

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08
Coursework

Key messages

Good answers will:

- Address their two texts with clear and concise focus upon what the questions ask;
- Explore how the writers create their particular effects, discussing some of the literary and/or dramatic techniques used;
- Support responses and ideas with some textual quotations and references;
- Make some brief use of critical and 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 3000 word limit (Note: quotations do not count towards this total).

General comments

This was a very good session, and with almost no exception Moderators reported great pleasure in reading the samples of work that were submitted and real satisfaction with the efficient professionalism with which the work had been prepared and presented by both candidates and Centres. A few relatively minor concerns were raised about presentation, which will be detailed below, but overall this was a thoroughly well-managed and successful set of coursework folders from a large number of Centres.

Most Centres had submitted outline proposal forms (OPFs) in advance of starting work, which meant that almost invariably candidates used appropriately demanding texts, and carefully and thoughtfully worded questions. Using the correct OPF – which is accessible through the CIE Teacher Support site – means that any uncertainty about the suitability of a text, or the wording of a question, can be considered by a senior Moderator, and if appropriate, amended by the candidate and Centre. The ideal situation is that each candidate within a Centre has an individual pair of questions, even if the texts used are shared by other candidates, so that what she or he writes is entirely individual and independent; ideally too the questions can be tailored to the particular strengths of each candidate, knowledge which teaching staff have but the Cambridge advisor cannot have. There were inevitably some instances this session where it seemed that a question was too demanding for a particular candidate, or more rarely where it was not sufficiently so, with the result that some candidates may not have achieved quite the best outcome that greater initial care might have afforded; in the words of one Moderator, *'The more Centres can be encouraged to suit text and task to the individual candidate, the better the result seems to be.'*

Text selection was rarely problematic, but a few points are worth making. Candidates must submit work on two separate genres (prose, drama, poetry), and no text must appear in any of the set lists for other 9695 papers; sending OPFs in advance will help to ensure that this kind of error cannot occur. The texts must also be of similar literary quality and academic demand as those elsewhere in the syllabus; a list is given below which shows the very wide range that Moderators saw this year and it may serve to demonstrate the kind of reading that is expected. When poetry is used, candidates must make close reference to a reasonable number of poems; this obviously will depend upon the length of each one, but there should normally be a minimum of four or five, together with a few more that are more briefly mentioned. It is important too that there is plenty of comparative cross-referencing between the poems, in order to show a knowledge of a whole published collection, rather than a simple poem-by-poem commentary, or just a sequence of unrelated and very short essays. The same is true if candidates use a collection of short stories, though the number referred to in detail will necessarily be a little smaller. When writing about Drama texts it is worth saying that, although this is in no sense a Theatre Studies syllabus, candidates who show an awareness that plays are to

be seen, heard and experienced in a theatre, or on a screen, rather than just read as a book, almost always write with a more acute and successful critical facility.

In order to show effective critical skills, candidates should ensure that what they write moves well beyond simple paraphrase or narrative, and does therefore explore in some detail *how* a writer presents his or her ideas, not just *what* these are. The wording varies a little according to the Level that is being described, but as an example of what is needed the marking criteria for Level 4 (competent work) say that there must be *'evidence of sound understanding of some aspects of ways in which writers' choices of structure, form and language shape meanings, with some analysis and appreciation of literary methods, effects and contexts'*. Most of this is very clear however, the last word may need a little extra advice: candidates should make at least some reference to one or more contextual factors that have influenced the writing or the reading of a text. These comments do not need to be (and because of the word limit cannot be) extensive, but reference will be helpful to any relevant biographical, social or cultural factors which may have affected the writing or indeed the reading of a text, and if the text is a play, to its theatrical features and characteristics. It is important that the wording of questions does not over-stress contextual matters. For example, a question asking simply what the novel or play reveals about American society in the 1920's is likely to lead to descriptive or sociological responses rather than ones that focus upon the writing itself.

Similarly, candidates should be able to show an awareness that their own personal opinions are not necessarily the only ones, and that other people may have different views. The Level Descriptors again make it clear that this is a requirement. For Level 6 (very good work) the wording requires candidates to *'consider varying views, arguing a persuasive case, relevant to the question, with support from the text'*, and while this kind of sophisticated and skilled approach may well be too demanding for many, the requirement for Level 2 (basic work) still expects some awareness of other ideas and candidates at this level should *'mention other opinions, perhaps those expressed in the wording of the question, and make some attempt to consider different views of a text.'* There is no need to quote any actual or published critical material, though many candidates did do so; if this is done, however, it is important that such quotation should be used towards developing a personal opinion, not just quoted without comment. Easy access to the Internet also provides a rich seam of critical material which most candidates used intelligently (usually citing their sources appropriately). This was an area of considerable improvement this session.

Almost without exception folders remained securely within the 3000 word limit, though not all candidates indicated exactly how many words they used; it is perhaps worth reminding Centres that this limit does not include quotations, whether from the primary texts or from other sources – it relates specifically to 'candidate words' alone. Most candidates presented their work well it is essential that pages are numbered and are not left completely loose as this can easily lead to difficulties for a Moderator. Treasury tags are ideal, as are staples, but plastic wallets are not at all helpful.

Most essays showed clear evidence of having been read, often by more than one teacher; this latter point is of course not always possible, especially in a small Centre, but it does add authority to the mark proposed. What is essential, though, is that as well as marginal annotation there should be some summative comments on each essay and on the folder as a whole; these comments are most useful when they are based upon the wording of the Level Descriptors. These Descriptors are accessible via the CIE Teacher Support site, together with updated instructions for internal moderation and presentation of work. **If you do not yet have these, it is important that you download them every year and that you do not use old and outdated versions.**

The list below contains a number of texts that were used successfully by candidates. It is not an exclusive list, nor is a list of recommended titles, but it is included to illustrate the very wide range of writing that candidates used. Most, it will be agreed, are canonical, but there are certainly also some that are less obviously so; what matters above all is that each text is a sufficiently demanding one for sustained Advanced Level study, that it is approved by Cambridge following submission of an Outline Proposal Form, and that the questions set on it are helpfully directed to the particular strengths and interests of each candidate.

PROSE

Ama Ata Aidoo	<i>Changes</i>
Angela Carter	<i>The Bloody Chamber collection</i>
Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i>
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie	<i>Half of a Yellow Sun</i>
Chinua Achebe	<i>No Longer At Ease</i>
Ian McEwan	<i>Atonement</i>
Joseph Conrad	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>
Ken Kesey	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>
Louis de Bernieres	<i>Captain Corelli's Mandolin</i>
Margaret Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
Mary Shelley	<i>Frankenstein</i>
Rose Tremain	<i>The American Lover</i>
Scott Fitzgerald	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>
William Golding	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>

POETRY

Carol Ann Duffy	<i>Mean Time</i>
Carol Ann Duffy	<i>The World's Wife</i>
Derek Walcott	<i>Selected Poems</i>
e.e. cummings	<i>Selected Poems</i>
Edna St Vincent Millay	<i>Selected Poems</i>
Emily Dickinson	<i>Selected Poems</i>
John Milton	<i>Paradise Lost Book 9</i>
Philip Larkin	<i>Selected Poems</i>
Robert Frost	<i>Selected Poems</i>
Seamus Heaney	<i>Selected Poems</i>
Sylvia Plath	<i>Selected Poems</i>

DRAMA

Christopher Marlowe	<i>Doctor Faustus</i>
Edward Albee	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>An Ideal Husband</i>
Peter Shaffer	<i>Equus</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead</i>

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- Successful responses focus on authors' choices of language and literary methods, and the effects that these might have on a reader or audience.
- Responses which only show knowledge of what happens in texts, and what subjects they explore, are not successful.
- Detailed references and quotations are needed to support points in essays. This should be remembered particularly for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select a wide range of material to answer the question.
- Answers to **(b)** passage-based questions should examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in great detail.

General Comments

Examiners read many vigorous and thoughtful essays on the texts set for study, often showing insight and appreciation. The most successful responses demonstrated not only a detailed knowledge of the texts and their concerns, but a developed understanding of ways in which the writers explore their ideas and present them to the reader. Explicit discussion of technique was most often evident in essays on poetry, frequently accompanied by the appropriate critical vocabulary, but this was only fully successful when matched by an appreciation of the effects of such poetic methods, considering how the writer's choices of language, imagery and structure shape meaning for the reader. Such discussion of method should not be solely reserved for poetry however, and some candidates demonstrated a strong awareness of narrative technique in novels and short stories with observant references to structure, point of view, chronology, dialogue, creation of setting and so on. Successful drama answers look carefully at the language of dialogue, the effects on an audience of entrances, exits, stage actions and stage directions for setting, lighting and sound among others. In literary study candidates should be conscious of writing about writing, not about events and characters.

Comments on specific questions

1. Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** This question challenged candidates to go beyond the familiar tropes on Hughes and explore some of the many poems where he presents different kinds of human relationships. Some responses tried to sidestep this by asserting metaphorical interpretations of poems about animals, but more successful answers looked closely at poems like *'Her Husband'*, *'You Hated Spain'*, *'Full Moon and Little Frieda'*, *'Six Young Men'* and *'The Tender Place'* among others. Some of the best essays took contrasting views of relationships, examining, for example, the pessimistic presentation of a stale and mutually grating marriage in *'Her Husband'* with the expression of the patient tenderness of a parental view of a young child in *'Full Moon and Little Frieda'*. Essays looking at autobiographically based poems about Plath, such as *'You Hated Spain'* and *'The Tender Place'* were successful as long as they avoided excessive use of biographical material. Such answers depended on careful examination of the ways in which the poems explore the relationships through their language, imagery and form, rather than an extensive narration of the actual relationship between the two poets.

- (b) *'Football at Slack'* was a popular choice, with a number of candidates commenting that its moments of cheerfulness and even comedy set it apart from conventional views of much of Hughes' poetry, while its focus on strength and resilience is a familiar concern. Most candidates confidently discussed the effect of the imagery in relation to the movement of the football players in the first three stanzas and the penultimate stanza, with some enthusiastic analysis of the 'b' alliteration in relation to the players and ball sharing the same movement and delight in the game. They noted how Hughes used visual imagery of the players, such as 'spouted like water' and 'the goalie flew horizontal', to emphasise the shapes the players' bodies make in their enthusiastic game, and there were comments on the 'bunting colours' and the 'merry-coloured men', indicating the colours of the football strips. The natural imagery of the poem was not always discussed as successfully, though many appreciated the heavyweight industrial image of the 'steel press'. There were sometimes problems with 'the humped world', the 'Atlantic depression' and the 'golden holocaust', though some candidates interpreted this successfully as the sudden burst of sun clearing the rain and also recognised the personification of the sun desiring to watch the football players.

2. Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were not many responses to this question on creativity, though it is one of Jennings' central concerns. Though poems like *'Remembering Fireworks'*, *'Chinese Art'* and *'Samuel Palmer and Chagall'* were used, discussion was often general, offering broad ideas about Jennings' view on art without careful analysis of the chosen poems. A few candidates considered the crafting of Jennings' own poems as examples of her interest in creativity, which worked successfully when carefully argued.
- (b) The question on *'Absence'* was much more popular, though some answers suffered from assuming a biographical interpretation, asserting that the poem deals with an abandoned relationship or the death of a lover, rather than looking at ways in which the poem itself explores the notion of absence and the way it is felt by the poem's speaker. Some sophisticated candidates noted the 'in media res' of the opening line and the poem's deliberate ambiguity of who is absent and why. Candidates commented on Jennings' use of the natural imagery as a vehicle for her expression of loss, contrasting the unchanging steadiness of the garden with inner turmoil and change, picking up phrases like the 'usual steady jet' of the fountain. Candidates generally noticed the separation between the narrator and the birds, which feel 'ecstasy'. Successful responses noted the shift in metre and imagery in the final stanza, which contrasts the 'steady', 'level' unchanged garden with indications of the violence of emotion with the 'savage force' and 'earthquake tremor' - the absence is felt as a physical, unsteady force. Alert candidates commented successfully on this shift in argument traced through the three stanza structure, while some thoughtfully suggested that the rhyme scheme is indicative of a controlled response to absence, though undercut by the half-rhyme in the final stanza.

3. *Songs of Ourselves Volume 2*

- (a) A small number of candidates wrote about poems expressing religious faith, choosing to look at poems such as *'Last Lines'*, *'On My First Daughter'*, *'Death'* and *'Requiem'*. While the essays often showed a sound knowledge of the chosen poems, with some discussion of the attitudes to religious faith expressed in them; most needed more focus on how the religious faith was expressed poetically.

- (b) Most candidates responded to the question on *The Forsaken Wife*; indeed this was the most popular question on the paper. There were many interesting and personal responses, though many essays were hampered by being responses to the woman's situation rather than the poem. However sympathetic candidates were to the woman's position, essays which only dealt with the speaker's situation, rather than recognising the poem as a literary construct, did not attract high marks. There were also widely-ranging, confused suggestions about the context, the poem being dated by candidates at any point from the Middle Ages to 1970. Better responses were able to identify the social context and poetic conventions of the early eighteenth century and effective answers were differentiated by the quality of the analysis of diction, verse structure, the use of caesura and the effects of the use of rhyme. Less successful answers tended to revert to paraphrase and assertion. Whereas more successful essays explored the significance of the first person narrator as the wife's viewpoint, noting the social values expressed in the third stanza, where the speaker bitterly regrets that women have to suffer silently and love without being loved, whilst men expect to be loved and honoured within marriage and find fame in the world. Thomas, on the other hand, portrays women as suffering society's disdain if their husbands are unfaithful, as shown by 'my ruin'. Many candidates noted the balancing of opposites, such as 'methinks' – 'you'; 'Your infidelity', 'Your want of love' – 'My broken heart, your broken vows'. Most candidates commented successfully on the effect of the question in line 4, the accusation and use of exclamation mark in line 5 and some noted the use of the command in line 13. Candidates commented with various degrees of success on the tone of defiance of the third stanza, often making a wider general point about the faithlessness of men, and often noted the self-confident dismissal expressed in the poem's final couplet. Stronger candidates commented on the use of rhyming couplets as evidence of self-confident propounding of the speaker's argument by the poet.

4. Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

- (a) Most candidates responding to this question seemed well-prepared on clashes of culture within the novel, though the strongest responses selected references carefully to construct an argument, while less successful work was often marked by narrative paraphrase of a few relevant sections of the plot. More confident candidates were able to identify various ways in which the clashes of culture were evidenced and discussed Lahiri's use of language, structure and form. For example, some compared the characterisation of Ashoke and Ashima, looking at ways Lahiri presents their responses to their early life in America, noting the narration of Ashoke's rapid ease with life at the university whereas Ashima is at first presented as isolated within their home. Others compared the parents with the presentation of Gogol and Sonia, children born and educated in America though steeped in Bengali heritage. Quite a large number of essays also had interesting things to say about Moushumi's multi-cultural position. Success here depended on not only the selection of relevant key reference points in the novel, but also knowing them well enough to be able to quote. The most successful answers were supported by key details of dialogue and description, and in this way to focus on ways in which Lahiri presents these clashes, as the question demanded.
- (b) While a number of less successful responses relied on paraphrase of the passage, relating Ashima's experiences in their own words, occasionally interspersed with quotations, the passage repaid careful reading and comment as there is much of interest in the ways Lahiri presents those experiences and Ashima's gradual gaining of independence. It is an important passage; as one candidate neatly put it: '*For Ashima, Gogol's birth [leads to] a coincidental rebirth of her own.*' Capable candidates recognised that Lahiri contrasts the alienation of Ashima as the new immigrant with Ashima the competent new mother who creates a role for herself and many commented on the range of routine tasks Ashima purposefully undertakes. Stronger essays commented on Lahiri's use of third person narrative and present continuous tense to portray the minutiae of repetitive ongoing tasks which are equated with Ashoke's wage-earning study and teaching. Lahiri's use of details to show the parents' pride was noted, 'admiring the tiny person they've produced' and pasting photographs into an album. Candidates noted the listing of aspects of the new baby which Ashima notes, from his 'glossy eyes' to his 'ten fingers and toes', and many appreciated the comic unpleasantness of 'the quick stream of undigested milk' which Ashima involuntarily receives into her own mouth. Some answers also showed a wider knowledge of the novel, noting the paragraph on letters from India and commenting on the one from the grandmother which never arrives.

5. Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) While this novel is not widely studied, it attracts some thoughtful responses and many candidates appreciated the paradox of this question and the novel's ending, suggesting that Lily finds happiness in death. The openness of 'the final stages of Lily's life' allowed candidates to draw their own limits and they usually did so effectively, concentrating on the key events which lead to the final chapter. Confident responses offered a careful analysis of Lily's progressive social deterioration, her internal conflicts and resulting isolation, but often saw Wharton suggesting a nobility in the decisions Lily makes. Candidates were often confident enough to define Lily's crisis, considering Wharton's depiction of her state of mind and her conscience in the few days before her death. Some embraced the ambiguity of whether Lily is indeed happy in her expectations of what was to come after paying off her debts and whether she intended to die. Strong, well-argued responses analysed how Wharton portrays Lily's attraction to the life of ease in the corrupt society she frequents and traced the events which precipitated her decline from favour, but acknowledged her rise in morality.
- (b) A number of candidates answered this question very well, offering views that showed understanding of Rosedale's cunning and the drive of a social climber, as well as Lily's resilience and show of conscience. Often even weaker responses which presented narrative summary still picked out some of the key examples of Wharton's language, such as 'monstrous glare', 'held her spellbound' and 'tranced subservience' as indicative of the power Rosedale has over Lily. Stronger essays recognised that the episode presents an important crux in the novel. Wharton not only shows the arrogance of Rosedale in his assumption that Lily will fall in with his plan but that Lily is herself attracted to a plan which answers her 'inmost cravings' for the restoration of her status and would assure for her a leisured and indulged life as Rosedale's wife. There was some skilful discussion of Wharton's use of the language of a political or business negotiation, with candidates taking note of language such as 'big backing', 'business', 'spoils', 'accomplice' and 'transaction'. Successful candidates analysed Rosedale's coarse, self-congratulatory monologue with its over-familiar slang expressions and veiled threats as indicative of the power shift between the two characters and related this to earlier parts of the story where Lily had thought herself superior to Rosedale. Much was made of the shifts in perspective in this extract. Starting with Wharton's use of third person omniscient narration and free indirect discourse in the first paragraph, to Rosedale's monologue, then back to the third person narrative of paragraph three, where the reader is made aware of Lily's 'groping consciousness' and is told of her recognition of 'the essential baseness of the act', leading to the hauteur of the 'old' Lily's pride and her rejection of temptation in paragraph four.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) '*The Yellow Wallpaper*', '*Games at Twilight*', '*The Stoat*', '*Secrets*', '*Journey*' (by Shirley Geok-Lin Lim) and '*The Village Saint*' were among stories successfully used to discuss the presentation of relationships between families. Occasionally candidates tried an inventive approach, attempting to use a story such as '*The Lemon Orchard*', for example, but these were not successful. It is very important to select material which is appropriate to the question set. Focus depended on the stories chosen, but the relationships between parents and children appeared most frequently, often showing ways in which the writers present the increasing distance between them, using description, dialogue and structure. '*The Stoat*' and '*The Village Saint*' were effectively used here. Other kinds of uneasiness of relationships were explored in '*The Yellow Wallpaper*', '*Secrets*' and '*Journey*', whereas candidates often wrote effectively about the portrayal of a child's view of siblings in '*Games at Twilight*'.
- (b) The passage from Dickens' '*The Signalman*' proved very popular and candidates who showed the ability to analyse the writing rather than describe the scene were much more successful. While some were unaware of the definition of a railway 'cutting', there were strong responses to the language of the excerpt and the way it creates the mysterious atmosphere for the story and its ghostly denouement. Comments were made on the 'oozier and wetter' conditions at the start and considered the initial presentation of the signalman as being in a 'solitary and dismal' place. Good answers picked up on the implications of the 'jagged stone' and the image of a 'great dungeon', often with references to gothic literature and even occasionally to Dante. There were, though, a worrying number of candidates who did not acknowledge why Dickens begins the story by creating this atmosphere – some thought the narrator was the signalman, failing to recognise the railway setting. They thought the action takes place in a ravine or a river valley, or on a rock-climbing adventure, with no clear idea what was going to happen later in the story. This limited responses

and showed that it is not a good idea to approach selected passage questions an unseen exercises.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
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- Detailed references and quotations are needed to support points in essays. This should be remembered particularly for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select a wide range of material to answer the question.
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Comments on specific questions

1. Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** The relationship between humankind and the natural world was interpreted in different ways by candidates looking at, for example, human entrapment of animals in '*Jaguar*', attempted capture and control in '*Pike*', animals reduced to meat in '*View of a Pig*' and human survival in '*Wind*'. Other poems used included '*Crow Hill*', '*Meeting*', '*Thrushes*', '*Thistles*' and '*The Thought-Fox*', all used in interesting ways. Candidates tended to know their chosen poems quite well and succeeded best if they were able to quote accurately from them; in this way they were able to discuss Hughes' treatment of the relationship, rather than describe it. Candidates were most successful when there was careful engagement with Hughes' presentation of the relationship between humankind and the natural world; often there was a tendency to simplify the relationship rather than explore its rich potential for complexity.
- (b)** '*Bayonet Charge*' was a popular choice and many candidates were able to comment closely on the images of war presented by Hughes. Though most identified the First World War, there was some confusion over Hughes himself fighting in the war. Successful answers noted the suddenness of the action and ways in which Hughes presents the physicality of the soldier's experience, picking up the repetition of 'raw', the use of 'hot' and 'sweat-heavy', 'Stumbling', 'smacking', 'lugged' and 'sweating like molten iron'. The mental side of his experience in the second stanza proved more challenging with some stepping over lines 9–11. More successful responses considered Hughes' suggestion that the soldier is caught in a mechanism of fate, circumstance and time, which have

led him to this moment of uncertainty and momentary timelessness. Some were able to link these circumstances to the empty ideals of the third stanza in: 'King, honour, human dignity' and the dismissive 'etcetera' to suggest their worthlessness. Essays were most successful when they had a coherent plan, linking their points to the exploration of the soldier's experience. Those which picked out individual words and images and stripped them of their context within the poem were much less successful.

2. Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were very few responses to Jennings' poetry on this paper and the bulk of those studying the text answered the question on '*A Requiem*'. Candidates on the whole understood the poem's suggestion that funeral ceremonies prompt a greater sense of grief than death itself with some suggesting that this makes Jennings, or the poem's speaker, cold and unemotional. Stronger responses belied this, noting the contrast between knowing the deceased man 'Only a little' and the feelings of 'love I thought I lacked' prompted by his funeral. Such answers also commented on the contrast between the 'calm' and 'solemn' 'ritual' and the speaker's 'stirrings underneath' which inevitably connect the living, the dead and the mourners – 'I cannot claim/ To stand aside.' Successful answers pondered the ambiguity of the poem's final question and particularly the source of the 'shame' – a shame to be prompted only by 'ritual' to 'tears', or a shame to continue living?

