

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/08  
Coursework

## Key messages

Good folders will:

- Address their two texts with clear, concise and consistent focus upon what the questions ask.
- Explore how each writer creates particular effects, discussing some of the literary or dramatic techniques used.
- Support comments with brief but apt textual quotations and references.
- Make some brief use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments
- Where practicable, write on individually selected and worded questions, to make responses as personal as possible.
- Ensure that the work submitted remains within the overall 3000 word limit (Note: quotations do not count towards this total).

## General comments

There was some good and frequently very good work in the folders submitted this session; it was clear that candidates were well and thoughtfully prepared, and that the demands of the syllabus were generally understood by both them and their centres. Several centres sent annotated copies of the published Level Descriptors in support of the marks proposed for candidates; this is not in any way a requirement, but it did suggest that these Descriptors had been properly taken into account when proposing marks for each piece of work, and that the teaching staff concerned were fully aware of what is required in relation to each criterion.

Texts selected by candidates were all appropriate, and in most cases had been approved in advance, following submission of Outline Proposal Forms; the questions addressed were similarly appropriate. It is important to note that submitting an OPF for approval is a requirement of the 9695 syllabus and the centres who do best are typically those who engage with the Principal Examiner's comments ahead of submitting their folders. It is of course perfectly legitimate within syllabus requirements, but where several, or even all, candidates in a centre use the same two questions there will inevitably be some overlapping of ideas, even when – as was always the case – there is clearly no suggestion at all of over-teaching or sameness of arguments. One purpose of the Coursework Syllabus is to encourage individuality and independence of investigation and response, and this did not always appear the case in some centres. For the same reasons, it would be wise for all centres to select a new text, or indeed two texts, either every year or at least every two years, again to avoid some inevitable repetition of ideas. A list of texts used this session is appended below for centres' reference. What remains important is that an Outline Proposal Form is completed by each candidate, proposing two texts, two questions, and with a brief outline of how these questions may be answered.

As already said, responses were generally good, and almost invariably candidates did what their questions required, only in rare instances relying too much upon narrative or description; what mattered above all was that the crux of any response was a properly critical one, exploring in some detail how each writer uses language, imagery and, where appropriate, stage craft or poetic techniques, in order to create particular effects on a reader or audience – and in this respect it was good to see that when a drama was used it was almost always seen by candidates in a theatrical context, to be seen, heard and experienced rather than just read.

Good and appropriate textual support was evident in virtually every case, with reference to what is written or to what takes place, and with appropriate brief quotation. Quotations do not count towards the overall 3000 word limit (so approximately 1500 words for each response), and while this should not lead to hugely long or

unnecessarily frequent quotation it does mean that there should be a reasonably substantial amount. It should also be very briefly referenced by the candidate, usually simply by a page or line number in brackets, or for a play by Act and Scene; it is not helpful to simply list each quotation as a footnote, with only the name of the text.

Other quotations, from published critics, or websites, or other publications, were similarly helpful, and were often but not always properly referenced – with the title of the book, the author, and with page numbers, or by detailing the web address and date accessed. What was really important, though, was that some candidates made use of such critical material; it was of little value simply to copy it unless it was shown to have been one way in which a candidate's own ideas had been developed, so some evidence was needed that it was offered in support of a personal idea, or indeed that a candidate disagreed with the critic for reasons that were presented and argued. This requirement is outlined in Assessment Objective 5 as 'The ability to appreciate and discuss varying opinions of literary works' and consequently is necessary to the assessment of A Level work; many of this session's candidates made reference, if not always in any detailed or critical way, to other people's views and thoughts.

In the same way, some brief use of contextual material is required for work in all higher levels; this can be of many sorts – literary, historical, cultural, social – and may relate to ways in which the text was written at the time, and/or the way in which it is read or seen today. Although too much contextual consideration may detract from close textual reading it should be present in candidates' readings of a text so that it is clear that they are aware that a piece of literature does not exist in a vacuum. In a similar way to their use of critical views, many candidates whose work was seen this year also referred to some contextual factors, which was good.

There were no problems with over-long folders, and most candidates made sure of this by indicating at the end of piece how many words were used; it is a slightly time-consuming task, but it would be very helpful if future work could have two word-counts – one with quotations and one without. Centre annotations and summative comments were generally quite full and almost always referred either directly or by implication to the Level Descriptors, and as noted above most marks were close to agreed standards. What is necessary, both for a centre and for a Moderator, is for an indication to be given of the level in which a response should be placed; when this has been done, it is then particularly helpful to indicate how successfully each of the Descriptors has been addressed, so that a proposed mark is very closely tied to what is required.

As is the case in every session, it is important to end by thanking all those members of teaching staff for the efficient and professional way in which work was carried out, and in which folders were prepared and submitted.

*The following texts were successfully used by centres, but as noted above this is not in any sense a required or recommended list:*

Harold Pinter	<i>Old Times</i>
T S Eliot	<i>Murder in the Cathedral</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar</i>
T S Eliot	<i>The Waste Land</i>
Louis Macneice	Selected Poems
Seamus Heaney	Selected Poems
Robert Frost	Selected Poems
Philip Larkin	Selected Poems
Katherine Mansfield	Selected Short Stories
R L Stevenson	<i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>
Jane Austen	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>
George Orwell	<i>1984</i>
Bram Stoker	<i>Dracula</i>
Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i>
Charles Dickens	<i>David Copperfield</i>
Ernest Hemingway	<i>Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises</i>
Anthony Burgess	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i>
Cormac McCarthy	<i>The Road</i>
Khaled Hosseini	<i>The Kite Runner</i>

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/31  
Poetry and Prose

## Key messages

- Questions usually ask candidates to consider ways in which writers treat particular concerns, so successful responses will focus on authors' choices of language and literary methods, and the effects these might have on a reader or audience.
- Questions are about the writing of the texts, so responses which only consider events and characters will not be successful.
- Candidates need to consider the specific wording of **(a)** questions very carefully, choose material that is directly relevant, and shape their answers as a response to that specific question.
- Answers to **(b)** passage-based questions should examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in great detail.

## General comments

Examiners were often impressed by the energy and insight of the textual discussion in essays, which frequently demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the set texts and a sensitive appreciation of writers' methods. A pleasing development over the last few series has been the increasing willingness of candidates to explore the detail and effects of the writing of prose passages, with focus on not only language and imagery but sentence and paragraph forms, narrative point of view and tone. On the other hand, this examination series raised many examples of candidates being less careful about their responses to **(a)** questions, with many general, narrative answers, often dealing with the characters as if they were real people, with very little consideration of the writing of the texts. There were also a high number of cases where candidates had not thought carefully enough about the focus of the question and therefore chose material from their texts which was unhelpful for the question set.

## Comments on specific questions

### 1. TED HUGHES: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** There were very few responses to this question and several of the responses looked at setting in very general terms. More successful answers considered the setting specific to the poems they were considering, which ranged from bleak landscape in poems such as 'Crow Hill' and 'Wind', a battlefield in 'Bayonet Charge' or a domestic kitchen in 'Her Husband'. Such essays were able to discuss not only the presentation of the setting but consider how it was used in the poem to inform the subject matter and guide a reader's response.
- (b)** The most successful responses to this question clearly focused on the presentation of the frailty of the crane, as it is struggling against its fate. There were some personal and detailed analyses of structure, form and language in the most effective essays, often thoughtfully considering the range of metaphors and the sympathetic tone which starts with the use of the personal pronoun 'She'. Some essays featured thoughtful comment on the way Hughes' description balances imagination and precise entomological observation. Less cogent answers tended to discuss what the poem might mean using assertion which was seldom supported. This was particularly true of imposed biographical readings which took the insect to be a representative of Sylvia Plath.

## 2. ELIZABETH JENNINGS: *Selected Poems*

- (a) The very few responses to this question tended to focus more on Jennings' own struggles with mental health than on ways in which her poetry presents illness. While biographical context can be interesting and illuminating it is important to remember that candidates should be primarily concerned with the text itself.
- (b) A large number of essays showed an appreciation of the language and imagery of Jennings' poem and the suggestions of savagery; fewer were able successfully to articulate how the view of 'the savage world' springs from the title of the poem itself. Confident candidates were able to explore the more conventional understanding of savagery in predator animals, like the 'fox' and 'owl', hunting their prey, and considered the connections Jennings creates with that kind of natural urge to sexual urges – another kind of 'blood beat' and 'throb', which also underpins human affection. Human beings too are described as 'creatures', a point grasped in many successful essays.

## 3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) The difficulties human beings face in relationships were interpreted quite broadly in responses to this question, with a number looking at infidelity in 'The Forsaken Wife' or at separation in 'Amoretti Sonnet 86' or 'Verses Written on her Death-bed'. A number of others looked at racial tension and distrust in 'The White House', 'These Are the Times We Live In' and 'The Migrant'. Some essays described the content and meaning of the poems without considering the ways in which they were communicated; others listed interesting choices of diction and imagery without consideration of how they communicated meaning. Successful answers combined the two approaches, looking carefully at how the poets' choices of language, imagery and form effectively communicate the meaning, affecting the ways readers understand the poems.
- (b) There were many sympathetic responses to Emily Brontë's poem and most answers were able to expound its central meaning successfully. The question and poem demanded a careful examination of how the view of death is carefully developed through the stanzas, but few candidates were able to give the poem a thorough close and precise reading. There was some examination of particular images, the anchoring metaphor in stanza 4 often being a particular focus, but only rarely was this examination part of a developing thesis about the poem.

