other guest. A number of candidates thought that (despite the passage evidence) it was, in fact, Lady Chiltern in the next room. The best answers were able to discuss the dramatic irony of the situation, the farcical action, the stilted, nervous language used by both men and the mutual misunderstanding of

lines 45-65. A small number of candidates speculated – interestingly – that Mrs Cheveley knocks over the chair deliberately.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates should deal firmly with the dramatic qualities of the texts.
- Time is well spent on planning a coherent answer, with a shaped argument.
- Discussions about characters' choice of language or the way in which they speak (syntax etc.) often focuses debate at a high level.

General comments

As always, candidates who are willing to engage with the dramatic qualities of the texts through discussion of form, structure and language show that they have a firm understanding of both content and of the writer's strategies. The best responses show strong commitment to dealing precisely with the terms of the question by adducing examples and offering crisp, relevant analysis. At the very top end, analysis often leads to perceptive originality about the texts.

Less convincing responses often show similar characteristics, but there is perhaps a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples are not being fully explored. At this level, responses can be over-long, a sign that candidates have not made judicious selection of what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and this is not, of course, expected. What is expected is that candidates should frame a discussion that allows them to show knowledge and understanding of the text through the shaping of a clearly progressing and structured argument.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded appropriately. Answers at this level were not without some analysis of text, but points did not cohere into a clear argument or were rather simplistic. Candidates sometimes need to be aware that feature spotting needs to be supplemented by analytical discussion.

In passage-based questions, the best responses took a strategic view of the moment presented, rather than a chronological approach. They often paid careful attention to the stage business of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to the words spoken. They noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but could analyse how that transfers into a dramatic effect when realised on stage.

Many candidates could have done more to discuss choices of language or syntax. Some scripts showed little evidence of understanding that went beyond plot. Others, at the very bottom, were often brief, irrelevant, or confused in expression.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Limited responses tended to work through a range of the different symbols in the play. Physical symbols discussed included guns, flowers, drink, imagined children amongst others. Fuller responses considered the ways in which Albee uses symbolism as a technique, demonstrating proficient and often original analysis. Stronger answers saw that the texture of the play, its complexity and fascination is about human interaction first and is enhanced/developed/contextualised by the symbolic patterns that surround it. Discussions about George and Martha as symbolising the American dream gone wrong were often pertinent. References to the couple (and

Nick) as metaphors for the Cold War often came across as learned responses that were not substantiated from the text.

- (b) Most candidates were able to discuss dramatic tension between the four characters, with only a few getting themselves into a bit of a knot trying to talk about too much at once. Martha's reference to the 'bog' and 'swamp' featured significantly in most answers. Responses that centred on the themes of the play often focused on the contrast between George, representative of the past, and Nick, the shape (physically too, according to Honey's breathy admiration in line 64) of the future. At times, there were useful discussions of Nick and Honey as an unwilling audience for George and Martha's games; more sophisticated responses were aware that they are much more actively involved than mere observers.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Responses here ranged widely over the play, noting that comedy could be seen most obviously in the struggles of the Mechanicals to present their play. Discussions covered issues of slapstick, rhetoric, irony, the melodramatic situation of the lovers. Responses that went beyond simply what is funny were able to discuss the parallel plots and the farcically exaggerated performance of the Mechanicals' play that acts as an ironic commentary on what has gone on amongst the Athenian nobles. Candidates with a sophisticated view of comedy as a genre were able to point out how the play resolves itself in terms of marriage and festivity, as do many of Shakespeare's other comedies. A number of very good answers were able to deal with some of the darker undercurrents of what is revealed about human nature through the use of comedy. Parallels between the world of the humans and that of the fairies often proved particularly insightful, though the comedy inherent in the moments where the various worlds of the play overlap could perhaps have been more fully exploited.
- (b) At the lower levels responses explained the plot and situation at this moment in the play. Slightly better responses were able to discuss how characters feel at this point, with some interpretation of the dialogue and some discussion of language features. Better answers looked at the specifics of language – especially the splicing of lines between the lovers between 8 and 12 and the use of imagery such as 'swift as a shadow', to comment on the lovers' apparent sincerity, and vastness of the obstacles to love. More perceptive responses noted that Hermia swears by a doomed love (Dido) and broken vows and that this does not bode well to a Shakespearian audience who may be attuned to listening for such clues. A number of very convincing responses argued that there is comedy in the sheer number and kind of obstacles listed by the lovers who are in a fairly clichéd situation after all. These responses were often backed up by discussion of diction and analysis of the rather tired staples of over-exaggerated literary love ('Why is your cheek so pale?/ How chance the roses there do fade so fast?').

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) The central nudge of this question was 'dramatise.' Candidates who saw the implications of the question quickly moved towards analysis of the various ways in which loyalty is interrogated in the play. This took many forms. For some there were issues of family loyalty worth exploring as a means of measuring the evil of Richard of Gloucester. For others, issues of unwarranted loyalty (that of Buckingham, for example) were central. Others were aware that a character like Bolingbroke is loyal to an idea of kingship, if not to the particular occupant of the role. The best candidates were able to shape a coherent case and adduce suitable examples within a clearly structured overall essay.
- (b) Virtually all answers understood the basic situation at this point in the play. Better responses were able to discuss the various ways in which Richard is stage managed to appear as a Christian prince. Close analysis of Buckingham's careful political 'spin' was, of course, central to responses in the higher mark bands, as was understanding of Richard's seemingly selfless reluctance to take on the role of king. There was often useful discussion of the image of England as a victim ('Her face defac'd') and of nature as corrupted ('ignoble plants') in order to suggest that the country is vulnerable and in need of strong government. The best responses were able to deal convincingly

with the dramatic irony of the scene, showing understanding of how the audience is not in the same situation as the Mayor.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates had done a lot of work in order to come to terms with the historical background of the text. Whilst this added to their understanding, it was clear that a number of responses were dealing with the play as though it was a historical witness, not a shaped, partisan response to a series of historical events in the same way that Shakespeare's history plays are a post-event interpretation of character and fact. Nonetheless, responses were usually clear about the nature of More's faith and of the sacrifices that it forced him into in order to maintain integrity. Stronger answers were able to substantiate More's inner struggle and the nature of his quandary through clear and detailed examples from specific moments. The best answers tended to consider the faith – or lack of it – in other characters in order to demonstrate Bolt's dramatic methods.
- (b) Candidates were well able to engage with the concept of Common Man as employed by Robert Bolt in the given scene and wider play. The use of questions and stage directions featured frequently in answers. A number of responses answered almost exclusively on the Common Man's speech, effectively leaving out lines 39 to 68. This compromised the overall success of the answers, which needed to bring out the contrasts in the scene in order to demonstrate what is going on. Responses at the top levels were able to comment on Bolt's debt to Brecht and ideas about alienation effects gained through the breaking of the fourth wall and through the lighting. Many noted that the Common Man's 'It is perverse! To start a play... with me!' gives clear clues about what Bolt is up to here. Better candidates noted too that More's character is delineated initially through his relationship with the servant class, not through his dealings with social equals, a means of demonstrating his worldly wisdom and his common touch. A number of responses made reference to Machiavelli, picking up on More's early recognition that Rich will act only through self-interest later on.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Although virtually all candidates were able to see some of the corrupting effects created by money in the play, the term 'dramatic' was only really dealt with in the better responses. Here, responses were able to contrast different characters at particular moments. Responses noted that there is a difference between those who take wealth for granted (Lord Goring and Lady Chiltern) and those for whom its lack or its loss is a major motivation (Sir Robert and Mrs Cheveley). The most sensitive responses saw how money corrupts relationships between people and forces moral compromise. Discussions about the hypocrisy related to money – the pretence that it does not matter – were often engaging and fertile.
- (b) Abler responses here recognised a range of ironies in the situation presented. There was often useful discussion of Lady Chiltern's lack of empathy, her intransigence, and her veiled threats to her husband (lines 9-10, 12-13). There was also discussion of her naïve, wilful belief in her husband's integrity. Sadly, the high-minded language of her speech (particularly in lines 57-60) was rarely explored in terms of dramatic irony. Many candidates were oddly sympathetic to Sir Robert, who continues to evade his own faults throughout. There were also useful discussions of the way that the issue is filtered through the stage directions at the end. Less convincing responses struggled slightly with the detail of the passage and were not entirely convinced about where the passage falls in the play.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates should deal firmly with the dramatic qualities of the texts.
- Time is well spent on planning a coherent answer, with a shaped argument.
- Discussions about characters' choice of language or the way in which they speak (syntax etc.) often focuses debate at a high level.

General comments

This paper is only taken by a small number of candidates, so comments on responses often refer to only a restricted number of candidate answers.

As always, candidates who are willing to engage with the dramatic qualities of the texts through discussion of form, structure and language show that they have a firm understanding of both content and of the writer's strategies. The best responses show strong commitment to dealing precisely with the terms of the question by adducing examples and offering crisp, relevant analysis. At the very top end, analysis often leads to perceptive originality about the texts.

Less convincing responses often show similar characteristics, but there is perhaps a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples are not being fully explored. At this level, responses can be over-long, a sign that candidates have not made judicious selection of what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and this is not, of course, expected. What is expected is that candidates should frame a discussion that allows them to show knowledge and understanding of the text through the shaping of a clearly progressing and structured argument.

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

In passage-based questions, the best responses took a strategic view of the moment presented, rather than a chronological approach. They often paid careful attention to the stage business of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to the words spoken. They noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but could analyse how that transfers into a dramatic effect when realised on stage.

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

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) A number of candidates found it quite hard to unpack the central issue of the question. Once they had done so, they were able to get to work on how the physical barriers that inhibit unrestrained behaviour (the alcohol, the lateness of the hour, the tiredness of the participants) gradually work their way on the characters. Moving on from there, the presence of Nick and Honey as giving permission for the hidden war between George and Martha to come into the open, soon provided

sensible areas for discussion. More perceptive responses were also able to see that each couple is gradually peeling away the restraint of the other couple, either intentionally or unintentionally.

- (b) Most responses showed understanding of the building of the tension through the extract. Some responses traced the speeches chronologically through the extract in order to demonstrate understanding of George's control of the situation, leading to Martha's surrender. More sophisticated answers understood the idea that this is a consequence of Martha's initial mentioning of the son to Honey, and that it will lead to George's 'killing' the son. Candidates often showed subtle awareness of the need for this exorcism to save Martha and George's marriage. Parallels between the two marriages were sometimes made to good effect, and attention was drawn to Nick's impatience with Honey's lack of understanding, and of the continuing power struggle between George and Nick, exemplified by George taking control here by calling Nick 'good boy'. At all levels, there was usually clear understanding of the straightforward dramatic features (stage directions/tone/pauses), particularly George snapping his fingers, and some responses considered the more obvious language features, such as 'birfday', and the idea that the son does not have a name. Detailed analysis was rarer. Relatively few candidates explicitly considered the idea of anticipation, though it is clearly signalled by Martha adopting the story telling mode in lines 59-60 and by George's '*beginning of quiet asides*' in the stage directions.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Responses at the lower end were restricted to giving an account of the Mechanicals' role in the play in plot terms, often with much assertion about the scenes being very funny. More sophisticated responses worked on the idea that their participation adds comic relief to counterbalance the other two main plots in the play. Better answers discussed the parallels between Pyramus and Thisbe and the Lovers' problems in the main plot. There was some recognition of the Mechanicals as a part of the play's confusion and comic resolution, with everything in order at the end (including the social hierarchy with the nobles ridiculing the workmen's efforts). Only the best responses were able to deal with Bottom's involvement with Titania, or with the ironic commentary that the language of the Mechanicals' play provides on the excesses of emotion seen elsewhere.
- (b) Good responses here were aware of the overblown language used by both Hermia and Helena. At the simplest levels candidates explained that Helena has a poor self image and hates herself and wishes she was like Hermia. Better responses dealt with the terms in which Helena frames her admiration for Hermia through, for example, the imagery ('lodestars'). There was awareness of plot and the obstacles to love presented at this point in the play and that love is a 'sickness'. The role of Lysander in the scene was largely ignored. The best answers were able to deal with the human situation of the randomness of love and its targets. Discussion of the girls' idealisation of love (the reference to Phoebe, and the excessive, hyperbolic language, for example) and the confusion of mind caused by being in love was restricted to work in the top bands. Similarly commentary on the construction of the scene (the rhyming lines, the stichomythia) was either well done by good candidates or poorly done by candidates who noted the features but then failed to analyse their effect.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) A small number of candidates answered on this question. Most were able to give an account of the various roles of the women in the play, but only the more subtle answers were able to see that the women are not always portrayed as a group, all with identical values, or as simply victims of Richard's evil. Deeper exploration of Queen Margaret as a choric figure, or of Anne's decision to marry Richard would have allowed exploration of the way in which Richard's contemptuous attitudes towards women allow an audience to frame a more complex response to the central character in the play.
- (b) Most candidates were aware of the plot and how the extract fitted in. Better answers responded to the various ways in which Richard is presented in pomp as he ascends the throne. Close focus on the ways in which Richard speaks of himself, or the early exchanges with Buckingham also allowed some candidates to see how Richard's image is being intentionally manipulated for political

purposes. The best answers saw the hidden agenda ('thy kindness freezes') behind the honeyed words on both sides, as Richard tests to see if Buckingham remains 'current gold indeed'. There was often a clear understanding of the dramatic reversal of Buckingham's position, and of the way that Richard's language changes from royal dignity to childish petulance within a few lines, whilst at the same time his appearance goes from statesmanlike glory to allowing courtiers to see him as he 'gnaws his lip.' On the whole, the last few lines of the scene were not fully analysed, despite the contrasts in the scene being perhaps its most obvious feature.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) There were only a small number of responses to this question. Candidates were aware of the contrasts between public and private life, epitomised through scenes in More's house or at court. Some were able to make convincing points about the prison scenes as being an objective correlative for what is going on in More's head. A small number of candidates pointed to the basic neutrality of the stage space as key to our understanding of Bolt's methods. There was usually clear understanding of the history that forms the source of the play, though at times discussions suggested that the play was seen more as documentary than as a dramatised interpretation of real events.
- (b) The basic conflict between More and his wife was understood by nearly all candidates who attempted this question. The nature of the love between them proved harder to pin down. Better answers focused on detail from the text and recognised the level of sacrifice that More is about to make. There was some useful discussion of how Alice More is feisty and self-assertive, as opposed to the stereotype of women of this time. The role of the last section of the scene was little discussed.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Discussions of this question often confined themselves to basic contrasts between Mrs Cheveley and Lady Chiltern. Better responses were able to see that Lord Goring's statement is either ironic or plain nonsense. The best responses noted that in a world where women lack real power, people like Mrs Cheveley have to make the best of the resources (and feminine wiles) that they have. On the whole, character study, rather than discussion of the question raised tended to dominate here.
- (b) Most responses understood that the relationship between Lord Goring and Sir Robert is a close one, with Sir Robert opening up to his friend far more than he can to his wife. The tone of their conversation was often usefully caught, as was the fact that they are easy in each other's company (Lord Goring is 'lounging in an armchair,' for example). The sudden, slightly unexpected seriousness of Lord Goring was also often discussed. Comments on Sir Robert's pacing helped highlight differences between the two men. A number of answers simply narrated what happens in the scene, with little analysis of language or action.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51
Shakespeare and other Pre-Twentieth
Century Texts

Key messages

- Candidates answering option **(b)**, passage, questions should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the whole text.
- Candidates should ensure that their answer addresses all parts of the question set.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors or time management issues. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although a few candidates did adopt a style which is too casual for an examination response at this level.