3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) Prompted by the quotation, '*The White House*' was a popular choice for this question. Other poems chosen included '*The Forsaken Wife*', '*The Border Builder*', '*These Are the Times We Live In*' and '*Requiem*'. Anger and discontent were emotions that candidates found accessible and so they were able to write clearly about feelings in the poems and how the writers' methods expressed those emotions. Sometimes candidates used contextual knowledge to good effect, highlighting the political concerns of Dharker's, Rumens' and McKay's poems, for example. Candidates who knew their chosen poems well were able to discuss effectively ways in which the poets' choices of language and structure powerfully communicated a sense of grievance and justified those feelings.
- (b) Most candidates studying the anthology opted for this question on Ben Jonson's '*On My First Daughter*' and there was a strong commonality in the discussions of the poem as an epitaph and the grieving father's various 'coping mechanisms'. This did at times, lead to highly sympathetic responses to the father's position rather than an analytical examination of the poem. A crucial starting point in a poem like this is to separate poet from speaker and to see the poem as a crafted artistic expression, not an outpouring of autobiographical grief. Sometimes too, candidates were hampered by limitations to their knowledge, incorrectly assuming 'ruth' to be a girl's name and 'virgin-train' to be a locomotive. Stronger essays successfully identified the contrasting tones of grief and consolation in religious belief. Some candidates were confident in identifying the religious imagery and the nature of the beliefs it represented. Other candidates discussed the use of the third person voice and the careful couplets as indicating a control of emotions, with some commenting on how the control breaks down with the use of 'severed' at line 10 to indicate the separation of body from soul. Many noted the poignant plea in the final line for the earth to be gentle in covering the body of the baby.

4. Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

- (a) *The Namesake* is a popular choice and candidates usually have a thorough knowledge of the events of the novel. However, candidates need to select references carefully and consider how they are presented, rather than relying on summary and paraphrase of key sections. A number of answers here focused on the changing circumstances Ashoke and Ashima face on coming to America, which worked well when supported by details from the writing. Areas of the novel that were chosen to exemplify characters' reactions to changes circumstances included Gogol's birth, his starting school and his relationships with his parents and women. Some of the strongest responses examined the role of the train crash and Ashoke's injury, which is a catalyst for his decision to follow Ghosh's advice and shapes events; acting as an undercurrent throughout the novel. Ashoke's death and the family's response to it, including Gogol's break-up with Maxine was also used very effectively, as was the divorce from Moushumi. In most cases, candidates argued that Lahiri shows that characters ultimately are strengthened by the difficult

circumstances they encounter, often looking at Ashima's independence as the final illustration of this idea.

- (b) The passage dealing with Gogol's visit to Maxine's house was very popular and stimulated some lively, detailed responses. Strong answers recognised that Lahiri is presenting the fascination Gogol has for the whole experience of white, middle class wealthy and cultured American life which encompasses: Maxine, her parents, the house, its decor, artworks, books, food and wine and even the dog as part of the package. Successful responses noted that Lahiri describes Gogol as being like a tourist in his admiration and uses his architectural understanding to legitimise his admiration for the neo-classical house which is so far removed from his parents' suburban home. Candidates who were alert to details of Lahiri's narrative technique noted that Maxine and her mother are described in great detail using reported thought. Lahiri's description of the house was recognised as being very detailed because it records the lifestyle which comes to absorb Gogol and leads him away from his parents' lifestyle. Some very sharp candidates suggested that the extract is Lahiri's parody of an aspirational American life: the 'large farmhouse kitchen table', artful prints on the kitchen walls, 'copper skillets', 'ceramic plates', 'hundreds of cookbooks', the 'butcher-block island' all seem taken from an article on how to live the American Dream. Even the colours on the walls – 'hibiscus pink, lilac, pistachio' – seem taken from a paint chart of fashionable colours. Most candidates recognised that this lifestyle, with its casual welcoming of guests, free-flowing wine and food prepared in view of the guests, is described in this evocative way by Lahiri to underline its contrast with the Gangulis' traditions. Careful answers also noted the caveats almost as form of foreshadowing as Gogol checks his image in front of the mirror, indicating his uncertainty that he can belong in this world. Maxine's suite is luxurious and she is indulged in her parents' wealth, but it is 'a mess', which some candidates took to be a warning of the future of the relationship between her and Gogol.

5. Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) There were few responses to this question on Lily's search for happiness and while most candidates were able to select appropriate moments from the novel, many found it challenging to move beyond events and comment effectively on how Wharton uses language and narrative methods to draw attention to Lily's search. Some candidates commented on the dilemmas Lily is shown to face between a wealthy lifestyle with a less than satisfactory husband and freedom with personal happiness and contentment. In choosing key episodes with Selden, Rosedale and Gryce, they noted that this choice is a feature of Lily's progress through the novel. More complex answers noted Wharton's focus on the difficulties Lily faces in making these complex choices. Many noted that Lily is characterised as unwilling to make up her own mind at crucial moments in the novel which also leads to ambivalent reader responses.
- (b) The passage with Gus Trenor was much more popular, with many candidates apparently relishing the opportunity to express their own personal distaste for Trenor, focusing on Wharton's descriptions of his repugnant nature and physical attributes. There were thus some thoughtful analyses of Wharton's presentation of Trenor but subtle answers were responsive to how Wharton writes the passage from Lily's viewpoint, using free indirect thought to show her calculations and responses. There were also some good commentaries which analysed Trenor's speeches which expound his values and his preoccupation with his wealth. They noted how his dialogue shows him to be a character who uses other people to make money and views Rosedale in terms of someone to be exploited. He also assumes that Lily shares his views. Lily's circumspect treatment of Trenor in her replies to his attempts to elicit pity for his neglected married state are indicative of Wharton's presentation of Lily's awareness of Trenor's power; foreshadowing later events in the novel.

6. Stories of Ourselves

- (a) Parents and children was a relatively popular topic, and the stories were generally well chosen: ‘*Games at Twilight*’, ‘*The Stoat*’, ‘*Journey*’ and ‘*The Village Saint*’ all made several appearances. In some answers, candidates focused on the impact of mothers on their children, given that the fathers stood back from the business of upbringing for all kinds of reasons, including immaturity and self-engrossment. Others looked at children’s separation from their parents as they grow up, often becoming critical evaluators of them – here ‘*The Stoat*’ and ‘*The Village Saint*’ were useful selections. Those writing about Lim’s ‘*Journey*’ noted the reversal of roles, where the daughter tends the mother while the father irresponsibly ignores them both.
- (b) The passage from ‘*Secrets*’ was very popular and drew a wide range of often very thoughtful and detailed responses. The question about the exploration of the past prompted close examination of the ways the stamps, cards, letters and photographs prompt memories and strong candidates who were aware of the context noted that the whole passage is the narrator’s exploration of his own past, recalled in flashback. Some suggested that the steam unpeeling the stamps was mimetic of the slow unpeeling of memories and candidates commented sensitively on how the photographs represent a capturing of past moments, held for the present. This is represented by the image of the formerly ‘beautiful’ aunt, the 1930s clothes and the young man ‘in the uniform’. Essays featured detailed analysis of the dialogue, which shows the innocent curiosity of the boy versus the willingness of the great aunt to give away some information but withhold the rest, with careful judgement of tone and language. The passage repaid very careful analysis which many candidates appreciated, there being fewer narrative-led responses to this question.
- (b) ‘*Bayonet Charge*’ was a popular choice and many candidates were able to comment closely on the images of war presented by Hughes. Though most identified the First World War, there was some confusion over Hughes himself fighting in the war. Strong answers noted the suddenness of the action and ways in which Hughes presents the physicality of the soldier’s experience, picking up the repetition of ‘raw’, the use of ‘hot’ and ‘sweat-heavy’, ‘Stumbling’, ‘smacking’, ‘lugged’ and ‘sweating like molten iron’. The mental side of his experience in the second stanza proved more challenging, some stepping over ll.9–11. More successful responses considered Hughes’ suggestion that the soldier is caught in a mechanism of fate, circumstance and time which have led him to this moment of uncertainty and momentary timelessness. Some were able to link these circumstances to the empty ideals of the third stanza, ‘King, honour, human dignity’ and the dismissive ‘etcetera’ to suggest their worthlessness. There was plenty in the poem for candidates to write about and essays were most successful when they had a coherent plan, linking their points to the exploration of the soldier’s experience. Those which picked out individual words and images, thus stripping them of their context within the poem, were much less successful.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/33
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- Successful responses focus on authors' choices of language and literary methods, and the effects that these might have on a reader or audience.
- Responses which only show knowledge of what happens in texts, and what subjects they explore, are not successful.
- Detailed references and quotations are needed to support points in essays. This should be remembered particularly for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select a wide range of material to answer the question.
- Answers to **(b)** passage-based questions should examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in great detail.

General Comments

Examiners read many vigorous and thoughtful essays on the texts set for study, often showing insight and appreciation. The most successful responses demonstrated not only a detailed knowledge of the texts and their concerns, but a developed understanding of ways in which the writers explore their ideas and present them to the reader. Explicit discussion of technique was most often evident in essays on poetry, frequently accompanied by the appropriate critical vocabulary, but this was only fully successful when matched by an appreciation of the effects of such poetic methods, considering how the writer's choices of language, imagery and structure shape meaning for the reader. Such discussion of method should not be solely reserved for poetry however, and some candidates demonstrated a strong awareness of narrative technique in novels and short stories with observant references to structure, point of view, chronology, dialogue, creation of setting and so on. Successful drama answers look carefully at the language of dialogue, the effects on an audience of entrances, exits, stage actions and stage directions for setting, lighting and sound among others. In literary study candidates should be conscious of writing about writing, not about events and characters.

Comments on specific questions

1. Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** The most popular choices selected by the candidates who chose to respond to the question were '*Hawk Roosting*', '*Snowdrop*', '*Pike*', '*Wind*' and '*Thistles*'. The strongest responses were very clearly focused on the use of structure, form and language with very detailed, sustained analysis and lively individual interpretations of the chosen poems. The characterisation of the hawk and his despotic view of the world was often explored effectively, and the resilience of the warrior-like thistles was discussed well. Details from '*Pike*' showed the awesome power of the fish's jaws, even potentially threatening the unwary fisherman, while the presentation of the power of wind, threatening 'gull', 'house' and 'skyline' was sometimes discussed perceptively. Some candidates picked up on the ways in which the power of the snowdrop is presented quite differently, the contrast often making for an effective essay structure.
- (b)** While more candidates opted for the question on '*November*', a number seemed to find it a challenging poem. Those which looked at some of the ways the bleakness and hardness of the month and season are portrayed did well; effectively focusing on 'the gulleys leaves', 'wind-chilled', 'wind-hardened', 'glassy verticals', 'weight of winter' and 'worst days'. In some essays there was careful discussion of the tramp and his endurance of nature's threat and the discomfort of the 'drilling rain'. Candidates who paid close attention to Hughes' language and imagery, and its cumulative effect in the poem wrote successful essays.

2. Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) ‘*Two Deaths*’ is a poem which has to be read carefully, following the sentences rather than splitting meaning into lines. In this way, the careful development of thought as well as Jennings’ use of free verse can both be appreciated; considering her use of enjambment and caesurae. Some candidates were not able to do this which lead to confused readings of the poem. Better prepared candidates considered the first two stanzas’ depiction of deaths witnessed through the distance of film, strikingly described, but not actual death. These answers commented on the shift in the final stanza to self-reflection – ‘I am ashamed/Not to have seen anyone dead’. Though the death described in the final stanza is that of a cat rather than a ‘shot boy’, the immediacy of it is powerful and candidates often noted the final line’s repetition of the idea at the beginning of the stanza. Successful essays needed precise reading, carefully expounding Jennings’ meaning and the methods she uses to communicate it.

3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) Candidates responding to this question on the presentation of dealing with difficult circumstances tended to approach it in a narrative way, outlining the content of the two poems selected, but missing opportunities to analyse style or literary methods. ‘*The Migrant*’, ‘*The White House*’, ‘*The Border Builder*’ and ‘*These Are the Times We Live In*’ were the most popular poems. Successful answers often considered the tone of the poem, which was the central clue to how the difficult circumstances were dealt with. In this way candidates were able to write about the sense of injustice and anger communicated in McKay’s poem, compared with the empathetic observation of Hendriks, for example. Rumens’ repeated questions were noted in ‘*The Border Builder*’, and Dharker’s satirical flights of fancy in ‘*These Are the Times We Live In*’ were also usefully discussed.
- (b) Candidates wrote about ‘*The Uncles*’ with sympathy and there were a number of touching personal responses to this question. The poem was understood as showing the uncles’ pride in their work and how they predicated their identities on their working lives. Candidates also noted the progression of the speaker’s pride in their family connections and in the uncles’ solid working-class background, some picking up references to ‘Red Square’ and ‘commun-ism’ which is built up by the speaker with links to ‘émigré intellectuals’ who have ‘dignity of their calling’; lifting them to the status of ‘kings’ and the ‘immortal’. The poem contains a great deal of detail with which candidates could get to grips, and although the overall meaning is quite straightforward, there are some complex nuances to tease out. Many candidates tended to focus on the broad brushstroke response of the speaker’s view of the uncles and neglected to pick up the little details that would have informed the details of their answers. There were a few responses which focused on the semantic field of mechanical and engineering language, almost unintelligible to the uninitiated, suggesting that the Uncles’ work, though manual, is highly specialised, before becoming more general in later years, with language to match – ‘doorhandles, grub-screws and the brass bits/that hold the front of the motor case’. Some answers expounded very well this paean to heroes of manual labour, in a continually running, unformed pair of stanzas, ending with that final note of pride: ‘My Uncles.’

4. Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

- (a) The question on different values gave candidates plenty of material to choose from and most tended to form their responses around Ashima, looking in particular at Gogol’s birth and her discomfort with the medical gown she is required to wear, her shock at the public intimacy of American couples and the requirement to name her baby before she leaves hospital. Some candidates also wrote about the challenges she faces as her children grow up and her gradual willingness to adapt their diets to the North American norm. Some candidates considered the affluent American world Gogol enters with Maxine and his ready acceptance of that way of life, while some interesting answers turned that round and considered Lahiri’s presentation of Maxine’s inability to adapt to Bengali family grief following Ashoke’s death.
- (b) There were some perceptive and assured responses to the passage, considering ways in which Lahiri portrays Gogol distancing himself from family life, a process which they noted, had started before he left for college. The phrase ‘obediently but unwillingly’ received a lot of appropriate attention, capturing Gogol’s sense of reluctant family duty. Candidates noted that Gogol falls back

into childhood patterns, going out with his parents, watching the television with the children and expecting that his laundry will be done, while missing the new experiences of college. The image of Gogol's desk being too small was dealt with well, suggesting that the smallness is in contrast to his expanding world where he learns 'how to tell the classical composers apart' and smokes 'Brandon's cigarettes'. Very good responses were alert to Lahiri's contrast between Gogol's subtle distancing himself from his parents and Sonia's more overt and conventional teenage rebellion, where she becomes the all-American teenager, contravening Bengali standards of female dress and decorum.

5. Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) The very few responses on this text were concentrated on the passage question, where candidates were able to comment on Trenor's attempted entrapment of Lily. His aggression and physicality was sometimes noted, with the phrases '-pushed a chair', 'laughed', 'squaring his shoulders aggressively', caught her up with a sneer' and 'darkened with rage', all of which convey a real sense of threat to Lily who has been brought to the house by trickery. The forcefulness of Trenor's dialogue was examined, with his use of transactional vocabulary, like 'you've got to pay up' and expressing his own sense of anger at having been made 'an ass' of. Good answers also looked at Wharton's portrayal of Lily in the episode, as ways in which the writing shows the effects Trenor has on her. Thus she 'flamed with anger' at the beginning, but later language is less secure as 'she faltered', feels 'the sea of humiliation' and finally 'She stood silent, frozen to her place.' Candidates often expressed shock at what Trenor's earlier flirting and bluster turns into in this scene, the novel at this point taking a distinctly nasty turn.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. The handful of candidates who attempted it wrote about such stories as '*The Stoa*', '*Journey*' and '*The Village Saint*'. The son's critical detachment from his father in '*The Stoa*' was exemplified in the narrative and dialogue; while Mompoti's complete change in attitude towards his mother was explained by her greedy behaviour. The young girl in '*Journey*' was seen herself in the parental position, doing what she can to assist her mother while as some candidates saw it, implicitly criticising the irresponsibility of her father.
- (b) Far more candidates answered the question on '*The Lemon Orchard*' and most understood the apartheid context well. They often successfully discussed the power imbalance between the anonymous victim and the Afrikaner farmers. They distinguished between the attitude of the leader with the gun, the lantern bearer and Andries, looking closely at their dialogue. The fear, resilience and pride of the victim was also discussed, noting that the third person narrator has access to his thoughts, but relies on dialogue from the assailants, creating sympathy and a closeness between the victim and the reader. Candidates dealt fully with the racist Afrikaner slang and there was frequent thoughtful analysis of the setting, with the dark path difficult to distinguish; surrounded by the magical heavily scented lemons. The ambiguity of the ending was also noted.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41
Drama

Key messages

- To do well, candidates must read the wording of the question carefully and respond to the full implications of the question given, both in terms of theme and dramatic techniques.
- Successful **(b)** answers focus intently on the language and dramatic techniques of the extract.
- Responses must show strong evidence of a developing, planned, concise and coherent argument in order to achieve marks at the top end of the mark scheme.

General comments

As always, there was a great range of answers. At the top end, responses were detailed and engaged with a very strong sense that candidates were having — and developing— insights for themselves, rather than relying upon received opinions. Less effective responses sometimes relied too much on narrative or on summary. At times, some candidates relied on contexts in order to make their points: it is important to remember that, contexts are only useful insofar as they illuminate the play as a work of art on the stage.

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

Less convincing responses often showed similar characteristics, but there was a weaker sense of focus and/or a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples were not being fully explored. At this level, responses were sometimes overly long; a sign that candidates had not made careful judgements about what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and this is not, of course, expected. However, it is expected that candidates should shape and direct their argument clearly, in a discussion which allows them to show knowledge and understanding of the text.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded for knowledge, if not for insight. Answers at this level included some basic 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. This was a particular problem at times with the Shakespeare questions, where discussions about verse forms often came across as mechanical and not reflecting a felt response to what is going on.

In passage-based questions, the best responses considered the whole of the moment presented, rather than looking to go through it chronologically. Less successful responses often noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but failed to see how that transfers into a dramatic effect when realised on stage. Many candidates could have done more to discuss choices of language or syntax. The best responses often paid careful attention to the staging of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to the words spoken.

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

Comments on specific questions

1. Ama Ata Aidoo: *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa*

- (a) The small number of responses on this question showed that candidates were fully aware of the various ways in which Kofi Ato is presented in the play. There was significant sympathy expressed for him, often seen in terms of his misunderstanding of precisely what he was letting himself in for when he married Anowa. The playwright's character note that he is Anowa's 'man who expands' provided an insight to develop for some of the better answers. The best answers were able to examine particular moments where his relationship with his wife is set against the prevailing culture.
- (b) Almost all responses were aware of the characters and the situation at this point in the play. There was much useful engagement with the language of the extract and with the questions and disjointed interventions of Ato's shocked family. The best responses were able to locate the frequent shifts of tone (often by talking about the stage directions). Some candidates were too preoccupied with trying to explain the cultural context of marriage in the community presented without usefully linking it to the language and details of the passage.

2. William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*

- (a) A few responses saw this question simply as being a matter of character study. Better answers were able to deal with Maria's position in Olivia's household and with her wit and intelligence. Some useful analysis of her relationship with Malvolio was often offered, with Maria seen as a symbol of the pleasure principle in the play. Virtually all responses were able to describe her role in the humiliation of Malvolio; fewer dealt with her motivation and her pleasure in it. There was sometimes sensible discussion of how Maria is actually the only character who loves truly in the play and the only one who gets a partner who she both knows and understands. The best answers were characterised by reference to particular moments in the play, supported by analysis of quotations.
- (b) Although there were many very effective responses to this question, a significant number of them failed really to respond to the full implications of the wording '*and his court*', preferring instead to focus simply on Orsino's relationship with Viola/Cesario. There was, of course, much to be said about Orsino's love of being in love, and about his blindness to what Viola is really telling him. By implication, the self-indulgence of the court was thus often considered. But there is music here to give the court atmosphere, and Feste's melancholy song offers a commentary on what goes on elsewhere in the scene, so there was much to be discussed. The best responses focused closely on the language of the extract and on the various ways in which Orsino is deceived about both himself and the world around him.

3. William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*

- (a) This was emphatically not a character-based question. Some candidates saw it as an opportunity to look at the central characters separately and then together, whereas the best soon realised that they were being asked to look closely at the ways in which there can be deep love ('tell me how much') that is also a destructive force. Many answers produced a catalogue of the various plot moments where Antony and Cleopatra are either very much together or at loggerheads. However, the best responses were able to make detailed reference to language, often talking about how the two glamorise their own relationship by comparing themselves to gods and then detailing the fire of their fallings out. A small number of able responses went into the question — very skilfully — by talking about other people's reactions to the lovers and their love ('a strumpet's fool') in order to characterise both its strengths and its limitations.

- (b) Responses that saw the light-hearted playfulness of the incident did well. There were, however, very few responses that looked closely enough at the banter, jokes and innuendoes ('his horns with garlands', 'an inch of fortune') that run throughout the scene. Many made the point that with Cleopatra absent, this is Shakespeare's means of showing us that the atmosphere of the Egyptian court is not simply something that comes from Cleopatra herself. There was some useful discussion of the court's obsession with the superficial. Although the scene does pre-figure some of what goes on later in the play, attempts to analyse this were not often able to capture the lightness of touch that prevails here. Some useful contrasts were made to Roman values embodied elsewhere and presented here through Enobarbus's pithy interventions during this scene.

4. Brian Friel: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) Most responses were able to characterise Gar's decision to move to America as being inspired by ambition, and there were some interesting discussions of some of the ways in which Private imagines his future in the States. More subtle responses were able to see that there is a strong desire by Gar to simply absent himself from the situation he finds himself in. Some responses noted, sensibly, that Gar even has moments of self-realisation (such as that about his college career) where his ambition is tempered by an awareness that he will carry the burdens of Ballybeg with him wherever he goes. The best responses were able to offer concise and detailed analysis of particular moments in the plays.
- (b) The situation at this point in the play was clearly understood by virtually all candidates. There was useful discussion of both Gar and S.B.'s awkwardness in each other's' presence, conveyed through both the language and the action. Many candidates had plainly been very moved by this scene. The best responses were able to see that S.B.'s concern for Gar is disguised behind the Canon's advice. A key discriminator was a discussion of Gar's line 'it never happened', both in terms of our feeling that Gar may be being slightly cruel here and in terms of us appreciating that Gar engineers some of the emotional distance that he blames his father for.

5. Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

- (a) The question provoked a wide range of responses. Most were confident about the darker aspects of the play and were able to see how unhappy marriages, alcoholism and social climbing among others are fundamental to what is going on. Better answers were able to balance the seriousness of theme against the play's farcical techniques, often through discussion of Eva's suicide attempts or the Hopcroft's gauche behaviour. There were many succinct and telling analyses of particular moments in the play. Less successful responses often provided a list, whilst better responses explored both language and action and analysed the uneasy tension between the humour and the darkness. There were some very strong discussions of the end of the play. Virtually all candidates — perhaps inevitably — simply agreed with the broad view that the play is 'darkly disturbing.' The best responses were able to offer alternative interpretations in order to deal with the 'to what extent' of the question.
- (b) Most responses showed a keen awareness of the situation at this point in the play. Sidney's self-satisfaction was often well analysed, as was his complete disregard for Jane's situation or feelings. Better answers were able to deal well with the detail of the text and the lack of communication and understanding between the two. There was often useful reference to the stage directions. The best responses looked carefully at the whole arc of the scene and recognised that this marriage, though not happy, is serviceable to both partners.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42
Drama

Key messages

- To do well, candidates must read the wording of the question carefully and respond to the full implications of the question given, both in terms of theme and dramatic techniques.
- Successful **(b)** answers focus intently on the language and dramatic techniques of the extract.
- Responses must show strong evidence of a developing, planned, concise and coherent argument in order to achieve marks at the top end of the mark scheme.

General comments

As always, there was a great range of answers. At the top end, responses were detailed and engaged with a very strong sense that candidates were having — and developing— insights for themselves, rather than relying upon received opinions. Less effective responses sometimes relied too much on narrative or on summary. At times, some candidates relied on contexts in order to make their points: it is important to remember that, contexts are only useful insofar as they illuminate the play as a work of art on the stage.

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

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At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded for knowledge, if not for insight. Answers at this level included some basic 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. This was a particular problem at times with the Shakespeare questions, where discussions about verse forms often came across as mechanical and not reflecting a felt response to what is going on.

In passage-based questions, the best responses considered the whole of the moment presented, rather than looking to go through it chronologically. Less successful responses often noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but failed to see how that transfers into a dramatic effect when realised on stage. Many candidates could have done more to discuss choices of language or syntax. The best responses often paid careful attention to the staging of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to the words spoken.

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

Comments on specific questions

1. Ama Ata Aidoo: *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa*

- (a) Answers to this question were able to range widely over the two plays and to examine a range of different roles for women by looking at the traditional roles and then at the parts played by Eulalie or Anowa. The best answers were characterised by a strong awareness of how the different experiences of women are interrogated in dramatic terms during the course of the two plays.
- (b) This was by far the more popular question on this text. Responses to this question on the whole showed understanding of the situation and of the various ways in which Esi feels that her role as mother and teacher is being sidelined. The best answers were able to characterise her self-pity and anger in great detail whilst also seeing Monka's contribution to the discussion about families and family values. Many candidates ignored, or overlooked the silent role of Eulalie in the scene, even though her presence is central to the anger being expressed. Candidates who were able to focus on the vividness of the language in the passage- especially Esi's,-presented clearer arguments in response to the question.

2. William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*

- (a) For a small number of candidates there was some confusion surrounding the term 'self-deception' in the question and thus talked about the issue of deception and the deceiving of others in the play. Those who considered the ways in which characters refuse to face the truth of their situations were spoilt for choice: Orsino was most often discussed, along with Malvolio but a range of other characters were also considered. The issue of 'dramatic presentation' was a key discriminator, and candidates who were able to focus on particular scenes; or on aspects of language were rewarded for the depth and complexity of their perceptions. The best answers combined theme and presentation in order to arrive at a coherent view of how self-deception fits in with other concerns of the play.
- (b) Most candidates understood the significance and complexity of this episode. There was often careful analysis of the exaggerated tone and vocabulary of what Orsino says, and there was much discussion of his blindness and naivety about the true nature of love. Viola's coded longings were at the fore of most responses, with the contrast between the pair clearly made. Discussions often took in wider views about the differences between male and female love. In weaker responses some candidates got very tangled up with discussions about boys playing girls playing boys and there was also some confusion surrounding the contextualisation about gender roles in Shakespeare's time.

3. William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*

- (a) Responses were always clear about the passionate relationship between Antony and Cleopatra and there was much good work seen on the ways in which Shakespeare presents both the heights of love and the childish rowing of the pair. Weaker answers tended to recount plot-based examples. Stronger discussions were able to remark on the various ways in which the pair inflate their love for each other through language and grand gestures. The strongest responses provided some very good analysis around the complexity of what is going on between the 'lion's whelp' and the 'serpent of old Nile.'
- (b) Almost all responses were able to give an account of what happens in this extract. However, the best answers developed this and looked closely at the ways in which Antony expresses his dissolving sense of self-worth and his increasing anger with Cleopatra at the opening of the scene, for these emotions only to be swept away by news of Cleopatra's (faked) death. There was much to say about the highs and lows of Antony's emotions as talks his way towards suicide. The best responses ensured that they were tightly focused on language throughout.

4. Brian Friel: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) Virtually all candidates were able to see that the past has created the circumstances that make Gar want to leave Ireland. There were discussions of Gar's relationship with the place, its values, his father, his friends and Kate, all of which contribute to the play's ending. The best answers were able to show explicitly how Friel's dramatic techniques (flashback, for example) make the past

viscerally part of the present during the course of the play's action in order to show Gar's highly-charged emotional state on the night before his departure.

- (b) Responses to this question all showed awareness of the situation and of the past relationship between Kate and Gar. The most successful responses were able to look closely at the detail and analyse the various ways in which Gar displays his regrets, longings, and uncertainties during the course of the conversation. The awkwardness between Kate and Gar was often well captured. There was some interesting analysis of Kate's contribution, with many recognising that she is behaving with acute sensitivity here. There was useful commentary, too, on the way that the conversation turns halfway through, with Gar being dismissively rude because of his doubts for his future. The best responses also noted that 'Private' Gar is perfectly aware of how poorly "Public" Gar is behaving, with the repeated calls for him to 'Shhhhhhh.'

5. Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

- (a) Most responses saw the presentation of women — justifiably — through the lens of marriage. They were able to compare and contrast the various marriages in the play and the plight of the three differently suffering wives. Weaker candidates simply gave an account of these. More searching responses were able to make close reference to particular moments in order to demonstrate the ways in which men patronise and dominate their wives. There was some useful reference to moments where the men discuss women in unflattering terms. There was a slight temptation merely to see women as victims, a reading which perhaps ignores Jane's role as a co-conspirator towards the end of the play. As always, candidates who responded to the play as a work to be performed offered the closest and most convincing analysis.
- (b) Almost all responses were able to comment on Marion's patronising, snobbish contempt for the Hopcroft's house and values. Some also went on to discuss the irony of this; bearing in mind how things change towards the end of the play. A few responses also saw clearly that the Hop crofts are out of their depth here, taking all remarks at face value and wondering whether they should correct Marion about her misunderstandings. There was useful comment on the state of the Brewster-Wright's marriage, as revealed through their lack of interest in each other's actions and words here. The best responses were acutely aware of how Marion either aims to hurt or is sufficiently out of control that she fails to recognise the stupidity of what she is saying. Responses that drew attention to the language tended to do well, as did those that responded to Ayckbourn's stagecraft and saw the cleverness involved in having the characters group and re-group so fluidly.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43
Drama

Key messages

- To do well, candidates must read the wording of the question carefully and respond to the full implications of the question given, both in terms of theme and dramatic techniques.
- Successful **(b)** answers focus intently on the language and dramatic techniques of the extract.
- Responses must show strong evidence of a developing, planned, concise and coherent argument in order to achieve marks at the top end of the mark scheme.

General comments

As always, there was a great range of answers. At the top end, responses were detailed and engaged with a very strong sense that candidates were having — and developing— insights for themselves, rather than relying upon received opinions. Less effective responses sometimes relied too much on narrative or on summary. At times, some candidates relied on contexts in order to make their points: it is important to remember that, contexts are only useful insofar as they illuminate the play as a work of art on the stage.

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

Less convincing responses often showed similar characteristics, but there was a weaker sense of focus and/or a lack of strict focus, or a feeling that examples were not being fully explored. At this level, responses were sometimes overly long; a sign that candidates had not made careful judgements about what is truly relevant. No candidate can hope to deal with all aspects of a question set, and this is not, of course, expected. However, it is expected that candidates should shape and direct their argument clearly, in a discussion which allows them to show knowledge and understanding of the text.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, candidates who showed clear understanding of what happens in a text were rewarded for knowledge, if not for insight. Answers at this level included some basic 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. This was a particular problem at times with the Shakespeare questions, where discussions about verse forms often came across as mechanical and not reflecting a felt response to what is going on.

In passage-based questions, the best responses considered the whole of the moment presented, rather than looking to go through it chronologically. Less successful responses often noted that the written script contains (for example) indications of pauses and discontinuity, but failed to see how that transfers into a dramatic effect when realised on stage. Many candidates could have done more to discuss choices of language or syntax. The best responses often paid careful attention to the staging of the passage (stage directions etc.) as well as to the words spoken.

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

Comments on specific questions

1. Ama Ata Aidoo: *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa*

- (a) Most answers were able to look clearly at the Odumna family's conservatism and unwillingness to change in the face of Ato's relationship with Eulalie. Competent answers looked at the issue in relation to dramatic moments in the play (the snails, perhaps). There were some very good answers that focused on Ato himself, as conflicted and torn between the two worlds. There was some useful commentary on the way in which the 'Bird of the Wayside' places the family's reactions in context.
- (b) This question was overwhelmingly the most popular choice on this text. All candidates were aware of the situation, with most aware of the tensions within the family that lead up to this moment. Responses that went beyond basic were able to comment on the stage directions and in particular on Badua and Osam's lack of appetite. The best responses looked at the language of the passage in detail, often responding to the number of questions asked in order to characterise the couple's puzzlement and confusion.

2. William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*

- (a) Responses were quick to point out that Viola's concealed love for Orsino is a key complicator of the play's plot. Some responses got very tied up with the issue of cross-dressing and failed to find an appropriate focus on the central issue of love. Better responses were able to see how the presentation leads into the thematic preoccupations of the play. The best responses offered close analysis of particular moments in the play, often focusing on the moments where Orsino and Cesario discuss love for others, whilst really talking about their feelings for each other. Very few responses addressed the complex ambiguities of the final moments of the play where the plot issue is resolved through their marriage, but the underlying feelings that Orsino had for Viola when he/she was a boy are left hanging. As always, the best answers dealt with the play as a drama and offered clear and detailed support through specific examples. Clear focus on the various ways in which love is talked about and seen in the play was central to all the best answers.
- (b) Virtually all responses demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of the situation at this point in the play's action. Less successful answers sometimes simply narrated the scene or placed the passage in the context of the play's action. More successful responses were able to suggest that this moment exacerbates some of the growing discomfort that an audience may feel about the play's supposedly happy ending. Malvolio was the focus of most answers, but there were some responses that looked more widely and considered the plangent, melancholic tone of the Clown's song. The best answers were aware of the dramatic tensions and of the various ways in which language is used in the passage, with the Duke (for the first time in the play) actually showing some understanding of someone other than himself.

3. William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*

- (a) Most responses were confident when discussing the relationship between the protagonists, and there were many useful discussions of tensions between the two. Better responses thought hard about the term 'self-destructive' and examined the various ways in which the behaviour of the two lovers means that their relationship is doomed from the start. There was often much focus on Antony neglecting his Roman duties. The best responses saw that each of the lovers has a central distrust of the other and that this inspires them to be constantly testing one another ('tell me how much') in a way that ensures they make both individual and collective decisions that cause their downfall.
- (b) At the bottom end, a number of responses simply went through this scene and saw it as part of the steady decline of Cleopatra's fortunes. Closer readings of the text allowed candidates to explore Cleopatra's feisty manipulation of Caesar through her setting up of Seleucus to give the impression that she has kept money back because she intends to survive. The richness of Cleopatra's language (sometimes contrasted with her earthiness elsewhere in the play) also provided fertile ground for discussion. The best responses saw that this scene shows the 'serpent of old Nile' at her most devious, with her obsequiousness delightfully cultivated in order to mislead.

4. Brian Friel: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) This was the least popular text on this paper. Virtually all candidates were able to see that the past has created the circumstances that make Gar want to leave Ireland. There were discussions of Gar's relationship with the place, its values, his father, his friends and his failed relationship with Kate; all of which contribute to the dramatic portrayal of Gar's feelings the night before he leaves his home. The best answers were able to show explicitly how Friel's dramatic techniques (flashback, for example) make the past viscerally part of the present during the course of the play's action.
- (b) The key insight here was to point out that the two voices in the extract convey Gar's ambiguity about his circumstances, with one voice acting to counter the enthusiasm of the other. Responses that dealt effectively with the detail of the extract were able to see how the voices sometimes combine in their fantasies, with Gar always as the hero of the hour ('I've never seen this boy in the brilliant form he's in today'). Few candidates dealt with the end of the passage and the notional disapproval of sexual liberation which is transformed from the language of the church (line 56–7) by Public's wink in line 58.

5. Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

- (a) Responses to this question usually showed firm understanding of the three couples presented. More acute responses were able to compare and contrast. The best answers dealt in detail with particular moments in the play and were able to see the various tensions within each couple expressed through both words and actions. Jane and Sidney's marriage (the most developed in the play) was the most talked about, and a number of responses simply saw it as unhappy and unsuccessful, something that much of the evidence from the text does not support. Better candidates were able to consider the conflicting interpretations that we can take of these different marriages. The best responses were always closely focused on the text as something that might be performed.
- (b) Virtually all candidates responded with knowledge and understanding to this passage. The situation was clearly seen. It was, however, harder for responses to get the tone of the passage, and few responses dealt with the uneasy hilarity of what is being presented to the audience. Many responses were very straight-faced about what is going on and felt that Jane is simply irresponsible without acknowledging the absurdist humour of the situation. The strongest answers looked at specifics, often analysing the stage directions — which are after all our only indication of what Eva is actually up to — in great detail. The most coherent response dealt with the tensions between word and action and with the various ways in which Jane and Ronald demonstrate that people deal with the world through their own predilections and obsessions, not by taking a realistic assessment of the situation. Candidates who had thought about the conventions of farce in drama tended to do very well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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

Key messages

- (1) Candidates choosing option **(b)** passage questions need to have some understanding of the genre of their set texts and their specific literary features.
- (2) Candidates should carefully select an appropriate amount of relevant contextual material to integrate into their essays.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. This was the third session with the new rubric, which requires candidates to tackle at least one option **(b)** passage-based question. There were still a number of rubric errors, with candidates writing two option **(a)** discursive essays, a combination which is no longer permitted. The quality of expression was at least acceptable in nearly every case, although there are still some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at each level of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – *Othello*, *Emma* and Chaucer – with others remaining very much minority choices, particularly Marvell and Rossetti, though the responses seen suggest these texts are accessible to learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (i) Candidates tackling the option **(b)** passage-based questions should have some understanding of the genre of their chosen texts. This should include awareness of the key literary features within the different disciplines, so that they are comfortable with analysing poetic methods such as rhythm, metre and verse form, as well as language and imagery when discussing poetry. Those studying a novel or a play similarly need to understand dramatic methods and narrative methods if they are to tackle a passage successfully.
- (ii) Candidates should carefully consider how much of the wider context is relevant to their proposed answer, including use of critical comments. Some essays ignore the context altogether, which can limit the interpretation to a single viewpoint and thus not have much evidence to meet Assessment Objective 5. At the other extreme, answers sometimes have too much wider knowledge embedded in the essay which then limits the depth into which the set text or the given passage is discussed. The main focus must be on the set text and the specific task, with the candidate's arguments supported briefly and relevantly by apposite contextual references.

1. *Measure for Measure*: William Shakespeare

This was the minority Shakespeare text in this session, with most candidates choosing the passage.

- (a) Nearly all answers had interesting ideas about Isabella, often showing secure knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to ignore the quotation and gave a summary- often very detailed- of her part in the play. Better answers explored the complexity of her characterisation, keeping the quotation clearly in view. As one candidate suggested '*Isabella wallows in the idea of her virtue and purity but her language often suggests otherwise – 'keen whips'- as well as her haste to let Marianne give up her virginity.*' Other answers, noting her lack of response to the Duke's marriage proposal, explored her lack of relationships generally; with good answers noting her similarity to

Angelo in this respect. Answers which considered how Shakespeare uses this ambivalence to develop the plot and the moral ambiguity of the play often did very well.

- (b) Every answer recognised this as the beginning of the play and Angelo's first appearance. Basic answers offered a loose paraphrase or a more general discussion of the characters. Better answers developed the analysis by close reading of the detail of the passage, noting for example how the Duke is still very much in charge and talking at the others. Many good answers saw in the dialogue the seeds of Angelo's impending fall, the Duke's disguised interference and Escalus's more controlled and balanced interventions. Answers which explored the characterisation in the context of the dramatic significance did very well.

2. *Othello*: William Shakespeare

This was the most popular Shakespeare text, with the majority of candidates opting for the passage question.

- (a) Nearly every answer revealed a detailed knowledge of the text, often relevantly chosen to explore the relationship. Most answers noted how the relationship furthers the plot, through the handkerchief and also leading to the unmasking of Iago. Better answers noted Iago's jealousy about Othello and Cassio with Emilia and how this motivated his revenge. Others saw the contrast between this relationship and that of Othello and Desdemona, noting how it reveals much about the protagonists, but also truths about Emilia and Iago themselves. Many puzzled over Emilia's role, noting its ambivalence – her apparent love for Iago and his use and distrust of her. Others explored her relationship with Desdemona as crucial to the plot. For some this role of Emilia in her marriage, contrasted with Desdemona's, revealed much about the role of women, especially wives, in the period: the abuse, the expectations of chastity and the obedience were considered. Sometimes these concerns were thoughtfully set against Emilia's final resolution not to be silent in order to defend the honour of her mistress, despite the threats of Iago and her ultimate murder. Others saw Iago's choice of a challenging woman for wife, compared to Othello's choice of a submissive 'green girl' as significant in revealing much about both male characters and their self-confidence. Those answers which supported such arguments with detailed reference to the text did very well.
- (b) Nearly all answers recognised this passage as the attempted murder of Cassio and the beginning of the play's denouement. Many noted the role of Iago – his hypocrisy, cunning, manipulation and psychological mastery were all revealed here. Better answers explored the layers of dramatic irony here – Roderigo discovering the truth as he dies, the almost comic exit/entrance of Iago, the misguided cries for help of Cassio and Othello's foolishness and the horror of what he is going off to do. As one candidate suggested, '*he even gets it wrong here as Cassio is far from dead and Iago proves to be the opposite of how he is described – honest, loyal and brave*'. Others considered how Iago stabs Cassio from behind, as deliberately indicated by the stage direction, and then flees, suggesting his cowardice, alongside his treachery and dishonesty. Good answers explored the details, noting for example the sardonic, or deliberately insulting, use of the word 'Lieutenant' at this point, as Iago, for some fuelled by jealousy of Cassio's 'daily beauty', has stabbed him in a personal act of revenge. Answers which analysed the dramatic effects, such as the symbolism of the light and dark and what it foreshadows, did very well.

3. *Emma*: Jane Austen

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the option (b) passage.

- (a) All answers revealed a sound knowledge of the detail of the text. Weaker answers tended to give a detailed summary of Frank's involvement, with little reference to the quotation. Better answers recognised the source of the quotation and explored how Frank's role enables Knightley to learn the truth about his own emotions. Others noted the significance of his role to the novel's structure and crucially in the development of Emma's characterisation. Many accepted, at least in part, the given contention, though some were sympathetic to his situation with Jane. Very good answers supported such arguments with detailed reference to the text and Austen's methods.
- (b) Most answers showed sound knowledge of the passage, often with relevant contextual pointing. Basic answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with some offering a more general summary of Emma's role in the text. Better answers noted the irony of Emma's situation and how this enables Austen to create humour and, for some, sympathy for Emma, though others saw her as a '*callous*,

selfish snob throughout the text and especially here. Very good answers explored the detail of the passage, considering what it revealed about Austen's methods, as well as concerns.

4. *Wuthering Heights*: Emily Brontë

This was a popular text in this session with most candidates offering a response to the passage option.

- (a) Nearly all answers were able to select relevant material from the text to address the task. Basic answers tended to write about 'love' rather than 'attitudes' to love, but often showed a sound knowledge of, and engagement with the text. Inevitably, perhaps, the main focus was on Cathy and Heathcliff, with better answers comparing the 'rocks beneath' to Cathy and Edgar's 'foliage'. Good answers saw the attitudes as destructive and powerful, or for others, eternal and supernatural. Many noted Heathcliff's vengeful attitude, yet his all-encompassing obsession was considered for modern readers as 'romantic'. Others thought a contemporary audience would see it as at least shocking and perhaps blasphemous. Better answers also considered Catherine and Linton and also Hareton; seeing the arc of her emotional development as a key facet of the novel's structure. Hindley's grief at death of Frances was seen as evidence of his love and the explanation of his descent into alcoholic violence. Very good answers considered the author's methods, including the narrators, some finding Lockwood's idea of a relationship with Catherine as comic: *'Lockwood is not able to grasp the fierce passion of love in the Heights any more than is Nellie'*, as one answer suggested.
- (b) Just about every answer recognised the passage as the arrival of Heathcliff into the Heights. Weaker answers offered a general summary of the passage, or of Heathcliff himself. Better answers considered the detail of the passage, for example Nellie's degrading language in the use of 'it' before 'he' later, noting how this reflects her warming to Heathcliff perhaps. The rivalry of Heathcliff and Hindley was noticed, as was Cathy's attitude changing so quickly. Others noted the dead son's name, seen as foreshadowing of Heathcliff's fate and his association with dark and dismal things. Good answers explored the presentation of Heathcliff here- his sullen patience was often seen as a key characteristic and was linked by some to his marriage of Isabella and attempts to corrupt Hareton. Very good answers noted the presentation of the adult Heathcliff in Lockwood's account of his first visit to his landlord and how this scene invites the reader to wonder how the 'brat' becomes the imposing, 'capital fellow' of Lockwood's narration.

5. *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*: Geoffrey Chaucer

This was a popular text in this session, with an even split between the two options.

- (a) Most answers were able to explore the presentation of love in some detail. Weaker answers tended to ignore the given quotation and offer a summary of the different characters' responses to love in the text. Better answers noted how the attitudes to love served as a key means of characterisation. For example, Dorigen as a damsel in distress, with the black rocks symbolic of her separation from her husband and of the perils awaiting marriage and life in general. Good answers contrasted the love of Averagus and Aurelius – both presented as seeing Dorigen in a physical way, though some sense of courtly love traditions was a significant help in such interpretations. Others noted the self-love – Arveragus's desire to go off and fight was seen by some as *'show[ing] he is more concerned for his reputation, just as he is later when he forces Dorigen to keep her word but secretly'*. Aurelius's two years of pining was also seen as self-love and self-indulgent- *'especially as he appears to have no trouble in not going through with his desire when he finally gets the chance'*. Very good answers were able to demonstrate the methods used for presentation by close and detailed reference to the text.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised this as the start of the Tale, with weaker answers tending to paraphrase the passage. Better answers noted how the narrator sets the tone of a 'Breton Lay' – simplicity and chivalry. For others, the passage brought out the key concerns of love and courtly lovers, honesty, truth and in terms of the marriage, setting out an equal responsibility and share of the 'maistrie'. This for some was the cause of the future problems – Dorigen's large reins enabling her to make the unintentional 'pact' with Aurelius. Others noted Averagus's desire to have the semblance of 'maistrie': *'for his public image, was later reflected in his desire for her to keep her oath to Aurelius but not tell anyone about it.'* Answers which explored the poetic methods in detail tended to do very well.