## 4. JHUMPA LAHIRI: *The Namesake*

- (a) While the passage question was much more popular, there were a good number of responses to the question about the presentation of family relationships. Most essays focused on the Ganguli family, and the novel certainly provides plenty of material for such a focus. Gogol's changing views of his parents was the strongest focus for candidates, including reference to his change of name and his response to his father's death. However, some candidates ranged more widely, with interesting results. On the one hand, some answers considered the role of the extended Indian family, including the wait for the grandmother's name for the baby, the visits to India and the death of Ashima's father. Also successful were the answers which contrasted traditional Bengali family values with Lahiri's presentation of American families, with Maxine's family the most frequent focus. Such answers were able to look more carefully at Lahiri's arrangement of ideas through the novel and the comparisons and contrasts she creates by her presentation.
- (b) There were many very strong answers to this question, featuring an overview of the importance of this passage's separation of Gogol's and his family's responses to the visit to India, combined with careful and precise analysis of some of the linguistic and narrative features of the passage itself. The difference between his parents' 'distress' while Gogol is 'secretly pleased' was often a starting point of a discussion of ways in which Lahiri's partial third person narrative presents Gogol's perspective and loss of a sense of being 'adventurous' on such a journey, to be replaced by frustration. Key details were picked up, such as Gogol's savouring of airline western food, while he finds the air in Delhi 'stomach-turning'. In contrast, candidates noted Ashima's ease as he 'slips' into a 'fresh sari'. The range of names for different relatives, the transformation of Gogol's parents and the powerless feeling of being 'swallowed' were all of note and many candidates noted Sonia's sharing of Gogol's uncertainty at the end of the extract.

**5. EDITH WHARTON: *The House of Mirth***

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.

**6. *Stories of Ourselves***

- (a) By some margin, Lim's 'Journey' and Desai's 'Games at Twilight' were the favoured stories chosen by candidates in responses to this question. Among other stories used were Grace's 'Journey', 'The Lemon Orchard', 'Secrets' and 'The Yellow Wall Paper', all to good effect. In some cases, though, essays twisted the question to look at how readers came to realisations, rather than the question's specific focus on characters' realisations. Less successful answers too tended to focus on narrative and on identifying the realisations, rather than considering how those characters are presented and the realisation is made significant in the narrative. More successful responses discussed such techniques as foreshadowing in the gothic dream visions at the beginning of Lim's 'Journey', or contrast, with Ravi's fervent hopes and confidence in the shed compared with the ending of 'Games at Twilight'. There was thoughtful discussion of the interior monologue, establishing key concerns and background, in Grace's 'Journey' and the use of letters and disrupted chronology in 'Secrets'. Candidates who thought carefully about how writers constructed their stories were far more successful than those who restricted their discussion to characters and what happens to them.
- (b) There were a surprising number of candidates who took the character of Mma-Mompoti at face value and extolled the praises of a thoughtful, caring and compassionate woman. This suggested a less than careful reading of the whole story and an imperceptive reading of the passage. Some candidates relied on narrating the events of the entire story rather than focusing on the writing of the passage, while others argued that this passage presents Mma-Mompoti as a caring figure, while the rest of the story reveals her hypocrisy. The candidates who knew the whole story and were also able to pay close focus to the passage itself were able to respond successfully, showing how the narrative in the excerpt develops its ironic portrayal of the character. While she is described as the 'great lady', alert candidates noted the unflattering colonial comparison with an 'English lady, with 'polished etiquette' and the clear implications of pretence in her 'professional smile' and 'assiduously cultivated' image, language choices which suggest effort and exhibition. The passage repaid careful reading and successful answers showed how Head's writing presents not only Mma-Mompoti for criticism, but the villagers too, who accept her view of herself so unquestioningly.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/32  
Poetry and Prose

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## General comments

Examiners were often impressed by the energy and insight of the textual discussion in essays, which frequently demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the set texts and a sensitive appreciation of writers' methods. A pleasing development over the last few series has been the increasing willingness of candidates to explore the detail and effects of the writing of prose passages, with focus on not only language and imagery but sentence and paragraph forms, narrative point of view and tone. On the other hand, this examination series raised many examples of candidates being less careful about their responses to **(a)** questions, with many general, narrative answers, often dealing with the characters as if they were real people, with very little consideration of the writing of the texts. There were also a high number of cases where candidates had not thought carefully enough about the focus of the question and therefore chose material from their texts which was unhelpful for the question set.

## Comments on specific questions

### 1. TED HUGHES: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** The question on conflict offered a number of routes for candidates to explore. Some considered the war poems to good effect whilst others looked at the conflict between humankind and the natural world, while some examined conflict within the natural world. This meant that a wide range of poems were chosen, from 'Bayonet Charge', through 'Thistles' and 'Wind' to 'Pike' and 'Hawk Roosting'. Less successful responses described the conflict represented in their chosen poems, relying on a recall of content rather than discussing poetic presentation. More confident responses looked at Hughes' creation of particular points of view and ways in which the conflict is presented through striking language choices and particular imagery in different poems.
- (b)** 'The Tender Place' proved a very popular choice, though the poem was not always well understood. A sizeable number of answers assumed that it describes torture in warfare, while others, with some knowledge of the context, took the view that Hughes describes watching ECT being performed on Sylvia Plath, or in some cases, inflicting it himself. Many candidates thought that the 'twelve-volt battery' was a part of the therapy itself and several understood 'temples' as places of worship. While some knowledge of the context can be helpful in interpreting the poem, understanding does not depend on it, and the context sometimes became an obstacle with candidates who did not fully understand it. More successful answers were able to explore the language and imagery of the poem effectively, though most were more confident with the first stanza and gave less attention to the second half of the poem. There was some capable discussion of the violence of vocabulary and imagery, with references to 'grenade', 'thunderbolt', 'lightnings' and 'seizures'. The threatening anonymity of the medical staff was compared with the presentation

of the helplessness of their patient, 'in... straps' and feeling 'Terror'. Essays which did engage with the second two stanzas found interesting things to say about the comparisons Hughes makes with the 'burning child' and 'the Boston City grid', while some explored the suggestions about the effects of the therapy on Plath's psychology and poetry in the final lines.

## 2. ELIZABETH JENNINGS: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly all candidates who had studied Jennings' poetry opted for this question on 'Remembering Fireworks'. Most were able to make some comments on the ways the fireworks themselves are described and suggested that they create childish 'delight' in the onlookers, and some of these looked at the references to light and shape. More developed answers considered not only the 'delight' of fireworks, but their ephemerality, and picked up the ideas of 'nostalgia' and 'things long known and lost' at the centre of the poem. Such answers postulated that the fireworks are also metaphoric, creating 'shapes, signs' but ultimately leaving 'emptiness' and memory only. Some candidates linked this idea with 'fumbling/For words of love' and discussed the transitoriness of human affection, with suggestions in some cases of phallic symbolism in the 'spent rocket'. Some perceptive responses noted that as well as the 'delight' in the fireworks, the poem expresses Jennings' familiar doubt and uncertainty with 'falling', 'absence', 'fumbling' and 'We search for a sign' at the ends of lines.

## 3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) This was a very popular question, and while 'On My First Daughter' and 'Sons, Departing' was the most common pairing, many kinds of separation and a wide range of poems were considered, including 'Border Builder', 'The Migrant', 'The White House', 'The Forsaken Wife', 'Verses Written on Her Death-bed' and 'Song'. As is often the case with less successful responses to poetry (a) questions, many described the separation, its causes (sometimes imaginatively invented) and effects, without considering at all the ways in which it is presented through language, structure and form. The most successful answers came from candidates who knew their poems very well and could therefore quote from them confidently, to enable them to comment on how tone is created, the effects of particular diction or imagery and so on. In this way, for example, there was some thoughtful discussion of the poem's structure reflecting the stages of the father's grief in 'On My First Daughter' and the symbolism of the hedges and the references to light and dark in 'Sons, Departing'.
- (b) The question on the Pope extract was frequently answered and sometimes excellently, with well-informed, detailed analytical discussion. There were also many candidates, however, who were not confident in their understanding of the poem. Some candidates were unaware that the extract was taken from a longer poem from the 18th century, but in some cases, the awareness of its context led to lengthy discussion of Pope's views on literature and the critics which were not always successfully linked to the extract. Effective responses commented on the allusions to the Pierian Spring and the Muse and some explored the tone of the poem, noting humour in the paradoxical 'shallow draughts intoxicate the brain' while 'drinking largely sobers us again' and the ironic noting that 'fearless youth' meet 'strange surprise' when they seem 'to tread the sky' before discovering further challenges. There was some successful engagement with the imagery of those never-ending challenges as 'Alps on Alps arise', the mountain metaphor suggesting both intimidation and exciting challenges.