The three new texts in this session were popular choices and the candidates' work indicated genuine engagement with and enjoyment of these texts, with Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* the most popular of the three.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this examination series:

- (a)** Candidates do need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the whole text, whether they are tackling option **(a)** or **(b)** questions. Some candidates, particularly when tackling a passage question, do not demonstrate a sufficient engagement with the whole text. For example, when answering on the Chaucer text, it is important to draw material for the answer from both the Prologue and the Tale. This equally applies to the Keats questions where in the passage **(b)** questions, candidates will be expected to show knowledge and understanding of more than just the given poem.
- (b)** Some candidates ignore part of the question in their answers, which inevitably limits their success. For example the question on Jacques from *As You Like It* referred to his 'role' in the play, but in discussing his characterisation some candidates did not address 'role' directly. Candidates should be careful that their answer addresses all of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Shakespeare

As You Like It

- (a)** This was a popular choice and nearly all candidates had a secure knowledge of the text and were able to consider Jacques as a character in the light of the given comment. Most answers agreed that he was 'bitter' and often found many plausible reasons for this. There was less agreement as to whether this in fact did 'cast a shadow' over the Forest, though many candidates explored the symbolic nature of the Forest and Jacques's role in creating that, often commenting shrewdly on his decision not to return to the Court at the end. Better answers considered the 'characterisation', noting the many elements revealed in the play such as his melancholy in weeping over the deer and his moral side in encouraging Touchstone to seek a better pastor for his marriage. Candidates who considered role often did very well, noting how 'in his conversations he reveals hidden sides to the other characters such as Orlando's wit and humour', as one candidate wrote.

- (b) Candidates able to provide a precise context often did well, noting the transformation in Oliver as a precursor of Duke Fredrick's equally sudden (and for some more surprising) conversion. The general view was that the relationship between Rosalind and Orlando was portrayed in a more sombre tone in this passage, triggered for some by the engagement of Oliver and Celia. Nearly all candidates were able to explore the disguise and its effects, with a minority considering that at this stage Orlando knows who Ganymede really is. Others noted her genuine affection – 'perhaps because he was nearly killed by a lion' as one suggested – and indicative for some of the approaching denouement. Others discussed Orlando's 'despair' and thought this triggered Rosalind's sudden decision to marry him, though some saw this as a necessary step in Shakespeare's construction of the plot. Why Rosalind maintains the 'fiction at this late stage' was often debated, with some concern over the introduction of 'magic' near the end of the play. Better answers saw this as part of the transformative power of the Forest, an introduction to Hymen and the masque and part of the comic conventions, an important factor in candidates' understanding of Rosalind and Orlando's roles.

Coriolanus

- (a) Different attitudes to war were identified as significant in terms of the characterisation and the plot, with many answers seeing binary opposites of patrician and plebeian, wife and mother and soldier and commoner. The main focus of many answers, though, was Coriolanus, often in comparison to the Tribunes and Tullus Aufidius.

Many answers focused on the role of the women, often contrasting to good effect the different views of Volumnia and Virgilia. Better answers suggested that for some characters politics was more important than fighting, with only Coriolanus, for some, unable to bridge the gap. More sophisticated answers developed this idea into exploring both the tragedy that envelops Coriolanus and the development of Rome from a militarised state into a rough democracy.

- (b) Candidates with a secure grasp of the context often did well, with many exploring the tensions revealed here in both tone and action. The role of Volumnia was well explored, as an ambitious mother and as a patrician, and better answers were able to link this to her pleading successfully outside the gates of Rome. Her ability to cajole and emotionally blackmail Coriolanus was often noted, though for some this was despite her apparent failure to understand her son's attitude. Better answers often looked closely at the language, noting for example a 'whining schoolboy' tone in Coriolanus's words, indicative of Volumnia's continuing maternal domination. His attitude to her demands and his language revealed for some why this attempt to recover his position was doomed – 'harlot's spirit' and 'beggar's tongue' for example, with perceptive responses noting the irony of his closing word 'mildly'.

Section B

Sense and Sensibility

- (a) Nearly all responses were able to discuss Marianne's two relationships in detail, with many showing a very good knowledge of the text. Better answers saw the different attitudes that Marianne had to them and how that changed during the novel. Others noted how Austen used other characters' views to define Marianne's development, such as her responses to Elinor's comments on Willoughby; this often seen as indicative of Marianne's development of 'sense', following her illness. These relationships were often linked to the main concerns of sense and sensibility more generally with the two men seen as counterpoints to the two sisters. More sophisticated answers related the 'love stories' to Austen's presentation of other concerns such as marriage, wealth and status, though the best answers were able to see how in the implicit comparison between the two men and their contrasting responses to difficulties, Austen developed both plot and characterisation.
- (b) The context for this passage was important in offering a convincing interpretation. Many answers focused on Marianne's characterisation, with some misreading where she is in terms of her relationship with Willoughby and what has happened so far. Elinor's attitude was often discussed in terms of 'sense' opposed to Marianne's 'sensibility'. Others saw that despite Elinor's sense, it is Marianne who instinctively realises that Edward is hiding something, is 'reserved', though few candidates mentioned his secret engagement with Lucy. Better answers noted his reference to being 'fond of low company' as an explanation of how he became engaged to Lucy at all. More

Careful analysis led some candidates into exploring how Marianne is either teasing or sarcastic to Elinor, some seeing the humour here, whilst others saw Elinor as typically careful and precise and reasoned.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

- (a) Many candidates were able to make detailed reference to the Wife's past marriages, often showing secure knowledge of the Prologue, though less often the Tale. Chaucer's concerns were well explored: her version of marriage and uncovering of secret methods, with the various attitudes to sex and money. Other answers saw her abandoning these principles in marrying Jankyn and explored the 'violence' of that relationship. Better answers linked these points into a consideration of attitudes to the Church and men of 'authority', whilst others noted her humour and liveliness. Those who remembered that Alison is a creation of Chaucer, a poet and a man, often found interesting and contradictory ideas – Alison as a 'stereotype terrifying, predatory female' as one put it or as Chaucer's subtle (or not so) attempt to undermine the way women were treated in the Middle Ages.
- (b) This was often well done, though weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or offer a summary of the prologue more generally. Alison was often seen as dramatic and forceful, for some candidates a mouthpiece for Chaucer's anti-Church and pro-women agenda. Others saw the characterisation as Chaucer trying to entertain readers through female attitudes to sex. Alison's character and her characterisation were discussed in terms of the rest of the Prologue and less frequently the Tale. Better answers referred to different audiences – suggesting the contemporary audience might be 'shocked by her language and references to the Church and its teachings' but perhaps a 'modern audience would be more likely to be shocked by her marrying at 12'.

The Mill on the Floss

- (a) Nearly all answers were able to summarise the different relationships and offer an evaluation of their significance to Maggie and less frequently the novel as a whole. Better answers focused on her role, noting that the rivalry was the mainspring of the plot as Stephen, Philip and Tom vie for her attention and love. Her relationship with Tom and her father was well contrasted by some candidates, though for others she was seen as idealistic – a fault or a virtue depending on the candidate's view of Eliot's characterisation – and often presented as too keen to please the men in her life. More sophisticated answers focused on the idea of Maggie as a 'victim', often noting that she finds neither love nor happiness and reaches a tragic end.
- (b) This was a less popular option, but often well tackled. Many candidates explored what is revealed of Philip and his relationships with Maggie and his father, noting his sensitive awareness of others but also his stubborn determination. Other answers noted the unexpectedly caring side of Lawyer Wakem, with better answers seeing how the reader's response to him has thus far been created through Tulliver's and also Tom's attitudes and comments. The rather quiet and wistful tone was explored by more thoughtful answers, as was Eliot's precise use of dialogue, in revealing the depth and significance of the father and son relationship.

The Return of the Native

- (a) Although the less popular choice for this text, nearly all answers showed a detailed knowledge of Thomasin's relationships with Wildeve and Venn, though only some considered Clym. Weaker answers tended to summarise the events of the text. Better answers focused on the key terms 'presentation' and 'significance', recognising that the love triangle was the mainspring of the plot and exploring how that was structured and to what effect. Other answers noted how Hardy develops the reader's response with his narrative methods and language, candidates often showing a secure knowledge of the detail of the text.
- (b) Many answers revealed a clear grasp of concerns here, noting the role of Eustacia in creating the tensions between mother and son. Other answers also saw how Hardy tempered their responses to reveal the underlying respect and love. Many saw this as a crux moment and better answers linked this to Clym's later words: 'My conduct to her was too hideous'. Others noted that both are stubborn – a family resemblance revealed in the language: 'firmly', 'frown' 'furrow'.

Other answers focused on style, often pointing out Hardy's use of dialogue here and limited narration, indicative of the dramatic nature of this conversation. Others noted Mrs Yeobright's short

sentences to show her impatience and desire to save him, her pleading tone, her love for her son – ‘o Clym’ – and especially her language for Eustacia – ‘hussy’ and ‘lazy’ and ‘dissatisfied’. More sophisticated answers saw how she shares Eustacia’s desire to move Clym to Paris, an ironic connection for some. Other responses noted how Clym is reassuring his mother and indicates his love and respect for her, though the narrative ‘betrayal’ made her ‘sound like a jilted lover’. Some answers linked this to Clym’s loss of sight and his Oedipus complex, noting how she calls him ‘blinded’ and ‘ominously states imbued with Hardy’s usual fatalism Clym’s future,’ as one candidate put it.

John Keats: Selected Poems

- (a) Many answers agreed with the statement and were able to identify many poems where loss was a significant feature. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the selected poems, but better answers noted different kinds of loss: life, mortality, beauty, poetry and art, nature, imagination and loss of sensory experience. Good answers often made telling reference to the text. For example (Nightingale): ‘he is blind in the dark and has lost his power to see, but imaginatively creates the vision by his poetic imagination.’ Others noted the ‘Loss of beauty in “To Autumn” which leads to a different “beauty” created: of autumn sights and sounds and thereby in his poetry’. Other answers saw death as not only a loss of life but also loss of the beauty Keats might have created and his fear of not fulfilling his ‘high purpose’. More sophisticated answers saw how loss was often balanced by optimism and hope, drawn from the loss, whereas others saw Keats’s excitement in for example ‘On looking into Chapman’s Homer’ and how loss led to the idea of permanence through artistic creation.
- (b) Nearly all answers had some knowledge of the poem, with weaker answers paraphrasing the meaning. Most candidates saw the poem as typical in its use of imagery and language to create the depressing, sinister mood, with some exploring the ‘ballad style’. Others saw it is a metaphor for his relationship to poetry/art/nature and more biographical interpretations linked it to Fanny Brawne. Better answers were able to refer to the wider text, often linking the poem to Odes especially Pysche and Nightingale as well as The Eve of St Agnes in its tone and sense of loss and longing and as one candidate suggested, ‘Keats’s battle with the imagination that is the centre of so many of his poems.’ Other answers noted ‘the inevitable return from fancy to reality’ and the harshness of the ending rhythmically and in sound.

The Changeling

- (a) Most candidates agreed with the quotation and were able to support their views with detailed reference to the text, with weaker answers concentrating on the narrative, with some shaping around Beatrice’s various relationships. Better answers saw her as troubled by a dominating parent – her forced marriage – and genuine love for Alsemero but gradually poisoned by the attentions of De Flores. Nearly all responses agreed with the description of Beatrice, but fewer accepted ‘devotion’, seeing this as lust, infatuation or a shallow unthinking response to her sexuality, so that, for some candidates, De Flores is a perverse mirror of Alsemero and Piracquo. Some answers mentioned tellingly the contrasting actions and responses of Isabella in the subplot, citing this as evidence of Beatrice’s immorality when faced with similar situations. Other answers though saw her not as immoral but only young and naïve and manipulated by men, especially De Flores, but also her father.
- (b) Nearly all answers recognised the passage as the opening of the play, with weaker answers summarising the events here and offering a brief summary of the rest of the play. Better answers explored the role and characterisation of Alsemero, noting how the dramatist reveals he is not himself. Others saw the irony of his descriptions, contrasting the language – religious and pious – with what is revealed in the play. As others noted, his view of her indicated in this passage leads to the ease with which he is taken in by her and De Flores later in the play. Better answers noted the role of Jasperino as foil to Alsemero and pointed up his previous character and how affected he is. More precise answers noted the use of ‘malady’, seeing how love as a sickness is linked to the subplot, De Flores and Piracquo.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52
Shakespeare and other Pre-Twentieth
Century Texts

Key messages

- Candidates answering option **(b)**, passage, questions should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the whole text.
- Candidates should ensure that their answer addresses all parts of the question set.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors or time management issues. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although a few candidates did adopt a style which is too casual for an examination response at this level.

The three new texts in this session were popular choices and the candidates' work indicated genuine engagement with and enjoyment of these texts, with Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* the most popular of the three.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this examination series:

- (a)** Candidates do need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the whole text, whether they are tackling option **(a)** or **(b)** questions. Some candidates, particularly when tackling a passage question, do not demonstrate a sufficient engagement with the whole text. For example, when answering on the Chaucer text, it is important to draw material for the answer from both the Prologue and the Tale. This equally applies to the Keats questions where in the passage **(b)** questions, candidates will be expected to show knowledge and understanding of more than just the given poem.
- (b)** Some candidates ignore part of the question in their answers, which inevitably limits their success. For example the question on Jacques and Touchstone from *As You Like It* referred to 'roles' in the play, but in discussing characterisation some candidates did not address 'role' directly. Candidates should be careful that their answer addresses all of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Shakespeare

As You Like It

- (a)** This was a popular choice and nearly all candidates had a secure knowledge of the text and were able to consider Jacques and Touchstone as characters and discuss their contributions to the play's events. Better answers considered the 'characterisation', especially the dramatic methods used for presenting them, with candidates noting the similarities such as wit and humour and how Shakespeare uses them as balances to each other: melancholy/jovial or cerebral/earthy, for example. Candidates who considered roles often did very well, noting how Jacques for example 'in his conversations ... reveals hidden sides to the other characters such as Orlando's wit and humour' as one candidate wrote or how Touchstone often provides a witty and telling commentary on the action, such as his comments on the wrestling match. Many answers saw them as having

similar roles as commentators but often from a different standpoint; with precise textual pointing, such approaches were often very successful.

- (b) Nearly every answer correctly identified the passage and there were some detailed analyses of Hymen's song, the music and dancing and how Shakespeare creates an 'air of magic and ritual and celebration', as one candidate suggested. Many answers also noted the jarring note of Frederick, with some focusing on Jacques's role here. Weaker answers tended to summarise the relationships and provide details of each couple's history. More sophisticated answers explored the comic conventions, with some seeing a deliberate parody of pastoral convention in keeping with the mockery of pastoral/false love and romance during the play. There was some confusion over the role of Hymen, the *deus ex machina* conventions and the masque as an art form in some answers but many candidates had a secure understanding of dramatic conventions.

Coriolanus

- (a) Most answers agreed with this view of Coriolanus. Weaker answers tended to summarise relevant parts of the play, sometimes identifying ways in which the action revealed heroism or pride. Better answers explored how Coriolanus is revealed to be proud and whether he was in fact a 'tragic hero' at all. Most responses saw his military valour as indicative of his heroism, but that his tragedy was as a result of his political failings rather than his pride. Other answers explored his relationships with the plebeians, his mother and Tullus in detail, with some comparing the contrasting views of Coriolanus of Virgilia and Volumnia. More sophisticated answers focused on the language and imagery as significant methods in creating the audience's response to Coriolanus and in some cases were able to support points made with telling reference to, for example, the Gods or Coriolanus's animalistic descriptions of the plebeians.
- (b) This was not a popular question. Weaker answers struggled to give a precise context and often were restricted to general paraphrase and summary. Better answers explored the relationship between Cominius and Coriolanus, noting the affectionate language; others noted the action and the visual spectacle. Some detailed discussions of the characterisation of Coriolanus explored his unwillingness to reveal his previous actions, his attitude to the common people and his love of fighting and war. He was also seen as an inspiring leader and warrior, though even in this some candidates saw the hint of his future problems in the political arena.