6. *Great Expectations*: Charles Dickens

This was a popular text with an even split between the two options.

- (a) Most candidates were able to find relevant material to discuss, with nearly all answers discussing Pip's abusive sister, his home in the marshes, Joe's trade and its 'perceived coarseness', the apparent ignorance of Biddy and the loss of his parents. Better answers identified Pip's first recognition of these 'faults' when he goes to Satis House, with some good work linking this to the role of Estella, as one suggested, *'it is she who makes Pip feel ashamed'*. Other good answers noted his development and how his realisation of the qualities of Joe and Biddy comes too late. Some thought this *'was a forlorn hope anyway; would the mature Pip would have found true happiness there or indeed with Estella if that was his ultimate role?'* Very good answers discussed Dickens's use of the other contrasting homes as well – the castle, the Pockets and Jaggers – and noted that rarely was there an inviting homely atmosphere with any genuine love.
- (b) Most answers recognised this passage as the introduction of Molly, with some noting the suspense created, the development of the plot and the links to Estella and Magwitch. Good answers explored Dickens's masterful plotting and use of irony – Pip is here with his beloved Estella's mother and her future husband. Others discussed the role of Jaggers with some wondering why he abused Molly in this way; those who analysed the lurid descriptions often did very well. Some very good answers noted the narrative voice – older Pip here remembering, but not giving much away about the future revelations.

7. *Selected Poems*: Andrew Marvell

This was the least popular text with very few takers for either option.

- (a) Most answers were able to identify three relevant poems. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems and make general comments about the various concerns identified. Better answers were able to find contrasting ideas about the soul to discuss, often linked to Marvell's religious views, with some relevant historical context. Very good answers were able to develop such ideas by exploring the poetic methods employed by Marvell.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the set poem, showing little understanding of its form or Marvell's concerns. Better answers addressed both of these issues. Some explored the structure and poetic form, noting how the fluidity and shape mirrored the journey or the ocean or the changing emotions. Good answers thereby found links with *'To his Coy Mistress'*. Other good answers explored the use of religious diction and natural imagery and linked this poem to *'On a Drop of Dew'* and *'Eyes and Tears'* and thereby Marvell's Christian audience and the contemporary beliefs and faith.

8. *Selected Poems*: Christina Rossetti

Option (a) was the least popular question on the paper, though option (b) was a popular choice.

- (a) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase more or less relevant poems, with little sense of Rossetti's 'presentation'. Better answers did focus on this. Popular poems were *'At Home'*, *'Cousin Kate'*, *'Goblin Market'* and *'Apple Gathering'*. For some good answers the seasons reflected her moods and the changes in her loves and beliefs. Better answers explored her poetic methods, for example noting the symbolic use of apples and gardens to express moral and religious truths, such as the *'loss of innocence and chastity, as well as the effects of personal choices and inner doubts'*.
- (b) Most answers were able to explore the detail relevantly. Weaker answers offered a more or less accurate summary of the poem, often with some biographical context. Better answers explored the conflicts underlying the poem: earthly and spiritual, human and religious and love denied on earth for love fulfilled in heaven. Better answers unpicked Rossetti's characteristic self-denial or self-centeredness depending on your view. Very good answers analysed poetic form as well as language, showing how these create the mood and the tone, often finding links with poems as varied as *'Winter my secret'*, *'Convent Threshold'* and *'Goblin Market'*.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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

Key messages

- (1) Candidates choosing option **(b)** passage questions need to have some understanding of the genre of their set texts and their specific literary features.
- (2) Candidates should carefully select an appropriate amount of relevant contextual material to integrate into their essays.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. This was the third session with the new rubric, which requires candidates to tackle at least one option **(b)** passage-based question. There were still a number of rubric errors, with candidates writing two option **(a)** discursive essays, a combination which is no longer permitted. The quality of expression was at least acceptable in nearly every case, although there are still some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at each level of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – *Othello*, *Emma* and Chaucer – with others remaining very much minority choices, particularly Marvell and Rossetti, though the responses seen suggest these texts are accessible to learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (i) Candidates tackling the option **(b)** passage-based questions should have some understanding of the genre of their chosen texts. This should include awareness of the key literary features within the different disciplines, so that they are comfortable with analysing poetic methods such as rhythm, metre and verse form, as well as language and imagery when discussing poetry. Those studying a novel or a play similarly need to understand dramatic methods and narrative methods if they are to tackle a passage successfully.
- (ii) Candidates should carefully consider how much of the wider context is relevant to their proposed answer, including use of critical comments. Some essays ignore the context altogether, which can limit the interpretation to a single viewpoint and thus not have much evidence to meet Assessment Objective 5. At the other extreme, answers sometimes have too much wider knowledge embedded in the essay which then limits the depth into which the set text or the given passage is discussed. The main focus must be on the set text and the specific task, with the candidate's arguments supported briefly and relevantly by apposite contextual references.

1. *Measure for Measure*: William Shakespeare

This was the minority Shakespeare text in this session with most candidates choosing the passage-based question.

- (a) Nearly all answers had interesting ideas about Isabella, often showing secure knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to ignore the quotation and give a summary, often very detailed, of her part in the play. Better answers explored the complexity of her characterisation, keeping the quotation clearly in view. Good answers linked her overt religious attitudes, such as her response to finding out about her brother's offence to her willingness to use Marianna and fall in with the Duke's plans. Very good answers often saw links between her presentation and its ambiguity and

the portrayal of Angelo. Answers which considered how Shakespeare uses this ambivalence to develop the plot and the moral ambiguity of the play often did very well.

- (b) Nearly all answers recognised this as one of the comic highlights of the play. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage and offer general summaries of the characters of the Duke and Lucio. Better answers often considered the dramatic irony of the situation and explored how Shakespeare creates comedy through the Duke's disguise and Lucio's tactlessness, which for some was seen principally as '*honesty in telling the Friar how things really are*'. Good answers saw Lucio in the context of overarching themes of deception and disguise, both in his own desire to seem more than he is and in inadvertently exposing the difficulties of 'seeming' to the Duke. Others saw how the Duke would in fact have 'lenity for lechery' later in the play, as well as recognising how this prepared the ground for the revelations in the final scene and the comic denouement. Others explored Shakespeare's methods of characterisation – for example, how Lucio '*warms to his theme of bad mouthing the Duke, because of the Friar's shocked responses*', with some wondering if the Duke's response here, linked to his later questioning of Escalus, reveal a deeply insecure character, better able to cope with life in disguise than as himself. Very good answers recognised the '*inner truth of Lucio's jocular descriptions of Angelo, when we consider what he did to Marianna and was about to do to Isabella and Claudio*' and those answers which saw the dramatic opportunities in Lucio's pretence of close acquaintance with the Duke and the disguised Duke's uncomfortable situation often did very well.

2. *Othello*: William Shakespeare

This was the most popular Shakespeare text, with the majority of candidates opting for the passage-based question, which was the most popular question on the paper.

- (a) Nearly every answer revealed a detailed knowledge of the text, often relevantly chosen to explore the relationship. Weaker answers tended to summarise the couple's story, with little regard to the details of the task. Competent answers tended to consider each character in turn, noting how they responded to Othello and Desdemona. Better answers noted how the relationship was seen as unusual and unexpected and nearly always judged through the prism of race with status and age also seen as a factor. Desdemona's choice to rebel against father and custom was often seen as a key element in Iago's ability to sow seeds of doubt in Othello's mind. Others noted the more balanced, if perhaps self-interested, response from the Duke in the 'trial' scene. Many very good answers contrasted Cassio's supportive attitude- 'Captain's captain' and his help with the wooing with Iago's bestial language and cynical sneering.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised this as part of the rising action of the play and as one candidate stated: '*part of the rising action in Iago's destruction of Othello*'. Weaker answers, sometimes confused as to the precise context, tended to paraphrase or offer general comments on Othello and Iago. Better answers explored the context of Othello now believing he has the ocular proof of his wife's infidelity. Good answers looked at the detail of the writing and were able to see how Iago uses the power of suggestion, such as accusations with ambiguous endings, use of words, images and questions to lead Othello to madness and desperation. Many good answers noted the revelation of Iago's true self in his aside, often horrified by his lack of pity or compunction. Others noted how '*Iago skilfully plants seeds of doubt*' so that it seems '*to Othello as though it is his thinking and not Iago's suggestions*'. Good answers explored Iago's use of the handkerchief, '*like a bull fighter tormenting a stupid bull with a red rag*' as one put it. Very good answers, noting the dramatic action explored Cassio's entrance and how it reveals Iago's quick thinking, whilst others analysed the sharp contrast in language between this Othello and the one who stood before the Duke and Brabantio earlier in the play.

3. *Emma*: Jane Austen

This was a popular **Section B** text, with an even split between the two options.

- (a) All answers revealed a sound knowledge of the detail of the text. Weaker answers tended to give a detailed summary of Knightley's involvement in the text, with little reference to the quotation, though often showing a sound knowledge of the text. Better answers explored his role and characterisation in detail, in terms of the plot and the development of the novel, especially through Emma's gradual maturing. Others saw Knightley as a contrast to Frank Churchill, with better answers exploring Austen's methods of characterisation more generally. Many good answers challenged the given quotation, offering spirited defences of his character, '*for without his guiding*

and moral leadership, Emma may never have found out the truth about herself. Others were less generous and thought his pursuit of Emma rather too suffocating, especially in his evident jealousy of Frank. Very good answers supported such arguments with detailed and apposite quotation, often exploring relevant features of Austen's style of narration as well as characterisation.

- (b) Most answers recognised the significance of the conversation here. Weaker answers were insecure over the precise context, but often had sound knowledge of the wider text, as well as relevant ideas about Mr Weston and Mrs Elton. Better answers saw the humour in this conversation between two new members of the Highbury world, vying with each other to dominate the conversation and only having in common their recent marriages. Better answers were also alive to the comedy of two self-interested people pursuing their own agendas without really listening to each other. Some very good answers explored how Austen creates *'the atmosphere of gossips, eager to give opinions, based on hearsay, and thereby create an impression of their standing and knowledge in society.'* Others noted the good will of Mr Weston in his reluctant flattery of Mrs Elton, as well as how she here, and so often elsewhere in the novel, is focused on status and money, thus revealing 'her intrinsic vulgarity'.

4. *Wuthering Heights*: Emily Brontë

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the option (b) passage.

- (a) Nearly all answers were able to select relevant material from the text to address the task. Basic answers tended to write about 'love' without much reference to the given quotation, but often showed a sound knowledge of and engagement with the text. Inevitably, perhaps, the main focus was on Cathy and Heathcliff, with better answers able to discuss other relationships as well. Good answers saw love as both destructive and powerful, or for others, brutal and yet nurturing. Many answers agreed with the contention. Cathy was seen particularly as selfish, through her treatment of Edgar and Heathcliff, with Heathcliff often seen as *'brutal, especially in the way he treats Isabella's love for him'*. Their love was often seen as 'destructive', though some saw the passion as in itself attractive and, for some, tragic. Other good answers saw how Edgar treats his sister's 'rebellion', for example, as indicative of the general truth of the proposition, further justified in Heathcliff's attitude to Catherine and Hareton at the end of the book. This general theme was also noted in the narrator, Lockwood and his attitudes to the young Catherine, though some noted the absence of any apparent love interest of any kind for Nellie and Joseph. Answers which supported such arguments with detailed reference to the text and awareness of Brontë's methods often did very well.
- (b) Just about every answer recognised the passage as the first detailed description of Cathy. Weaker answers offered a general summary of the passage or of Cathy's later actions in the novel. Better answers considered the detail of the passage, for example Nellie's role as the 'unreliable' narrator. Many answers noted *'the tomboyish charm of Cathy's wild spirits'* mixed with her gentler, more sensitive side; better answers saw how this was later developed through her relationships with Edgar and Heathcliff. Some responses noted the physicality of her relationships, leaning onto her father with Heathcliff's head in her lap, foreshadowing her passion and desires later in the novel. Others saw her mischievous teasing of her father as a precursor of her treatment of Edgar and to some extent Heathcliff. Her hold over Heathcliff and his willingness to do her bidding were often seen as indicative of how she controlled their relationship throughout, *'even to the extent that Heathcliff ran away and came back a rich gentleman after she said he would degrade her'*. Very good answers focused on Brontë's methods of characterisation, often discussing Nellie as the unreliable narrator and the effects of her biased viewpoint. Those answers developing the analysis to look at the narrative structures and the use of dialogue, for example, often did very well.

5. *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*: Geoffrey Chaucer

This was not a popular text on the paper, with the majority offering responses to the passage-based option.

- (a) Very few answers were seen on this question. Weaker answers tended to list all of the 'love' relationships in the text, offering some general comments on their differences. Better answers explored the presentation in the context of the given quotation, some noting the ambiguity of the Franklin's position; especially given the social context of the expected roles in marriage. Those answers which were able to support arguments with detailed quotations and show understanding of some of Chaucer's poetic methods often did very well.

- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage with little reference to the wider text or Chaucer's methods and concerns. Better answers focused on the attitudes to marriage here, noting the changes from the previous courtship. Others noted the narrative voices, exploring Chaucer's complex layering and, in better responses, considering the effects of this. Answers also explored the effects of *'Dorigen's melodramatic reaction to her husband's absence'*, though others thought his sudden removal indicative of deeper fractures in the relationship, to be exposed later in the Tale. Answers which explored the poetic methods in detail, through discussing these concerns, often did very well.

6. *Great Expectations*: Charles Dickens

This was a very popular text in this session, with most candidates choosing the passage-based question.

- (a) Nearly all answers found relevant material to discuss and were able to shape ideas to the question. Weaker answers tended to summarise each of Pip's relationships in turn, with little discrimination and often only a general idea of their relative significance. Better answers saw how the lack of a mother figure and the harsh treatment meted out by his sister coloured his relationships later in the text. Others saw how the fateful invitation to Satis House and the influence of both Miss Havisham and Estella further damaged Pip in his formative years. Good answers saw how his attitude to Biddy changed, for example, reflecting his own moral development throughout the novel. When such arguments were supported by detailed reference to the text and Dickens's methods of characterisation and narration, the responses often did very well.
- (b) Most answers recognised this passage as the introduction of Herbert, with some noting the suspense created, the development of the plot and the eventual links Miss Havisham, Jaggers and Magwitch. Good answers explored Dickens's masterful plotting and use of irony. As one suggested, *'Pip's interactions with Herbert and Estella here set the tone of his relations with both of them throughout the novel'*. Others noted Dickens's social concerns as well, for example the class differences, especially Pip's younger perception of them, seeing them as significant themes here and elsewhere in the novel. Very good answers were alive to the subtlety of Dickens's style here, the use of dialogue and description and the shifting narrative voice and his choice of language.

7. *Selected Poems*: Andrew Marvell

This was the least popular text with very few takers for either option.

- (a) Most answers were able to identify three relevant poems. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems and make general comments about the various concerns identified. Better answers were able to find contrasting ideas about the soul to discuss, often linked to Marvell's religious views, with some relevant historical context. Good answers saw how souls were presented as tortured prisoners, the chains and escape imagery noted in *'A Dialogue between Soul and Body'*. Others explored the contrasting images: earthly and ethereal, coarse and refined. Good answers also saw the personification of the souls and their longing to return to heaven in such poems as *'On a Drop of Dew'*. Very good answers were able to develop such ideas by exploring the poetic methods employed by Marvell.
- (b) Weaker answers here tended to paraphrase the set poem, showing little understanding of its form or Marvell's concerns. Better answers addressed both of these issues. Good answers considered the poetic methods in detail. For example, as one suggested *'Marvell uses a complex metaphysical conceit to show his Lovers physically separated yet bound together through ethereal love.'* For others Fate is the enemy *'constructing barriers to love'*. The poem was often compared to *'The Garden'* and the dialogue poems. Very good answers explored some of the poetic detail such as the metal imagery – the 'tinsel' hope and the 'iron wedges of fate' and references to steel, for example – with good understanding of some of the effects created. Others saw the use of the language of science with one noting the *'geometric and cartographic conceit, complex images to impart complex ideas.'* Such answers often did very well.

8. *Selected Poems*: Christina Rossetti

This was a minority choice with very few responses to option (a) which was the least popular question on the paper, though option (b) was a more popular choice.

- (a) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase more or less relevant poems, with little sense of Rossetti's 'presentation' and often little discrimination in terms of the poetic methods. Better answers did explore her poetic methods, for example noting the symbolic use of nature and time to present her characteristic sense of loss and longing.
- (b) Most answers were able to explore the detail relevantly. Weaker answers offered a more or less accurate summary of the poem, often with some biographical context. Better answers explored the conflicts underlying the poem: earthly and spiritual, human and religious. Better answers unpicked Rossetti's characteristic self-deprecation and religious uncertainty. Very good answers analysed poetic form as well as language, showing how these create the mood and the tone, often finding links to her devotional poems by subject and tone, many noting the despair, mixed with the stubbornness and unyielding hardness of the speaker's refusal to 'open the door to salvation and redemption'.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53
**Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth
Century Texts**

Key messages

- (1) Candidates choosing option **(b)** passage questions need to have some understanding of the genre of their set texts and their specific literary features.
- (2) Candidates should carefully select an appropriate amount of relevant contextual material to integrate into their essays.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. This was the third session with the new rubric, which requires candidates to tackle at least one option **(b)** passage-based question. There were still a number of rubric errors, with candidates writing two option **(a)** discursive essays, a combination which is no longer permitted. The quality of expression was at least acceptable in nearly every case, although there are still some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at each level of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – *Othello*, *Emma* and Chaucer – with others remaining very much minority choices, particularly Marvell and Rossetti, though the responses seen suggest these texts are accessible to learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (i) Candidates tackling the option **(b)** passage-based questions should have some understanding of the genre of their chosen texts. This should include awareness of the key literary features within the different disciplines, so that they are comfortable with analysing poetic methods such as rhythm, metre and verse form, as well as language and imagery when discussing poetry. Those studying a novel or a play similarly need to understand dramatic methods and narrative methods if they are to tackle a passage successfully.
- (ii) Candidates should carefully consider how much of the wider context is relevant to their proposed answer, including use of critical comments. Some essays ignore the context altogether, which can limit the interpretation to a single viewpoint and thus not have much evidence to meet Assessment Objective 5. At the other extreme, answers sometimes have too much wider knowledge embedded in the essay which then limits the depth into which the set text or the given passage is discussed. The main focus must be on the set text and the specific task, with the candidate's arguments supported briefly and relevantly by apposite contextual references.

1. *Measure for Measure*: William Shakespeare

This was the minority Shakespeare text in this session, with nearly all candidates choosing the passage.

- (a) There were too few candidates for this question to be able to comment.
- (b) Every answer recognised this as the Duke's plan to deceive Angelo and rescue Isabella. Basic answers offered a loose paraphrase or a more general discussion of the characters. Better answers developed the analysis by close reading of the detail of the passage, noting for example how the Duke is still very much in charge, despite his disguise. Others noted the humour of 'much please the absent Duke' and good answers explored the moral ambivalence of Duke and Isabella here, seeing their '*desire to preserve their own honesty yet bring down Angelo at the expense of*

Mariana's virginity as 'shocking'. Other good answers noted the overarching themes of disguise and deception – for some, *'here used for a positive end, unlike Angelo's'*. Answers which explored the dramatic effects here in tandem with such detailed arguments did very well.

2. *Othello*: William Shakespeare

This was the most popular Shakespeare text, with the majority of candidates opting for the passage-based question.

- (a) Nearly every answer revealed a detailed knowledge of the text, often relevantly chosen to explore the relationship. Weaker answers tended to summarise the couple's story, with little regard for the details of the task. Some more successful answers tended to focus solely on Othello and ignore the relationship as a specific area of discussion. Better answers explored the ambiguity of Othello's comment, exploring his characterisation in detail, as well as his attitudes to Desdemona. Others saw his self-justification as untenable – *'a last attempt to portray himself in an acceptable light'*, as one suggested. Many agreed he was 'unwise' in his choice, but only from the point of view of Desdemona and very few thought he loved 'too well'. Very good answers explored his language in detail here and elsewhere, often concluding that his lack of awareness, even at the end was symptomatic of the presentation of the doomed relationship throughout the play.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised this as early in Iago's plot to destroy Othello. Weaker answers sometimes confused as to the precise context and tended to paraphrase, or offer general comments on Othello and Iago. Better answers explored the context of Othello's starting to consider Desdemona's infidelity. Good answers looked at the detail of the writing and saw how Iago uses the power of suggestion, through words, images and questions to lead Othello to doubt his wife. Iago's ability to manipulate and develop relationships was often discussed. His 'honest' stage persona, described by Othello in this rare soliloquy, was well contrasted with his *'outrageous lies and two-facedness, as proved by his previous description of Cassio to Roderigo in Act 1,'* as one answer suggested. His pretence of uncertainty, his show of false interest in Othello's position and his understanding of Othello's weakness were all much discussed. Others saw the contrast as *'Othello's evil angel leaves and his good angel enters'*, so that for some Othello's 'heart and mind are the battleground between the opposing forces of good and evil'. His nature noted, for some it was seen as trusting and for others naïve and simple, with some seeing his racial insecurity exploited by Iago. Very good answers explored the dramatic ironies of much that is said here, as well as other dramatic and poetic methods.

3. *Emma*: Jane Austen

This was not a popular text on the paper, with the majority offering the passage-based question.

- (a) There were too few candidates for this question to be able to comment.
- (b) Most answers recognised the significance of the conversation here. Weaker answers were insecure over the precise context of the passage but often had sound knowledge of the wider text, as well as relevant ideas about the Knightley brothers and Emma. Better answers saw the humour in this conversation as well as Austen's characteristic social and moral concerns. Good answers explored the characterisation here, considering what is revealed about the characters as well as the relationships. Very good answers tended to analyse the methods in tandem with the wider discussion, exploring narrative and linguistic techniques and crucially their effects.

4. *Wuthering Heights*: Emily Brontë

This was not a popular text on the paper, with the majority offering the passage-based question.

- (a) There were too few candidates for this question to be able to comment.
- (b) Nearly all responses had a sound knowledge of the text and recognised this passage from near the end of the novel. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage and offer some general comments on the characters. Better answers focused on the characterisation, especially of Catherine and Hareton, with some linking the discussion to the wider text and Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship. Very good answers noted the narrative voice and importantly its effects, as well as other key methods such as language, dialogue and sentence structure.

5. *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*: Geoffrey Chaucer

This was a popular choice in this session, with an even split between the two options.