## 4. JHUMPA LAHIRI: *The Namesake*

- (a) It was striking that a large number of the less successful responses to this question merely narrated sections of the plot without direct reference to the question itself. Long accounts of Gogol's early trials at school and his change of name, or his relationship with Maxine, often seemed to have little relevance to 'the relationships between children and their parents'. More thoughtful responses usually started with Gogol's growing detachment from his parents, particularly his father, with Lahiri showing at various points both the conscious and unconscious separation. His name, the gift of the book of short stories and the revelation of the importance of the author Gogol to his father were key parts of this. There was also careful discussion of ways in which Lahiri shows Gogol's return to his mother following his father's death, while comparisons were often drawn with the characterisation of Sonia. Successful responses often explored the portrayal of

Maxine's parents and their role as surrogate parents to Gogol, while there was also thoughtful discussion of Lahiri's presentation of the relationship between Ashoke, Ashima and their parents.

- (b) While there were some narrative responses to this passage, which did not explore Lahiri's writing effectively, there were also many sensitive readings, responsive to the situation itself and the author's presentation of it. Many candidates contextualised the extract to indicate how Lahiri emphasises Ashima's isolation in the house and noted how the first sentence creates the foreboding atmosphere of threat. Some linked that with ll. 44–45 where Ashima floods the house with light in defiance of Ashoke's death. Strong candidates noted the use of the third person narrator which creates suspense for the reader while also leading them to the truth in advance of Ashima herself. There was some observant discussion of the detailed steps Ashima goes through to try to contact her husband, with emphasis on periods of time to build tension. Candidates noted Lahiri's use of direct speech as Ashima tries to call the hospital, her persistence and confidence as she negotiates its systems and gets irritated by the delays. Many commented on the use of the term 'expired', clinically neutral and at first not comprehended. Many candidates noted how Lahiri uses the physical action of Ashima holding down the telephone receiver to indicate her mental state and discussed Lahiri's description of the physical actions of Ashima shivering and turning on all the lights, then staring at the completed cards. Perceptive candidates were able to observe that Lahiri leaves the reader to fill in the gaps and interpret Ashima's emotions.

#### 5. EDITH WHARTON: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) While there were few responses to this question, candidates who attempted it usually had a good understanding of Percy Gryce's character and role. Wharton's emphasising of his wealth and collection of Americana featured strongly in answers, as did the blandness of his characterisation – a dull, unoriginal and nervous man. His role in the novel as a key eligible bachelor in New York society, a target for young women and their mothers, was well understood, and in particular his role initially in being a marriage target for Lily herself. Some very astute answers discussed an ambiguous response to Lily's failure in her resolve to marry him, Wharton encouraging both a disappointment that her behaviour and Bertha Dorset's interference leads to Percy's withdrawal when she seems set for success, but also relief that she has avoided a meaningless, loveless marriage to an exceptionally boring man.
- (b) Less successful responses recounted the events in this extract with occasional comments on how beautiful Lily is and how much Selden appreciates her. A number of candidates did not consider that the responses of the audience of the tableaux are a key part of Wharton's presentation of it and so missed some key points. Stronger responses recognised that Wharton presents the view of Lily's beauty through direct narration as well as through the perspective of Selden, a character whose views are trusted by the reader, and Van Alstyne, who represents the society which the reader recognises to be corrupt. Strong essays often featured detailed discussion of the contrast between the descriptions of Lily and the other women, with the other women's 'sumptuous curves', 'gold salver', rich brocade', black satin' and 'pearl-woven heads' highlighting the 'pale draperies' 'without distracting accessories' which highlight Lily's own 'loveliness' and 'soaring grace'. There was some interesting discussion of ways in which these details show Lily as part of, but distinctly different, from the values of New York society. The use of dialogue was often explored, particularly looking at Wharton's use of Gerty Farish's commentary to delay the appearance of Lily and her effect on the audience and the reader.

#### 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) Popular stories to compare for this question included Lim's 'Journey', 'Secrets', 'The Yellow Wall Paper', 'Games at Twilight', 'Meteor' and 'The Lemon Orchard'; successful responses went further than identifying the important discoveries and looked at ways in which the structure and writing of the stories shapes the characters' and reader's responses to them. Some interesting answers looked at the use of foreshadowing, in the dismal setting of the shed in 'Games at Twilight' and the macabre dream sequence in 'Journey', for example; while good responses on 'The Yellow Wall Paper' looked at the gradual development of the discovery. Some interesting responses on 'Meteor' contrasted the discoveries made by the aliens and the reader with the lack of discovery made by the human beings in the story. Successful answers depended on detailed knowledge of the chosen stories with the ability to quote from them to support key points in the argument.
- (b) While there were some responses which saw the relationship of Royal and his wife as comfortable, loving and mutually supporting, most answers were more perceptive and recognised that



underneath that surface, White presents Royal as an aggressive, stifling partner to his wife. A significant number also picked up on the details which suggest Royal's diminished power and also that the inclusion of Ella's thoughts within the narrative indicate that she retains an inner life which Royal has not quite crushed. The passage repaid close attention and candidates commented fruitfully on Royal's name and his wife's anonymity in the passage, contrasting his wheelchair with the 'old cane chair' which is no longer 'presentable'. Candidates noted that the apparent equality of 'side by side' is undermined by Royal's speeches, gruff and accusatory with short sentences. Many identified gender inequality and the patriarchal society as a key concern in the passage and the story as a whole, though some subtler responses commented on the woman's dependency and affection – White writes that 'she liked' listening to Royal, notes her patience with him and her acknowledgement that 'She didn't know what she would do if Royal passed first'. The writer's use of metaphor was often discussed considering the idea of life passing the couple by as they sit and watch the traffic. Candidates who used their knowledge of the whole story were able to comment about the importance of the man in the pink car to develop the discussion of that part of the passage.

### 7. AMA ATA AIDOO: *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, showing some knowledge of the two plays. Candidates concentrated on the female characters and looked at issues of gender and patriarchy and some considered ways in which Ato's sense of his society is challenged by Eulalie, for example.
- (b) Few candidates responded to this text, but most who did attempted the passage question. It is important for candidates to note the nature of passage-based questions, as here few noted the second half of the question, recommending close reference to language and action. It would have been useful, for example, to comment on the significance of Anowa's costume and discuss the mirroring effect of the actions of the Boy and Girl, though some answers were able to discuss Anowa's speech about woman- and motherhood.

### 8. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

- (a) This question on some of the central concerns of the play drew some thoughtful and knowledgeable responses, with many candidates able to articulate some of the methods Shakespeare uses to dramatise Roman and Egyptian values. These ranged from the characterisation of Antony and Caesar to aspects such as the two rivers, the Nile associated with agriculture and fertility, whereas the Tiber is linked with naval warfare and military strategy. Octavia and Cleopatra were often compared and contrasted with telling choices of detail. A few subtle responses noted that the contrasts are highlighted by ambiguities and conflicts within characters, especially Antony, who while at one point is struck by 'a Roman thought', in another acknowledges that his 'pleasure lies' in the 'East'.
- (b) While this was quite a popular passage, a number of candidates struggled to focus specifically on the question and did not successfully pay attention to the presentation of politics. The successful responses analysed the scene's political negotiation, with neither Caesar nor Antony committing themselves and allowing Agrippa to take the role of go-between, and still testing each other out once Agrippa has made his proposal. Some noted Antony's political calm when he turns aside Caesar's barb about Cleopatra with dignity, but that he still falls into a political trap by agreeing to the marriage with Octavia. Many candidates discussed the role of Caesar's sister as a political pawn, used by her brother who frankly admits his power over her in ll. 29–30. Further to this, some answers, alert to detail, noted the ironic language used by Caesar in confirming the agreement in ll. 40–44, where he refers to Octavia's role to 'join our kingdoms', whereas the implications of 'bequeath' suggest the political reality. Some noted too the role of Lepidus, apparently an equal holder of political power with Caesar and Antony, but who says little and nothing until the negotiation has been completed.

### 9. BRIAN FRIEL: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) Few candidates responded to this question. All who did so recognised the importance of the Sweeneys in representing the prosperous life in America to which Gar aspires and to Lizzy's role in encouraging him to emigrate with promises of accommodation and a job. The flashback scene of the Sweeneys' visit was a central reference, with some noting that although Lizzy Sweeny is the source of Gar's desire to leave, she is also presented as a shallow, superficial character.

- (b) This episode, dominated by Private Gar's speeches, was the favoured option, with many answers noting both the humour and underlying pathos. Some successful responses demonstrated a clear grasp of the presentation of Gar's subconscious thoughts and desires through Private while Public retires to his bedroom. Comments were made on the contrast between Private's entertaining and histrionic speeches and the quiet dull game being played by SB and the Canon. They explored how the sarcasm and taunts directed towards the two men relate to earlier events in the play and some also made reference to the *mise-en-scene* and the importance of the bedroom as a refuge. There was often appropriate focus on the underlying emotion behind 'will you miss me?'