Section B

Sense and Sensibility

- (a) Nearly all responses were able to discuss Marianne's relationships in detail, with many showing a very good knowledge of the text. Most candidates were alive to the irony of her comment. Better answers saw the different attitudes that Marianne had to Brandon and Willoughby and how these changed during the novel and were able to support their arguments with precise reference to the text. These relationships were often linked to the main concerns of sense and sensibility more generally with the two men seen as counterpoints to the two sisters. More sophisticated answers related the 'love stories' in the text as a whole to Austen's presentation of other concerns such as marriage, wealth and status, with the best answers able to see how in the implicit comparison between the various relationships and their contrasting difficulties, Austen developed both plot and characterisation.
- (b) This was a popular question. Weaker answers were able to offer a summary of the passage with some awareness of why this introduction to the Steeles was significant in terms of the plot and characters. Better answers considered the detail of the writing, noting how Austen presents the Steeles through the eyes of Elinor and how for example Anne's grammatical errors were indicative of a lack of breeding and education. More sophisticated answers noted how Elinor's controlled response was typical of her elsewhere: 'her genuine interest in Edward is confirmed but also her iconic trait of self control and so she (and thus the reader) learns nothing of substance,' as one candidate wrote. The mystery of Edward was often noted, with some answers seeing an almost sinister hint in the Steeles' contradictory comments about him.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

- (a) Most candidates agreed with this comment, with many candidates making detailed reference to the Wife's past marriages, often showing secure knowledge of the Prologue, though less often the Tale. The 'entertainment' of the Prologue was well explored with better answers linking the characterisation there to the concerns and methods of the Tale. For some candidates the Tale was simply an example of what Alison had been 'preaching' in her Prologue, whereas for others it was 'a fantasy wish fulfilment of an old woman,' as one put it. Most though did agree that the Prologue was more amusing and memorable principally because it focused on her Alison herself.
- (b) This was not a popular question. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the content with some general comments about Alison's character. Better answers linked this passage into a discussion of her characterisation in the rest of the text, as well as identifying Chaucer's concerns, such as the role of women and attitudes to marriage. More successful answers offered detailed explorations of the language and tone, which were able to see how Chaucer develops the response to Alison, with some candidates amused by her manipulation and vivacity, whereas others found her attitudes to be unattractive and even sinister.

The Mill on the Floss

- (a) Nearly all answers were able to summarise the different relationships and offer an evaluation of their significance to Maggie and less frequently the novel as a whole. Better answers focused on her role, noting that rivalry for her affection was the mainspring of the plot as Stephen, Philip and Tom vie for her attention and love. Her relationship with Tom and her father was well explored by some candidates, arguing this explained her emotional confusion, though for others she was seen as idealistic – a fault or a virtue depending on the candidate's view of Eliot's characterisation – and often presented as too keen to please the men in her life.
- (b) This was a less popular option, but often well tackled by candidates who had a precise knowledge of the context and could therefore understand Tulliver's state of mind. Weaker candidates tended to summarise the passage, with some general reference to the relationship between Tulliver and Wakem. Better answers explored the detail of the passage and how Eliot builds tension and excitement. More successful answers noted the narrative voice and how that shapes the reader's response, along with the use of dialogue and description. Other answers considered the significance of this contretemps to Maggie and her relationship with Philip, noting her cry at the end, and to Tulliver, with this passion leading to his stroke and his death.

The Return of the Native

- (a) This was not a popular choice for this text. Nearly all answers showed a detailed knowledge of Thomasin's relationships with Venn. Weaker answers tended to summarise the key events. Better answers focused on the key terms 'presentation' and 'significance', recognising that the love triangle was the mainspring of the plot and exploring how that was structured and to what effect. Other answers noted how Hardy develops the reader's response with his narrative methods and language, so that by the end the reader accepts 'the acceptable love story of patient virtue rewarded,' as one candidate suggested. Other answers saw Venn as a shadowy, rather sinister figure, gradually revealed as the hero. Candidates showing a secure knowledge of the detail of the text in supporting these opinions often did very well.
- (b) Most candidates were able to discuss the passage with some relevance, though weaker answers tended to retell the story of Clym, Eustacia and Damon. Better answers focused on the detail of the writing in the passage, showing how Hardy created tension and built up to the climax. Other answers discussed the characters, noting how Damon's impulsive dive into the water reflected his rashness elsewhere in the text, but also revealed his genuine love for Eustacia. Others contrasted this with Clym's more measured and self-centred response. More sophisticated answers considered the Heath and the storm: 'as though Providence and Fate were punishing Eustacia and Damon for their wickedness,' as one candidate wrote. Good answers often noted the wider textual concerns and themes and how they are developed here.

John Keats: Selected Poems

- (a) Many answers thought the past was an important element of Keats's poetry and were able to identify many poems where the past was a significant feature. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the selected poems and there was sometimes too much biographical detail introduced. Better answers noted how his concern for the past connected to other concerns: life, mortality, beauty, poetry and art, nature and imagination were all discussed. More successful answers were able to support points made with telling and detailed reference to the text.
- (b) Nearly all answers had some knowledge of the poem, with weaker answers paraphrasing the passage, though few candidates referred to the rest of the set poem. Most candidates saw the poem as typical in its use of imagery and language to create the mood, with some exploring the style of the Odes more generally. Better answers were able to refer to the wider text specifically, often linking the poem to other Odes, especially *Pysche* and *Autumn*, as well as *The Eve of St Agnes*, in its tone and sense of loss and longing. Others explored the detail of the language and the imagery with, as one candidate suggested, 'the inevitable return from fancy to reality signalled by the harshness of the word *forlorn*'.

The Changeling

- (a) This was not a popular question. Weaker answers tended to summarise Beatrice's story with some comment about her lack of morals. More successful answers looked at her development from the innocent virgin to the point at which she makes this comment. More sophisticated responses noted her moral ambivalence, her selfishness and her attractiveness, variously seeing these traits as key pointers to how 'shamed' she really is. Candidates who focused on language and explored how Middleton uses that, as well as her relationships, to develop Beatrice's characterisation, often did very well.
- (b) Nearly all answers recognised the passage as immediately following the murder of Piracquo, with weaker answers summarising the events here and offering a brief summary of the rest of the play. Better answers explored the role and characterisation of Beatrice and De Flores, noting her shock at the finger despite her easy acceptance of the death itself. Others discussed how at this point with the acceptance of Alsemero by her father and the removal of her fiancé by De Flores all of her desires appear to be coming to fruition, though some responses noted the hints of conflict in her discussion with De Flores over the ring and explored the ironies implicit in the language.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/53 Shakespeare and other Pre-Twentieth Century Texts</p>

Key messages

- Candidates answering option **(b)**, passage, questions should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the whole text.
- Candidates should ensure that their answer addresses all parts of the question set.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors or time management issues. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although a few candidates did adopt a style which is too casual for an examination response at this level.

The three new texts in this session were popular choices and the candidates' work indicated genuine engagement with and enjoyment of these texts, with Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* the most popular of the three.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this examination series:

- (a)** Candidates do need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the whole text, whether they are tackling option **(a)** or **(b)** questions. Some candidates, particularly when tackling a passage question, do not demonstrate a sufficient engagement with the whole text. For example, when answering on the Chaucer text, it is important to draw material for the answer from both the Prologue and the Tale. This equally applies to the Keats questions where in the passage **(b)** questions, candidates will be expected to show knowledge and understanding of more than just the given poem.
- (b)** Some candidates ignore part of the question in their answers, which inevitably limits their success. For example the question on Mrs Jennings from *Sense and Sensibility* referred to her 'role' in the novel, but in discussing her characterisation some candidates did not address 'role' directly. Candidates should be careful that their answer addresses all of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Shakespeare

As You Like It

- (a)** This was a minority choice. Nearly all candidates had a secure knowledge of the text and were able to discuss relevant examples of deception and disguise. Weaker candidates tended to summarise their examples, often retelling the events in detail. Better answers focused on how Shakespeare used these dramatic methods to reveal his themes or develop characterisation, usually focusing on Rosalind and her role. Other answers discussed the structure of the play and how it is affected by disguise and deception. More sophisticated responses saw more subtle kinds of disguise: Jacques hiding behind melancholy and Touchstone's intelligence masked by foolishness, for example. Candidates who supported these ideas with detailed reference to the text often did very well.

- (b) Candidates able to provide a precise context were able to tackle this question more successfully. Some noted the transformation in Oliver as a precursor of Duke Frederick's equally sudden (and for some more surprising) conversion. Weaker answers tended to summarise Oliver's past and his relationships with Orlando, and less frequently, Celia. Better answers explored the language and what it revealed about the characters, often concentrating on the change in Oliver and Rosalind's attempt to cover up her swoon and the ironies involved. Sophisticated answers wondered if Oliver realised Ganymede was a woman and linked that into the later action.

Coriolanus

- (a) There were very few answers to this question, but nearly all had a secure knowledge of the Tribunes' role and actions and the significance to the play as a whole. Weaker answers tended to summarise relevant parts of the text, whereas better answers saw the Tribunes in terms of the wider construct and structure of the plot, as well as thematically.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the significance of this passage. Weaker answers narrated the events leading up to Coriolanus's murder. Better answers saw how the events here were foreshadowed by previous action, with more sophisticated answers exploring the language and how, for example, it is Coriolanus's reaction to 'boy' which triggers his doom, with some linking that to his reaction to the Tribunes in Rome. Tullus was seen variously as political and expedient or as a worse traitor than Coriolanus, with some doubting the truth of his eventual regret.

Section B

Sense and Sensibility

- (a) Very few responses were seen. Most agreed with the quotation and weaker answers were able to describe her part in the action of the novel. Better answers focused on her characterisation, with some seeing her as more complex than the quotation suggested, citing her care over Marianne and genuine concern for the well-being of those around her. More sophisticated answers considered her role in detail, noting, for example, how she contrasts the other mothers in the novel, as well as linking the different social worlds of town and country.
- (b) The context for this passage was important in offering a convincing interpretation. Weaker answers narrated the events to this point in the novel. Better answers tended to focus on characterisation, with some misreading where Marianne is in terms of her relationship with Willoughby and what has happened so far. Elinor's attitude was often discussed in terms of 'sense' opposed to Marianne's 'sensibility'. More sophisticated answers identified the humour and genuine affection between the sisters, with others noting Elinor's attraction to Edward but also, for some, her shallowness in not seeing his duplicity. Candidates who focused on the detail of the writing often did very well in exploring the narrative voice and the way Austen develops our response to the sisters here and elsewhere in the novel.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

- (a) There were few responses to this question. Most candidates had a sound knowledge of the Prologue, with some weaker answers less secure on the Tale. These answers were often summaries of the key moments in the Prologue and Tale, with some shaping to the task. Better answers saw the links between the two in terms of Alison's characterisation and Chaucer's concerns. Most successful were the answers which focused on Chaucer's presentation, identifying how he creates the effects which might lead a reader to expect a different kind of Tale.
- (b) This was not at all popular, but candidates did show a sound knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or offer a summary of the prologue more generally. More successful answers explored this relationship in terms of Alison's characterisation, linking this to the concerns of the Prologue and less frequently the Tale itself. More sophisticated answers referred to different audiences, suggesting that a modern reader's response to Alison's attitudes might be very different to Chaucer's contemporary audience response.

The Mill on the Floss

- (a) Nearly all answers were able to summarise the different relationships and offer an evaluation of their significance to Maggie and less frequently the novel as a whole. Better answers focused on her role, noting that the rivalry was the mainspring of the plot as Stephen, Philip and Tom vie for her attention and love. Maggie's genuine affection for both men was often noted, though for some she was seen as idealistic – a fault or a virtue depending on the candidate's view of Eliot's characterisation – and often presented as too keen to please the men in her life.
- (b) This was a less popular option, with weaker answers tending to paraphrase the content of the passage, with a summary of the characters. Better answers considered Eliot's methods of characterisation, noting how the traits revealed here in Maggie and Tom were developed later in the novel and to what effects. Other answers discussed the relationship between Maggie and Tom, with some linking this childhood adventure to the later conflicts and the ultimate tragic ending on the river. More thoughtful answers considered the language and details of the writing, noting, for example, how Tom calls her 'Magsie' and linking that to the ending of the novel.

The Return of the Native

- (a) This was not a popular text in this examination series. Nearly all answers had a detailed knowledge of Wildeve and Venn and their rivalry for Thomasin. Weaker answers tended to summarise the events of the text. Better answers focused on the key terms 'role' and 'characterisation', recognising that the love triangle was the mainspring of the plot and exploring how that was structured and to what effect. Other answers noted how Hardy develops the reader's response with his narrative methods and language, candidates often showing a secure knowledge of the detail of the text.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Most candidates were able to discuss the passage with some relevance, though weaker answers tended to retell the story. Better answers focused on the detail of the writing, showing how Hardy created tension and developed his concerns here and elsewhere. Other answers discussed the characters, with more successful responses considering how they are developed here and what the significance of that development might be to the wider text.

John Keats: Selected Poems

- (a) Many answers agreed with the statement and were able to identify many poems where the past was a significant feature. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the selected poems and there was sometimes too much biographical detail introduced. Better answers noted how his concern for the past connected to other concerns: life, mortality, beauty, poetry and art, nature and imagination were all discussed. The most successful answers were able to support points made with telling reference to the text.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Nearly all answers had some knowledge of the poem, with weaker answers paraphrasing the meaning. Most candidates saw the poem as typical in its use of imagery and language to create the homely, rather domestic mood, with some exploring the sonnet form more generally. Better answers linked the poem to the wider text and in particular Keats's concerns such as mortality and longing.

The Changeling

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question. Most candidates agreed with the quotation and were able to support their views with detailed reference to the text, with weaker answers concentrating on the narrative, with some shaping around her various relationships. Better answers saw her as troubled by a dominating parent – her forced marriage – and noted her genuine love for Alsemero but saw her as gradually poisoned by the attentions of De Flores. Other answers though saw her not as immoral but only young and naïve and manipulated by men, especially De Flores but also her father.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Nearly all answers recognised the passage and weaker answers were able to offer a paraphrase with some awareness of the various strands of the plot coming together at this point. Better answers noted the increase pace of the action and how the dramatist uses language to reveal the characters, with some answers offering sophisticated views on the relationship between the main and sub plots.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
Twentieth Century Writing

Key messages

- Candidates need to read both **(a)** and **(b)** questions carefully, respond to all parts of the question and shape their material to the task.
- Candidates need to write strategically so that they can demonstrate how writers' choices of structure, form and language shape meanings and effects.
- Critical theory and opinions, knowledge of social, literary and biographical contexts should be used in the study of the texts to stimulate and inform a personal reading so that in examination essays, candidates can develop some depth in their personal responses to the questions and the texts. This extra-textual information should not be offered as a substitute for a discussion of the text itself.

General comments

All questions were accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements, though on **(b)** questions there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This restricted discussion of the significance and effect of specific details and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic'. Less secure candidates are understandably attracted to **(b)** questions even when they find themselves confronted with a poem or extract that, perhaps, they have not studied in much depth. In some cases, they would have been better advised to tackle the **(a)** questions because they tend to be open and give opportunities for a wide range of material and approaches. Candidates choosing the **(a)** questions particularly on the prose texts often demonstrated detailed knowledge though some could have raised their performance levels by selecting material with more discrimination in response to the questions. Candidates need to cover a range of ideas in some depth with some analysis of specific quotations to demonstrate a literary appreciation of a range of stylistic methods and effects. This is also true of the poetry texts where candidates often write as though they are discussing biographical or philosophical texts rather than poetry. It is helpful to offer immediate textual, literary and social contexts, but these need to be carefully made relevant to a close reading of the selected passage or poem. Some candidates had spent much time on exploring the literary and historical contexts of texts and while these were sometimes presented fluently and informatively, there was often a mismatch between an impressive general introduction and the more individual attempts to address textual detail, particularly in answers to the **(b)** options. Successful candidates used critical opinions to support, and extend personal interpretation or to argue against them and showed a genuine enthusiasm for their texts based on evidence of close personal reading and appreciation.