- (a) Weaker answers tended to offer general comments on love. Most good answers were able to explore the presentation of love in some detail. Basic answers tended to ignore the given quotation and offer a summary of the different characters responses to love in the text. Better answers noted how the attitudes to love served as a key means of characterisation. The conflicting views of love held by Arveragus and Aurelius were often compared, along with Dorigen's attitudes before and after her marriage and her 'foolish promise'. Others explored love in marriage against the wider context of the 'marriage debate'; considering what the Franklin or Chaucer suggest about 'maistrie' and 'love'. Better answers also widen the debate to consider love between friends and family, as well as, for some, the '*disturbing hints of self-love in Arveragus's departure to seek glory and Aurelius's use of magic to seek sexual fulfilment*'. Very good answers contrasted the 'courtly loves' of Arveragus and Aurelius and how Chaucer undermines both through the more earthly and human love that Dorigen has for her husband.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage with little reference to the wider text or Chaucer's methods and concerns. Better answers focused on the significance of the concerns here, noting how Dorigen's worries over the rocks made her more vulnerable to Aurelius's wooing. Many good answers noted the language of her despair and her faith in the prayers of the wife left behind to keep her husband safe. Others explored the language and imagery of anxiety and despair, showing how they reveal her love for Arveragus.

6. *Great Expectations*: Charles Dickens

This was a minority choice with an even split between the options.

- (a) Most candidates were able to find relevant material to explore, with nearly all answers discussing Pip's home in the marshes, his abusive sister and Joe's love and protection. Weaker answers tended to discuss the characters in the various families, often finding some generally relevant ideas. Some more competent answers focused exclusively on Pip's various families, including his relationship with Herbert and Magwitch at the end of the novel. Better answers considered other families as well, seeing, for example, how Dickens contrasted the family at the forge with Satis House and the Castle to create his effects.
- (b) Most answers recognised this passage as Pip's leaving Satis House to become an apprentice to Joe, before his great expectations begin. Weaker answers often struggled with the context and offered a more general paraphrase of the passage. Better answers were able to discuss the significance of this point in the novel's structure and in Pip's development. Good answers explored the comedy, noting Pip's mortification and Joe's uncomfortable behaviour and awkwardness, which better answers tracked alongside the developing plot with Pip's later rejection of Joe and all he stands for once he has expectations. Very good answers analysed some of the methods, for example Dickens's use of narrative voice, the dialogue and his choice of language, often exploring the effects created on the reader.

7. *Selected Poems*: Andrew Marvell

This was the least popular text with only a very few taking option (b).

- (a) There were too few candidates for this question to be able to comment.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to offer a more or less accurate paraphrase of the poem, with little discussion of the methods or concerns. Better answers did consider Marvell's characteristic pastoral concerns with some discussion of the use of natural imagery and simple language to convey the cares of the mower. Good answers explored the overarching allegory of time and the grim Reaper, noting how its connection here with rejected love is comic or effective, depending on your point of view. Few responses looked in detail at the effects created by the poetic methods used, but those that did often did very well.

8. Selected Poems: Christina Rossetti

A minority choice in this session though slightly more popular than Marvell, with nearly all candidates opting for the passage.

- (a) There were too few candidates for this question to be able to comment.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with little recognition of methods or concerns and no apparent awareness of the rest of the poem. Better answers did relate this extract to the wider poem and also to other poems such as *'Memory'*, *'Despised, Rejected'* and *'Goblin Market'*. Good answers noted Rossetti's characteristic concerns of longing, renunciation, the tension between earthly desires and spiritual fulfilment and the need for companionship. Very good responses developed such ideas by exploring the poetic methods here and in the wider text, as well as their poetic effects.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Many candidates need to show more detailed knowledge of the texts, shaped to the demands of the question, evidenced by specific references to relevant scenes and pertinent quotations.
- To gain higher marks, this knowledge needs to be presented as evidence of understanding methods and effects rather than as narrative or explanation of characters and ideas.
- Passage-based **(b)** questions continue to be the most popular but are not always well done. Successful candidates are those who show evidence of close reading of the given extract and a critical appreciation of 'the effects of the writing' within it, while at the same time showing its relationship with the wider text.
- Many well-informed, engaged candidates would score more highly if they could develop their essay writing skills to include more analysis.

General comments

The paper was of a comparable level of difficulty with previous sessions and while *Death of a Salesman* was by far the most popular text and produced the full range of answers, there were many interesting, detailed discussions on the others; including the new text- Eleanor Catton's *The Rehearsal*, where a number of candidates really engaged with her postmodern experimentation with identity, masks, roles and so on. At all levels of competency, candidates showed a lively engagement with their texts, and many wrote substantial essays with evidence of careful consideration of the ideas, some insight and obvious enjoyment.

This session there were very few rubric errors with candidates offering only one essay. The majority managed their time well, and wrote equally balanced essays. At the higher levels, some were able to construct personal, literary arguments in response to the questions. These were well supported by textual references and showed an ability to appreciate aspects of the various writers' craft by analysing methods of presenting concerns and characters, structure, language and occasionally aspects of form. Other candidates, who seemed to have a reasonably sound grasp of the overall meaning or concerns of a text, did not appear to have enough detailed knowledge available to support their ideas. They could often only manage a page and three-quarters per essay or wrote longer but very general essays, with paragraphs of personal reflections on the various social issues. Some with quite detailed knowledge of the texts were perhaps less successful than they might have expected. They tended to give accounts, descriptions or explanations concentrating on the content rather than focusing on how writers create meaning and shape response. Often this was a question of presentation, a need for a more analytical approach and mode of expression. For example when they did use a quotation it would often be followed by a paraphrase, rather than critical analysis: 'He tells the boy "I can't believe that nobody else is doing anything about this." to show the boy he was doing something to stand up for him and to do the right thing.'

In terms of language and structure most of the candidates could produce clear, straightforward essays. Those who took a few minutes to plan tended to construct answers with a stronger focus on the questions and often with a greater range and development of ideas. More successful candidates used a 10-15 line introduction to consider the terms and implications of the **(a)** questions and ensured that the key terms were embedded in the answer. They made good use of discourse markers such as *moreover*, *furthermore* and *on the other hand* to construct coherent arguments. Structuring answers to **(b)** questions has always been more challenging. Candidates tend to either restrict their focus to the given extract without showing knowledge of the wider text; or they use a few details from the extract to make relevant comments on development of character and characteristic concerns in the wider text, without looking in enough detail at the effects of the

writing within the given passage. More successful candidates took time to read the given extract closely and used the introduction to explain the context or its significance for the wider text. They then discussed the ways these ideas are presented in the given extract and the various effects of the writing focusing on how writers create meaning and shape a response. Some candidates who perhaps have been encouraged to prepare some general introductory remarks frequently got distracted by the pre-prepared content and failed to grasp the thrust of the question or took too long to get down to it. They often routinely mentioned general aspects of style which unfortunately were not followed up even though examples were available in the given text. Many candidates answering the **(a)** questions had a supply of short, pertinent quotations and could have maximised their use by making explicit comments on the language or sentence structure. This can be encouraged by using phrases such as 'The writer's use of.... here' or 'The key /interesting /provocative /potent word here is....'. These can also be helpful for those candidates answering the **(b)** questions, as particularly on the prose or drama extracts, there was not enough attention paid to the choice of language. Many otherwise very able candidates writing well about the texts did so only at the level of plot and character which limited their ability to reach top marks. Discussion of plays as dramatic spectacles was rare, with many candidates relying on narrative summary referring to them as novels. Poems were frequently discussed for ideas so that answers tended to rely on paraphrase which limited the opportunities for showing an appreciation of poetic methods and effects.

An increasing number of candidates made judicious use of secondary critical material to show there are many ways to look at a character, theme or image and to enhance their own arguments or more impressively sometimes, to argue against. Sometimes for example, a feminist reading of Linda in *Death of a Salesman* would be set against a psychoanalytic or historicist point of view. The best were able to 'weigh' these views by testing their applicability against textual evidence. There was some very effective use of the writers' comments on their own work particularly Miller, Adiche and Adiga. Some candidates quoted significant amounts of perfectly reasonable critical perspectives but neglected to demonstrate their own detailed knowledge of the text or analysis that would support their own view of the text. Some answers were littered with very bland supposed critical comments which did not further the argument at all e.g. 'Critic Maria Hernandez argues that Biff can't hold down a job but I think he was in prison', or ascribed an established critical perspective to the wrong person: 'critic Dr Patel suggests that *Death of a salesman* may be the tragedy of the Common Man'.

Successful candidates were able to combine detailed knowledge of their texts with proper consideration of relevant critical reading and so were able to respond to the questions with a range of ideas that had some complexity and greater depth. Less successful candidates tended to stay on the surface of the texts and took refuge in biographical or historical material or poorly assimilated critical views which they struggled to make relevant to the question.

Comments on Specific Questions

1. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah*

This was a popular text with candidates across the spectrum of ability enthusiastically engaging with the story and the writer's concerns. Both questions produced answers across the range with the **(b)** option proving to be slightly more popular.

- (a)** This was an open question allowing candidates to select a variety of relationships, not just male/female though many saw 'relationships' as necessarily implying love and sex. Those who considered the terms of the question explored one or a number of the following: gender roles in Nigerian/US culture, the issue of economic insecurity, the need to embrace corruption to gain power; the impact of race on power and issues to do with class and status. Many had detailed knowledge of characters and significant events so could make useful comparisons, for example between Auntie Uju and the General, Auntie Uju and Bartholmew, Curt with Ifemelu, Ifemelu with Obinze and Obinze with Kosi. There were also some good responses on Ifemelu's relationships with her respective employers and how she finds herself in her blog- a self-empowering 'relationship with the public' and why she resents Blaine's critical comments from his position as an academic. Others used the experience of being an immigrant as a thematic thread and, as well as Ifemelu and Obinze, included Emenike, Dike and the false aristocracy of the 'Americanahs'. What was impressive about the best of these essays was the ability to create a thoroughly developed, coherent discussion with interesting personal insights supported by skilfully integrated textual references. For example, there were some good detailed analyses of ideas about power and equality within the relationship between Ifemelu and Obinze. Less accomplished essays showed a restricted discussion of the ideas and tended to rely on narrative summary: 'Because Curt was

white he didn't understand what Ifemelu faced on a daily basis and laughed off her struggles....' Often there were no quotations though some sense of the narrative structure emerged in the awareness of parallel experiences and use of contrast and most could show a clear understanding of the characters.

- (b) This was sometimes very well done. Many described, quite well, the satirical tone of the piece, the irony that those marginalized and discriminated against in the US wear their accents and education in Nigeria as a badge of pride. Many extrapolated on the theme of hair and identity, falseness, accents, hypocrisy etc. and the way in which the passage satirises not only people, but both Nigerian and US norms; suggesting both societies are flawed. The best answers stuck close to the passage and looked at how phrases such as 'defeated by chemicals' suggest a war against oneself, and by extension Africa's destructive battles with a sense of inferiority, one disguised by a 'self-style quirkiness'. These noticed the pretentious effects of the juxtaposition of 'drinking champagne in paper cups', the caustic tone of 'dripping', the impact of natural hair being described as 'an alien eruption' and the triple repetition of 'Good customer service.' A few noted that the 'voice' in the passage is a subtle combination of Adiche and Ifemelu – the voice of the wry outsider and pointed to Ifemelu's partly unsuccessful attempts to detach herself from the attitudes of the other Americans. Some made brief but pertinent references to Ifemelu's observations and feelings at Shan's party earlier in the novel. Less successful attempts stayed on the surface of the text and in adopting a running commentary approach often strayed into paraphrase or narrative summary. They usually showed clear understanding of the content but there was only some restricted or implicit awareness of the effects of the writing. A minority however revealed partial understanding, claiming that the meeting or the salon girls were in America. Others used the passage as a lift-off for a more general essay on the significance of hair in the wider novel, or personal reflections on the effects of emigration and how people do not fit in on their return.

2. ARAVIND ADIGA: The White Tiger

This was a popular text which has obviously provoked lively discussion. The (b) question proved to be marginally the more popular choice but both questions produced answers across the range and were often very well done.

- (a) There were some outstandingly detailed, well referenced answers, with the most successful essays firmly focusing on the key words in the question: 'By what means and with what effects' to cover narrative methods as well as responses to Balram as a character. Good responses considered the presentation of Balram as the owner of his business 'White Tiger Drivers' and his self-declared mission to educate a Chinese Premier on the truth about India's entrepreneurial culture and success. They wrote measured accounts, exploring what the term entrepreneur implies: aspiration, ruthless opportunism and cynical exploitation of the way the business world works and how Balram acquired his 'skills' over time through observation, overhearing, imitation and assimilation. The best answers used context well here, exploring the post-colonial theme and the notion of the Nietzschean Übermensch. In considering various shades of moral judgement on Balram, comments tethered these to the structure with some analysis of parallel scenes, the use of symbolism and the effects of the language in the epistolary form. More modest answers gave a simpler rags-to-riches account of Balram, focusing on the more obvious events. Many did not really mention where Balram ends up at the close of his entrepreneurial journey and what this suggests about Adiga's agenda as a writer. In weaker answers moral judgements became detached from any consideration of Adiga's presentation of the character.
- (b) At the top end, this passage provoked some interesting exploratory answers and most candidates were clear on its significance in the development of Balram as a character. The discriminating factor was the approach, with less successful essays tending to focus more on the wider narrative context than the significance and effects of the language and imagery within the passage. Much was made of the significance of the 'jungle' as opposed to a 'zoo', the history of Balram's identification as the White Tiger and linked to the description of the tiger's hypnotic walking behind bars, to the central motif of the Rooster Coop. A few candidates seemed to be mistakenly of the opinion that the tiger had actually escaped at the end. Those who offered a close reading of the passage found much to analyse. The best scripts considered what Adiga is implying about the nature of 'enlightenment' by focusing on the stereotypical picture of India at the beginning and the significance of the 'epiphany' at the end as man/beast/ and master/servant merge and how this foreshadows the brutal actions to follow. Others focused on aspects of the presentation of Balram as a character: the incongruity in the style of addressing the Chinese Premier, with whom there is an assumed equality. They commented on the use of imperatives, the strange mix of educated

moral squeamishness ‘be aware of great poetry; don’t stone the animals’ and the tone of vulgarity ‘shag a sadhu or two.’ Some noted the death/rebirth imagery at the end and linked this to Balram’s rejection of family ties; the murder of his master and assumption of his name as Ashok Sharma. Most were able to focus on some aspects of the imagery particularly the zoo and the use of animal imagery here and elsewhere in the novel. Some noted the narrative ironies of ‘Let animals live like animals...’ and saw the hippo as an image of the lazy, rich ‘big-bellies’ whom Balram does not wish to disturb as he intends to become one of them. The passage offered lots of opportunities for personal interpretation and there were some very good discussions noting the symbolism of the ‘rise and fall’ of the fort, the metaphor of ‘loopholes’ (allowing the devious to find a way out of one place into another, then find legal loopholes to excuse road accidents etc.) or how the black and white light effects leading into the tiger section echo the darkness/light imagery prevalent in the novel. What distinguished the best essays was the keen appreciation of the way the choice of language, use of imagery and variation in sentence structure shaped a reader’s response; together with a carefully argued view of Balram for example, that in exiting the Rooster Coop, he entered the zoo where he was imprisoned by wealth and corruption.

3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

There was significant take-up of this new novel which seems to have provoked lively interest, some sophisticated appreciation of the ways the writer creates ambiguity and the significance of this uncertainty for a reader. The (a) question proved to be the more popular option and tended to be better done.

- (a) A number of effective answers explored the saxophone teacher’s role in the narrative, her lack of a name, her role both as listener/voyeur and ‘director’ of others’ lives, her bringing together of Julia and Isolde: tutees through whom she can experience vicariously a relationship she herself has been denied with Patsy. Many talked about the language of stagecraft that accompanies her to blur the lines between what is real or acted out; a few insightfully pointed out that all human action is ‘acting’ in one way or another and that the character is given some of the key expressions of Catton’s concerns, for example, that youth ‘is a rehearsal for everything that comes after.’ Others reflected on the overtly sexual nature of the saxophone teacher, and how her work parallels that of the school and drama school. Many mentioned the way this character challenges taboos as to what an authority figure is and should be, what relationships between teachers and students, or teachers and parents should be, as well as what a woman is. The discriminating factor was the extent to which candidates had pertinent quotations available to capture the range of the character’s feelings and tone in her relationships with others. Less successful essays tended to give a more general account of her role in the plot, noting the parallel details between Julian and Isolde and herself and Patsy, such as the concerts and explaining the reporting of Stanley’s relationship with Isolde as unresolved jealousy and frustration at Patsy’s marriage.
- (b) A few reflected well on how the scene juxtaposed Stanley’s otherwise weak and timid persona and referred to other specific scenes in the novel in which he is struggling to find a role and identity. Some, knowing that Stanley had observed and done nothing in the Theatre of Cruelty session felt that Stanley was acting out of guilt, or more cynically had put on the mask of a concerned person because that is what society expects. It was argued that in anger at the ‘victim’s’ rejection of his concern Stanley had become, ironically, the aggressor, trapping and pinioning the boy. A few mentioned the description of Stanley’s voice in the stairwell but there was more to say about how the dialogue worked with its short declarative or minor sentences, restricted colloquial diction and use of repetition. Very few spotted the significance for the novel as a whole of ‘It’s not your problem. You weren’t there.’ Generally though, this question seemed to be the choice of weaker candidates who lacked textual knowledge and stayed on the surface of the text. There were several who did little more than paraphrase it, or who failed to note that the answer asked them to reflect on Stanley here and elsewhere in the novel. Some seemed not to understand that Stanley had been duped by a ‘performance’ and misunderstood the meaning of ‘plant’. Too many answers were characterised by tentative, vague assertions such as the boy having suffered ‘an embarrassing experience.’ There were a few attempts to show how the expected roles of victim/saviour are subverted in the passage but judgements of Stanley did not take into account his experience of trying to talk about the Theatre of Cruelty episode with the Head of Movement.

4. ATHOL FUGARD: *My Children! My Africa!* and *The Road to Mecca*.

This was not a popular choice of text this session and although both questions produced some good, well detailed answers, the tendency in both questions was to show generalised knowledge of plot and situation

rather than evidence of close reading and appreciation of dramatic methods and effects. The **(b)** question was the more popular choice and produced answers across the range.

- (a)** Most candidates were able to tether the characters to a clear understanding of the political context and their roles as a white, Afrikaner, Protestant pastor and a black teacher opposed to violence in the student uprisings against apartheid. The majority of answers tended to be rather general, descriptive in approach with few quotations and detailed references. Better responses looked for points of comparison and moved between the two characters to discuss their roles as authority figures in their communities, their conservative values, stubborn adherence to their beliefs and just occasionally – some appreciation of the difficulty they had in expressing love. Effective answers explored the role each played dramatically and morally as well as the theme that misguided morality can result in tragedy, giving rich detail from the texts regarding the respective conflicts into which these characters are drawn. Some showed the ways in which they became antagonists without intending to do so. There was less attention paid to methods of presentation – such as the use of symbolism, the way back-stories are presented and the use of soliloquies. Most answers could have been improved by some detailed focus on key scenes, such as the way Fugard manages the big dramatic moments such as the admission of love for Helen in *The Road to Mecca* and Mr M's defiant ringing of the bell in *My Children! My Africa!*
- (b)** Most were able to put this exchange into the social context of the play and explain why friendship between Isabel and Thami would be problematic, though few commented on the issue of the competition; that the curriculum of authors: Hardy, Austen and Dickens seems confined to dead white English writers and is perhaps of tenuous relevance to the South African context, and therefore represents a kind of imperial agenda in itself. There was evidence of some good close reading with good answers exploring the power dynamic between Thami and Isabel, discussing how she talks with the voice of naïve white privilege, while he is trapped into the more formal black African conventions of subservience to an elder. Some commented on her hectoring, arrogant tone when instructing Thami how to confront (verbally) those things he opposes; her slightly patronizing use of both his names, and how the power-shifts between them are reflected in his clipped and then more fulsome and angry responses, ones in which his political reality confronts her view that everything boils down to human and 'personal' relationships. The best looked at nuances of language, such as when Thami says ominously that Mr M has 'chosen to identify himself' with the wrong side, the word 'chosen' suggesting he has brought his fate upon himself. Some noted how the rhythm of the extract changes from stichomythia to more considered and longer exchanges. Some looked at ellipses and stage directions: some explored how Isabel speaks in the voice of appeasement and idealism, which juxtaposes the grim fatalism of Thami. Less assured essays tended to describe the characters, often focusing more on Isabel, noting her sincerity, her attempts to do the right thing and maintain her dignity at the end; or they attempted a running commentary which often relapsed into paraphrase and summary.

5. LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

This continues to be quite a popular text. Due to an issue with the **(b)** question, a discussion took place before marking began, and measures were put in place for marking **Questions 5(a)** and **5(b)** to ensure that no candidates were disadvantaged by the error.

- (a)** Most candidates understood the idea of 'voices' and thought of using the idea of personas or of contrasting the different tones in Lochhead's work. A few were more tentative, and thought about how Lochhead 'gave voice' to particular feelings, using '*Visit, Sonnet*'. The most effective essays chose contrasting poems and dealt well with such poems as '*Rapunzsiltskin*' or '*Everybody's Mother*,' '*Revelation*,' '*Poem for my Sister*' or '*After a Warrant Sale*' and one of the poems dealing with love or loss including some interesting feminist readings of '*The New-Married Miner*.' Most showed a good understanding and sympathy for the human subject-matter of the selected poems. The discriminating factors were the extent to which candidates could discuss Lochhead's choice of language and use of form and structure through analysis of pertinent quotations or whether they relied on summaries of the poems. Most however, were able to show some appreciation of the different viewpoints as a daughter, sister, girl growing up, friend, observer, witness, disappointed lover or victim or were able to discuss some of the ways Lochhead uses the specifics of situation and setting, objects and tone to express attitudes and moods.
- (b)** There were some responses to this poem and those who read it closely and carefully were able to construct balanced essays, realising that it linked to other poems on the subject of creativity. Candidates who picked up on specific details such as 'for every good one/ there are ten in the

trash' remembered that in '*Poets Need Not*' Lochhead talks of how 'efforts end up in the bin'. In pursuing productive links between the given poem and '*Poets Need Not*', '*Notes on the Inadequacy of a Sketch*', '*Persimmons*' and interestingly '*Visit, Sonnet*'; some were able to intelligently discuss Lochhead's exploration of the issue of inspiration, the crafting necessary to make sure the 'endless possibilities' are 'rhymed right' to fit the mood, or capture the experience or a memory. Some candidates showed an impressive use of their skills in practical criticism. There were some insightful comments on the effects of the language: 'songs you slaved over/ that just won't sing' and the synaesthesia in '*The tune that smells like an onion?*', the colloquial diction and speech rhythms using listing, repetition and parentheses and the structure of the poem comparing the closing of stanzas with: 'its own tune that was born for it' and 'its own fine-tuned lyric that is born for it.' Those who considered specific details found that an understanding of the meaning of the poem emerged. Others struggled to pick up on the significance from the poem's initial question: 'which comes first, the 'words or music?' but nevertheless tried to use paraphrase to tease out a meaning with varying degrees of success.

6. ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

This was by far the most popular text. Both questions produced answers across the range, with the (b) question proving to be the more popular choice. Essay writing technique was a key discriminating factor in both essays: whether candidates adopted an analytical or descriptive approach.