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- Answers to **(b)** passage-based questions should examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in great detail.

## General comments

Examiners were often impressed by the energy and insight of the textual discussion in essays, which frequently demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the set texts and a sensitive appreciation of writers' methods. A pleasing development over the last few series has been the increasing willingness of candidates to explore the detail and effects of the writing of prose passages, with focus on not only language and imagery but sentence and paragraph forms, narrative point of view and tone. On the other hand, this examination series raised many examples of candidates being less careful about their responses to **(a)** questions, with many general, narrative answers, often dealing with the characters as if they were real people, with very little consideration of the writing of the texts. There were also a high number of cases where candidates had not thought carefully enough about the focus of the question and therefore chose material from their texts which was unhelpful for the question set.

## Comments on specific questions

### **1. TED HUGHES: *Selected Poems***

- (a)** Few candidates responded to this question and of those who did, several omitted to consider landscape in Hughes poetry, which was the focus, and instead wrote about animals. It is very important that candidates think carefully about the wording and focus of questions and choose their material judiciously to ensure appropriateness. Some answers made gestures towards the question, for example that the landscape is the sky in 'Skylarks' or 'Hawk Roosting'. This was inventive, but not successful. Successful answers were confident in what constituted landscape and wrote well about the presentation of the 'oozing craters' of farmland in 'Crow Hill', the 'tent of the hills' in 'Wind', ice forming 'plate and rivet on pond and brook' in 'October Dawn' or the 'Smudged' farms and fields in 'November', for example.
- (b)** 'The Thought-Fox', on the other hand, drew a large number of responses, many of them sensitive, perceptive and responsive to Hughes' choices of language and imagery. The imaginary fox as a metaphor for poetic inspiration was well understood and its tentative introduction into the poem carefully plotted. The most successful essays considered not just the emergence of the fox but ways in which the poem makes the connection between it and creation in stanzas 3–5. Candidates traced the way in which the fox's 'nose touches twig, leaf' to detect scent as suggesting that creation is hesitant and instinctive, and most candidates interpreted ll. 11–12 as placing words on the page, noting the neat repetition of 'now'. They considered ll. 14–15 as the writer obliquely finding words which sidle into view, becoming focused and clearer as if having a life of their own ('coming about its own business'), as if independent of the poet. Nearly all candidates acknowledged the 'sudden sharp hot stink' of the fox as a powerful metaphor, suggesting that

words have a taste and smell of their own and enter the poet's mind without him being conscious of the process. Several paid close attention to the role of the clock marking time, the initial absence of a guiding 'star' and the contrast between the 'blank page' in stanza 1 and the final line of the poem.

## 2. ELIZABETH JENNINGS: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were a very few answers to this question. Among the answers, 'Night Sister', 'A Mental Hospital Sitting-Room' and 'Night Garden' were the poems chosen for focus. These were appropriate poems, though they were not always known in sufficient detail to support an argument and some answers drifted from the question's focus on medical care to discuss illness more generally, while some were waylaid by recounting Jennings' biography, which was seldom helpful.
- (b) This question elicited some thoughtful answers, noting that under the praise for creation lie some darker thoughts typical of Jennings. Strong responses noted the individual elements of perfect creation in the opening stanza before looking at the indications of 'order' and 'rule' in the second, where creation is controlled. Perceptive candidates noted that the tone changes in stanza 3 with the ominous 'blood' and 'drums' which 'pound'. Some noted the importance of Jennings' choice of a predator for this stage of the poem, which develops to 'darkness' and 'passion' which is 'beyond reason', contrasting with the order of stanza 2. While some were puzzled by the closing of the poem, others suggested that the reference to the open mind suggests that humankind is capable of rational thought – 'reason' – and can therefore order and rule 'passion'. This view was often connected with Jennings' own Catholic beliefs. Less successful responses looked at individual images without connecting them to the developing meaning of the poem, while others missed the import of the central stanzas.

## 3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) A small number of candidates opted for the question on the exploration of feelings of rejection, but among the answers, poems such as 'These Are the Times We Live In', 'Border Builder', 'The White House' and 'The Migrant' featured most frequently, though 'The Forsaken Wife' and 'I Find No Peace' also appeared a number of times. From this choice of poems, answers tended to focus on rejection through racism and xenophobia or within relationships. It was pleasing in some of these answers to see that candidates knew their chosen poems well and were able to quote from them to support their points and comment on the effects of particular choices of language and imagery, for example considering the connotations of 'building', 'door', 'bricks', 'blood', 'tightened face' and 'sharp as steel', while there was also interesting discussion of the structure of Dharker's and Rumens' poems.
- (b) Spenser's poem was often confidently, but incorrectly, defined as a Petrarchan sonnet even by candidates who commented on the final couplet. Others tried to make the sonnet fit the Petrarchan octave/sestet structure, which missed the final epigrammatic couplet. These difficulties with structure were often indicators of candidates not carefully following through the development of ideas in the poem itself and expounding their meaning, but instead choosing isolated examples of language or technique for comment. More successful responses looked at ways in which the poem deals with the time of absence between the lovers, starting with the initial 'Since' and progressing through 'long weary days', 'many nights', 'evening until morn', 'day', 'night', 'extend' and 'every minute' to emphasise the sense of slowness of time when the lovers are separated. Such answers noted that the speaker of the poem is frustrated with the length of both day and night as he waits in 'expectation' and 'grief'. Those candidates who were alert to the final couplet noted the way it neatly summarises the speaker's condition, antithetically balancing the 'long' hours of 'sorrow' with the 'fast' flying 'joyous hours', with the two rhyming words contrasting.

## 4. JHUMPA LAHIRI: *The Namesake*

- (a) Some candidates saw the older generation as representatives of traditional culture and wrote essays on cultural identity, using the question wording as a slight springboard to a different question. Again it is worth saying that it is very important for candidates to consider carefully the precise wording of questions which they attempt to answer, as Examiners are unable to reward essays which wander off the specified topic. More successful responses usually started with Ashoke and Ashima, considering the differing ways in which they are shown to adapt to life in America and are perceived by their growing children. Fruitful responses also considered the generation older than them, looking at Ashoke's and Ashima's relationships with their own parents and the values enshrined in that generation. Some good answers also considered Lahiri's

presentation of Ashoke's and Ashima's American contemporaries, especially Maxine's parents, to discuss how the American older generation live different lives and have different values and expectations from Ashoke and Ashima.

- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper and drew many detailed and perceptive responses. While there were certainly some narrative answers, many candidates showed they could say a good deal about Lahiri's choices of language and the structure of her sentences. Subtle answers noted that the third person narrative takes Gogol's perspective, observing his parents in a detached way as they are 'weeping like children', and reducing his relatives to a 'row of people', showing his lack of connection with India. The references to 'Gogol knows...' suggest the predictability of events for him and candidates contrasted Ashima 'staring at the clouds' with Gogol's 'relief' as he re-enters the western world on the aeroplane. There was also some interesting discussion of the second paragraph and the details of the Gangulis' readjustment to life in America, with the contrasts between the full 'refrigerator', 'space' and 'silence' and the busy family life in India they have just left. Candidates noted Lahiri's references to American foodstuffs and domestic activities in listing sentences and that all the members of the family soon adapt, their Indian experiences are 'quickly shed, quickly forgotten'.

### 5. EDITH WHARTON: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) While there were not many answers on Bertha Dorset, candidates recognised her role as a representative of the values of New York's affluent society and as a foil to Lily. There was usually good knowledge of her pivotal role and influence in society and her role in Lily's expulsion from the yacht was much discussed. The most successful answers looked at her presentation through what other characters say about her as well as her own behaviour, while a few particularly strong responses were also able to look at her speech.
- (b) The passage on Percy Gryce repaid careful reading and responsive candidates drew much from the details of Wharton's writing. From its damning first sentence, the passage shows a character devoid of life and interest, with his only distinguishing feature being inherited rather than original. Confident answers noted how Gryce is further characterised through his 'appalling' house like a 'mausoleum' and his 'monumental' mother, who is as self-regarding as her son, both of them delighting in seeing their names in print and writing. Many noted Wharton's tone of mockery in the final paragraph of the extract where Percy needs protection from the rain and is linked with 'a batch of pale men'. In looking at others' attitudes towards Percy, candidates noted that 'maternal breasts' 'fluttered' at the thought of him, establishing his role as a highly desirable potential husband. Some commented on the ironic gap between this and the dullness of the character described in the passage and Wharton's method of satirising the materialistic values of New York society. Lily's role in watering his 'thirsty soil' was also noted, and her own desire to capture Percy's attention. Candidates with a broader view of the novel were able to apply their knowledge of Lily's ultimate failure to marry Percy and how this passage illuminates that part of the novel.