The best scripts, whether they chose **(a)** or **(b)** options, focused on the effects of the writing using such terms as *narrative point of view*, *stream of consciousness*, *diction*, *tone*, *imagery* and its symbolic, sound or visual effects, *structure*, *juxtaposition*, different kinds of irony and comedy. Those writing on drama on both options did better when they focused on audience engagement and response at specific moments in the plays. The issue of poetic form is frequently a challenge, but there were some productive discussions of choice of diction, sentence structure, enjambment and rhythm. Less accomplished scripts relied on textual summary and generalised opinions. Successful candidates showed evidence of some competent planning of answers to **(a)** questions, with clear paragraphing offering discrete relevant points supported with pertinent textual reference and quotation to generate a sound, literary argument and arrive at a substantive conclusion. Structuring answers to **(b)** questions is perhaps more problematic, hence the tendency to adopt a linear approach and relapse into paraphrase or summary. Candidates need to be encouraged to offer a thesis – some understanding of the context and the function or significance of the passage as an introduction, which can then be deconstructed and organised into a critical framework covering concerns, methods and effects. They need to make a point, support it with evidence and then *explore* rather than just explain the effects. It is sometimes helpful to take a key, significant phrase from the middle or end of a passage and use that to build a thesis. Some scripts in the lower bands were compromised by a lack of textual knowledge. Overall,

the standard of expressive English was very good or fluent enough to sustain discussion of reasonably complex ideas. Though time did not appear to be an issue, there were a few rubric infringements with some candidates offering only one question. Many candidates showed evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues, some intelligent insight into specific detail and communicated a real personal engagement and enjoyment of the texts they had studied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1960-2000*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. In answers to both questions, there was sometimes too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing but generally candidates have become more confident in discussing Adcock's methods and effects.

- (a)** This was a very open question which allowed candidates a wide choice of reference, though naturally there were some favourites. More successful candidates explored a particular concern, such as the treatment of death or family relationships. They moved between the poems, comparing the presentation of ideas and focusing on specific poetic detail to display an intelligent appreciation of choice of language and syntax, and how this affected their understanding of the poetic voice and tone. Less accomplished scripts either went for more or less detailed summaries or went for breadth rather than depth and attempted to deal with too many poems with some over-reliance on biographical knowledge.
- (b)** This was a very accessible poem though the wider reference demanded by the question was usually under-developed. Most candidates made brief references to the content of other relevant poems and offered only general or assertive comments on characteristic poetic methods and effects. The best scripts offered a thesis – that freedom and choice were an issue for Adcock and used this poem together with 'A Way Out' to discuss poetic voice and a range of poetic devices and effects. Others went for a sense of place or dislocation and attempted to use 'Going Back' or 'Instead of an Interview'. Those who adopted a running commentary approach sometimes managed some apt focus on significant details of expression but often relapsed into paraphrase. Most commented on the negativity in the diction and syntax, and tracked the tone through to the assertion of some control at the end. Some managed a productive discussion of the description of the garden by focusing on the language used to describe the lions and the birds and the significance of the reference to 'no sun as clock or compass'. Better candidates considered the effects of the rhyme scheme, the shorter fourth line and the enjambment at specific places and saw this disturbance in the regularity of form as an expression of Adcock's resistance to her situation. Weaker scripts caught the tone and situation but generalised on the simplicity of the language, or offered over-elaborate Freudian readings and did not read closely enough to see the rhyme.

Question 2

W. H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

This was a moderately popular text this session with the **(b)** question, surprisingly, proving to be the more favoured option. Those who chose the **(a)** question were more successful because they could choose well-known poems.

- (a)** The better scripts showed evidence of thinking how to link their chosen poems and generate an argument as a context for detailed consideration of a range of Auden's methods and effects. The most successful went for 'poetic voice' and contrasted the dramatic dialogue of 'O what is that sound' with the detachment of 'Musée des Beaux Arts' and a sense of personal reflection – either on the role of the poet as 'In memory of W.B. Yeats' or on the situation of old people in 'Old People's Home'. Others structured their argument around the idea of death by human cruelty or indifference. Good scripts balanced a discussion of the ideas with a sensitive appreciation of specific aspects of form, choice of language and rhythm and had pertinent quotations available for analysis. Weaker essays tended to summarise and simplify the content.
- (b)** This was a challenging poem and those candidates who had studied it, produced some impressive examples of essays which could move between the given poem and the wider text, sometimes

going for themes: anxiety and fear of the world of imagination, or looking at form, imagery, sound effects and the issue of obscurity. In focusing on the poem they showed sensitive consideration of the social context and discussed a range of poetic methods to show how Auden generated a sense of anxiety and hopeless desperation. Others treated the poem as an unseen and tried to make what they knew of Auden fit, struggling to get beyond the use of natural imagery in the first stanza, the idea of the 'prams' suggesting that life goes on and attempting to generate a coherent reading about the death of children.

Question 3

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

This is becoming a popular text which is often thoroughly known and understood with evidence of extensive critical awareness as well as personal engagement. Differentiation is usually by depth of response to the questions, structure of the argument and quality of expression rather than straightforward textual knowledge and understanding.

- (a) This open question addressed a key theme in the novel and often provoked a keen sense of personal engagement as well as many examples of different kinds of betrayal, most well justified. There was evidence of a sound argument even in those who adopted a narrative approach. The key words in the question were 'By what means and with what effects' and more successful candidates carefully worked out an argument and selected material to support it. Most useful was an exploration of Hartley's device of the diary and use of the dual narrative perspective to consider how Leo is betrayed by his experience at school, his reliance on his school-boy rules and persona as a magician. Good essays had detailed references to Leo's feelings in specific scenes such as when Marian called him 'Shylock' or he considered the justification for opening the letter and his response to the truth of her relationship with Ted, or the implications of her version of his experience in the summer in the epilogue. The best essays used pertinent quotations to show how the language conveys young Leo's naivety or the elderly Leo's reflective observations and self-justifications. Some focused on Leo's loss of innocence, the lying to Marcus, his alteration of the meeting time and the betrayal of his whole imaginative world of the Zodiac that comes over in the final scene of the Virgin and the Water-carrier on the ground 'moving as one'. Others focused in more or less detail on Marian's affair with Ted being a betrayal of her class, Trimingham and Leo. Some remembered Leo's belief in the 'Golden Age' and how he became disillusioned and diminished by it.
- (b) Generally this question was well understood and the extract prompted some useful contextualisation, focusing on the heat, Leo's class consciousness and insecurity at Brandham Hall, his experience of 'persecution' and belief in magic. Successful candidates used the references to the wider text to consider how the significance of the details in the extract contributed to Hartley's presentation of Leo, finding evidence of the elder Leo's commentary on his younger self and social inexperience. They focused on such aspects of expressive style as the use of the pathetic fallacy and the wider symbolic significance of the heat in the novel; the authoritative diction and sentence structure given to Marcus in the dialogue and the nuances of such phrases as 'I still half-believed', and '- more surely than -' 'and the fear of losing face'. Many commented on the school-boy exaggeration of the 'gas-jet' simile and a few contrasted the educated, higher register of the elderly Leo with the simplicity of the young Leo's account in the last paragraph. Less successful essays tended to discuss the content, particularly the class issues, in ways which came close to paraphrase or summary or discussed the wider text without showing an appreciation of the narrative methods through a close reading of the extract.

Question 4

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

This was a popular new text and most candidates showed clear evidence of personal engagement. Candidates are asked to discuss **two** stories to encourage them to focus on detail and develop ideas in depth. The (a) option was more popular and candidates choosing it tended to be more successful than those choosing the (b) question because they were much more confident about narrative themes and content than focusing on the details of narrative method and effect.

- (a) Most candidates chose appropriate stories: 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', 'Bliss', 'The Prelude', and 'The Woman at the Store' though some had difficulty with the narrative perspective of

'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day.' Many had detailed knowledge with the best answers offering a consistent comparative discussion which included well selected examples of symbolism and language effects to support arguments. Those candidates choosing 'Frau Brechenmacher' and 'Bliss' offered some perceptive analyses of class as well as the presentation of attitudes and feeling in the nuances of language and tone. Some weaker scripts attempted to cover too many stories, offering narrative summaries and simple observations, or invested too much in the social context and biography.

- (b) This passage was rich in language effects and those candidates who had the confidence to explore the narrative voice did well. They focused on the relationship with the reader, the evidence of a retrospective narration and different aspects of self-conscious, self-dramatisation in the character of the narrator by looking at the language. Some commented intelligently on specific features such as the effect of the direct address, the emotive colloquial diction to describe Life as the 'old hag' seizing 'the old bitch by the throat' and the self-conscious similes 'like the tongue of a little dead kitten' together with the effect of 'which I have never felt'. A few commented on the description of the 'physical feeling' of 'Agony' at the end but only those who knew the rest of the story could explain its significance. The weakest essays came from candidates who were doing this question as an 'unseen', unable to support tentative observations with reference to the rest of the story or the wider text.

Question 5

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

This new text was a popular choice and candidates showed a wide range of engagement and knowledge of literary and social context though this was sometimes included uncritically. Some candidates tended to spend too long explaining the historical context of the Cold War and the prevalence of paranoia without then providing evidence of paranoia from the text and analysing the dramatic significance and effects of specific details.

- (a) This was the less popular option, but the best candidates rose to the challenge of probing Pinter's dramatic method, combining this with relevant critical references from the work of Martin Esslin, Bill Naismith and other relevant work by Pinter such as 'The Room' or quotations from his essays. The key words 'central' to the play's 'significance' and 'dramatic effects' separated the worthy candidates focusing generally on the presence of menace from those candidates who successfully considered aspects of the word 'nightmarish'. They discussed the way the audience is made to feel insecure, anxious and shocked by focusing on the ways Pinter presents characters, particularly Goldberg and McCann, how Pinter withholds information and provides inconsistencies and absurdities in characters' speech, their perceptions of themselves, actions and events. Successful candidates referred in detail to specific scenes such as Goldberg and McCann's interrogation of Stanley, the birthday party 'celebration' itself and the scene where Stanley is reduced to a broken, speechless victim of their unexplained persecution. Less successful scripts scarcely mentioned 'nightmare', but wrote answers attempting to deal with the concept of the Theatre of the Absurd, and Comedy of Menace, referring to threats from the outside, violence and the destruction of Stanley in a general way.
- (b) This question produced answers across the range. The most effective responses consistently demonstrated an understanding of the play as seen by an audience. Some candidates were distracted by half-digested ideas about discourse analysis and proposed that Pinter wanted to demonstrate that language is meaningless. The best responses focused on both the visual and verbal conflict between the characters, linking this with themes of subordination, power, anonymity and loss of identity supported by some specific, pertinent references to the wider text. These confirmed an intelligent understanding of Pinter's work and a genuine appreciation of the absurdist genre. Specifically, there was some skilled focus on methods such as the relentless, penetrating questioning, the measured, menacing quality of the stage directions e.g. *quietly, uncertainly, deliberately*, a discussion of the possible audience responses to Meg's attempt at playful intimacy: 'Tickly, tickle' and the threatening effect of the shift in register given to Stanley at the end. Modest responses managed to focus on the relationship, tracking the tone through the scene, but discussion was restricted by a lack of reference to the wider text. Weaker responses tended towards paraphrase or were merely judgemental.

Question 6

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This continues to be a popular, well-known and well-understood text. Sometimes the sheer amount of knowledge compromised some candidates' ability to focus on relevant details, to address a specific question and write strategically. Many offered detailed knowledge of the content with very limited discussion of how the writer shapes meaning and reader response.

- (a) The key issue here was to examine the terms in the quotation and the question. There were some beautifully planned, well illustrated discussions covering a wide range of sophisticated ideas about Roy's presentation of her concerns, with a genuine critical appreciation of her narrative methods. Better answers made clear distinctions between small and big, remained consistent and selected their material judiciously. They discussed how a big thing like the Love Laws was explored through the structure by the accumulation of parallel love stories as well as specific conversations where Rahel fears being 'Loved a Little Less'. They focused on choice of language and sentence structure to demonstrate how Roy's repetition of specific phrases associated with childhood appearance, events, language and feelings – small details in themselves – are used to show how the twins' characters have been formed and restricted by their memories of the big events in the novel. Many candidates showed remarkable recall of detail but their linear narrative approach illustrated their knowledge of the sequence of events, instead of being a literary discussion. Pappachi's Moth was explained as a small thing, resulting in his disappointment and violent treatment of his family but discussion was 'restricted' to giving an explanation of his character. Roy's use of this as a symbol for Rahel's fear would be asserted rather than examined in the context of a particular moment and the effects analysed. In weaker essays, personal response was restricted to repeatedly pointing out how small things can lead to big ones which sometimes resulted in confusion as to whether Estha's molestation was a big thing or a small one.
- (b) This was a rich passage which produced answers across the range. There were some good examples of management of textual and contextual considerations. Most candidates mentioned the narrative structure and commented on how this extract contained the flashback of Estha's banishment to his Baba's and that it foreshadowed the twins' consummation of their 'hideous grief'. There were some good answers focusing on the detail of the passage – for example the description of Rahel and her 'Ammu's mouth' or how the impact of the prominent placing of 'His sister' linked to specific parallel phrases in the earlier scene where Rahel observed Estha in the bathroom. In commenting on the syntax of 'A little wet. A little quiet. The Air' some candidates discussed the impact this phrase had in the extract and when repeated in the later one. There were some perceptive answers that considered the effects of the figurative language: 'A bird held down by skin' and 'Long corks that kept the darkness in' and how the phrases contributed to the characterisation. Many commented on the effects generated by the stylistic features in the description of the station. Modest answers explained the significance of both halves of the extract, focusing on details like the youthful nicknames and the significance of some of the listed items at the end. They focused on the more obvious characteristics such as 'Stoppit and she Stoppited'. Poor answers did not get the narrative perspective right and usually stayed within the passage.

Question 7

WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This text was very popular on this paper. There was real engagement with the political satire and much reference to political problems in Nigeria, usually relevant but sometimes referred to in excessive length. More candidates are beginning to consider some of the ways Soyinka achieves comic effects.

- (a) This option proved to be more popular and in some cases was very well done. Most candidates showed a clear understanding of the characters and their roles within the plots. Many managed to compare the characters with some supporting evidence but often in a straightforward, descriptive way without fully exploring the difference dramatic methods and effects. Successful candidates focused on specific examples of the characters' interactions and their contribution to Soyinka's satirical purposes. They showed appreciation of how the comedy works by discussing the characters in terms of comic stereotypes, analysing examples of physical and visual comedy, and the use of irony. Modest answers often had more material available on Amope than Rebecca; weaker ones tended to lose focus on the question.

- (b) This was in a few cases equally well done with candidates efficiently placing the passage in context and then focusing on the language of the extract to show sensitive appreciation of the way Soyinka generates Jero's argument. Responses covered the choice of diction, the religious concepts of damnation, Biblical references, rhetorical questions, repetition and irony. Most commented on Jero's presentation of Amope here and Chume's reaction to the idea of 'promotion'. Modest scripts explained the significance of these references, sometimes in rather too much detail, losing sight of the question. More successful essays discussed the comic effects and audience response at specific moments in Jero's long speech and showed an understanding and appreciation of the use of parody at the end of the scene and elsewhere in the two plays. Some candidates used the extract as a starting point for a more general essay on the character of Jero and his relationship with Chume.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62

Twentieth Century Writing

Key messages

- Candidates need to read both **(a)** and **(b)** questions carefully, respond to all parts of the question and shape their material to the task.
- Candidates need to write strategically so that they can demonstrate how writers' choices of structure, form and language shape meanings and effects.
- Critical theory and opinions, knowledge of social, literary and biographical contexts should be used in the study of the texts to stimulate and inform a personal reading so that in examination essays, candidates can develop some depth in their personal responses to the questions and the texts. This extra-textual information should not be offered as a substitute for a discussion of the text itself.

General comments

All questions were accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements, though on **(b)** questions particularly there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This restricted discussion of the significance of specific concerns or details and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic'. Less secure candidates are understandably attracted to **(b)** questions even when they find themselves confronted with a poem or extract that, perhaps, they have not studied in much depth. Those who chose the **(a)** questions, particularly on the prose and drama texts, often demonstrated detailed knowledge and an ability to construct a coherent argument. They could have raised their level of performance by selecting material with more discrimination and planning their responses. To do well on either sort of question, candidates need to cover a range of ideas, with some depth or complexity in the discussion and some analysis of specific quotations so they can demonstrate a literary appreciation of a range of stylistic methods and effects. This is particularly true of the poetry texts where candidates often write as though they are discussing biographical or philosophical texts rather than poetry. Some candidates had obviously spent much time on exploring the literary and historical contexts of texts, particularly the Pinter this time, and while this was sometimes presented fluently and informatively, there was a tendency for less secure candidates to offer summaries of ideas rather than apply themselves to the specifics of the question or extract on the chosen text. Successful candidates used critical opinions to support and extend personal interpretation or to argue against them. They showed a genuine enthusiasm for their texts based on evidence of close personal reading and appreciation.