- (a) Successful essays were built on a consideration of the terms of the questions: some explored the difference between understanding and accepting and pointed out that characters such as Bernard and Charlie and Ben and Howard do not struggle. Willy and Biff were compared as characters who struggle to understand themselves and their failures, using the 'I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you' scene at the end of the play to focus on the idea of acceptance. They were contrasted with Happy who makes little effort to understand himself or his father's situation. When Happy draws attention to his inadequacy, his unhappiness 'I'm getting married' or frustrations at work, his coping mechanisms – cheating and womanising or embracing Willy's dream to 'come out number-one man' – are celebrated by him, not questioned or agonized over. Some reflected on this, seeing him as Willy's reincarnation, contrasting him with the only character who 'learns' – Biff. Some candidates relied on a psychological perspective to explain Willy's insecurities in terms of abandonment, or a feminist and historicist critique of Linda to explain her acceptance of her domestic role and failure to take responsibility for confronting Willy. While these perspectives opened up some interesting ideas, they often tended to displace discussion of the text. The best essays were able to focus on methods of presentation – particularly of the expressionistic techniques, the use of the set, the symbolic 'planting scene' and the flashback scenes to show Willy's failure as an unfaithful husband and an unprincipled parent and delusions about economic success in imagined conversations with Ben. Modest answers tended to rely on descriptions of character and showed clear understanding of key events with some use of significant detail, such as Willy's tendency to contradict himself within a few lines. Weaker ones wrote endlessly of the American Dream and Willy being a victim of capitalism but didn't necessarily show how he 'struggled to accept' his nature and how that was depicted on stage.
- (b) Most candidates were able to put the extract into the context of the wider play though some restricted their ideas to a narrative account of Willy's decline and death, or over-invested in explanations of The Woman, or on the feminist and historicist perspectives on Linda. The challenge is to maintain a balance and focus on what is significant within the given extract, while at the same time using knowledge of the wider text to elucidate or develop the points. Good essays considered the dramatic effects of the interplay between the characters particularly Linda's focus on Biff and the enormity – given the opening lines – of 'his life is in your hands'. This was often contrasted with Happy's attitude of aggressive mockery to Biff's horror-stricken and guilty responses, and the visual impact of his act of 'kneeling' although some were not convinced by his pledge to work in business whilst confessing that he 'doesn't fit'. Many noted the way Happy switches attention to an attack on Biff at the end, as if the only way he can deal with the situation is to offload blame. Biff's reactions are central to this scene but it was interesting that many candidates could make greater use of the wider text to discuss Happy as an ironic reflection of Willy than to discuss the presentation of Biff here and elsewhere in the play. For example, many asserted the critical view that Biff in this scene is only pretending to care, without weighing the evidence by taking into account his conversation with Happy earlier or the way Miller manipulates the language in his promise, to suggest a person struggling to do the right thing. Less successful essays stayed on the surface of the text. They made simple, straight forward comments on foreshadowing. Most were able to comment on the dramatic impact of the hesitation and repetition of Linda's 'these accidents in the last year – weren't

– weren't accidents' but many talked rather generally about how Miller's use of dashes and full stops '*makes a character stop talking and appear close to breakdown*'. Those who adopted a running commentary approach were often paraphrasing, even when noting the stage directions '*which make it clear that Biff is feeling angry and despairing at this point.*' In discussing the extent of Linda's culpability for Willy's suicide, her desire to save his feelings by not confronting him or challenging him some candidates were clearly frustrated or angered by this perceived moral weakness; seeing her as a weak facilitator shaped by her subservient domestic role. Few however, considered contemporary attitudes to the shameful act of suicide. In pursuing these ideas, many tended to drift away from an appreciation of the text as a play. Most noted the misunderstanding and overlapping of speech when 'the woman' is mentioned, but many seemed to think the audience had already seen evidence of Biff's knowledge of the affair, or thought this was clear evidence Linda knew about it. Better candidates on the other hand, noted that a theatre audience would wonder why Biff was so anxious, pointing out that this scene would take on retrospective significance after the reveal when Biff sees The Woman in Boston. They used this knowledge to show an ability to think of the play in performance – that the actor playing Biff would be worried about whether his mother knew of the affair and would realise she didn't. Good answers were always distinguished by an appreciation of the text as drama and by analysis of specific moments. When considering dialogue for example, it is good to see some candidates using the word *stichomythia* but it is always more effective to discuss the effects of a short exchange at a particular moment in the scene, so that the point can be extended by analysis of sentence structure and choice of language.

7. W.B. YEATS: *Selected Poems*

Yeats's poetry is often complex and challenging but good candidates wrote well-informed appreciative essays particularly on the more popular **(b)** question. Most tended to be better on subject matter than style.

- (a)** Most candidates chose to contrast the lyricism of '*The Lake Isle of Innisfree*' with either '*September 1913*' or '*Easter 1916*' many confidently placing the poems within the context of Yeats's Romanticism, his attitude to change and the ambiguity of his feeling towards the political upheavals. Some managed to make use of details within '*In Memory of Major Robert Gregory*' and '*Under Ben Bulbin*' to show how Yeats valued aspects of Irish life and culture. Those who picked up on the word 'feelings' in the question used it not only to structure discussion but also as a prompt to discuss how different moods and tones are created by choice of language, use of repetition and various sound effects. The best essays were detailed and analytical in their approach to the poems. Most however, tended to offer detailed contextual knowledge explaining how Yeats's feelings towards Ireland were tied up with his unrequited love for Maud Gonne and the political background to '*September 1913*' and '*Easter 1916*'. In these essays, treatment of the chosen poems was sketchy, relying on thin summaries of ideas, with little specific reference or quotation. As a result, opportunities to demonstrate understanding of poetic methods and effects were limited and restricted to very obvious details such as the 'greasy till' and 'a terrible beauty is born'.
- (b)** This question produced answers across the full range. Many had a conceptualised understanding of the poem and were able to place it within the context of Yeats's wider concerns about attitudes to art and culture, drawing on Yeats's own words from '*A Vision*'. One candidate opened with a quotation that touches on the central subject 'We begin to live only when we conceive life as a tragedy' to pursue the apparent contradiction between tragedy and the word 'gay' throughout the poem. Many looked at the theatrical lexical field in the second stanza, considering the references to Shakespearean tragic heroes and the impact in the context of the poem of the sound and symbolic significance of stage curtains 'about to drop' and noting the universalising effects of 'upon a thousand stages'. Most recognised the reference to 'palette', 'fiddlebow' and acting as a metonymy for art as a whole and explored how art transfigures the 'dread' of death and destruction. Many candidates picked up on 'All things fall' and took the opportunity to show wider knowledge by referring to '*The Second Coming*'. The best noted the certainty within the given poem that 'those that build them again are gay', to celebrate the act of artistic creation which, as some pointed out, Yeats was doing in creating the poem itself. There was also some sensitive appreciation of the language used to describe the skills of Callimachus and the significance of the description of the carving in the lapis lazuli combining images of the natural dangers and beauty. Some candidates focusing on the structure and development of ideas juxtaposed the 'hysterical' women of the opening with the serene and aloof Chinamen at the end, linking this to Yeats' idea of aesthetic distance, artistic control of chaos and so on. Good answers spent some time deconstructing the poet's shift to a personal expression of delight in the world of imagination at the end some apt, well-

integrated links to '*Sailing to Byzantium*,' '*No Second Troy*' and '*Long-Legged Fly*' to bring out characteristic poetic methods and effects. Many of the essays were a delightful combination of academic study and personal appreciation of the way Yeats's language works. Less assured answers took refuge in more generalised knowledge, using the 'hysterical women' to talk about '*Maud Gonne*', writing more generally about Yeats's interest in the rise and fall of civilisations with an explanation of the image of the gyres. Some noted however, that the poem is atypical in not having an angry or despairing, apocalyptic tone, some linking this to the fact that poem was written in response to a gift, this in itself lending the poem a more celebratory tone. Some weaker answers attempted to discover meaning through paraphrase, showing that they had scant knowledge of the poem with little understanding of the references and were struggling to arrive at a coherent reading. A few incorrectly interpreted the use of the word 'gay' and just occasionally went off into tangential personal reflections about homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Many candidates need to show more detailed knowledge of the texts, shaped to the demands of the question, evidenced by specific references to relevant scenes and pertinent quotations.
- To gain higher marks, this knowledge needs to be presented as evidence of understanding methods and effects rather than as narrative or explanation of characters and ideas.
- Passage-based **(b)** questions continue to be the most popular but are not always well done. Successful candidates are those who show evidence of close reading of the given extract and a critical appreciation of ‘the effects of the writing’ within it, while at the same time showing its relationship with the wider text.
- Many well-informed, engaged candidates would score more highly if they could develop their essay writing skills to include more analysis.

General comments

The paper was of a comparable level of difficulty with previous sessions and all questions proved accessible. While *Death of a Salesman* was by far the most popular text and produced the full range of answers, there were many interesting, detailed discussions of the most popular novel: *The White Tiger* and the two poetry texts. At all levels of competency, many candidates showed a lively personal engagement with their texts and wrote substantial essays with evidence of careful consideration of the ideas, demonstrating insight into the significance of specific details and obvious enjoyment of the texts studied.

This session there were very few rubric errors with candidates offering only one essay. The majority managed their time well, and wrote equally balanced essays. At the higher levels, some were able to construct personal, literary arguments in response to the questions. These were well supported by textual references and showed an ability to appreciate aspects of the various writers’ craft by analysing methods of presenting concerns and characters, structure, language and occasionally aspects of form. Other candidates, who seemed to have a reasonably sound grasp of the overall meaning or concerns of a text, did not appear to have enough detailed knowledge available to support their ideas. They could often only manage a page and three-quarters per essay or wrote longer but very general essays, with paragraphs of personal reflections on the various social issues. Some with quite detailed knowledge of the texts were perhaps less successful than they might have expected. They tended to give accounts, descriptions or explanations concentrating on the content rather than focusing on how writers create meaning and shape response. Often this was a question of presentation, a need for a more analytical approach and mode of expression. For example when they did use a quotation it would often be followed by a paraphrase, rather than critical analysis: ‘He tells the boy “I can’t believe that nobody else is doing anything about this.” to show the boy he was doing something to stand up for him and to do the right thing.’

In terms of language and structure most of the candidates could produce clear, straightforward essays. Those who took a few minutes to plan tended to construct answers with a stronger focus on the questions and often with a greater range and development of ideas. More successful candidates used a 10-15 line introduction to consider the terms and implications of the **(a)** questions and ensured that the key terms were embedded in the answer. They made good use of discourse markers such as *moreover*, *furthermore* and *on the other hand* to construct coherent arguments. Structuring answers to **(b)** questions has always been more challenging. Candidates tend to either restrict their focus to the given extract without showing knowledge of the wider text; or they use a few details from the extract to make relevant comments on development of character and characteristic concerns in the wider text, without looking in enough detail at the effects of the

writing within the given passage. More successful candidates took time to read the given extract closely and used the introduction to explain the context or its significance for the wider text. They then discussed the ways these ideas are presented in the given extract and the various effects of the writing focusing on how writers create meaning and shape a response. Some candidates who perhaps have been encouraged to prepare some general introductory remarks frequently got distracted by the pre-prepared content and failed to grasp the thrust of the question or took too long to get down to it. They often routinely mentioned general aspects of style which unfortunately were not followed up even though examples were available in the given text. Many candidates answering the **(a)** questions had a supply of short, pertinent quotations and could have maximised their use by making explicit comments on the language or sentence structure. This can be encouraged by using phrases such as 'The writer's use of.... here' or 'The key /interesting /provocative /potent word here is....'. These can also be helpful for those candidates answering the **(b)** questions, as particularly on the prose or drama extracts, there was not enough attention paid to the choice of language. Many otherwise very able candidates writing well about the texts did so only at the level of plot and character which limited their ability to reach top marks. Discussion of plays as dramatic spectacles was rare, with many candidates relying on narrative summary referring to them as novels. Poems were frequently discussed for ideas so that answers tended to rely on paraphrase which limited the opportunities for showing an appreciation of poetic methods and effects.

This session an increasing number of candidates made judicious use of secondary critical material to show there are many ways to look at a character, theme or image; enhancing their own arguments or more impressively, sometimes setting up arguments which evaluate these views. Sometimes for example, a feminist reading of Linda in *Death of a Salesman* would be set against a psychoanalytic or historicist point of view. The best were able to 'weigh' these views by testing their applicability against textual evidence. There was some very effective use of the writers' comments on their own work particularly Miller, Adichie and Adiga. Some candidates quoted significant amounts of perfectly reasonable critical perspectives but neglected to demonstrate their own detailed knowledge of the text or analysis that would support their own view of the text. Some answers were littered with very bland supposed critical comments which did not further the argument at all e.g. 'Critic Maria Hernandez argues that Biff can't hold down a job but I think he was in prison', or ascribed an established critical perspective to the wrong person: 'critic Dr Patel suggests that *Death of a salesman* may be the tragedy of the Common Man'.

Successful candidates were able to combine detailed knowledge of their texts with proper consideration of relevant critical reading and so were able to respond to the questions with a range of ideas that had some complexity and greater depth. Less successful candidates tended to stay on the surface of the texts and took refuge in biographical or historical material or poorly assimilated critical views which they struggled to make relevant to the question.

Comments on specific questions

1. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah*

This was not such a popular text this session though both questions proved equally popular and produced answers across the range.

- (a)** This question produced some knowledgeable and enthusiastic answers. Many candidates carefully focused on the narrative methods and effects in their selection of relationships to show an appreciation of Adichie's use of structure and contrasts, presentation of character and concerns through different points of view, choice of language and the use of the blogs. The best responses opened the question out to explore feminist and cultural representations of men and women and how culture impacted on approved conduct, some students suggesting that Ifemelu was engaged in challenging such perceptions despite sometimes undermining her agenda with sexism of her own: 'hot white ex'. The most sophisticated navigated very well between the discussions of relationships in the blogs, the third person presentation of Ifemelu's relationships and Obinze's experience in the UK; with some making insightful observations on Emineke and his English wife Georgina and feelings about an arranged marriage of convenience. Most answers were able to explore how the relationships reveal aspects of wider issues such as gender politics, financial and social security, racism and the experience of being an immigrant. They used Aunt Uju's relationships with the General and Bartholemew, Ifemelu's relationships with Curt, Blaine and Obinze or the relationship between Ifemelu and Obinze and Obinze and Kosi to explain how readers feel about his leaving his wife for Ifemelu at the end. These essays often revealed restricted levels of detailed textual knowledge. Better responses gave greater details on Curt with references to issues such as getting Ifemelu a job, dealing with curly eyebrows, cultural ideas

about beauty in magazines and the issue of natural hair but there was often less given on the relationships between Ifemelu and Obinze or Obinze and Kosi. Although they show a sound, general understanding of the dynamics of the relationships they seemed to have fewer pertinent quotations available. Less successful essays offered narrative descriptions of Ifemelu's unsuccessful relationships with limited analysis of methods and effects.

- (b) This was the slightly more popular choice with the best responses offering balanced approaches, dividing their time between detailed critical appreciation of style, the significance of the passage as the opening of the novel and an understanding of concerns and references that linked to the wider novel. In good answers references to Blaine and Obinze and the memory of the man in the supermarket were taken as opportunities to discuss the effects of the structure of the novel. Ifemelu's detailed descriptions were taken as evidence of her abilities to observe and reflect on her experiences raising the wider issues of cultural norms, racism and use of language while at the same time showing her identity as a writer and as someone who is struggling with 'cement in her soul' intent on finding words that were 'true'. Some noticed the image of 'cement' or the image Nigeria being the only place where she could resist the urge to tug 'out her roots to shake off the soil' but only the best took time to explore the effects of the language in these examples, or elsewhere in the passage. Very few commented on such phrases as 'heaving with moral judgement', 'brief imaginary glints of other lives she could have been living' or 'prodded her awake'. It was even rarer for anyone to look at the way the longer sentences in the second paragraph are structured to give a painful sense of her feelings though a couple commented on the stark effect of alienation in the simple brevity of 'They were living her life.' Less successful essays tended to discuss the ideas in the passage in a general way and use it as a launch-pad for the narrative of Ifemelu's relationship with Obinze, sometimes offering a strong, simplistic judgemental response to her treatment of Blaine at the end of the passage and her resumption of an adulterous relationship with Obinze. Others wrote partial answers – focusing on ideas of body image and beauty and then drifting into discussions of how hair is used throughout the novel or focused more generally on the blog-writing without really having detailed examples to show how the presentation of ideas and how style in the blogs differs from the third person narrative in the given passage. Weaker responses tended to take a linear approach to the passage and lapsed into paraphrase.

2. ARAVIND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*

This was the second most popular text after Miller, with candidates showing an enthusiastic engagement with both the social concerns and the character of Balram. Both questions provoked answers across the range with the (b) question proving to be the slightly more popular choice.

- (a) Economic success was covered effectively by many and candidates seemed to have lots to say about the context and the novel's imagery, shape and form; tying all this to the controversial nature of the novel's satire of post-colonial, post caste-system India dominated by The Rooster Coop. The best used Nietzsche as a philosophical viewpoint, and discussed the skewed moral perspective of the narrator, some commenting on his paradoxical unreliability (he excuses unspeakable acts) and charm, as a man made, to some degree, by his surroundings. They focused on the effects of the epistolary method and on how a reader's response is shaped by Balram's apparent presentation of himself as a successful entrepreneur in the letters to the Chinese Premier. Many expanded upon corruption, animal imagery, light and dark symbolism, the use of the chandeliers and prostitutes as indicators of economic success, and Balram's caustic observations on Ashok's evening exercise around Buckingham Towers B Block. More modest essays focused in a straight forward way on the qualities needed to become successful bringing out Balram's ability to take risks, the ruthless opportunism of his treatment of Ram Persad and the murder of Ashok. Many looked at his angry sense of deprivation in lack of access to health care for his father, comfortable living conditions, genuinely blonde prostitutes and the shopping malls. Most were able to comment on the power that comes with money in the parallel scenes of the car accident. Better candidates weighed up their moral judgements of Balram using evidence from the text. They pointed out the way Balram takes the blame for his employee's accident but nonetheless buys off the police, which suggests a compromise with morality but makes Balram a more attractive character than his masters. Less successful answers relied on thin or over-detailed narrative rags-to-riches summaries, or tended to focus in a general way on poverty and corruption with little attention to the instruction in the question to focus on 'By what means and with what effects.'
- (b) There were some good, intelligent essays here that managed to focus in an analytical way on the given passage while discussing some wider textual issues with support from the text. The best responses showed an understanding of the dramatic break at the end of the chapter; they knew

what the 'emergency' was and they discussed the concerns and effects within the passage in the context of Balram's letters to the Chinese Premier on the truth of his own and of India's entrepreneurial success. They focused on the imagery: the symbolism of the mall, the allusion to the new India being constructed by indistinguishable men and animals and what that implied. Some reflected on the incongruity of the tone in Balram's language to the Premier, the references to 'watermelon' and the beak-dipping, this being another animal image that connects Balram to the Mongoose and the others. Most explored the violence implied in the passage — the way a servile role is 'hammered' into Balram as his lot in life with more insightful answers explaining why this is linked to the pollution of the Ganges, a 'mother' river now as corrupted as the grandmother Kusum. Others looked at the image of the mother's foot emerging from the pyre as a clear motivating force for Balram, a vision of the 'true' mother and the thing that makes him determine not be enslaved as she was, her own slavery made clear in the wider novel by her errant foot being repeatedly shoved back on the pyre, another example of how the symbolic Rooster Coop polices itself – a point made overtly at the end. Some discoursed on Balram's isolation, the bullying he receives when he tries to do something spiritual – yoga — something which is now associated with the affluent and leisured rather than the universal path to enlightenment it once was. Some saw foreshadowing in B's 'strangling grip' on the wheel when faced by surrounding inequality, again suggestive of an authorial mitigation for Balram's crimes. More modest answers tended to restrict the discussion of the passage and write more general essays on the Rooster Coop, picked up on the reference to zoo and gave an account of Balram's identification with the white tiger. Others gave an account of Balram's relationship with Kusum, focusing on the materialistic attitude to marriage and how families also served to confine individuals to the Rooster Coop. Weaker essays restricted discussion to obvious aspects of the passage such as straightforward comments on Balram's character, his situation as a servant, rejection of Kusum's blackmail, with a tendency to lapse into paraphrase and moral outrage at his attitude to girls.

3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

This is a new text and candidates taking component 61 showed a lively interest in it producing responses across the range. There were very few offering this text on this component with no one choosing the (b) question.

- (a) The quotation in the question is of central importance to the novel its purpose was to invite candidates to consider the significance of the title and the role-playing that goes on, both in the music lessons and the drama school, as various characters create and explore a sense of their own personal identity and their sexual preferences and relationships. The few candidates who opted for this question made sensible choices of Isolde and Julia but answers tended to be generalised descriptions that were very thin on specific details or a generalised plot-based account of their relationship with each other.
- (b) No responses.

4. ATHOL FUGARD: *My Children! My Africa! and The Road to Mecca*

This was also a minority text and although both questions produced answers across the range, the (b) question was the preferred option and generally better done.

- (a) Most candidates had a sound understanding of the political and social context of the plays and considered in what ways the characters rebelled against authority and the status quo as well as how Fugard explored their humanity in the way they responded to other characters. The key discriminating factors were the extent to which candidates showed detailed knowledge of the texts, had some pertinent quotations available and whether they were able to think in terms of methods of presentation: how the actions, language and tone created a sense of their personalities and how relationships with other characters brought out their ideas and emotions. Most candidates were able to talk about roles in the plot but these were often rather generalised and reliant on narrative summary. Better essays often saw Elsa as being more complex than Thami because they felt he was defined by the political situation whereas Elsa was a political rebel in her professional life as a teacher and in the way she challenged Marius's attitudes to 'Our Coloured folk' but she also championed Miss Helen's right to individuality expressed in her Art and to autonomy which brought her into conflict with both Marius and Miss Helen when she is ironically, forcing her to stand up for herself. Some commented on the dramatic effects of her offensive language, her intelligent understanding of the significance of Miss Helen's art and what her relationship with the woman meant to her. Treatment of Thami tended to be more generalised and limited with few being able to

refer in detail to specific scenes such as his long soliloquy in Scene 6, his argument with Mr M over the inadequacy of 'words' in the political struggle, or the presentation of Thami's conflicting loyalties and emotions in the scene where he tries to warn Mr M and explain Mr M's 'murder' to Isabel.

- (b) Most candidates could narrate the dramatic and political contexts of the scene with some exploring how it is used by Fugard to present character and create dramatic effects. A few good answers discussed Isabel's bossy tone and her naïve assumption that Mr M should be able to talk to Thami in the same way Mr M talks to her, showing the emptiness of her boast that she has received 'quite an education' from Thami. She still fails to understand how impossible it is for someone black and in a subservient role to address an authority figure with her degree of insouciance. Some noted how the capitalized 'Freedom of Speech' suggests Isabel is lecturing Mr M and holding the term to be a universal absolute, not understanding how political realities mean it only exists in a compromised form. Good candidates noted the irony of 'within reasonable limits'. Others reflected on the poignancy of Mr M having to ask Isabel what Thami is thinking/feeling, this in itself showing the division between old and young in the black community and foreshadowing the trouble to come. Some commented on the way Isabel makes no distinction between her and Mr M's problems and those of Thami, showing her parochial views. Most noted the shift from the local (the school) to the wider political arena (what is going on 'on the street'); and some noted how Mr M effectively wishes to use Isabel as a spy at the end. Some good candidates noted the metaphorical 'fishing for trouble' and I am trying to catch it before it gets too big' as typical of Mr M's way with words and linked this to Mr M's good intentions, his principled but reckless actions late in the play. Less successful essays seemed to forget this is a play, even repeatedly calling it a 'novel' and thus failed to note what is dramatic in the way the scene develops. Some restricted discussion to generalised descriptions of character and did not to connect the scene to the wider text.

5. LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

This continues to be a popular text with candidates obviously enjoying the human subject matter and appreciating the liveliness of the language. The (b) question was overwhelmingly the more popular choice and produced answers across the range.

- (a) Very few candidates chose this option. Some effectively teased out a consideration of art forms – the writing of a poem in 'Poets Need Not' and 'Visit, Sonnet', and drawing in 'Persimmons' and 'Notes on the Inadequacy of a Sketch'. The key difficulty here was a lack of detailed knowledge. Most were able to discuss the structure and effects of the imagery in 'Visit, Sonnet', and give some sense of the way feelings about the relationship are communicated in 'Persimmons' but the tendency to rely on rather thin summaries of the poems limited opportunities to show an appreciation of Lochhead's poetic methods and effects.
- (b) There were some lively, engaged responses effectively probing the subject structure and imagery in relation to other poems in the collection on the experience of love or which used a strong sense of a persona or voice. Most dealt well with Lochhead's tone and her perspective of an engaged and naive observer, contrasting 'Warrant Sale' with the rueful experienced tone of 'Obituary' or the romanticised male perspective on marriage in 'The New-married Miner'. Good essays showed evidence of close reading. Some reflected on the anonymity of the forces of officialdom, the juxtaposition of the words 'politeness' and ' impersonally' with the emotive verbs 'rip' and 'tear' and the effects of the shift from 'to rip her home apart' to tearing 'her life along the dotted line/officially'. Some focused on the lexical fields, juxtaposing the idea of monetary worth/worthlessness with the theme of emotional value/pain/loss – the 'sticks of furniture' and 'only partially/paid for washing machine' set against the 'death of love' and the 'ashes of hope'. A few reflected well on the poem's form and structure, the use of parenthesis having an effect on the tone, the placing of words on a line and the twist at the end. More modest responses tended to focus on more obvious aspects of the content such as the speculative gossip and public humiliation, with some analysis of the significance of the lightened hair in the wedding photograph and the emerging 'dark roots'. Some linked the use of physical objects and what they symbolise to the wider text, linking this well to 'My Rival's House', 'Poem for my Sister' and 'Sorting Through'. Less successful essays restricted discussion to the given poem and in teasing out the meaning through paraphrase, occasionally commenting on a few features such as the use of alliteration but either ignored the ending, or showed limited understanding of its meaning and effect.

6. ARTHUR MILLER: *The Death of a Salesman*

This was overwhelmingly the most popular text, done by almost everyone. Both questions were equally popular; both produced answers across the range.

- (a) Those who considered the terms of the question did well. They discussed the play within the context of classical ideas about tragic heroes and Miller's own view of the play as 'the tragedy of the Common Man', while at the same time showing some appreciation of Miller's expressionistic dramatic methods. Some good answers debated whether Willy emerges as merely tragic or perhaps pathetic and in what ways his struggles might make him heroic. Most were able to explore his delusions, how he had 'the wrong dreams' and the ways these are presented on stage using the set, the flashbacks to his past and the imagined conversations with Ben. Better responses also included how Miller shapes an audience's response to Willy in key scenes such as his confrontation with Howard and Biff at the end and how our view of him is affected by Linda and Charley's assessment of him. Some argued he was a victim of the American Dream, contrasting the shiny objects of materialism: the car, fridge, diamonds and his pride in the Loman name with the more organic and Romantic themes that haunt his soul: his desire to plant seeds and make things grow, his skills as a carpenter and the flute- representing the admiration of his father's pioneering spirit, as well as his abandonment of Willy. These answers were detailed, interesting and often provocative with some launching a fairly savage critique of Willy, dismissing his stupidity, cruelty, vanity, hypocrisy and so on and seeing the end when he mistakenly believes his suicide will bring insurance money as his crowning delusion. Such students saw Willy's inability to recognise his failings and understand his son as fatally undermining his ability as a character to evoke sympathy and pity, and thus in Aristotle's terms failing to be truly tragic. A few claimed Biff was the real tragic hero; others Linda. Many neglected to follow the question's instruction to explore 'how far' Willy was tragic/heroic and failed to debate the issue offering a more straightforward character study. Weaker answers re-told the story and didn't consider Miller's agenda or the context of tragedy from a historical perspective, often simplistically arguing that Willy was tragic because he died sacrificing himself.
- (b) In good answers there was some impressive discussion of the character interaction and a perceptive understanding of the tension between the brothers illuminated by detailed knowledge of the wider text. Many reflected on how, in this passage, Happy appears to embody all that is worst in Willy: his casual sexism, his assumption of superiority over his brother, his easy facility at lying, his peddling of delusions over truth at the end. Most contrasted this well with Biff's agonised moment of revelation and linked this to his efforts to make Willy confront the truth about himself and his son later in the play. Some saw Biff's kleptomania as both an act of revenge on the corporate world that has humiliated him and a pathetic attempt to steal the symbol of business success that eludes him, an ersatz phallic symbol. Many argued that Biff's understanding of his failure is at least superior to Happy's insistence that 'the old confidence' is all that is needed for his life to become successful. Some noted that Happy is not disturbed by Biff's act of theft, only whether he is 'caught' or not. The best answers combined discussion of the characters with some analysis of the dramatic effects, particularly how Happy's interruptions and repetition of the 'old confidence' show his insensitivity towards Biff; the condescending effect of his use of the word 'honey' and the unattractive assertiveness of 'Don't try, honey, try hard.' A few looked at how the fragmented sentence structure and repetition given to Biff suggests his distress though only the best considered the effects of the language such as the significance for the final scene of the word 'dream'. Less successful answers stayed on the surface of the text and relied on narrative summary. Some seemed not to have noticed the invitation in the question to consider an audience's response to the characters 'here and elsewhere in the play', so opportunities to discuss the presentation of the characters through the flashbacks to their youth were missed. They tended to offer descriptive character studies restricting comments on details within the passage to obvious aspects – such as Happy's attitudes to marriage. Most noticed the effects of the interruptions but otherwise discussion of dramatic effects was limited to occasional references to the stage directions.

7. W.B.YEATS: *Selected Poems*

This was the least popular of the poetry texts for this Paper. Most candidates chose the **(b)** option which was often very well done.

- (a)** Candidates often had detailed biographical or contextual material that was relevant and made some sensible choices of poems such as '*An Irish Airman Foresees his Death*', '*September 1913*' and '*Easter 1916*'. Occasionally candidates used his unrequited love for Maud Gonne and considered '*No Second Troy*'. Better essays gave more or less coherent accounts of the poems and made some comments on point of view, how Yeats expresses feelings but generally treatment of the chosen poems was sketchy. Candidates seemed to lack detailed knowledge of the poems, relying on brief or partial summaries of the subject matter with little attempt at any discussion of poetic methods and effects. A few managed some simple comments on such obvious details as 'the greasy till' and the use of the refrain in '*Easter 1916*'. Discussions on this poem were often restricted to an explanation of the political situation and ideas about Yeats's treatment of the uprising confined to some limited discussion of the repetition of 'a terrible beauty is born'.
- (b)** Good candidates offered a close study of the given poem and many seemed to be genuinely excited by the imagery and the allusions. Most had a sound understanding of Yeats's theory of history based on a series of gyres but good answers considered the sound and visual effects of the opening, and wrestled with the imagery in the first stanza. There were some perceptive discussions on the implications of 'blood-dimmed tide' being 'loosed upon the world' and effective analyses of the tight complexity of the last two lines built on the opposition of 'best' and 'worst', 'lack all' and 'full'. Most commented on the effects on the tone of the repetition of 'Surely' and discussed the troubling nature of the vision by careful consideration of the descriptive details and the appalling paradoxical idea of a lifeless sphinx-like creature moving 'towards Bethlehem to be born'. Less successful essays tended to give information about the poem: the political context, the Christian allusions, Yeats's interest in ancient civilisations and the meaning of '*Spiritus Mundi*'. They showed some clear understanding of the first stanza but sometimes struggled with the imagery of the antichrist at the end. Some thought that the apocalyptic end of one era will usher in a better, new one. Such students failed to note the connotations of 'rough beast', 'slouch', 'stony sleep', 'vexed by nightmare' and often struggled to so on. Good essays thought about Yeats's attitude to change and linked details within '*Second Coming*' to '*Easter 1916*' and '*Lapis Lazuli*'. Many of these essays were informed and at the same time refreshingly personal in their analysis of the language, though only the best had the confidence to discuss the effects of the form.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Many candidates need to show more detailed knowledge of the texts, shaped to the demands of the question, evidenced by specific references to relevant scenes and pertinent quotations.
- To gain higher marks, this knowledge needs to be presented as evidence of understanding methods and effects rather than as narrative or explanation of characters and ideas.
- Passage-based **(b)** questions continue to be the most popular but are not always well done. Successful candidates are those who show evidence of close reading of the given extract and a critical appreciation of 'the effects of the writing' within it, while at the same time showing its relationship with the wider text.
- Many well-informed, engaged candidates would score more highly if they could develop their essay writing skills to include more analysis.

General comments

The paper was of comparable level of difficulty with previous sessions and is the same as 62 where centres can read a fuller report on the whole paper. On this component, all the candidates bar one chose *The White Tiger* and *Death of a Salesman* and tended to do much better on the novel. There were no rubric errors. Better candidates showed some lively engagement with their texts and some occasional insights. Those who seemed to have a reasonably sound grasp of the overall meaning or concerns of a text unfortunately did not appear to have enough detailed knowledge available to support their ideas. They could often only manage just over a page per essay or wrote longer but very general essays, with paragraphs of personal reflections on the various social issues. Other candidates with some detailed knowledge of the texts were perhaps less successful than they might have expected because they were restricting their comments to plot and character. They tended to give accounts, descriptions or explanations concentrating on the content rather than focusing on how writers create meaning and shape response.

In terms of language and structure most of the candidates could produce clear, straightforward essays. Those who took a few minutes to plan tended to construct answers with a stronger focus on the questions and often with a greater range and development of ideas. More successful candidates used a 10-15 line introduction to consider the terms and implications of the **(a)** questions and ensured that the key terms were embedded in the answer. They made good use of discourse markers such as *moreover*, *furthermore* and *on the other hand* to construct coherent arguments. Structuring answers to **(b)** questions has always been more challenging. Candidates tend to either restrict their focus to the given extract without showing knowledge of the wider text; or they use a few details from the extract to make relevant comments on development of character and characteristic concerns in the wider text, without looking in enough detail at the effects of the writing within the given passage. More successful candidates took time to read the given extract closely and used the introduction to explain the context or its significance for the wider text. They then discussed the ways these ideas are presented in the given extract and the various effects of the writing focusing on how writers create meaning and shape a response. Some candidates who perhaps have been encouraged to prepare some general introductory remarks frequently got distracted by the pre-prepared content and failed to grasp the thrust of the question or took too long to get down to it. They often routinely mentioned general aspects of style which unfortunately were not followed up even though examples were available in the given text. Many candidates answering the **(a)** questions had a supply of short, pertinent quotations and could have maximised their use by making explicit comments on the language or sentence structure. This can be encouraged by using phrases such as 'The writer's use of.... here' or 'The key /interesting /provocative /potent word here is....'. These can also be helpful for those candidates answering the **(b)** questions, as

particularly on the prose or drama extracts, there was not enough attention paid to the choice of language. Many otherwise very able candidates writing well about the texts did so only at the level of plot and character which limited their ability to reach top marks. Discussion of plays as dramatic spectacles was rare, with many candidates relying on narrative summary referring to them as novels. Poems were frequently discussed for ideas so that answers tended to rely on paraphrase which limited the opportunities for showing an appreciation of poetic methods and effects.

This session an increasing number of candidates made judicious use of secondary critical material to show there are many ways to look at a character, theme or image; enhancing their own arguments or more impressively, sometimes, setting up arguments which evaluate these views. Sometimes for example, a feminist reading of Linda in *Death of a Salesman* would be set against a psychoanalytic or historicist point of view. The best were able to 'weigh' these views by testing their applicability against textual evidence. There was some very effective use of the writers' comments on their own work particularly Miller, Adichie and Adiga. Some candidates quoted significant amounts of perfectly reasonable critical perspectives but neglected to demonstrate their own detailed knowledge of the text or analysis that would support their own view of the text. Some answers were littered with very bland supposed critical comments which did not further the argument at all e.g. 'Critic Maria Hernandez argues that Biff can't hold down a job but I think he was in prison', or ascribed an established critical perspective to the wrong person: 'critic Dr Patel suggests that *Death of a salesman* may be the tragedy of the Common Man'.

Successful candidates were able to combine detailed knowledge of their texts with proper consideration of relevant critical reading and so were able to respond to the questions with a range of ideas that had some complexity and greater depth. Less successful candidates tended to stay on the surface of the texts and took refuge in biographical or historical material or poorly assimilated critical views which they struggled to make relevant to the question.

Comments on specific questions

1. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah*

a) No responses.

(b) No responses.

2. ARAVIND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*

Candidates generally had more success with this text because they showed a greater command of the detail and some appreciation of the presentation of Balram. The (b) question was more popular but there were some competent essays on both questions.

(a) Those who looked at the terms of the question and attempted to focus on 'By what means and with what effects' did better, because in showing some detailed knowledge of the text they made some comments on narrative methods and effects. The other discriminating factor was whether candidates focused on examples of 'economic success' as opposed to examples of poverty. Better essays focused on Balram as the owner of White Tiger Drivers, Vijay and the Sharma family together with some of the descriptive details of comparative living conditions, developments in the cities such as the mall and Ashok's evening exercise round Buckingham Towers B Block. Only a couple of candidates made any reference to the central conceit – that Balram was writing letters to a Chinese Premier to explain the truth about India's entrepreneurial culture and success. Most candidates dealt with the narrative methods implicitly by launching into a rags-to-riches account of Balram's life, covering the obvious events, through which some sense of the wider issues emerged, such as corruption and the power of those who were economically successful over those who weren't. Many who had a reasonable knowledge of significant detail, such as the prostitutes or chandeliers presented the knowledge as information within their narrative accounts, rather than as a calculated use of contrast or part of a wider symbolic pattern, full of wit and irony. Others focused on character, discussing qualities which allowed Balram to become successful – his ability to learn through observation, his aspiration for self-improvement and his ruthlessness in dealing with Ram Persad and Ashok. Better essays weighed up their moral judgements of Balram and used the parallel scenes of the car accident to show that, although corrupt, Balram was a better man than his masters. Less successful answers relied on thin, narrative summaries peppered with inaccuracies: '*Balram was picked out of school because of how smart he was and began learning to drive.*'

- (b) There were a few proficient essays here that managed to focus in an analytical way on the given passage while discussing some wider textual issues with support from the text, but again it was rare for candidates to comment on the epistolary narrative structure or to comment on the dramatic break with its reference to the 'emergency' at the ending of the passage. There was evidence of some sound understanding of symbolism. Better essays commented on the descriptive details of the construction site in terms of the symbolic Light/Darkness patterning in the novel and understood the implications of the new India being constructed by indistinguishable men and animals. Most of the essays fell into Level 3 because they focused more on the wider text than on the effects of the writing within the passage. For example, some focused almost exclusively on the animal imagery, using references in the passage to write more general essays using Balram's father's wish that one of his sons 'should live like a man', explanations of how the Rooster Coop works to keep the majority in the state of servitude and accounts of Balram's identification with the White Tiger. Others restricted discussion to obvious aspects of the passage such as straightforward comments on Balram's character, his situation as a servant, rejection of Kusum's blackmail, the crudity of his reference to sex and girls tasting like watermelons and how he liked to keep himself separate from the other servants. How well such discussions were rewarded depended on the extent to which candidates relied on narrative summary or paraphrase, and whether they managed some comment in passing on the significance of some of the details rather than just asserting effects. Levels of achievement would be improved by more sustained analysis the effects of the writing – for example, by considering how Adiga manages the tone and reader's attitude to Balram through his choice of language and sentence structure in the paragraph where Balram considers the attractions of marriage.

3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*.

- (a) No responses.
(b) No responses.

4. ATHOL FUGARD: *My Children! My Africa! and The Road to Mecca*

- (a) No responses.
(b) No responses.

5. LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

- (a) No responses.
(b) One candidate chose this option. A good essay on 'After a Warrant Sale' would have focused on the point of view, shown a clear understanding of the last stanza and been able to link the presentation of the situation and ideas about love in the given poem with others such as 'Obituary', the 'New-married Miner' and 'Epithalamium'. This essay was mostly restricted the given poem using a linear approach that tended to rely on some paraphrase, with intermittent references to imagery such as the 'lightened' hair and how far the neighbours and the persona could understand the break-up of the marriage. Comments tended to be general, personal reflections unsupported by the text and although there was a brief potentially relevant link to 'Persimmons' on how love can survive, treatment of the actual poem was sketchy with only partial understanding of the twist at the end.

6. ARTHUR MILLER: *The Death of a Salesman*

This text was done by all the candidates with the (b) question proving to be the more popular option. Neither question produced answers across the range, the key factors being, the simplicity of some of the ideas, the lack of detailed textual knowledge and the brevity of some of the essays.

- (a) This question was slightly better done with some candidates showing a sound understanding of the character supported some relevant plot-based textual references though only the better essays had some pertinent quotations. Better essays gave some explanation of the American Dream and Willy's failure to achieve it in comparison with Charlie and Bernard or Ben; some discussion of Willy's failure in relation to his wife because of his affair and his failure as a parent, instilling the wrong values in his children. Few seemed to consider the terms of the question and discuss Miller's expressionistic dramatic methods in presenting Willy, or classical ideas about tragic heroes

and Miller's own view of the play as 'the tragedy of the Common Man'. To some extent this was a due to the ways in which the text was approached. Many candidates wrote as though the play were a novel, or explained Willy as though he were a psychological case study. These views were often supported with reference to his abandonment by father and brother, or guilt over his affair and lack of legacy but not dealing explicitly with how this is shown through the use of the set, the flashbacks or imagined conversations with Ben, the memories of The Woman or the symbolic seed-planting scene. Most discussed Willy as a tragic hero in very simple terms: he was '*a hero because his intentions were good but his method was tragic*', or not a hero because no insurance company would pay out on a suicide. Better essays suggested that Willy was not a tragic hero because he lacked self-awareness and understanding of his son as shown by his final deluded conversation with Ben. Weaker answers relied on strongly asserted personal views such as it being hard to relate to Willy because he was '*cracked from the onset*', a loser, an adulterer, to whom it was difficult to relate and hard to feel sorry for. Candidates are entitled to their opinions but need to show them in relation to a more detailed understanding of Miller's concerns and his presentation of the character in specific scenes such as Willy's confrontation with Howard or the Epilogue.

- (b) Better essays produced balanced discussions, linking the passage competently to the wider text while managing to discuss some specific details within the passage though few seemed to notice the invitation in the question to consider an audience's response to the characters 'here and elsewhere in the play'. Less successful essays tended to discuss rather generally the significance of the scene in terms of the plot, relapsing into narrative summary and not looking in enough detail at the dramatic effects in the given extract or they tended to stay on the surface of the text and offer basic deductions about the characters and their feelings. A few sound essays contrasted Happy's casual sexism, facility for lying and insensitivity to Biff's obvious distress with Biff's agonised moment of revelation. There was some sound understanding of how Happy seems to embody Willy's faults supported by some discussion of obvious dramatic effects such as Happy's interruptions, the use of the word 'honey' and his attitude to marriage, with some drawing out the implications for Happy's repetition of 'the old confidence' and demand for Biff to tell Willy 'something nice.' Candidates seemed to have less to say on Biff, though most could link the theft of the pen to that of the ball and timber. The few who attempted to look at tone, tended to focus in a simple way on the stage directions '[with great tension and wonder]' without considering how this might have been created in Miller's choice of language and use of sentence structure. Weaker essays were short under-developed summaries of the scene, thin on knowledge of the wider text, offering generalised character studies.

7. W.B. YEATS: *Selected Poems*

- (a) No responses.
- (b) No responses.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/71 Comment and Appreciation</p>

Key Messages

Good answers will:

- Show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- Focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and upon how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Identify some of the literary devices and techniques in the poems or passages, and discuss how these are used.
- Show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not simply to what is said.
- Maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout their response, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.
- Make it clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.

General Comments

It may seem inappropriate, or even unhelpful, to open a report by commenting on handwriting, but criticisms about this were so frequently expressed this session that it was clearly one of the most significant concerns. All examiners understand the pressure that candidates are under during this timed examination, and that having chosen which poems or passages they wish to write about they have only a short time in which to do this, but if as a result their handwriting is so hurried and untidy that it is difficult to read then they are doing themselves no favours at all, and may in fact be doing harm. No penalty of any sort is ever imposed simply for poor presentation but when a response becomes hard or even impossible to understand then clearly it is unlikely to attract the marks that it may deserve. The instructions on the question paper say “*You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers*”, and it really is absolutely essential that candidates follow this requirement.

This aside, there was as usual a very good range of responses to the three questions in the Paper, and on the whole, candidates had read the poems and passages carefully before starting to write about them, so that they were able to see each of them as a whole, and did not therefore omit the significance where appropriate of the closing lines or words. There were fewer responses than has sometimes been the case which relied upon simple paraphrase or narrative, and there was plenty of critical discussion of language and structure, especially with the two poems. A few candidates spent unnecessary time comparing the printed poems or passages to what they had read by other writers, or speculating about what influences might have been brought to bear on the writing by historical conditions at the time of writing; both of these factors were unhelpful, and very rarely added any value to the close reading that must be expected. The best responses focused entirely and solely upon the passages printed on the question paper.

There were few rubric errors, though a small handful of candidates did either all three questions or only one; the instruction is quite clear that two must be attempted. A disappointing number appeared unfinished, perhaps because of time pressure, and in these cases a lower mark was inevitably awarded than might otherwise have been the case; it is important that candidates do not allow themselves to spend more than about one hour on their first response, so that they have a similar time to complete their second. In relation to this concern, one examiner made a particularly interesting and relevant comment: “*Some very long responses were conversational in tone, and/or narrative and occasionally lacking focus in form; candidates will always find it helpful to spend some time thinking and planning before beginning to write; less is often*

more, and candidates need to be aware that writing everything that comes into their head as and when it occurs to them will rarely make for a good, cohesive analytical response.”

Comments on Specific Questions

1. *Invisible Man*: Ralph Ellison

This was a very popular question, and the majority of candidates addressed it, often with some sensitive critical appreciation. The young man’s African-American racial background is obviously important, and there is no doubt that this plays a significant role in the passage, especially in relation to the white female receptionist and how she speaks to him; the fact that he anticipated some antagonism from her, but received nothing but courtesy, is an important point that a lot of candidates missed: he is so used to feeling inferior to white people in the Southern USA that being treated as an equal in the North is something that surprised him, and in part, accounts for his quite cheerful resignation that Mr Bates is too busy to see him straight away. This point has been made before, but to speculate about the importance of a text’s title (in this case *Invisible Man*) is not usually helpful, playing little or no part in what the passage, or indeed a poem, is about; to assume therefore that Mr Bates is “invisible” is a possible surmise, but does not help in an appreciation of how the writer portrays the young man who is narrating the experience.