### 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The few responses to this question used stories such as 'Five Twenty', 'Games at Twilight', 'The Village Saint', 'The Signalman' and Lim's 'Journey'. In many cases, answers relied on narrative accounts of the stories with an explanation of the surprise. In few cases did essays look at ways in which the authors prepared readers for the surprise or discuss the effects of that surprise on a reading of the rest of the story, perhaps by encouraging a reevaluation of what has been read.
- (b) The question on the extract from 'Meteor' attracted far more answers, and while some were descriptive and narrative, there were also many thoughtful responses which teased out ways in which Onn's Journal provides the reader with the aliens' perspective on earth, encouraging the reader to reconsider what is ordinary. Many linked this new perspective to the end of the story, noting that the reader has been led to understand Onn's race from passages like the extract, and therefore feels sympathy, or even outrage, at their final fate. Others too compared the Journal's previous references to a planet 'like a blue pearl' with the passage's opening 'terrible place' and the tension built up through references to 'horror' and 'hideous monstrosities'. Perceptive candidates noted that the writer of the Journal is not identified or described in any way, and though the names are unusual, the attitudes expressed are recognisably human, and in this way Wyndham creates empathy between the reader and the Fortans. They noted too that the reader relies on Onn's description and has to work out the position of the Globe from his observations, so his unusually small point of view forces the reader to 're-see' the shed, the table, the skylight and the cat. A few

less responsive candidates offered the opinion that since the Fortans cannot understand what they see, they are clearly not as intelligent as their technology suggests, but these were in a minority. Better answers looked at the careful, detailed descriptions and the rationality of the interpretation, and understood the lack of comprehension from one seeing the world from a height of less than 'a quarter of an inch', as we are told at the end of the story.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/41  
Drama

## Key messages

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- Candidates should read questions carefully and respond to the question that they have been asked, not the question that they would like to have been asked.
- If candidates want to do **(b)** passage-based questions, they must be prepared to deal with the passage printed on the paper in detail.

## General comments

Centres should note that this paper is taken by a comparatively small number of candidates. This means that points made are often not gathered from a large number of responses and that examiners may not have seen responses for each question from the whole ability range.

Most candidates this session showed sound knowledge of the texts, though for some this is restricted to matters of story or simple response to character. Better answers were able to carefully select ideas relevant to the question in order to deal with the precise requirements of what was being asked.

In order to show understanding, candidates need to be careful to anchor their discussions through particular reference to form, structure and language. Candidates should be prepared to focus down onto particular moments in order to demonstrate how the text actually works. At this level, precision of response is a key skill, and it must be supported through analysis of evidence taken from the text.

The study of literature is, of course, very much about how an individual responds to a text. With an examination at this level, personal response arises from the examples chosen and through a strong feeling that candidates have allowed themselves to deal personally with the text, rather than simply reiterating what they have been told about it. Often it is most clearly evidenced through an unusual approach to a question or through originality of thought. At other times it comes out through a candidate's ability to create a clear line of argument that leads an examiner logically through a series of interesting discussions about aspects of the text. The best answers, of course, show a level of flow and originality which can only come from candidates who have allowed texts to work upon them and have put considerable effort into weighing up different aspects of the text in order to establish their reading.

To do well, candidates need to communicate their ideas with clarity. Whilst plans are not compulsory (or indeed rewarded), those who do spend some time on working out a structure for what they have to say give themselves the advantage of not circling round. They make a point and move on. Particularly with **(b)** passage-based questions, it is important that an analysis of the passage is constructed in response to the question; rather than a line-by-line, is adopted in order to ensure coverage of a range of aspects of the question. Although there is no formula for opening paragraphs, it is noticeable that candidates, who simply tease at the question itself, often putting it in other words, are not doing enough to engage with the question from the outset of their essays. It is advisable to launch directly into relevant arguments and outline which points are going to be explored in relation to the question for the examiner to follow the through line of the argument.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

- (a) Some candidates struggled to make balanced reference to both plays, often preferring one over the other. Many candidates approached the question relevantly through the presentation of women or families in the plays. The best candidates were able to focus in on dramatic effects and point to particular moments in order to substantiate their points.
- (b) This was the more popular question choice for this text. A number of candidates talked about the family in general terms, with only passing reference to the passage. Better responses were able to contextualise the incident and thus had a clear view of the ways in which this scene builds on the expectations of a society presented elsewhere. The word ‘presentation’ was a key discriminator in this question, and the best responses dealt well with the various ways in which the ‘family’ heads off any impetus for change that might threaten the status quo.

#### **2. William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night***

- (a) The question on Antonio elicited a limited number of responses. Some simply reported on what he does in terms of plot. Others were able to look at his contribution to some of the play’s themes because of his integrity and his clear, unconditional love for Sebastian. A small number of quite ambitious responses attempted to relate his contribution to the sexual ambiguity of the play and its unconcern about love being linked to gender.
- (b) This was by far the most popular question on this text and one of the most popular on the Paper. Basic responses here gave background information about Malvolio’s gulling and then mentioned that this scene was the result. More sophisticated responses looked at the dialogue and the action, often focusing on Olivia’s bewilderment at the strange behaviour of her steward. Interesting points were often made about Malvolio’s insensitivity, his obliviousness to the fact that he is creating an entirely negative impression. A number of candidates struggled with Malvolio’s final speech; this monologue reveals to the audience the full extent of his self-delusion. Responses that simply took the question to be a starting point for a general discussion of the role and significance of Malvolio in the play as a whole did not do well and needed to better consider the precise wording of the question.

#### **3. William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra***

- (a) Basic answers were able to give an account of Antony’s increasing incompetence as a military leader as he becomes more and more involved with Cleopatra. More competent responses were able to see how Antony inspires love and loyalty in his soldiers and followers, who see him, without irony, as a ‘plated Mars’ early on in the play. The best responses explored Antony’s internal struggles and the ways in which he allows his judgement as military leader to be swayed by his private life. There were some interesting responses on Antony’s relationship with Rome and its values, with some comment on the way in which, at the last, he tries to affirm Roman, military values through his suicide, in part to thwart Caesar on his own terms.
- (b) Basic answers were able to give an account of how Cleopatra reaches this point. More complex responses were able to react to her desire to appear as both woman (‘my baby at my breast’, ‘A lass unparallel’d’) and queen/ goddess (‘O Eastern star’) in her final moments. There was often focus on her final recognition of Antony as ‘husband’ together with her entirely typical jealous thought that one of the serving maids may have the first kiss from Antony. There were some strong discussions of the roles of Iras and Charmian. A small number of very good responses pointed out that she wants to stage her death out of spite towards Caesar, to leave him as an ‘ass unpolicied.’

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

- (a) Most responses were able to describe the different scenes in which Kate appears. Better responses looked at the scenes as flashbacks and saw how Gar’s disappointment in love leads him into planning to leave Ireland. Some of the best responses saw how Kate herself is compromised by the tension between love and family. There were some interesting close analyses of the difficult moment when Kate comes to bid farewell to Gar, with clear recognition that Gar’s indifference covers a deeper hurt.



- (b) Responses to this question were able to talk interestingly about this moment of uncomfortable contact between S.B. and Gar. There was usually clear recognition of the sadness and regret in the passage, though comparatively few responses were able to use the initial stage directions in order to explore ideas around S.B.'s state of mind at this point. The best responses dealt in detail with the barriers that exist between the two and the unspoken longing for deeper communication that they share. There was often useful discussion about the relationship between the public and private characters of Gar, as revealed here.

**5. Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular***

- (a) Basic answers simply gave an outline of the various characters and their relationships with others. More thoughtful responses noted that guests and hosts (particularly if they do not know each other very well) are in a really ambiguous situation, which is fully exploited by, for example, Marion's rudeness to the Hopcrofts in Act 1. The best answers pointed out that the various hosts gradually give up any pretence of hospitality during the course of the play and that the guests are increasingly unwilling to fulfil their socially defined roles and that their selfish preoccupations gradually come to dominate. The very best essays dealt with the final act where the Hopcroft's invade and set themselves up as the hosts, determined to play the games that Sidney wanted to play in Act 1 and which are now agonisingly compulsory.
- (b) Limited responses often talked about Marion as though she was a real person. A number of candidates had not really understood the situation at this point and thought that she was in a negligée because she is pregnant. More attentive responses were able to discuss her constant seeking of others' attention, her drinking, and the various ways in which she presents herself to the other characters. The best answers responded fully to both language and action and commented on the roles of the other characters present too.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/42  
Drama

## Key messages

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- Candidates should read questions carefully and respond to the question that they have been asked, not the question that they would like to have been asked.
- If candidates want to do **(b)** passage-based questions, they must be prepared to deal with the passage printed on the paper in detail.

## General comments

Centres should note that this paper is taken by a comparatively small number of candidates. This means that points made are often not gathered from a large number of responses and that examiners may not have seen responses for each question from the whole ability range.

Most candidates this session showed sound knowledge of the texts, though for some this is restricted to matters of story or simple response to character. Better answers were able to carefully select ideas relevant to the question in order to deal with the precise requirements of what was being asked.