The best scripts, whether they chose **(a)** or **(b)** options focused on the effects of the writing or dramatic techniques using such terms as *narrative point of view*, *stream of consciousness*, *diction*, *imagery* and its symbolic, sound or visual effects, *tone*, *structure*, *juxtaposition*, different kinds of *irony* and *comedy* including the *absurd*. Those writing on drama on both options did better when they focused on audience engagement and response at specific moments. The issue of poetic form is frequently a challenge, but there were some productive discussions of choice of diction, sentence structure, enjambment and rhythm. Less accomplished scripts relied on textual summary and very generalised opinions. There was evidence of some competent planning of answers to **(a)** questions with clear paragraphing offering discrete relevant points supported with pertinent textual reference and quotation to generate a sound, literary argument and arrive at a substantive conclusion. Structuring answers to **(b)** questions is perhaps more problematic, hence the tendency to adopt a linear approach and relapse into paraphrase or summary. Candidates need to be encouraged to offer a thesis – some understanding of the context and the function or significance of the passage as an introduction, which can then be deconstructed and organised into a critical framework covering concerns, methods and effects. They need to make a point, support it with evidence and then *explore* rather than just explain the effects. It is sometimes helpful to take a key, significant phrase from the middle or end of a passage and use that to build a thesis. Some scripts in the lower bands were compromised by a lack of textual knowledge. Overall, the standard of expressive English was very good or fluent enough to sustain

discussion of reasonably complex ideas. Time did not appear to be an issue and there were few rubric errors. At all levels, there was much evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues and personal insights into specific details with many candidates communicating a real personal engagement and enjoyment of the texts they had studied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1960-2000*

This was not a popular choice of text this time. The **(b)** question attracted the majority of responses, though those who chose the **(a)** question tended to do better.

- (a)** This offered the opportunity to choose from a wide range of poems and candidates did well when they managed to generate an argument about Adcock's concerns – such as death – or used points of comparison between the poems to structure and develop their discussion. They tended to choose presentations of people related to Adcock or to use Adcock's approach – a personal one as in 'Water' or 'In Memoriam' as opposed to a more observational point of view in 'Witnesses' or a 'A Walk in the Snow'. Most showed some detailed knowledge and engagement and the best were able to comment on how Adcock uses a particular situation as a starting point, her choice of diction and the way she manages tone. In some cases there was sensitive appreciation of her use of form and the manipulation of sentence structure, rhyme and rhythm.
- (b)** The challenge here was to use a close reading of the poem to bring out Adcock's characteristic approach and use of language with relevant links to the wider text either looking at the issue of aging via 'Weathering' or 'A Walk in the Snow' or Adcock's interest in her ancestors. The majority tended to restrict their discussion to the given poem, with some attempting a paraphrase to get at the meaning. Better candidates focused on the language and perceptively explored the fear of madness. They commented on the way the conversational tone and consideration of hair colour is suddenly disturbed by the inclusion of 'Alzheimer's', and then diminished by the diction: 'which ones went funny in their seventies?' A few who had studied the poem caught the ambiguity in the tone in the idea of 'playing with fire' and linked this with other poems where Adcock plays with language, such as 'Last Song' or 'The Pangolin'.

Question 2

W. H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

This was a popular text and candidates found much to say on both questions. They tended to be more successful on the **(a)** question than on the **(b)** question, where many found it difficult to link Auden's poetic methods to other poems.

- (a)** Most candidates made some attempt to define what aspects of human experience or human nature interested Auden; they chose well-known relevant poems and did not get distracted by too much biographical material. The best candidates developed a discussion about anxiety, insecurity, suffering and love within which they displayed some close, detailed reading and appreciation of Auden's various treatments of his ideas. 'O where are you going?', 'O what is that sound..?' and 'Refugee Blues' were chosen to illustrate Auden's use of drama and form in comparison to the more detached point of view and tone in 'Musée des Beaux Arts' and 'The Unknown Citizen' or the personal reflective tone in some of the love poetry, particularly 'But I Can not' or 'The More Loving One'. The key discriminator here was the quality of analysis used to generate a sensitive, personal response to the poems as poetry. Modest answers tended to give quite detailed accounts of relevant poems with restricted discussion of poetic methods and analysis of effects.
- (b)** There were some very good, well-informed, nicely structured essays which managed to communicate how much candidates can relish the different effects achieved here by Auden's choice of language and the way the sentence structure generates rhythm to reinforce the meaning. Many considered whether the poem was simply descriptive or used details from the poem to support Auden-esque ideas about the need to savour the moment, or they used the relentless attack by the tide on the chalk wall to discuss ideas about time and insecurity. Many were perceptive about the form and structure, commenting on the effects of the variation in line length,

the rhyme and the very specific enjambment used to support the sound effects of the alliteration and assonance in 'the shingle scrambles after the suck-/ing surf', while noting the shift in perspective in the third stanza. Many found so much to comment on that references to the wider text were limited but some made brief comparisons to other poems using imagery from nature such as 'River Profile' or 'The More Loving One' or contrasted the mood and development of 'Look, stranger' with the more dramatic poems using voices or elliptical nightmarish imagery. Weaker scripts tended to treat the poem as an unseen and were rather more tentative about its meaning, sometimes trying to make it fit what they knew of Auden's fear of war or experience of exile. However even in these scripts candidates were able to demonstrate some appreciation of the effects of specific phrases, though many confidently asserted that there was no rhyme scheme.

Question 3

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

This is becoming a popular text which is often thoroughly known and understood with evidence of extensive critical awareness as well as personal engagement. Differentiation is usually by depth of response to the questions, structure of the argument and quality of expression rather than straightforward textual knowledge and understanding.

- (a) This was the more popular option and often very well done. Good scripts combined detailed knowledge and a perceptive understanding of Leo with a critical appreciation of how the structure and framework of symbols contributed to the theme. Most focused on how the diary is used as a mechanism to display the young Leo's naivety and the elderly Leo's sense of disillusionment and guilt by focusing in detail on specific scenes such as his conversations with Ted over 'spooning' and his internal debate over reading the letter. They looked at the language used to suggest his innocent delight in acting as Mercury for the idealised Virgin of the Zodiac and belief in his powers as a magician but also considered his disconcerting awareness of the loyalty issue at the cricket match and the extent to which the Epilogue validated or assuaged the elderly Leo's sense of guilt and penitential withdrawal into the 'world of facts'. At various levels of achievement, most candidates managed to generate a coherent argument, with modest scripts relying more heavily on a narrative account to show the 'loss' of innocence but most showed sound understanding of more obvious details such as the significance of the colour green and the heat as a symbol of Leo's developing sexual awareness.
- (b) Most scripts showed a good understanding of the presentation of Leo here while highlighting concerns over class and Leo's hyper-sensitivity about his own self-image. The differentiating factor was the extent to which candidates provided evidence of close reading of the extract and an ability to discuss the nuances of language such as the use of the word 'tourist' and the exaggeration of 'the dawn of the unimaginable'. Better scripts looked in detail at the dual perspective of the narrative: 'Two and two never made four for me, if I could make them five' and at the contrasting diction of 'obsequious' 'repressively', the humorous 'unmistaken' with youthful words like 'silly' and 'spifflicating'. There were some sensitive, well documented explorations of Leo's feelings and Trimmingham's humorous kindness which was contrasted with Marian's insensitive carelessness. Most candidates could make useful links to the wider text focusing on Leo's distress at being teased or 'vanquished', other occasions when he felt at a social disadvantage and the significance of his role as messenger. Modest scripts tended to write more generally on the concerns with insufficient treatment of the passage or attempted to paraphrase it.

Question 4

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

This was a popular new text. There were good responses to both questions and some essays were very good indeed. They showed lively engagement with the stories and a sophisticated ability to explore Mansfield's presentation of the complexities of human thought and feeling. Some weaker essays relied too much on biographical detail.

- (a) Successful candidates considered what it was that young girls needed to learn, came up with a range of ideas about the realities of marriage, class and self-realisation and selected appropriate stories. The 'young girls' part of the question was often loosely interpreted as women in general, probably because candidates recognised the voice of the quotation as Frau Brechenmacher and many essays began with her character. However many managed to construct a coherent

argument focusing on significant symbolic details like the handing of the shawl to her daughter or the description of the bride as ‘an iced cake all ready to be cut and served in neat little pieces to the bridegroom’, together with a sensitive discussion of the ending of that story. There was also some good close readings of both the ‘Garden Party’ and ‘The Doll’s House’ with plentiful quotation to illustrate relationships with adults, issues of class consciousness and moments of epiphany when characters understand more about themselves or the society they live in. Modest scripts gave detailed accounts of relevant stories with restricted discussion on narrative method and effect. Less successful candidates sometimes struggled to make the stories they knew – like ‘The Woman in the Store’ – relevant to the question.

- (b) There were some excellent close readings of the extract with candidates showing good literary appreciation of the how Mansfield presents the relationship, by looking at the gap between what is said and what is felt. They picked up on the heavy humour on the presentation of the cake, the man’s projection of his affection onto the food, the furniture in the room and the ‘marvel of the sleeping boy’s head’. They focused on the impact of particular words such as ‘devoured’, the simile used to describe the man’s surprise at his pleasure, and the possible irony in his finding himself ‘at journey’s end’. Most commented on the different sorts of silence, the effects of the figurative language of light, ripples and darkness and the intrusion of the narrator’s voice. Good essays commented on the nuances in ‘a wonderfully good imitation of other occasions’ and the significance of the couple being like two hunters in a jungle disturbed by a ‘loud, questioning cry’. Candidates also considered the social context to discuss why in the last paragraph, she would be the one who would be ‘destroyed’. More modest answers showed sound understanding of the relationship but tended to be descriptive rather than analytical.

Question 5

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

This is obviously going to be a popular text and many candidates clearly relish the challenge of trying to make sense of the play. There was evidence of some useful critical reading of Martin Esslin and Bill Naismith, but some candidates produced some partially understood material on discourse analysis and reduced the dialogue in the play to the message that communication is impossible because language is meaningless. Candidates were more successful when they focused on how the language and action shape an audience’s response to a scene in the theatre.

- (a) This was the less popular option. Good scripts showed evidence of careful thought and planning before writing the essay. They considered the significance of rituals and routines and the function and dramatic impact of particular bits of dialogue and scenes. Some showed a sensitive use of context in suggesting that rituals and routines were a means of maintaining the illusion of control and predictability in an insecure political and social world. The best scripts thought about the significance of the title and how an audience’s expectations of a birthday celebration are challenged in the scene where Meg presents Stanley with a drum as well as the bizarre and violent nature of the party itself. Many commented on the banality in much of the dialogue in the routine nature of the discussions over breakfast and the importance of ‘tea’ and how for example, Stanley’s interrogation of Meg over the arrival of Goldberg and McCann is mirrored in their relentless and brutal interrogation of Stanley. Successful candidates had quotations to illustrate the absurdity of the characters’ questions and the menace in the physical intimidation – rituals of standing and sitting – a double-act routine which some noted, is repeated in Act 3 and exposes Stanley as a broken, speechless victim of their unexplained persecution. There were some perceptive comments on the way Pinter uses rituals and routines to generate nervous, defensive laughter and a disturbing awareness of ambivalence and impotence in the audience. A few candidates wrote rather narrowly on ideas of the ‘Pinter-esque’ in response to the question of routines, discussing the withholding of information, inconsistencies in the characters’ accounts of themselves and the ‘Pinter pause’.
- (b) The challenge here for candidates was to get the balance right between a detailed critical appreciation of the passage and reference to the wider text. There were some very sound discussions of the way Pinter generates tension by withholding information on Goldberg and McCann, of the dynamics between Meg and Stanley and their contrasting reactions to the visitors’ arrival, and of the inappropriateness of the drum as a present. Successful candidates focused on Pinter’s dramatic methods, looking closely at the structure of the dialogue and dramatic effects at specific points such as: ‘Why Stan? Do you know them?’ There were some perceptive discussions of the dramatic methods at the end, how Pinter reveals Stanley’s emotions through body language

and action rather than speech and the effects this might have on the audience. Many candidates focused on the way Meg is used to provide comic effect: the repetition of 'nice', the reassurance that she will still bring 'early morning tea' and the incongruity of the drum 'because you have not got a piano'. There were some pertinent links to the wider text, particularly on the next appearance of the drum with Meg at the party, but also on the issue of 'the piano' and whether Stanley was presentation of himself was reliable. Modest answers either restricted themselves to the extract and gave detailed character studies of Meg and her relationship with Stanley, or showed insufficient attention to the extract, choosing to demonstrate knowledge of earlier scenes between Meg and Stanley, the significance of Goldberg and McCann and their role in the plot. Weaker candidates stayed within the passage, wrote thin character profiles and found it difficult to deal with the idea of 'absurdity'. They could not see any structure or purpose to the play and used details in the passage to support of ideas about language being an unreliable tool for communication.

Question 6

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This continues to be a popular, well-known and well-understood text. Both questions produced answers across the range with more successful candidates judiciously selecting their knowledge to focus carefully on the questions and write strategically. Many essays showed a real relish of examples of Roy's control and use of language. Less successful essays offered detailed knowledge of the content with very limited discussion of how the writer shapes meaning and reader response.

- (a) Many answers focused exclusively on the second part of the question: 'the inter-play between past and present'. Most candidates had enough detailed knowledge to explain how characters in the present had been formed in response to their experiences in the past. They tended to focus on the traumas that accounted for Estha's withdrawal into silence and Rahel's insecurities about being loved less, to explain the incest at the end. Some candidates also brought in the parallel stories of characters who broke the 'Love Laws'. The challenge here was to avoid slipping into narrative mode. Candidates who considered the question more carefully understood it was an invitation to discuss and evaluate the effects of the structure of the novel on the reader. Good answers thought about 'how' Roy used the narrative structure to maximise the 'impact' on the reader by withholding information, generating a sense of different points of view at different times and ages through the language and the use of details like Orangedrink Lemondrink Man or the 'familiar smell. Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze.' Some also considered the symbolic use of the 'History House', the changes to the Kathakali dances and the descriptive writing about modern Ayemenem, as well as discussions about the caste system to show Roy's wider textual concerns. Some candidates offered very narrow partial discussions, focussing on Pappachi's Moth and the caste system. Those candidates who showed evidence of planning, tended to do better because they were more likely to generate a range of points and a coherent argument.
- (b) This passage was in many cases extremely well done, with many candidates finding specific examples of irony in Sophie Mol's persuasive remarks on the adults' reaction to their disappearance, and providing a close analysis of how Roy presents the slow realisation of the fact of Sophie Mol's drowning and its implications. At all levels, candidates showed some sensitivity to the nuances of the diction: 'There was no storm music....just a quiet handing over ceremony.' The chief discriminator here was the extent to which candidates showed an ability for critical appreciation based on a close reading of the passage, together with some references to the wider text to support a discussion of ways in which the writing is 'characteristic'. Good answers for example, commented on the effect of the presentation of Pappachi's Moth in the extract and discussed the impact of the layout of the short sentences as well as explaining its significance and function in the wider text. More modest answers noted details in the extract like 'Pappachi's Moth' and the 'History House' or the mentions of Velutha, particularly as a lone 'wolf' and over-invested in a display of knowledge of the wider text and the issue of caste.

Question 7

WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was a slightly less popular text this series. Responses often showed a clear general understanding of its satiric purpose and the roles of particular characters but fewer showed detailed knowledge of particular scenes and speeches. Candidates tended to be more successful on the **(b)** question which was the more popular option.