Many candidates spent considerable time explaining what is meant by a first-person narrative, illustrating this by quoting a number of times when the narrator uses the word “I”; it must be expected at A-Level that all candidates know and understand the term, so again to spend time defining it was time misused. Much more important is the writer’s presentation of the young man facing what is presumably his first job interview, and feeling in many ways a nervous outsider. In this way his race is certainly important, though less so than some candidates appeared to think, but from the start he is shown to be different from the chattering of the office women; he is fascinated by the luxury of Mr Bates’ office, and the portraits of men, both white and of colour and he is worried about his hair and suit. These are all concerns that most young people have, or will have, as several candidates noted. Several made the interesting point that what the young man saw as the arrogant nature of the portraits acts as a foreboding warning about how Mr Bates might himself appear.

The passage ends on a confident note – or perhaps a note of hopeful confidence; Mr Bates has the narrator’s name and address, he has read the letter from Dr Bledsoe, and the receptionist has been kind and courteous towards him. “*My fears were groundless, there was nothing to it. This was New York*” the city where everything was possible. Most candidates did make some appropriate comment on these final thoughts, but those who did not do so missed a good opportunity to say how the narrator’s feelings have changed radically within such a short space of time.

2. *Spring in War-time*: Edith Nesbit and *Spring in War-time*: Sara Teasdale

This was the second most popular question, and there was some good writing about each poem separately, with some perceptive and thoughtful comparisons. The best responses tended to be those which wrote about both poems together, moving easily and frequently between them. More common, and often nearly as successful, were responses which addressed one poem first on its own, then moved to the second while referring back to the first from time to time. The least successful tended to be those that dealt with each poem quite separately, closing with a paragraph or perhaps two drawing some comparisons and contrasts. There will not always be a comparison question in this Paper, but candidates should be taught how best to approach one should they need, or choose, to do so.

Most saw a fundamental difference between the poems. Nesbit writes about a personal experience of losing somebody in war, while Teasdale speaks more generally about the sadness that war creates without – at least explicitly – making clear that she has personal experience of this. Nesbit’s poem is much warmer and certainly sadder; some of her lines and expressions are very moving indeed, and many candidates quite rightly singled out lines 3–4 and 11–12 as so powerfully expressing her profound sense of loss, while at the same time ensuring that the regularity of rhythm and rhyme keeps these emotions under firm control. The only moment when arguably this control breaks down is in the closing lines, when the abrupt finality of “*On your clay*” is particularly striking, and suddenly so very cold after the warmth of the rest of the poem. Interestingly, and pleasingly, no candidate was misled by the now-archaic use of the word “gay” in line 14, but understood it in its old sense.

The contrasts that Nesbit draws are between Spring a year ago, when her lover was alive, and the Spring now after his death; Teasdale writes more generally rather than personally, with anger rather than simple sadness, about the callousness of Spring to continue as it does year after year, a relentless act of rebirth when so many have lost their lives in war. The third line of each stanza expresses this anger, and the fourth and fifth lines, shortening each time and repeating the words '*grief*', '*fight*', '*graves*', '*Death*', make this emotion particularly strong, a technique which most candidates noted and commented upon, a similar effect of course to that spoken of above in Nesbit's final line.

Some responses spent rather more time than was needed on describing the poems' rhythms and rhyme patterns, together with the fact that while Nesbit writes with no indented lines, Teasdale's poem is much less ordered in appearance; this latter point may be significant, reflecting the relative calm that Nesbit shows contrasted with the much less steady anger in Teasdale, but there was never any need or value to list the rhyme pattern, or the number of syllables in each line. Some candidates no doubt do this as a way of working towards their own critical ideas, but it is very rarely particularly helpful unless clearly contributing to the direction of the argument.

3. *The Waxen Man*: Mary Reynolds

This was the least popular question, which was a pity, as those who did address it produced some very good and often very perceptive responses; what was most noticeable and pleasing was the frequency with which candidates commented on the dramatic nature of the extract, and its impact that it must have upon audiences. This is very important indeed when writing about a piece from a play as it is meant to be seen, heard and experienced in a shared environment, not just read alone.

This was evident from the very start, when almost all candidates commented upon the rather intimidating sight that the audience have, and Alison does not, of the face at the window; we do not immediately know who it is, but given that Alison is alone in the cottage and the face is that of a man is at best worrying, and dramatically quite alarming. When the Coastguard comes in, and the audience realise that it was his face, it is very clear that he is unwelcome; the stage directions, and for an audience the actors' movements and expressions, make it very obvious that he has come for no good purpose (he "*comes over the threshold, against her will*", and watches Alison "*with furtive desire*"). Most candidates pointed out that she is alone in the cottage, and he is immediately presented by the dramatist as a threat. His speeches are tentative, full of ellipses and incomplete sentences, but he talks a lot in comparison to Alison's "*stoniness*" and brief replies. And his comment about some men liking women "*as soft as a bit o' new cheese*" is at best clumsy and at worst distasteful. A few candidates argued that he is genuinely in love with Alison, and thus very shy but most saw her reactions and movements as evidence that she finds him threatening and unpleasant.

Comment has been made above about the need to read the whole passage or poem, and this is a good example of why this is so necessary; the extract from the play is a long one, but its second page is crucially important. Until line 50, it is Alison who holds the power, but as soon as the Coastguard mentions Luke Simonds' wedding, and the fact that he saw her hiding in the church tower, there is an immediate shift in this power. We do not find out why she was watching the wedding in this way, but whatever the reason she is alarmed that the Coastguard seems to know a secret, and that there is a lot of gossip about her, which very clearly worries her. The sympathy that most candidates had earlier expressed for her suddenly became diminished at this moment – Alison clearly has something to hide, and she is perhaps not quite as innocent as she has so far appeared to be. The final words and movements of the Coastguard are quite ominous, suggesting that although she can again face him, she is extremely worried: her repetition of the word '*gossip*' at the very end is full of mystery. Those candidates – and there were more than a few – who talked about this conclusion demonstrated some good and thoughtful awareness of how the relationship between the two characters has changed and how the playwright has created real dramatic tension.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/72 Comment and Appreciation</p>

Key Messages

Good answers will:

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- Focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and upon how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Identify some of the literary devices and techniques in the poems or passages, and discuss how these are used.
- Show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not simply to what is said.
- Maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout their response, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.
- Make it clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.

General Comments

It may seem inappropriate, or even unhelpful, to open a report by commenting on handwriting, but criticisms about this were so frequently expressed this session that it was clearly one of the most significant concerns. All examiners understand the pressure that candidates are under during this timed examination, and that having chosen which poems or passages they wish to write about they have only a short time in which to do this, but if as a result their handwriting is so hurried and untidy that it is difficult to read then they are doing themselves no favours at all, and may in fact be doing harm. No penalty of any sort is ever imposed simply for poor presentation but when a response becomes hard or even impossible to understand then clearly it is unlikely to attract the marks that it may deserve. The instructions on the question paper say “*You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers*”, and it really is absolutely essential that candidates follow this requirement.

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Comments on specific questions

1. *The First Fireworks*: Alex Broun

Rather unusually, all three questions in this Paper were tackled more or less equally, and it was particularly pleasing that so many responses to this extract were able to see it very much as a piece of theatre, with actions being as important as words in establishing and developing the relationship between Dawn and her daughter Helen. This is immediately noticeable in the opening stage directions, and most candidates spent time on these, discussing how the physical appearance of Dawn and her slow movements must impact an audience and create sympathy for her clearly frail state. Helen’s worried opening words as she ‘*goes to Dawn*’ were similarly used by many to show understanding of how the playwright combines speech and movement to create character and an immediate sense of the relationship – even though this relationship is not quite as simple as it first appears.

Most responses noted the very brief and quick exchange of questions and answers in the first 20 lines of the extract, establishing Helen’s worry about her mother whilst at the same time beginning to show that Dawn is perhaps not quite as frail or helpless as she first seemed; she has after all climbed to the top of the hill, through a hole in the fence, and is very clearly in control of herself. Her comments about Helen’s husband, and her apparent pretence that she does not remember his name, similarly show that her mind remains very sharp – her joke in lines 24–25 was picked up by almost all candidates as evidence of this. A few thought that she was genuinely forgetful but while this is perhaps arguable it seems much more likely that it is pretence; particularly in the light of her subsequent comments about her own husband and about Simon.

A few candidates noticed the very brief stage direction (*‘Pause’*) in line 39 acts in two ways: it is a moment for an audience to take in what has happened and what has been said so far and also signals a clear turning-point in the action and the relationship. Dawn’s speeches now become rather longer and even more confident, and she takes control of the actions and conversation; until line 46 Helen has been standing, suggesting a kind of dominance, but when Dawn gestures for her to sit their relative power changes. The act of tapping Helen’s stomach and repeating the wrong name for Garan, makes it evident that Dawn knows, and is pleased about, Helen’s presumed pregnancy; she is becoming less and less like the frail, elderly and apparently helpless old woman that she seemed at the start.

There are two further pauses in lines 54 and 57, acting in much the same dramatic way as the earlier one, leading towards the recollections of Helen’s first fireworks. Few candidates tried to define the dramatic purpose of this memory, but in a way this did not matter; what was important was the fact that these fireworks were a shared and significant experience in the lives of the mother and daughter; remembering the fireworks acts as a kind of symbolic reflection of the renewed and open affection that is now evident in their relationship. Although an audience cannot of course actually see or hear the original fireworks, Helen’s description is so full of colour and recollected excitement that it is in its own way a kind of theatrical as well as a simply emotional experience.

2. *New Grub Street*: George Gissing

A number of candidates made the interesting observation that although this passage is taken from a novel there is so little that is not dialogue that it is almost like a piece of drama; it is certainly true that there are relatively few pieces of narrative, and that the relationship between Reardon and his wife is presented by the writer almost entirely through what each says, with just a few though very significant moments of action to reinforce what has been spoken.

Several commented that the passage opens *in media res*, a useful phrase which does not need translation or explanation – examiners know what it means – but it is entirely appropriate here. Amy is clearly frustrated by Reardon’s inability to write, and the description which follows (lines 2–3) make very clear that she is not saying it in an affectionate tone, as perhaps the italicised word “*is*” in line 1 demonstrates. Reardon’s movement from his chair, around the room and finally back to Amy with his face on her shoulder, suggests a lack of confidence and even an inability to face her. Most candidates then saw an increasingly melodramatic tone in what Reardon says, and showed little sympathy for his dilemma; the words ‘*My fingers refuse to hold the pen*’ attracted a good deal of distaste and even scorn. This feeling increased as his self-pitying tone develops over the next twenty lines or so, with some highly inflated language, such as ‘*Don’t use that word, Amy. I hate it*’ or ‘*like an interminable desert*’ (line 27), and while Amy’s attitude is certainly cold and unloving she attracted plenty of sympathy, though when she says in line 41 that her husband is ‘*much weaker than I*

imagined there was some mixed feeling; several candidates suggested that the writer was making her unnecessarily cruel, though rather more saw this as evidence that she is beginning to regret her marriage altogether. Many candidates wanted at this point to discuss what they called “the patriarchal society” of the nineteenth century, and how women were often obliged to marry in order to survive financially rather than for love, a point that Amy herself reinforces in her final speech. Rather too many, however, spent time considering this historical context, even drawing comparisons with other Victorian texts, time which should have been spent focusing upon, for instance, the final image of the passage, missed or ignored by almost all candidates, when the writer shows Amy shaking her head ‘as if a fly had troubled her’; Reardon, obviously believing himself to be a potentially great writer, is reduced in Amy’s mind to just ‘a fly’, of little significance but considerable irritation.

There was plenty of personal response to each character and to their relationship; too often, however, this response was focused more upon what Amy and Reardon say to each other, rather than looking more critically at the impact that their language and their physical actions create. Too often the characters became almost real Victorian people, rather than imagined and fictional creations.

3. *The Last Good-bye: Louise Chandler Moulton and ‘Love, we must part now’: Philip Larkin*

These two poems led to plenty of interesting and thoughtful responses, most seeing some fundamental differences between the attitudes expressed: Larkin’s speaker is positive and cheerful, even exuberantly so, about his wish to part from his lover, while Moulton is much quieter and more restrained. There was some uncertainty about what exactly Moulton means by the last good-bye, but while it may simply refer to the last time she and her lover may see each other, it seems more probable that she is saying that when we say farewell to someone we cannot know if this may be the last time we do so before they die. Larkin, on the other hand, wants to part, so that like two tall ships they can sail away towards other relationships – “waving” goodbye but at the same time waving in relief at ending their partnership.

Most candidates saw that the two poems are sonnets, but too many spent too much unnecessary time proving this: there is no need at all to elaborate on the number of lines, the iambic pentameter rhythm, the rhyme pattern, all of which examiners are well aware of. What matters is what *use* a poet makes of these factors, not just what they are, which at A-Level should be taken for granted. More significant, for example, is the way in which Moulton opens with a striking question, followed by a sequence of negative thoughts about what will not happen at a last farewell: the words ‘no’ and ‘not’ are repeated throughout the poem, the first of these words ominously echoed in line 13 by ‘Who knows?’ There will, the poet says, be no signs in nature such as a darkening sky, a sudden blight, a silencing of bird song; everything around the couple will be exactly as normal, and there will be no mysterious ‘voice of prophecy’ warning of their impending parting or death. It may be that the poet is deliberately commenting upon some kinds of writing in which partings and deaths are given wider significance (for example, the use of pathetic fallacy), whereas she says that in reality we can never know what is going to happen in the future. The closing lines are surely very significant indeed, though very few candidates commented on them: we cannot know the future, she says, and surely nobody would *choose* to part in this ignorance? She gives no answer to this question, because there can really *be* no easy answer. It is interesting, too, that the poem ends as it began, with an unanswered question. And despite what has been said about rhyme, it is surely worth a comment here about the final rhyming words, ‘pain/ remain’ and ‘despair/unaware’.

In complete contrast, Larkin tells his ‘Love’ that they must part. Like Moulton, he uses plenty of natural images, but not in the same way: there has, he says, been plenty of ‘moonlight and self-pity’, but that is past and finished – now the sun is bold, and their hearts want to be free to ‘kick down worlds, lash forests, in other words to break out of their existing personal world and make something more of their lives. They are empty husks now, and the grain within them must go different ways, for different uses. The sestet introduces a new image, and it becomes a truly majestic one; there will be regret at their parting, but they are now like two sailing ships moving away from the estuary and the harbour, each to a new and different course and perhaps relationship.

There was some good writing about each poem separately, and some perceptive and thoughtful comparison. The best responses tended to be those which wrote about both poems together, moving easily and frequently between them. More common, and often nearly as successful, were responses which addressed one poem first on its own, then moved to the second while referring back to the first from time to time. The least successful tended to be those that dealt with each poem quite separately, closing with a paragraph or perhaps two drawing some comparisons and contrasts. There will not always be a comparison question in this Paper, but candidates should be taught how best to approach one should they need, or choose, to do so.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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General Comments

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more, and candidates need to be aware that writing everything that comes into their head as and when it occurs to them will rarely make for a good, cohesive analytical response.”

Comments on specific questions

1. *The Gift of Rain: Tan Twan Eng*

This was a popular question, and the passage led to some thoughtful responses; some spent rather more time than was sensible or helpful on explaining *aikido* rather than exploring how this writer presents it. It is certainly true that balance of different sorts does lie at the centre of what is written here, but it would have been more valuable if these candidates had done what most did and looked at the passage first, rather than just seeing how it echoes the requirements of this martial art.

Several commented that the passage opens *in media res*, a useful phrase which does not need translation or explanation – Examiners know what it means – but it is appropriate here. The audience does not yet know who the speaker is, where he is, or why he is there, and all that is known is that he is suddenly woken by a series of screams, and that he is called Philip. He is understandably alarmed and puzzled, but this feeling is rapidly overtaken by his sense of pleasure and perhaps awe at the sheer beauty of the early morning; several responses linked the idea of the sun ‘*hauling itself up*’ with Philip’s own rising from his bed.

In the same way it is not known who ‘*he*’ is in line 6 (though to be fair the introductory rubric does display his name, Hayato Endo), and the anonymity that this conveys adds a sense of mystery and even a kind of magic to the atmosphere being presented. Hayato’s appearance is striking – his clothing a contrast of black and white, bad and good as several candidates suggested, and his actions are both violent and utterly silent and controlled. The balance that is at the heart of the passage is asserted and illustrated again and again. His order for Philip to hit him is unexpected, but when it is repeated Philip uses the punch that has stood him in good stead at school, only to find himself flattened on the grass; Hayato is amused, but not unkind, and offers to teach Philip how he was able to throw him so easily. When Philip succeeds in doing so, he feels extraordinarily calm, ‘*as if the earth and I were spinning in harmony*’. Once more, a balance is shown to be central.

The passage is quite short, so candidates had no difficulty in using the whole of it, including Philip’s obvious but quiet enthusiasm to continue learning *aikido*. Most selected plenty of apt descriptions from the main body of the passage, particularly those relating to Hayato’s appearance and personality, and to the way he treats Philip. There were some very full and good responses, though also a few that did little more than paraphrase what happened, with some illustrative quotation; most did, however, move beyond this kind of response and demonstrate an often quite high degree of critical perception.

2. *The Reading: Gabriel Gbadamosi and Clearing: Tony Harrison*

This was a less popular question, but there was some good writing about each poem separately, and some perceptive and thoughtful comparison. The best responses tended to be those which wrote about both poems together, moving easily and frequently between them. More common, and often nearly as successful, were responses which addressed one poem first on its own, then moved to the second while referring back to the first from time to time. The least successful tended to be those that dealt with each poem quite separately, closing with a paragraph or perhaps two drawing some comparisons and contrasts. There will not always be a comparison question, but candidates should be taught how best to approach one should they need, or choose, to do so.

The second poem, by Tony Harrison, was more confidently managed by most, perhaps because unlike the first poem it is grounded in reality, with only the closing few lines hoping that the speaker’s mother cannot see what is happening to her beloved home and possessions. Gbadamosi’s poem, on the other hand, is not so clear-cut: is the speaker’s father still alive, or is the speaker imagining that he is? Some candidates seemed to believe that both his parents are still living, despite what the introductory words say – ‘*The poets remember their parents, no longer living*’. Examiners accepted any reasonable interpretation, provided that it was convincingly argued and supported, but it seems most likely that the speaker is remembering himself as a younger man (he has ‘*an adolescent voice*’) reading his new poems to his father, though now what he reads is about his mother, no longer alive (‘*couched in her cold repose*’). There was clearly real warmth between the speaker and his parents when both were alive, and perhaps he had no siblings, so that he and his two parents formed ‘*our triangle*’. He imagines that his mother is watching from her grave and that she can secretly still squeeze his father’s hand; his mother, he senses, would not want to be seen doing something so openly affectionate. She was obviously proud of her son, and the speaker knows this, referring to himself as ‘*her son, the poet*’. It may of course be that both parents have died, and that he is imagining

himself reading to his father rather than actually doing so; in a way it does not matter in terms of critically evaluating and responding to the poem.

The speaker in Harrison's poem is in many ways much more down to earth and realistic; he watches as his mother's home is unfeelingly taken apart by the auctioneers, who regard *'the hard earned treasures of some 50 years'* simply as *'junk'* to be *'shifted'*, two particularly hard and emotionless words. Like the speaker in the first poem, the speaker here is clearly deeply fond of his late mother, and hopes that she cannot see what the removal men are doing to her paintwork, her piano, her soil patch – not even a garden, just a patch of earth; there is certainly deep feeling for his mother, but he knows (line 14) that his mother's spirit cannot return, unlike the speaker in Gbadamosi's poem. The final two lines recall the mother's pride in her polishing, so good that she could see her face reflected in it; but now she has died there is no face to be reflected, even if she could return to see it.

There are clearly a lot of contrasts to be considered, not least in the structure of the two poems. The first is written in a kind of free verse, though there is a regularity in stanza and line length, perhaps reflective of how the speaker is as yet unable to assimilate his mother's death. The second is more controlled in both rhyme and rhythm (it is not a strict sonnet, though it has similarities to this form), perhaps because Harrison presents the speaker as a more controlled and less emotional person. Such ideas, though, are speculative: the poems are as they are, and why they are like this is something nobody can know.

3. *Gray Matter*: Jeanette D. Farr

There were many responses to this extract, but only a few that really appeared to see it as a piece of drama; it is true that there is not much action – though there is more than many candidates seemed to think – but it is also more than just a short presentation/discussion of racial prejudice. The two characters have more to them than simple bias and the playwright presents them both with some growing complexity; if her intention is only, as many suggested, to warn the audience all about their simple black-and-white prejudice, then she has made her characters much less one-sided than this simple interpretation would imply.

There is of course a question right at the start, which grows as the extract developed; why is Marge waiting in the police station? It becomes clear why Russell is there, but is Marge as innocent of a crime as she seems? The audience does not know, and the playwright does not want them to know, but this is a piece of dramatic uncertainty that surely pervades the entire extract and makes it a rather less straightforward piece than may at first appear. Where does the writer want the reader's sympathies to lie? At first they probably lie with Marge: moving her purse is probably a natural and arguably courteous thing to do, in case Russell wishes to take the chair next to Marge. His reaction, while outwardly quiet and polite, is perhaps full of underlying aggression; his half-threats in lines 12 and 14 are unnerving for Marge and will almost certainly be seen so by at least some members of an audience. He also becomes increasingly confrontational in lines 25–30, and even allowing for her apparent distrust of Russell because of his skin colour he is a young and apparently fit man, whereas she is middle-aged and so less able to stand up for herself, hence her decision to go to the counter and ring the bell in line 42.

At this point in the extract, however, it becomes clear that Russell, though clearly with a criminal record, is an intelligent young man, more than capable of defending himself and is perhaps playing games with Marge. The one section of the extract with most movement (lines 38–44) is certainly worth a good deal of comment, and it was disappointing that so few candidates made much of it; it could be considered as simply comic, but it also adds to the threat that Marge feels from Russell as he moves from chair to chair and finally says he will sit on her lap; if this is serious it is potentially quite frightening, but if it is intended as he says, it is simply a joke, then he has got the upper hand in the relationship that is developing. Marge's speech in lines 54–56 is understandable and perhaps justifiable but Russell's ironic comparison of his skin colour to B.O. is powerful and well presented. As suggested earlier, he is shown to be an intelligent and quick-witted young man; Marge's initial alarm was about his colour but at this point she has every right to feel much more subdued and concerned by the fact that despite his apparent criminal history, he is in reality far smarter than she is. A few candidates at this point returned to the question raised much earlier – why is Marge there in the first place? Her prejudices, and perhaps an audience's prejudices too, are shown by the writer to be almost certainly too simplistic; the extract is of course about racial ideas and discrimination, but as the most confident candidates said it is more than just this.