In order to show understanding, candidates need to be careful to anchor their discussions through particular reference to form, structure and language. Candidates should be prepared to focus down onto particular moments in order to demonstrate how the text actually works. At this level, precision of response is a key skill, and it must be supported through analysis of evidence taken from the text.

The study of literature is, of course, very much about how an individual responds to a text. With an examination at this level, personal response arises from the examples chosen and through a strong feeling that candidates have allowed themselves to deal personally with the text, rather than simply reiterating what they have been told about it. Often it is most clearly evidenced through an unusual approach to a question or through originality of thought. At other times it comes out through a candidate's ability to create a clear line of argument that leads an examiner logically through a series of interesting discussions about aspects of the text. The best answers, of course, show a level of flow and originality which can only come from candidates who have allowed texts to work upon them and have put considerable effort into weighing up different aspects of the text in order to establish their reading.

To do well, candidates need to communicate their ideas with clarity. Whilst plans are not compulsory (or indeed rewarded), those who do spend some time on working out a structure for what they have to say give themselves the advantage of not circling round. They make a point and move on. Particularly with **(b)** passage-based questions, it is important that an analysis of the passage is constructed in response to the question; rather than a line-by-line, is adopted in order to ensure coverage of a range of aspects of the question. Although there is no formula for opening paragraphs, it is noticeable that candidates, who simply tease at the question itself, often putting it in other words, are not doing enough to engage with the question from the outset of their essays. It is advisable to launch directly into relevant arguments and outline which points are going to be explored in relation to the question for the examiner to follow the through line of the argument.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

- (a) Basic answers to this question were able to describe the tensions between Ato and Eulalie in the play, noting that the different backgrounds of the pair were bound to lead to discomfort. A number of answers became distracted from the main topic by trying to approach ideas about patriarchal societies and feminist views – these discussions were almost always unhelpfully abstract and unanchored by analysis of the text. Better responses anchored the differences in particular moments with the snails and the violence at the end of the play being popular choices. Stronger responses dealt firmly with cultural background of each character and explored Aidoo's skill in dramatising tension in order to allow an audience to retain sympathy for both characters.
- (b) Restricted responses here were able to contextualise the scene and give a brief overview of the relationship between Kofi Ako and Anowa. More detailed responses were able to make reference to Kofi Ako's care for Anowa and to the warmth of their relationship, the way they have respect for each other despite their differences of opinion. There were some useful discussions about the role of the storm as a dramatic device reflecting the differences between the characters. The best answers argued closely from details and demonstrated with a number of carefully selected details how the passage works in dramatic terms.

#### **2. William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night***

- (a) This was by far the most popular text on the paper for this cohort with the majority of candidates choosing to respond to the (a) question here. Responses were often quick to identify the various examples of disguised identity in the play, ranging from the obvious example of Viola/ Cesario to various ways in which characters assume identities for a range of purposes. Malvolio was the most referenced example here, with Feste's disguise as Sir Topas also featuring largely. But there were coherent discussions too, about Orsino and Olivia as people who disguise their true identities and feelings behind both physical and metaphorical masks. Strangely, hardly any candidates pointed out that Viola gives the clue to the question in her remark: 'Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness,/Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.' Discussions that took on disguise as about more than dressing up and that it might distort and corrupt were able to deal with the surrounding complexities. Less successful responses often became bogged down in discussions of the roles of women in Shakespeare's society or in speculation about homo-eroticism as a theme of the play.
- (b) A number of responses simply narrated the action of the passage in other words or gave an account of the various characters. More subtle responses were able to see that there are tensions between the serving class and its masters, with Maria clearly at odds with Sir Toby at the beginning of the extract. This sometimes led to convincing discussions about the topsy-turvy nature of the play as a whole. The most obvious point to make was about Malvolio and most responses centred on his self-righteous grumpiness. Some answers went into long digressions about Puritanism, rather than focusing on what (and how) Malvolio makes his rather pompous points about 'disorders' and 'misdemeanours.' Most candidates pointed out that this scene sets up Malvolio's subsequent punishment; the best recognised that it is Malvolio's love of high-sounding language that provides Maria with the method for his downfall. Some highly articulate responses recognised that the quest for fun has negative consequences such as greed and the unkindness shown between characters.

#### **3. William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra***

- (a) A number of responses simply offered a narrative view, with the plot of the play foregrounded. Some candidates focused on the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, with their deaths only being mentioned as something of an afterthought. Better responses were able to focus more precisely on the deaths themselves, observing how both are designed to be heroic, honourable deaths in the Roman fashion and yet also show enormous humanity. The best responses were able to deal in detail with Antony's botched first attempt and then with the final magnificence of the joint deaths in Act 5. Candidates who could deal in detail with the richness and variety of the diction did well. A small number of responses dealt fully 'with what effects' by talking about Octavius's reaction to the final tableau and his insincere tributes to the pair who – only hours before – he had been plotting so viciously against.
- (b) The best answers to this question focused on the language and action of the piece, rather than on generalised observation about Antony's character and situation. Better responses were able to

explain the complexity of his feelings on hearing of Fulvia's death though comparatively few responses made explicit the fact that her death forces Antony into recognising that he was relying on Fulvia as a proxy ('The business she hath broached in the state/ Cannot endure my absence') in order to stay in Egypt: her death forcing a practical as well as an emotional issue. There were some convincing discussions of his abstraction during the scene, and of the role that Enobarbus plays in pointing out the truth of what is really going on. The best answers offered a clear, strategic view of the passage, fully supported by sensitive attention to detail of language and action.

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

- (a) A number of responses failed to see the ramifications of this question, which was taken to require a description of why Gar wants to go to America in the first place. Answers of this kind tended to look at the general unhappiness of his situation, both in terms of his home life, his romances and his prospects for the future. Slightly more sophisticated responses noted that America offers a way out, despite the fact that Gar's only direct experience of America is framed through his aunt and uncle's life there, with the material aspects of America only partially making up for their lack of a child. Better responses, of course, saw instantly that the question is about Gar's emotional engagement with America as a place of fantasy, where he can fulfil his ambitions. Gar's mind is full of American songs (the title of the play crops up a number of times as sung) and bits from movies, and he often acts out – in an American accent – what he imagines his future might be in terms of jobs and financial success. He is also obsessed with the minutiae of American life with his references to the exoticism of 'a movie at the downtown drive-in', 'malted milk', 'coke' and 'blueberry pie'. Many candidates commented on the shift of excitement about America at the beginning to a mood of uncertainty and apprehension at the end.
- (b) A number of scripts took the overriding view that Doogan, Kate's father is acting as an antagonist and being unfriendly towards Gar, or being sarcastic. However, better responses were able to recognise subtleties in his tone throughout being friendly and considerate but giving way to his sense of fatherly protection creeping in at the end of the passage as he says 'Kate is our only child, Gareth, and her happiness is all that is important to us-' perhaps colouring his motivation for his previous comments on her prospects. Most candidates were able to identify Gar's lack of confidence and saw that the incident – coming so early in the play – is a significant one for an audience who are keen to find out about the various things that have made Gar so determined to leave Ballybeg. The most successful answers were able to respond convincingly to the presentation of both the inarticulate Public Gar and the commenting self-aware Private Gar in the scene. There were some interesting discussions of the passage as a flashback, allowing responses to better consider and analyse the structure of the play.

#### Question 5 Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

- (a) There were a couple of popular approaches to this question. Some candidates agreed with the terms and wrote about self-awareness. Others took issue with the question and sought elsewhere for the sources of the comedy in language play, or farce for example. A number of responses failed to recognise that the term 'self-awareness' suggests that people are able to monitor the effect that they are having on others. Responses of this type tended to focus on character study or on the characters' inconsiderate treatment of others. There were, understandably, many responses that focused on Sidney as someone who has no sympathy for others and is entirely self-obsessed. For those who understood the question fully, there was ample opportunity to explore dramatic irony and themes such as materialism and social climbing. The best responses were richly illustrated with particular examples of behaviour or language which show his lack of social skill: discussion of the Hopcrofts's behaviour at the end of the play provided particularly useful material for analysis, with the way in which the characters continue regardless of others' feelings and, indeed, of social conventions.
- (b) Simple responses took the passage to be an opportunity to talk about the Hopcrofts's marriage, both here and elsewhere in the play. More sophisticated responses were able to engage more fully with the language and action at this particular point in the play. Many responses failed to respond to the second half of the scene in any detail. Those that did were able to analyse Sidney's inconsiderate behaviour towards Eva and her subsequently ironic direction of the carol singing (particularly bearing in mind her strained relationship with Geoffrey). Some of the best answers showed detailed awareness of the passage in context, as the conclusion of Act 2, the bridge to Act 3, with its demonstration of Sidney's boorish dominance disguised as 'party spirit.'

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/43  
Drama

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Most candidates this session showed sound knowledge of the texts, though for some this is restricted to matters of story or simple response to character. Better answers were able to carefully select ideas relevant to the question in order to deal with the precise requirements of what was being asked.