- (a)** Those candidates who did well considered the various ways an audience can be involved in the plays and Soyinka's dramatic methods. They discussed how Jero's soliloquies affected an audience's judgement of him and the most thoughtful covered the way in *The Trials* this complicated an audience's response to the character. They also pointed out how the response to Jero in *Jero's Metamorphosis* was more straightforward because Soyinka did not give him soliloquies. Successful candidates also explored how specific scenes depended on audience knowledge in generating dramatic irony and visual comedy, such as when Jero attempts to climb out of the window to escape Amope or the 'miraculous disappearance' of Jero in the last scene of *The Trials*. A few also commented on the use of an on-stage audience in Amope's 'Kill me' scene and how the comedy in specific scenes with Jero, Chume and Rebecca depends on the audience recognising the parody of charismatic, evangelical religious practices. Weaker answers tended to show restricted knowledge and covered only Jero's opening soliloquy or discussed generally how aspects of the social and religious satire invited the audience to recognise their human weakness – the desire for material possessions and promotion – and encouraged them to learn better values.
- (b)** Good responses covered a range of dramatic methods and effects by achieving a proper balance between a close analysis of the extract and relevant knowledge of the wider textual concerns. Successful candidates examined the comedy at the beginning in Jero's manipulation of Rebecca, the mystery of the 'certain ally', the flattery of 'my best ally' and they discussed the effects of the religious imagery in 'you have lightened my life with your spiritual lamp'. They commented on the physical and visual comedy of his spying through the widow and the use of repetition in the action of first Jero then Ananias clamping their hands over each other's mouths. Most essays managed a comparison between Jero and Ananias to show Jero's superiority and how his power depended on planning, knowledge and his use of it to blackmail Ananias. Some picked up on the verbal humour in Ananias's violent parody of Christian baptism and the inconsistency between 'the land of milk and honey' and 'this barren waste land'. Less successful answers used elements of the extract as a starting point for discussion of the wider text, for example Jero's previous weakness for women, his prior relationship with Chume, his sense of 'vocation' or how typical Ananias was of the other Beach Prophets. A few confined themselves to obvious aspects of the extract with little discussion of its significance or effects.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63

Twentieth Century Writing

Key messages

- Candidates need to read both **(a)** and **(b)** questions carefully, respond to all parts of the question and shape their material to the task.
- Candidates need to write strategically so that they can demonstrate how writers' choices of structure, form and language shape meanings and effects.
- Critical theory and opinions, knowledge of social, literary and biographical contexts should be used in the study of the texts to stimulate and inform a personal reading so that in examination essays, candidates can develop some depth in their personal responses to the questions and the texts. This extra-textual information should not be offered as a substitute for a discussion of the text itself.

General comments

All questions were accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements, though on **(b)** questions there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This restricted discussion of the significance and effect of specific details and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic'. Less secure candidates are understandably attracted to **(b)** questions even when they find themselves confronted with a poem or extract that, perhaps, they have not studied in much depth. In some cases, they would have been better advised to tackle the **(a)** questions because they tend to be open and give opportunities for a wide range of material and approaches. Candidates choosing the **(a)** questions particularly on the prose texts often demonstrated detailed knowledge though some could have raised their performance levels by selecting material with more discrimination in response to the questions. Candidates need to cover a range of ideas in some depth with some analysis of specific quotations to demonstrate a literary appreciation of a range of stylistic methods and effects. This is also true of the poetry texts where candidates often write as though they are discussing biographical or philosophical texts rather than poetry. It is helpful to offer immediate textual, literary and social contexts, but these need to be carefully made relevant to a close reading of the selected passage or poem. Some candidates had spent much time on exploring the literary and historical contexts of texts and while these were sometimes presented fluently and informatively, there was often a mismatch between an impressive general introduction and the more individual attempts to address textual detail, particularly in answers to the **(b)** options. Successful candidates used critical opinions to support, and extend personal interpretation or to argue against them and showed a genuine enthusiasm for their texts based on evidence of close personal reading and appreciation.

The best scripts, whether they chose **(a)** or **(b)** options, focused on the effects of the writing using such terms as *narrative point of view*, *stream of consciousness*, *diction*, *tone*, *imagery* and its symbolic, sound or visual effects, *structure*, *juxtaposition*, different kinds of irony and comedy. Those writing on drama on both options did better when they focused on audience engagement and response at specific moments in the plays. The issue of poetic form is frequently a challenge, but there were some productive discussions of choice of diction, sentence structure, enjambment and rhythm. Less accomplished scripts relied on textual summary and generalised opinions. Successful candidates showed evidence of some competent planning of answers to **(a)** questions, with clear paragraphing offering discrete relevant points supported with pertinent textual reference and quotation to generate a sound, literary argument and arrive at a substantive conclusion. Structuring answers to **(b)** questions is perhaps more problematic, hence the tendency to adopt a linear approach and relapse into paraphrase or summary. Candidates need to be encouraged to offer a thesis – some understanding of the context and the function or significance of the passage as an introduction, which can then be deconstructed and organised into a critical framework covering concerns, methods and effects. They need to make a point, support it with evidence and then *explore* rather than just explain the effects. It is sometimes helpful to take a key, significant phrase from the middle or end of a passage and use that to build a thesis. Some scripts in the lower bands were compromised by a lack of textual knowledge. Overall,

the standard of expressive English was very good or fluent enough to sustain discussion of reasonably complex ideas. Though time did not appear to be an issue, there were a few rubric infringements with some candidates offering only one question. Many candidates showed evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues, some intelligent insight into specific detail and communicated a real personal engagement and enjoyment of the texts they had studied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1960-2000*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. In answers to both questions, there was sometimes too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing but generally candidates have become more confident in discussing Adcock's methods and effects.

- (a)** This was a very open question which allowed candidates a wide choice of reference, though naturally there were some favourites. More successful candidates explored a particular concern, such as the treatment of death or family relationships. They moved between the poems, comparing the presentation of ideas and focusing on specific poetic detail to display an intelligent appreciation of choice of language and syntax, and how this affected their understanding of the poetic voice and tone. Less accomplished scripts either went for more or less detailed summaries or went for breadth rather than depth and attempted to deal with too many poems with some over-reliance on biographical knowledge.
- (b)** This was a very accessible poem though the wider reference demanded by the question was usually under-developed. Most candidates made brief references to the content of other relevant poems and offered only general or assertive comments on characteristic poetic methods and effects. The best scripts offered a thesis – that freedom and choice were an issue for Adcock and used this poem together with 'A Way Out' to discuss poetic voice and a range of poetic devices and effects. Others went for a sense of place or dislocation and attempted to use 'Going Back' or 'Instead of an Interview'. Those who adopted a running commentary approach sometimes managed some apt focus on significant details of expression but often relapsed into paraphrase. Most commented on the negativity in the diction and syntax, and tracked the tone through to the assertion of some control at the end. Some managed a productive discussion of the description of the garden by focusing on the language used to describe the lions and the birds and the significance of the reference to 'no sun as clock or compass'. Better candidates considered the effects of the rhyme scheme, the shorter fourth line and the enjambment at specific places and saw this disturbance in the regularity of form as an expression of Adcock's resistance to her situation. Weaker scripts caught the tone and situation but generalised on the simplicity of the language, or offered over-elaborate Freudian readings and did not read closely enough to see the rhyme.

Question 2

W. H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

This was a moderately popular text this session with the **(b)** question, surprisingly, proving to be the more favoured option. Those who chose the **(a)** question were more successful because they could choose well-known poems.

- (a)** The better scripts showed evidence of thinking how to link their chosen poems and generate an argument as a context for detailed consideration of a range of Auden's methods and effects. The most successful went for 'poetic voice' and contrasted the dramatic dialogue of 'O what is that sound' with the detachment of 'Musée des Beaux Arts' and a sense of personal reflection – either on the role of the poet as 'In memory of W.B. Yeats' or on the situation of old people in 'Old People's Home'. Others structured their argument around the idea of death by human cruelty or indifference. Good scripts balanced a discussion of the ideas with a sensitive appreciation of specific aspects of form, choice of language and rhythm and had pertinent quotations available for analysis. Weaker essays tended to summarise and simplify the content.
- (b)** This was a challenging poem and those candidates who had studied it, produced some impressive examples of essays which could move between the given poem and the wider text, sometimes

going for themes: anxiety and fear of the world of imagination, or looking at form, imagery, sound effects and the issue of obscurity. In focusing on the poem they showed sensitive consideration of the social context and discussed a range of poetic methods to show how Auden generated a sense of anxiety and hopeless desperation. Others treated the poem as an unseen and tried to make what they knew of Auden fit, struggling to get beyond the use of natural imagery in the first stanza, the idea of the 'prams' suggesting that life goes on and attempting to generate a coherent reading about the death of children.

Question 3

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

This is becoming a popular text which is often thoroughly known and understood with evidence of extensive critical awareness as well as personal engagement. Differentiation is usually by depth of response to the questions, structure of the argument and quality of expression rather than straightforward textual knowledge and understanding.

- (a) This open question addressed a key theme in the novel and often provoked a keen sense of personal engagement as well as many examples of different kinds of betrayal, most well justified. There was evidence of a sound argument even in those who adopted a narrative approach. The key words in the question were 'By what means and with what effects' and more successful candidates carefully worked out an argument and selected material to support it. Most useful was an exploration of Hartley's device of the diary and use of the dual narrative perspective to consider how Leo is betrayed by his experience at school, his reliance on his school-boy rules and persona as a magician. Good essays had detailed references to Leo's feelings in specific scenes such as when Marian called him 'Shylock' or he considered the justification for opening the letter and his response to the truth of her relationship with Ted, or the implications of her version of his experience in the summer in the epilogue. The best essays used pertinent quotations to show how the language conveys young Leo's naivety or the elderly Leo's reflective observations and self-justifications. Some focused on Leo's loss of innocence, the lying to Marcus, his alteration of the meeting time and the betrayal of his whole imaginative world of the Zodiac that comes over in the final scene of the Virgin and the Water-carrier on the ground 'moving as one'. Others focused in more or less detail on Marian's affair with Ted being a betrayal of her class, Trimingham and Leo. Some remembered Leo's belief in the 'Golden Age' and how he became disillusioned and diminished by it.
- (b) Generally this question was well understood and the extract prompted some useful contextualisation, focusing on the heat, Leo's class consciousness and insecurity at Brandham Hall, his experience of 'persecution' and belief in magic. Successful candidates used the references to the wider text to consider how the significance of the details in the extract contributed to Hartley's presentation of Leo, finding evidence of the elder Leo's commentary on his younger self and social inexperience. They focused on such aspects of expressive style as the use of the pathetic fallacy and the wider symbolic significance of the heat in the novel; the authoritative diction and sentence structure given to Marcus in the dialogue and the nuances of such phrases as 'I still half-believed', and '- more surely than -' 'and the fear of losing face'. Many commented on the school-boy exaggeration of the 'gas-jet' simile and a few contrasted the educated, higher register of the elderly Leo with the simplicity of the young Leo's account in the last paragraph. Less successful essays tended to discuss the content, particularly the class issues, in ways which came close to paraphrase or summary or discussed the wider text without showing an appreciation of the narrative methods through a close reading of the extract.

Question 4

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

This was a popular new text and most candidates showed clear evidence of personal engagement. Candidates are asked to discuss **two** stories to encourage them to focus on detail and develop ideas in depth. The (a) option was more popular and candidates choosing it tended to be more successful than those choosing the (b) question because they were much more confident about narrative themes and content than focusing on the details of narrative method and effect.

- (a) Most candidates chose appropriate stories: 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', 'Bliss', 'The Prelude', and 'The Woman at the Store' though some had difficulty with the narrative perspective of

'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day.' Many had detailed knowledge with the best answers offering a consistent comparative discussion which included well selected examples of symbolism and language effects to support arguments. Those candidates choosing 'Frau Brechenmacher' and 'Bliss' offered some perceptive analyses of class as well as the presentation of attitudes and feeling in the nuances of language and tone. Some weaker scripts attempted to cover too many stories, offering narrative summaries and simple observations, or invested too much in the social context and biography.

- (b) This passage was rich in language effects and those candidates who had the confidence to explore the narrative voice did well. They focused on the relationship with the reader, the evidence of a retrospective narration and different aspects of self-conscious, self-dramatisation in the character of the narrator by looking at the language. Some commented intelligently on specific features such as the effect of the direct address, the emotive colloquial diction to describe Life as the 'old hag' seizing 'the old bitch by the throat' and the self-conscious similes 'like the tongue of a little dead kitten' together with the effect of 'which I have never felt'. A few commented on the description of the 'physical feeling' of 'Agony' at the end but only those who knew the rest of the story could explain its significance. The weakest essays came from candidates who were doing this question as an 'unseen', unable to support tentative observations with reference to the rest of the story or the wider text.

Question 5

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

This new text was a popular choice and candidates showed a wide range of engagement and knowledge of literary and social context though this was sometimes included uncritically. Some candidates tended to spend too long explaining the historical context of the Cold War and the prevalence of paranoia without then providing evidence of paranoia from the text and analysing the dramatic significance and effects of specific details.

- (a) This was the less popular option, but the best candidates rose to the challenge of probing Pinter's dramatic method, combining this with relevant critical references from the work of Martin Esslin, Bill Naismith and other relevant work by Pinter such as 'The Room' or quotations from his essays. The key words 'central' to the play's 'significance' and 'dramatic effects' separated the worthy candidates focusing generally on the presence of menace from those candidates who successfully considered aspects of the word 'nightmarish'. They discussed the way the audience is made to feel insecure, anxious and shocked by focusing on the ways Pinter presents characters, particularly Goldberg and McCann, how Pinter withholds information and provides inconsistencies and absurdities in characters' speech, their perceptions of themselves, actions and events. Successful candidates referred in detail to specific scenes such as Goldberg and McCann's interrogation of Stanley, the birthday party 'celebration' itself and the scene where Stanley is reduced to a broken, speechless victim of their unexplained persecution. Less successful scripts scarcely mentioned 'nightmare', but wrote answers attempting to deal with the concept of the Theatre of the Absurd, and Comedy of Menace, referring to threats from the outside, violence and the destruction of Stanley in a general way.
- (b) This question produced answers across the range. The most effective responses consistently demonstrated an understanding of the play as seen by an audience. Some candidates were distracted by half-digested ideas about discourse analysis and proposed that Pinter wanted to demonstrate that language is meaningless. The best responses focused on both the visual and verbal conflict between the characters, linking this with themes of subordination, power, anonymity and loss of identity supported by some specific, pertinent references to the wider text. These confirmed an intelligent understanding of Pinter's work and a genuine appreciation of the absurdist genre. Specifically, there was some skilled focus on methods such as the relentless, penetrating questioning, the measured, menacing quality of the stage directions e.g. *quietly, uncertainly, deliberately*, a discussion of the possible audience responses to Meg's attempt at playful intimacy: 'Tickly, tickle' and the threatening effect of the shift in register given to Stanley at the end. Modest responses managed to focus on the relationship, tracking the tone through the scene, but discussion was restricted by a lack of reference to the wider text. Weaker responses tended towards paraphrase or were merely judgemental.

Question 6

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This continues to be a popular, well-known and well-understood text. Sometimes the sheer amount of knowledge compromised some candidates' ability to focus on relevant details, to address a specific question and write strategically. Many offered detailed knowledge of the content with very limited discussion of how the writer shapes meaning and reader response.