In order to show understanding, candidates need to be careful to anchor their discussions through particular reference to form, structure and language. Candidates should be prepared to focus down onto particular moments in order to demonstrate how the text actually works. At this level, precision of response is a key skill, and it must be supported through analysis of evidence taken from the text.

The study of literature is, of course, very much about how an individual responds to a text. With an examination at this level, personal response arises from the examples chosen and through a strong feeling that candidates have allowed themselves to deal personally with the text, rather than simply reiterating what they have been told about it. Often it is most clearly evidenced through an unusual approach to a question or through originality of thought. At other times it comes out through a candidate's ability to create a clear line of argument that leads an examiner logically through a series of interesting discussions about aspects of the text. The best answers, of course, show a level of flow and originality which can only come from candidates who have allowed texts to work upon them and have put considerable effort into weighing up different aspects of the text in order to establish their reading.

To do well, candidates need to communicate their ideas with clarity. Whilst plans are not compulsory (or indeed rewarded), those who do spend some time on working out a structure for what they have to say give themselves the advantage of not circling round. They make a point and move on. Particularly with **(b)** passage-based questions, it is important that an analysis of the passage is constructed in response to the question; rather than a line-by-line, is adopted in order to ensure coverage of a range of aspects of the question. Although there is no formula for opening paragraphs, it is noticeable that candidates, who simply tease at the question itself, often putting it in other words, are not doing enough to engage with the question from the outset of their essays. It is advisable to launch directly into relevant arguments and outline which points are going to be explored in relation to the question for the examiner to follow the through line of the argument.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question. Some answers offered an overview of describing the roles of the two characters in the plays. More sophisticated responses were able to use the women's cultural backgrounds as a means of seeing how the two react to their present circumstances. A number of responses attempted to impose a view about patriarchy that tended to ignore the subtlety of the author's presentation of these characters. The best answers were able to offer a clearly detailed comparison, making use of specific moments from the plays and dealing with the term 'dramatic presentation' from the question.
- (b) Basic responses often saw this question as an invitation to discuss the relationship of Kofi Ako and Anowa in the play as a whole. Better answers were able to anchor discussion of these characters into the detail of the extract provided. These responses were able to examine the cultural 'norms' of marriage in the society presented and thus look at the ways in which this marriage is atypical. The best responses were acutely aware of the passage as drama and were able to analyse the tensions and also the warmth of the relationship in the scene with reference to both language and action; whilst also taking into consideration Aidoo's use of symbolism.

#### **2. William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night***

- (a) A small number of responses simply took the question as asking for a character analysis of Malvolio and his motivations. But there was a 'nudge' to the question in Olivia's remark, and the central focus of any answer needed to be upon self-love and the various ways in which Malvolio is oblivious to others. The best responses looked at particular moments (the letter speech was, of course, very popular, as was his confrontation with Olivia) and many sought to discuss whether Malvolio deserves the severity of the punishment meted out to him. Answers that dealt with detail of language and action rather than generality were more highly rewarded.
- (b) Answers at the lower end tended to be narrative in focus or to go through the passage in a line-by-line way. Better responses looked at the situation and at the way that the grieving, reluctant Olivia is transformed by her encounter with Viola/Cesario, whose language proves so seductive, even though he/she seems only to be acting on Orsino's behalf. The best responses were able to characterise Viola/Cesario's humour, her capacity to dissimulate, her underlying sadness and her imprisonment in a disguise that enables to empathise with Olivia because she knows exactly how a woman feels and is thus able to work on Olivia's weaknesses.

#### **3. William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra***

- (a) This was the most popular text on this paper with the majority of candidates choosing to write on the (b) passage-based question. The question prompt demands focus on Cleopatra as someone who stages her life (the barge, or her death for example) in order to manipulate others, rather than requesting a broad character study. The best answers quickly saw this and focused on her engagement with directing her servants ('I am sick and well') in order to present an image of herself as a queen or a badly treated lover. In the best responses there were also some detailed discussions of the ways in which she manipulates language in order to convey particular impressions of herself.
- (b) Most responses were able to deal effectively with the second half of the passage and the various ways in which Caesar, Antony and Octavia circle around each other, each aware that their discussions are carefully framed for political advantage. The best responses looked at the language, at the hidden agenda and at Octavia speaking aside to Caesar. But better candidates recognised that there was more to the scene than that. The framing role of Enobarbus and Agrippa as both partisan participants and commentators places the mood of distrust in context. It goes wider than the chief protagonists, with Enobarbus and Agrippa carefully complimenting the other's master with a formality and rigidity which exudes distrust verging on antagonism, though couched in the friendliest of terms.

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

- (a) Restricted responses were able to discriminate between Public and Private Gar and see that the inner voice is much more confident and more aggressive than the outer voice; which is more guarded, more reserved, less confident and self-assured. The best responses were able to characterise the voice through examples of diction and to see the range offered here, with the voice acting as a commentary on the outward action and Gar's behaviour, while also being the way in which we see Gar's inner imaginings about what will happen to him when he goes to America. Competent answers often sought to look at the range of his imagination in terms of how he pictures himself. The best answers anchored points into particular moments in the play in order to move from listing towards considering the 'significance,' as demanded in the question.
- (b) Most responses were quickly able to see how this passage reflects Madge's gloom at losing the closest thing she has ever had to a son. They also recognised the ambiguity of Gar's final uncertainty. Some responses made much of the new baby, though its relationship to Madge was often misunderstood. Better responses looked at the action, at Madge's gift to Gar, at her raising her hand 'in a sort of vague Benediction.' In comparing Gar's two voices as presented here, answers were able to characterise the melancholy of the scene. A few responses took into account Madge's sad reflection in her monologue that, for all his hopes, Gar is very much his father's son. Some candidates had plainly been very moved by Gar's inarticulate concern for his father. The best responses also noted that Gar is both in the moment and outside it; explicitly storing it up as a memory.

**Question 5 Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular***

- (a) Most responses to this question showed a sound understanding of what happens to Eva during the course of the play. Many responses were basic as they simply took the question to ask for a character study and thus went through the play act by act. Better responses were able to think about Eva's character strategically in terms of the presentation of the contrasting marriages in the play and in terms of what her ludicrous, self-dramatising adds to the comedy of the play and to its themes. There were some interesting discussions of the ways in which she demonstrates a new and rather unappealing side of herself in Act 3 when helping the Hopcrofts with their games.
- (b) Virtually all responses saw that Marion is being deeply patronising towards the Hopcrofts in this scene. Better answers were able to characterise her contempt and snobbery with close reference to detail of language and action and see how she is deliberately choosing her words ('dishy kitchen') to be as rude as possible without being explicit. There was often useful discussion of the physical comedy of opening and shutting drawers and cupboards. Some responses dealt fully with the parts that Sidney and Ronald play in the scene, looking carefully at Ronald's indifference and at Sidney's attempts at humour ('we've got a good ten yards to the fence...') as a means of fighting back. A number of essays argued convincingly that it is exchanges such as the one shown in this passage that energise Sidney's revenge in the final act. The best responses were able to imagine an audience's reaction and to feel the squirming discomfort that you might feel in recognition of how a social event can be used to both patronise and belittle. These answers often managed to convey the ambiguity of the scene too, pointing out that discomfort comes through farce and through members of the audience feeling uncomfortable at the same moment that they are laughing.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 9695/51**  
**Shakespeare and other pre-20th**  
**Century Texts**

## Key messages

- 1 Candidates choosing option **(b)** passage-based poetry questions should ensure that they make appropriate references to the rest of the text.
- 2 Candidates should carefully structure their arguments, after selecting the material to be discussed, before beginning to write 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 fourth 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. Once again written 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 *Wuthering Heights* – with others remaining very much minority choices, particularly Marvell and Rossetti, though the responses seen suggest these texts are very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

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

- (a)** Candidates tackling the option **(b)** passage-based poetry questions should link their analysis and arguments into the wider text, in the same way they would for a passage from a novel or play. This prompt is given and expected by the phrase ‘methods and concerns’. If the given poetry passage is an extract from a longer poem, judicious reference to the rest of the poem should be made, taking into account the precise terms of the task. Similarly, points made should be extended and developed by reference to other poems, either as a contrast or as further evidence for the point under discussion.
- (b)** Candidates should plan their essays carefully, taking into account the key terms of the task. This will often require careful selection of appropriate material to be discussed, with precise and apposite quotation from the text itself and at times from supporting secondary sources. The material chosen should then be arranged into an appropriate order, with effective and connected paragraphing. This will ensure candidates have answered the question fully and presented a developed argument, relevantly supported.

## Comments on specific questions

### **1. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Measure for Measure***

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

- (a)** Nearly every answer revealed some relevant knowledge of Angelo’s character and part in the play. Weaker answers tended to ignore the given quotation, with a consequent loss of focus. Better answers were able to select material to support and refute the Duke’s description. For some



candidates this was Shakespeare (and/or the Duke) setting Angelo up for his fall, by creating an impression on the audience which is challenged by the play. Answers which developed this into a consideration of the dramatic structure and methods of characterisation often did well. Very good responses, addressing 'Shakespeare's presentation' in the question, often explored language and imagery as well, with some considering dramatic effects such as irony. Such responses did very well.