- (a) The key issue here was to examine the terms in the quotation and the question. There were some beautifully planned, well illustrated discussions covering a wide range of sophisticated ideas about Roy's presentation of her concerns, with a genuine critical appreciation of her narrative methods. Better answers made clear distinctions between small and big, remained consistent and selected their material judiciously. They discussed how a big thing like the Love Laws was explored through the structure by the accumulation of parallel love stories as well as specific conversations where Rahel fears being 'Loved a Little Less'. They focused on choice of language and sentence structure to demonstrate how Roy's repetition of specific phrases associated with childhood appearance, events, language and feelings – small details in themselves – are used to show how the twins' characters have been formed and restricted by their memories of the big events in the novel. Many candidates showed remarkable recall of detail but their linear narrative approach illustrated their knowledge of the sequence of events, instead of being a literary discussion. Pappachi's Moth was explained as a small thing, resulting in his disappointment and violent treatment of his family but discussion was 'restricted' to giving an explanation of his character. Roy's use of this as a symbol for Rahel's fear would be asserted rather than examined in the context of a particular moment and the effects analysed. In weaker essays, personal response was restricted to repeatedly pointing out how small things can lead to big ones which sometimes resulted in confusion as to whether Estha's molestation was a big thing or a small one.
- (b) This was a rich passage which produced answers across the range. There were some good examples of management of textual and contextual considerations. Most candidates mentioned the narrative structure and commented on how this extract contained the flashback of Estha's banishment to his Baba's and that it foreshadowed the twins' consummation of their 'hideous grief'. There were some good answers focusing on the detail of the passage – for example the description of Rahel and her 'Ammu's mouth' or how the impact of the prominent placing of 'His sister' linked to specific parallel phrases in the earlier scene where Rahel observed Estha in the bathroom. In commenting on the syntax of 'A little wet. A little quiet. The Air' some candidates discussed the impact this phrase had in the extract and when repeated in the later one. There were some perceptive answers that considered the effects of the figurative language: 'A bird held down by skin' and 'Long corks that kept the darkness in' and how the phrases contributed to the characterisation. Many commented on the effects generated by the stylistic features in the description of the station. Modest answers explained the significance of both halves of the extract, focusing on details like the youthful nicknames and the significance of some of the listed items at the end. They focused on the more obvious characteristics such as 'Stoppit and she Stoppited'. Poor answers did not get the narrative perspective right and usually stayed within the passage.

Question 7

WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This text was very popular on this paper. There was real engagement with the political satire and much reference to political problems in Nigeria, usually relevant but sometimes referred to in excessive length. More candidates are beginning to consider some of the ways Soyinka achieves comic effects.

- (a) This option proved to be more popular and in some cases was very well done. Most candidates showed a clear understanding of the characters and their roles within the plots. Many managed to compare the characters with some supporting evidence but often in a straightforward, descriptive way without fully exploring the difference dramatic methods and effects. Successful candidates focused on specific examples of the characters' interactions and their contribution to Soyinka's satirical purposes. They showed appreciation of how the comedy works by discussing the characters in terms of comic stereotypes, analysing examples of physical and visual comedy, and the use of irony. Modest answers often had more material available on Amope than Rebecca; weaker ones tended to lose focus on the question.

- (b) This was in a few cases equally well done with candidates efficiently placing the passage in context and then focusing on the language of the extract to show sensitive appreciation of the way Soyinka generates Jero's argument. Responses covered the choice of diction, the religious concepts of damnation, Biblical references, rhetorical questions, repetition and irony. Most commented on Jero's presentation of Amope here and Chume's reaction to the idea of 'promotion'. Modest scripts explained the significance of these references, sometimes in rather too much detail, losing sight of the question. More successful essays discussed the comic effects and audience response at specific moments in Jero's long speech and showed an understanding and appreciation of the use of parody at the end of the scene and elsewhere in the two plays. Some candidates used the extract as a starting point for a more general essay on the character of Jero and his relationship with Chume.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

Key messages

- good answers show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write;
- good answers focus on the form, structure and language of the poems or passages, on how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase;
- good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create;
- good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said;
- good answers maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General comments

There was some very pleasing critical work this session. Very few candidates relied on paraphrase *alone*, or on simple identification of literary techniques and devices, and most were very aware that they should support everything they said with apt and critically explored quotations from the set passages and poem. There was plenty of close and often quite sensitive and perceptive discussion of how each writer creates meaning and shapes reader response; there was also a good deal of varied and thoughtful personal response, especially to Kenneth Slessor's poem – some interpretations were almost certainly beyond what the poet had in his mind, but provided that they were argued convincingly, and aptly supported, they were appropriately rewarded. What could not be rewarded highly were answers that responded only to the *ideas* presented by the writers, or to the situations they described. Answers that moved away from the poem or passages to consider similar ideas or even similar texts could not gain reward; such digressions were almost invariably unhelpful.

Unusually, perhaps, the three questions attracted more or less equal numbers of responses; **Question 2** was marginally less popular, but not significantly so, and all three led to some good or often very good critical writing.

Most candidates satisfactorily completed work on two questions; some were a little unbalanced, spending more time on the first question so that the second was shorter or sometimes unfinished. Where time was becoming a problem a few candidates resorted to using bullet-points towards the end, rather than saying nothing; this was never as satisfactory as properly completed work, but it was certainly better than simply running out of time in mid-sentence.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Although quite lengthy this narrative was very simple to follow. Candidates who saw it as nothing more than an account of a few childish adventures often achieved good marks, while those who read it in a more metaphorical sense, as a kind of 'bildungsroman', or at least a short description of growing up, often produced equally thoughtful responses. There was certainly no expectation at all for there to be any 'hidden' or secondary meaning which candidates had to find, a point that is worth making firmly in connection with all questions that are set in this examination – there will never be any passages or poems that can be interpreted only as if they have multiple meanings. As with Lessing's short story here, the passages set will always mean simply what they say; any further meanings may be valid for some readers, but they may not be what the writer meant, and will certainly not be required.

Candidates who expressed concern about the title of the story from which this passage was taken sometimes wasted a good deal of time wondering why it was called *Traitors*, or even trying to speculate about possible reasons, rather than looking immediately at the passage itself, and at the language and images used by the writer, and at the effects that these created.

Many commented on some of the expressions – ‘...the wind slapped and jiggled’ (line 4), or ‘the grass . . . higher than a tall man’ (line 5) – and wrote thoughtfully about how in the first example the personification and onomatopoeia added both visual and aural impact to the description. ‘The trees were pink and gold’ (line 14) again attracted some good comment, suggesting that because these colours were made by the rising sun the writer is also portraying the girls’ excitement at the start of a new day, reflected in the warm and perhaps feminine colours. There are plenty of other examples of Lessing’s language that candidates selected and discussed, often with perception and critical insight. Many, for example, noted the interesting duality of the sometimes quite sophisticated wording, written by an adult looking back many years to a very child-like sequence of excitements and fears. The final paragraph exemplifies this well, beginning with some relatively sophisticated writing, followed by the sudden very homely and indeed very juvenile wish for Father to take them home (a few candidates did note that so much had appeared to take place, but in reality it was only a very short pre-breakfast time). And almost all candidates noted the impact of the final four-word sentence: short, hopeless and at the time almost sad – but because we know that the children were not seriously lost there is another moment of the kind of self-deprecating humour that can be seen earlier – the apparent bravery that a rifle gives the girls, sliding downhill ‘with torn knickers and scratched knees’, their discovery that the boundary, a sort of Wall of China, was in fact only a stretch of wire.

Question 2

This passage also contains much humour, and most candidates saw at least some of this. A few were concerned at the thought of any family having a snake as a pet, but those who spent time criticising the writer for this were missing the point: this may be simply a piece of fiction, and even if it is factual the purpose of the examination is to explore the writing, not its contents.

Many noted the striking first sentence, not merely what it says, but particularly the slightly unexpected word-order, leaving the significant words ‘as a pet’ to the end, after stressing the important ideas of Carpie’s size and beauty. The first paragraph continues light-heartedly to describe how each of the speaker’s parents viewed Carpie – his father as a totem and perhaps a blood-brother, his mother as a killer of her beloved chickens. Giving Carpie the almost human characteristics of smartness and sneakiness (lines 6-7) is of course exaggerated and probably unrealistic, but the speaker makes it light and entertaining, a mood developed in lines 16 to 18, with Mother’s very unfeminine swearing, but only when she thought nobody could hear her. The comedy continues, even at the moment when Carpie is found in the cot with the new baby; this action in itself is not comic, but the contrasting reactions of the two parents, and that of the dog, are surely meant to raise a smile rather than to be seen as frightening. The language used by each parent suggests comedy: if she were truly frightened, Mother would probably not call Carpie ‘that gluttonous reptile’, and Father, while at first naturally alarmed by his wife’s screaming, responds by asking why Carpie would want to swallow the baby ‘when he can swallow your chooks any time he wants to?’, and leaves the room as fast as he can before Mother can reply. The fact that even after this episode Carpie is allowed to carry on ‘exactly as before’ is arguably unrealistic, as is the speaker’s confession that he talks to Carpie for hours while in the lavatory, but it is this very lack of realism and exaggeration that makes the piece humorous.

There are certainly elements of seriousness in the story, and most candidates recognised these, and commented thoughtfully on how they were presented. From the start, many noticed that none of the characters has a name, except for Carpie; he is clearly the most significant character in the story, while all the others are called simply by their roles and positions – Father, Mother, the dog, the baby – which may simply be another element of quiet comedy, but it may also suggest that the family is not intimate in any real way, and that the speaker (whether male or female is unclear, though line 64 does perhaps suggest that he is male) may in fact be very lonely and unloved, which is why s/he confides to the snake alone. The ending of the story is full of pathos: no sadness is evident at Father’s death, at least from the speaker, though it would appear that Mother is in fact seriously lost without her two previously assumed ‘enemies’, Father and Carpie. And the final sentence is surely quite sad in its simplicity, as well as arguably being quite amusing as well.

Candidates who were able to capture at least something of the mixed emotions and moods created by the writer usually attracted good marks, provided that what they said was appropriately illustrated and argued. Those who spent valuable time discussing aboriginal culture, or considering the wisdom/folly of having a snake as a pet, could not be rewarded highly for this aspect of what they wrote.

Question 3

Responses to this poem illustrated very well the way in which many candidates appeared certain that the writer meant much more than he actually says. Personal interpretations were very varied, ranging from an insistence that this was a wartime poem, that the whole poem is describing a drug-induced hallucination, that that the whole experience is in fact a dream, to the concept that this is a poem tracing the whole of human life from birth to death. Few candidates appeared to regard the poem as portraying exactly what it says: an account of a brief stop at Rapptown railway station during a long night-time train journey. The speaker is only half-awake, and what he sees and hears on the station and indeed on the train itself are simply glimpses of other people moving about and speaking on the platform, of the noises made by the engine itself, and the snoring sounds of other passengers in the train.

Some of the images are old-fashioned – the platform is lit by gas-lamps, there are milk-tins waiting to be collected, it is a steam train – and the fact that some candidates were unable to recognise this did sometimes lead them towards other interpretations, but these were always rewarded provided that they were clearly justified and argued. There is no doubt that some of the images are dark and even bleak, and there is indeed an almost unearthly quality about some of them, but this is perhaps simply because the speaker is only half awake, and virtually asleep by the end. The best responses did not insist on just one interpretation, but analysed the poem in the light of a personal response, identifying apt quotations and justifying this within their argument.

It may be worth reiterating that Examiners do not set poems or passages that are deliberately 'difficult', or that have some kind of hidden or secondary meaning; candidates who accept them as meaning exactly what they say have every chance of achieving high marks, possibly more so than those who see determined to find something more obscure within them.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation

Key messages

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- good answers focus on the form, structure and language of the poems or passages, on how these shape meaning, and do not rely on narrative or paraphrase;
- good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create;
- good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said;
- good answers maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General comments

There was some very pleasing critical work this session. Very few candidates relied on paraphrase *alone*, or on simple identification of literary techniques and devices, and most were very aware that they should support everything they said with apt and critically explored quotations from the set passages and poem. There was plenty of close and often quite sensitive and perceptive discussion of how each writer creates meaning and shapes reader response; there was also a good deal of varied and thoughtful personal response, especially to Questions 1 and 2 – some interpretations were almost certainly beyond what the writers had in his mind, but provided that they were argued convincingly, and aptly supported, they were appropriately rewarded. What could not be rewarded highly were answers that responded only to the *ideas* presented by the writers, or to the situations they described. Answers that moved away from the passages or poem to consider similar ideas or even similar texts could not gain reward; such digressions were almost invariably unhelpful.

Unusually, perhaps, the three questions attracted more or less equal numbers of responses, and all three led to some good or critical writing.

Most candidates satisfactorily completed work on two questions; some were a little unbalanced, spending more time on the first question so that the second was shorter or sometimes unfinished. Where time was becoming a problem a few candidates resorted to using bullet-points towards the end, rather than saying nothing; this was never as satisfactory as properly completed work, but it was certainly better than simply running out of time in mid-sentence.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There was plenty of good comment on this passage, with most candidates moving confidently and thoughtfully beyond simple paraphrase to explore at least some of the images presented by Mungoshi. The opening paragraphs were especially fruitful in this respect, with some interesting thoughts about the literary function of the shadows that the speaker sees, and how this reflects the child's view of his father; the fact, for instance, that at one moment he looks 'like a back scarecrow' was selected by most candidates, who noted the impact of the colour black, and the fact that the word 'scare' is used to illustrate at least one aspect of the child's feelings, elaborated upon as the father's shadow grows and lengthens into even more frightening images in the second paragraph. Many, too, noted the facts that in line 2 the father blocks most of the sunlight, that the father and child are sitting far apart, and that 'He is talking. I am not listening'. The physical and emotional distances between father and child are both heavily stressed.

The child misses his mother; she may be still alive, as we know from line 60 that she has left, but the story he tells of the dove nestlings and their dead mother suggests that she is either literally or effectively dead to the child, and can never be replaced by his father's new wife, who clearly is unhappy too, as her repeated absences strikingly suggest. The long paragraph (lines 36 – 52) takes the child back to a moving incident in which he recalls his preference for the softness of his mother, rather than the 'hard and pinchy...rough and barky' nature of his father; interestingly the father is again (line 48) trying to talk to his child, an echo of line 16. More interestingly still is the repetition of the word 'stubble' in line 50, reiterating line 25's comment that this is 'as stiff as a porcupine's', but at the same time, as in the earlier line the child also sees his father's face as 'vulnerable'; his feelings are complicated, and by no means consistently of dislike.

The last two paragraphs take the child's memory back again to the moment when his mother left, with the use of the expression 'father's threatening shadow' in line 56 starkly echoing the passage's opening lines. The storm in the last few lines reflects the mood of anger and hatred felt by both parents – this is a moment when the expression 'pathetic fallacy' might very aptly have been used, as it was by several candidates, in the fact that the violent overnight hailstorm had destroyed the mealie plants, leaving behind piths 'like nails in a skull', a painful and striking image picked up by many candidates. The closing line is moving and powerful in its stark simplicity.

Question 2

This poem was marginally less popular than the two prose passages, but there were some good and perceptive personal responses to it, and to the ways in which the poet movingly portrays his sudden realisation when a child that he was isolated and ignored by many adults, presumably though never quite explicitly because of his colour.

Many candidates commented on the striking opening lines, and their apparently uncertain feelings about childhood: unlike ideal memories he prefers to forget his, and says that he 'stormed into manhood', an expression identified by many, but commented on by few. The second section of the poem recalls a number of incidents, initially appearing to be quite routine, despite being experienced on 'unhappy Friday afternoons', including how a stallholder would ignore the child to serve another customer. Lines 18-20 make it increasingly clear that he experienced many more actions like it, 'separating me from other human beings', because of his colour. The final section should probably make his feelings entirely clear: his anger and his 'tears of impotence' have changed to both pride and frustration; he sees how Africa has grown up and 'taken the bull by the horns', and wishes that he could go back and retrace his life in the way that today's children are able to do.

Most candidates saw this as a poem about racial prejudice, though some – and perhaps understandably – retained the idea that it was simply about how warfare and food rationing led some people to actions that were unthinkingly callous and selfish, and where this view was pursued and argued carefully then such responses were certainly rewarded in line with their strengths or weaknesses as literary criticisms. As noted in the Key Messages, candidates should always read the whole of each passage or poem before starting to write about it; a significant number appeared to realise quite suddenly, two-thirds of the way through their answer, that it might be about racialism and not just food rationing, so made a sudden and not necessarily convincing switch in their ideas. It is better to try to grasp the text as a whole before writing anything.

It is in many ways not a conventional poem – there are no regular stanzas, there is no regular rhythm, no rhyme, and above all no punctuation of any sort – and some candidates spent considerable time trying to find examples of these. Others noted the fact that it is so unconventional, and suggested that it is written in this way because the poet's emotions were so high that he could not contain them within any rigid form, an idea that might or might not be the case, but which did at least go some way towards appreciating the structure; others simply noted that certain words were inevitably highlighted and stressed by their positions within, or usually at the end of, each line. Others seemed almost unaware that this was a poem, rather than just a piece of rather strangely lineated prose, and these responses tended to be less confident that those which did try to make some suggestions as to why Sepalma writes as he does.

Question 3

This passage prompted many sensitive and perceptive responses, often quite personal in their reactions to the three women involved. There was plenty of sympathy for both the speaker and for Puja, and very little for Mrs Chawla, even though we see all three only through the speaker's eyes and voice, a point made by few candidates. Most nonetheless used the language of the passage well, rather than simply presenting three discrete character studies.

Normally, the advice given to candidates would be to focus entirely upon what is written, and to ignore any contextual concerns that may arise; in this case, however, it was sometimes helpful to take account of the very different cultural backgrounds of the two main characters, and indeed of Puja. Helpful, certainly, though never absolutely necessary, in that there is enough indication within the passage itself to explain how and why cultural expectations and sensitivities affect what is written. The speaker, an American woman whose recently deceased partner was Indian, is certainly embarrassed by the fact that she has met her future sister-in-law only once, and in the heat of the moment cannot temporarily remember her name, two facts that Mrs Chawla, clearly a traditionalist, cannot understand. More immediately, the differences in how they are dressed demonstrates the opposing values.

Mrs Chawla is immediately depicted as a powerful woman: she has a driver, and tells him how to park the car; she effectively orders Puja to make tea rather than letting the speaker do this; she has evidently visited the house before, uninvited; and her manner towards Puja at the end is at best proprietorial, and possibly discourteous to the 'stupid girl' when she speaks to her in Hindi. She also (line 48) makes it very clear that now Arun has died she fully expects the speaker to leave India and return to America – there is no sense that as Arun's mother she might feel at least a duty, if not a wish, to care for her daughter-in-law. By contrast, the speaker herself is ill at ease, partly because of the unannounced visit, and partly because of the relationship between herself and Mrs Chawla, but does make every effort to be welcoming and courteous, in the face of what she suggests is considerable difficulty. She is honest about the way in which the house is becoming untidier all the time, and about her particular difficulties in overseeing Puja and ensuring that she cleans and cooks rather better than she is currently doing.

Most candidates were sympathetic towards the speaker, seeing Mrs Chawla through her eyes – there were a few thoughtful comments here on the narrative form used by Freudemberger – and indeed towards Puja, who despite her failings as a housekeeper does also have a husband and four small children to look after. Most too were very unsympathetic towards Mrs Chawla, using plenty of textual evidence in support. Some candidates, however, writing from a range of cultural perspectives, considered that she was in an awkward position as well; the passage does not indicate why or when the speaker and Arun became a pair, or perhaps married, and it may possibly be that this was against Mrs Chawla's wishes; she may feel that Arun was partnered below his status, and it may be that her apparent arrogance is just a façade to cover her lack of certainties. Whatever was argued, however, was rewarded as and where appropriate, provided that discussion was clearly expressed and properly supported.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

Key messages

- good answers show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write;
- good answers focus on the form, structure and language of the poems or passages, on how these shape meaning, and do not rely on narrative or paraphrase;
- good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create;
- good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said;
- good answers maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General comments

There was some very pleasing critical work this session. Very few candidates relied on paraphrase *alone*, or on simple identification of literary techniques and devices, and most were very aware that they should support everything they said with apt and critically explored quotations from the set passages and poem. There was plenty of close and often quite sensitive and perceptive discussion of how each writer creates meaning, and shapes reader response; there was also a good deal of varied and thoughtful personal response, especially to Patrick Kavanagh's poems, and provided that they were argued convincingly, and aptly supported, they were appropriately rewarded. What could not be rewarded highly were answers that responded only to the *ideas* presented by the writers, or to the situations they described. Answers that moved away from the passages or poem to consider similar ideas or even similar texts could not gain reward; such digressions were almost invariably unhelpful.

Questions 1 and 2 were considerably more popular than **Question 3**, though those candidates who tackled the extract from the play did make some apt comments; there was however little sense that it is a play for radio, to be listened to as well as read.

Most candidates satisfactorily completed work on two questions; some were a little unbalanced, spending more time on the first question so that the second was shorter or sometimes unfinished. Where time was becoming a problem a few candidates resorted to using bullet-points towards the end, rather than saying nothing; this was never as satisfactory as properly completed work, but it was certainly better than simply running out of time in mid-sentence.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Almost all candidates wrote about these two poems, and many were clearly moved by the poet's memories of his parents, making some sensitive comments about both poems, especially the second. It is normally unwise to spend much time considering the title of a piece of writing, but some interesting points were made about the fact that the second poem's title begins with the word 'In', implying a much more personal approach compared with the arguably rather colder wording of the first poem. Those who made this point could analyse the rather more intimate nature of his memories of his mother as he actually remembers her, compared with the fact that his father is more distant in the first poem, reflected only in other elderly men that the poet sees.

Because the poet's father is not actually 'present' in the first poem, some candidates seemed to find some difficulties in responding to some of the images: what, for instance, are the significances of the 'half-eyed' stumbling man or of the 'faltering' musician – perhaps his recollections of his father are similarly distant and only half-seen or half-recalled? Most, however, connected the autumnal images in lines 4 and 14 as emblematic of death and decay, and many made some sensitive comment on his father's having 'fallen in love with death'.

'In Memory Of My Mother', by contrast (and the question clearly asks for comparison between the poems) is a warmer, more intimate and celebratory poem, with a sequence of quite specific moments in her life that the poet recalls and pictures; at least two of these memories are explicitly of summer moments, and the third (stanza 4) probably so, given that it is a fair day. The final stanza is autumnal, like the first poem, and concludes with the warm and very personal picture of the mother smiling eternally at her children ('we' in line 18); the final word 'eternally' is certainly much more positive and emotionally warm than the slightly cool conclusion of the first poem's 'Seems to say to me: "I was once your father"'. Interestingly, the first and last stanzas have much in common: their first lines echo each other, and the rhyme sounds of the two stanzas are the same.

Comparing two pieces of writing demands slightly different skills than those required for simply commenting on one piece; most candidates wrote about each poem separately, drawing them together towards or at the end, which is fine, but more confident responses moved more frequently and fluently between the two all the way through.

Question 2

Some saw this passage simply as a description of a visit to the park and the memory of an earlier accident there; a good number, though, saw more in it than this and wrote about the way the narrator sets the scene using a number of literary features such as sentence structure, dialogue, onomatopoeia. They also picked up on David's apparent lack of real interest, apart from the mention of the actual accident. Many commented on the final section of the extract and made some sound comments on the significance of the reference to the past when black children were only allowed into the playground at specific times.

Content was in this way quite reasonably and widely outlined, but there was relatively little consideration in many responses to the language and structure of the passage. There is much in the language that could be noted: the simple expression 'Ah' in line 3; the excited sounds made by children shouting in lines 15 – 18; the fascinating and child-like descriptions of the sky in lines 18 – 19 and 36; the repetition of the word 'going' in line 36. There were some good structural comments, too: the striking contrast between the moods of the opening line and the very last; the two-word paragraph in line 3, repeated but with such a different emphasis at the end of the passage; the wonderfully long and excited sentence in paragraph 3 (lines 5 – 14); the child's thrill evident in the syntactically broken sentences in lines 15 – 19; and perhaps above all the sudden realisation in line 42 that the speaker is black, and the sense, at least in his father's eyes, that this may in some way have been responsible for the accident; and the striking contrast in the closing two lines between the 'grand affair it used to be. And now look at it.' While apparently just a piece of simple narrative, it is in fact quite sophisticated writing.

Question 3

There were few responses to this extract from a radio play, but despite the possible difficulties inherent in responding to drama, and to the fact that this is a text to listen to rather than see, there were some thoughtful ideas. Candidates saw clear differences between the social setting that opens the extract, with its relative luxury (television, cars, radio, cinema, street lights) and that of Look Behind; Trevor David's father clearly wants the very best for his son, and encourages him to do his very best in school; Theophilus, by contrast, has just one parent – his father disappeared some time ago – and has had to miss school for three days in order to help in the field.

There is much too in the writing itself that deserves consideration, and which did attract some comment: Trevor David's excited listing of the kind of car he would like in lines 12 – 15, for example, balanced by his father's listing of life in Look Behind in lines 52 – 56. Each of these short pieces of speech deserves, and received, some close analysis, as did Trevor David's quick-fire argument with his father between lines 19 and 30. The alteration in speech patterns between Dad and Birdie – one speaks with grammatical correctness, the latter with briefer but entirely clear dialect – hints at differing social and educational backgrounds.

Mention has been made above of the fact that this is a radio play, and there is enough guidance in the text itself to encourage comment on this: lines 10, 17 – 18, 49, 64, for instance, as well as the sounds introducing the extract before line 1 opens, all require an audience to *hear* rather than simply *read*. Few responses made much of these lines – as the rubric says it is ‘a radio play’, some realisation that this is not just a piece of prose was expected.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

Key messages

Good answers will:

- address their two questions and texts with clear and concise focus;
- explore in some detail how the two writers create their particular effects, discussing some of the literary techniques used;
- support what is said with brief but apt textual quotation and reference;
- make some brief use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments;
- where practicable, write on individually selected and worded questions, to make responses as personal as possible;
- ensure that the work submitted remains within the overall 3,000 word limit.

General comments

This was another good examination series, with a pleasingly large number of Centres and candidates submitting coursework; it has been said before, but will certainly bear repetition, that teachers who use this syllabus are in general increasingly confident about what is required, and as a result are enabling their learners to achieve good results. There are some concerns, of course, which this Report will consider, but overall the view of external Moderators is that there is a good deal of justified confidence in what is being prepared and presented.

It might be most helpful to look briefly at each of the bullet points printed above, and to say a little more about how each of these points was reflected in work seen this session, and in so doing to help Centres ensure that future standards of work remain at least as high. Before doing this, however, there are just a few preliminary points for Centres to consider before starting any teaching or preparation.

Selecting texts, and wording questions, are in some ways the most important aspects of the process, and it is for this reason that Centres are required to submit proposals well in advance of each session; doing this will give teachers, and through them their candidates, the confidence to know that they are approaching their work in the best way. They also avoid the possible use of unsuitable texts, or those which are not permitted because they are set elsewhere in the A Level syllabus. The adviser who replies to the proposals will also comment on the suggested questions, sometimes offering advice on how they might be more helpfully worded to enable candidates to address exactly what is required. It is clearly crucial for candidates that such advice is followed.

The first bullet notes that good answers will address their two questions and texts with clear and concise focus, and this must be the first and foremost requirement. Questions that are set and approved must expect candidates to show that they can do more than simply show knowledge of the texts; this is of course essential, but for high marks they must demonstrate that they can *use* this knowledge to look at and discuss specific aspects of how the texts are written, of how each writer shapes his or her meanings, and of how reader responses are guided, as noted in the second bullet point. This is something that was managed by most candidates this session, though there were still some answers that lacked concise and sustained focus on the questions, and whose candidates seemed to want – however unintentionally – to say everything they could about the texts, regardless of the question.

The second bullet is very closely linked to this, in that it suggests that the most confident candidates will always spend at least part of what they write looking in close detail at some aspects of the relevant literary techniques being used by each writer. There were some very good examples this session, where for example candidates writing about a play made it quite clear that the text is one that is intended to be *seen and experienced physically*, not just read, and discussed ways in which stage directions and characters'

actions matter, as well as just their words. For the same purpose, good answers made some close reference to the structure, language and imagery of the poems, novels or short stories under discussion. The 3,000 word-limit is of course tight, and no candidate can be expected to say everything possible about any text, but there does need to be clear evidence that they do understand how their two authors have written as well as what they have written.

Points being made must be properly and aptly illustrated, of course; candidates who addressed what the third bullet suggests always quoted from their texts, and – more importantly – made some comments on what they quoted. Some, however, relied too much on broad, general comments with little textual support or occasionally none; what they said was often perfectly fine in itself, and appropriately challenging, but without being explicitly rooted in what the texts say it had less critical impact and suggested less critical confidence.

There is no requirement in the syllabus for candidates to make use of other critical views or interpretations, but those who do so can often add some weight to their own arguments, and certainly there were many candidates this session who managed this with considerable skill and fluency. A few candidates quoted critical ideas purely as a way of supporting their own, which is fine, but when these were integrated into a developing discussion, and were made part of a candidate's own argument then they became much more valuable. If a critic is quoted, however, whether from a printed text or from a website, the exact source must be given both in a footnote and in a bibliography.

More importantly, however, the Marking Criteria do include 'contexts' in what is expected for work that is placed within each of the top three bands, so candidates who made at least some use of contextual material did quite rightly gain more credit than those who did not. Such material can be from a wide range of sources – literary, cultural, historical, biographical – but where it scored most highly was where it, as with alternative critical views, helped towards the formation and development of a personal argument. Contextual factors are of little value in themselves, but where they were used to illustrate ways in which they influenced the writer, or affected what was written, or indeed the ways in which they influence a modern reader, they were of often considerable value.

The fifth bullet makes a point that is very important, though particular circumstances within Centres may sometimes make it less easy than in others. There is no doubt that the best answers almost invariably resulted from questions that were individual to each candidate, even where the texts were the same as those used by others. It is probably unrealistic to expect that every candidate will study two entirely different texts, though some Centres did manage this, and it is perfectly legitimate for all candidates to use the same two; it is also legitimate for them all to use exactly the same questions, but when this was the case there was almost always a lack of individuality of ideas and responses. Candidates whose questions were unique to them alone were obviously obliged to think personally – even where they and all their peers had been taught together – and as a result their work tended to have a freshness and independence.

The final bullet regarding the maximum word-limit is extremely important, and breaching this limit is a breach of the syllabus regulation; almost every folder submitted this session remained securely below 3,000 words, however, but where a few candidates did exceed it, they really penalised themselves, by failing to focus tightly and consistently on the question, and by writing more broadly and generally than should have been the case. To write within a limit is in itself a good and valid exercise in eliminating irrelevance, and in writing concisely and cogently. This regulation *must* be adhered to by all candidates.

In this examination series, candidates knew their texts well, had clearly worked hard when preparing their responses, and submitted essays that were at least competent and thoughtful, and at best scholarly and often insightful. Working on these essays, drafting and refining them, developing ideas and making interesting connections with other texts had undoubtedly given candidates a satisfying chance to produce work they could very justly feel proud of.

What follows below is a list of some of the texts used by candidates this session; as always in these reports, it is not a full list, nor is it intended as any sort of guidance for future coursework submissions, but it does indicate the wide range of texts – prose, poetry and drama – that were successfully studied.

Prose

Atonement – Ian McEwan

Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen

A Farewell to Arms – Ernest Hemingway

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde – R. L. Stevenson

Things Fall Apart – Chinua Achebe

The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald
Oliver Twist – Charles Dickens
Tess of the d'Urbervilles – Thomas Hardy
The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini
The Handmaid's Tale – Margaret Atwood
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest – Ken Kesey
The Picture of Dorian Gray – Oscar Wilde
The Mayor of Casterbridge – Thomas Hardy
Lolita – Vladimir Nabokov
Frankenstein – Mary Shelley
Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit – Jeanette Winterson
A Collection of Short Stories – John Cheever

Drama

The Glass Menagerie – Tennessee Williams
Much Ado About Nothing – William Shakespeare
Macbeth – William Shakespeare
Hamlet – William Shakespeare
Antony and Cleopatra – William Shakespeare
The Importance of Being Earnest – Oscar Wilde
A View From the Bridge – Arthur Miller
Death of a Salesman – Arthur Miller

Poetry

Christina Rossetti – selected poems
Philip Larkin – selected poems
Sylvia Plath – selected poems
Edgar Allen Poe – selected poems
Alfred, Lord Tennyson – selected poems
Paradise Lost (Books One and Two) – John Milton
The Canterbury Tales (General Prologue) – Geoffrey Chaucer
The World's Wife – Carol Ann Duffy
Songs of Innocence and Experience – William Blake