- (b) Most candidates were able to place the extract clearly and suggested that its significance was in creating tension between the siblings. Weaker answers tended to retell the story to this point in the play. Better answers saw the changing tones of Claudio from acceptance to pleading, with some also noting Isabella's 'condescending tone' which for some became 'more persistent' with her decision to reject Angelo's offer. Other good answers questioned Isabella's character in terms of virtue or selfishness, often referring to her later actions with Marianna, while others considered how Shakespeare creates sympathy towards Claudio, often exploring the language and imagery of his speech about death. Very good answers noted how the conflict here and the difficulty of Isabella's situation, is part of the dramatic structure leading to the bed trick, with some exploring in detail the dramatic effects on the audience of this moral conundrum.

## 2. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

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

- (a) Nearly every answer agreed with the critical view given and was able to discuss Iago's character and his part in the play in some detail. Better answers explored Shakespeare's methods of characterisation, often through discussion of Iago's different relationships, contrasted with his soliloquies. Better answers showed excellent knowledge of and engagement with the text, with some focusing on 'Shakespeare's presentation' to telling effect. Other good answers argued with the view given, considering that '*Iago doesn't see people as they really are as a result of his twisted and envious outlook,*' as one suggested. Others used Emilia as an example: '*it becomes apparent that he has misread her when she reveals the truth about the handkerchief.*' This led to some candidates to hypothesise that Iago's '*real power is due to his skills of persuasion and rhetoric*', often supported by precise reference to the text. Sophisticated responses were able to explore the given view as a partial truth, suggesting for example that '*it is others' weaknesses that Iago exploits*'. Answers which supported such arguments with apposite quotation, whilst exploring the dramatic effects, such as irony, created by the methods of presentation, often did very well.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper and often well-handled, as this passage prompted most candidates to demonstrate impressive knowledge of the wider text and at times some ability to engage with the language of the extract. Better answers paid close attention to the words of the question regarding 'thoughts and feelings of an audience' which sparked some interesting debate about the sympathy (or lack of it) different audiences feel towards Othello. For instance some answers saw Othello's line, 'I have done the state some service' as giving a '*humbling sense of modesty*', suggesting it to be a '*somewhat redeeming quality, inspiring some respect towards Othello.*' Others thought this '*the simple boasting of a broken warrior, facing up to his own stupidity,*' as one put it.

Some answers focused on the dramatic nature of the ending, for example visualising Othello's suicide weapon as a sword he takes from under the bed, '*creating a sense of sympathy for a man who was unable to divide his duty between love and war.*' Very good responses also saw how other audiences might have a different view of the play. For example one candidate considered Othello's final kiss as '*hugely frustrating for a modern feminist audience*'; adding that it is '*unfair that Othello should be able to control his wife in life and death and still perceive his entitlement to her love after he wrongfully murdered her.*' Better answers remembered the bodies of Emilia and Desdemona as well as the captured Iago and the dramatic effects these sights might have on an audience.

Good answers also considered the concerns of the play, such as justice and status, often questioning, for example, is Cassio a worthy leader and what has Gratiano done to inherit Othello's wealth? Very good answers also explored the language and the imagery, with some noting Othello's return to his earlier poetic self, '*another story of his earlier life, but this time a self-eulogy,*' as one suggested.

### 3. JANE AUSTEN: *Emma*

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

- (a) Most answers agreed at least to some extent with the given view and were able to discuss the various marriages and proposed marriages in some detail. Weaker answers ignored the idea of money and status and often highlighted the narratives of the women, with some of them contrasted usefully, such as Emma and Mrs Elton, Harriet and Jane and Miss Bates with Mrs Weston. Better answers explored Austen's presentation through such contrasts, as well as considering narrative choices, language and structure. Very good answers also considered gender and age differences, contrasting for example Mr Woodhouse and Mr Knightley in their respective attitudes to the marriage of the Westons. Answers which supported such arguments with precise reference to the text often did very well.
- (b) Most candidates were able to place the passage clearly and consider what it revealed about the developing relationship between Emma and Frank. Weaker answers tended to give a summary of the relationship throughout the novel. More successful answers saw how the discussion on Jane and the Weymouth set brought out the similarities and the differences between Emma and Frank. Others noted the significance of this to the novel's structure and ironic tone. '*We remember this conversation with ironic amusement, when the true Frank/Jane situation is revealed,*' as one put it. Good answers focused on 'Austen's methods and concerns' such as characterisation, status, marriage and relationships. Those answers considering language, narrative voice and structures and the use of dialogue often did well, particularly when such considerations were developed with precise references to the wider text.

### 4. EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights*

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

- (a) Nearly every answer was at least able to write about the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy in detail and for many, Heathcliff's actions were often explained away as revenge for Cathy's rejection of him in favour of Edgar. More developed answers also gave examples of his evil deeds to contrast with his love for Cathy such as his treatment of Hareton, young Cathy and even his own son, Linton; his marriage to Isabella, out of revenge to Edgar, and his treatment of her, from hanging her dog until her eventual death, were often seen as Heathcliff at his most evil. Better answers focused on 'Brontë's presentation', such as her use of narrators, letters and shifting narrative structures. Such arguments, which also considered the effects on the reader, often did very well.
- (b) Most responses were able to place the passage clearly and relevantly, with only a few showing confusion as to the narrative voice at this point. Weaker answers explained in detail why Lockwood was ill, but better answers used his encounter with Heathcliff at Wuthering Heights as a means of informing the discussion of the narrative structures and voices in the novel generally. The passage encouraged better candidates to examine (or at least acknowledge) the narrative form of the novel. For instance, some noted that the passage sees the shift '*into the more intimate opinions of Nelly Dean*', while others showed an awareness of how the narrators in the novel are '*neither impartial nor infallible*' and saw Lockwood as '*representative of the audience*'. Very good responses explored other methods as well, such as dialogue, language and imagery, often linking their observations to the wider text with precise references.

### 5. GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*

This was a popular text on the paper, with the majority offering the passage option.

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. Most answers seen did show appropriate knowledge of the text and the key 'magical' moments. However very few answers were able to consider the 'effects' of Chaucer's choices in sufficient detail to address the task or the text fully.
- (b) Most answers had a secure knowledge of the text and some ability to place this extract clearly, although a few responses confused it for an earlier meeting between Aurelius and Dorigen. Better answers revealed a wider knowledge of the text in the thematic discussions that took place, for example to show the significance of 'gentillesse' and 'trouthe' to the text as a whole. Better answers saw the garden as a symbol of entrapment or a symbol of innocence and sin, even, for

some, the garden of Eden. Others explored the concerns, for example: '*The restrictive nature of medieval expectations of women and women's behaviour, as seen through the prism of courtly love traditions*'. Some were more critical, for example '*the absurdity of Dorigen submitting to commit adultery, in order to obey her husband's perverse view of 'trouthe' is highlighted here*'. Many good responses explored this paradox, the upholding of Dorigen's 'trouthe' to Aurelius by breaking her marriage vows to Arveragus, because he, her husband, expects her to keep her 'trouthe'. Very good answers often developed this into exploring the contrast between 'trouthe' and 'gentillesse' and linked it to the growth of a squire into a knight.

## 6. CHARLES DICKENS: *Great Expectations*

This was the most popular **Section B** text in this session, with most candidates choosing the passage question.

- (a) Nearly every answer could find relevant material to discuss, with many focusing on Pip in his different settings, often the marshes, the forge, Satis House and his London rooms, with some answers noting how in each, Dickens brings out different facets of Pip's character. Better answers saw how the older Pip's unreliable narrative clouded the reader's view of this development but that the arc of his moral and, for some, emotional growth led back to Joe and the forge. Other good answers explored how Dickens creates the depth in Wemmick's character through the contrast between his castle and Jaggers's chambers, some also noting how in contrast Jaggers appears the same and thus less engaging to the reader wherever he appears in the book – Satis House, the inn, his chambers or his home. Others noted how Magwitch is first introduced in the graveyard and needs Pip to help him escape 'death' and Compeyson; a narrative thread running through the book, again leading to the final moments and the reveal of Estella's existence to him. Very good answers considered Dickens's language choices as well, for example the descriptions of the gothic setting of Satis house and the fire that destroys it; those exploring the effects on the reader of these choices, as emotion and life comes back to Miss Havisham, often did very well.
- (b) Most candidates were prompted to show an impressive textual knowledge in response to this passage with clear placing of the extract and a general awareness of its significance in showing the 'declining' state of Pip and Biddy's relationship. Better answers paid attention to detail, seeing the effect of the repeated 'Mr Pip', Biddy's 'downcast eyes', her weeping and short replies as showing how Pip's expectations have driven them apart and how Dickens highlights Pip's flaws through Biddy's reactions to him. Some were puzzled by her reference to the '*bad side of human nature*', not connecting the reference to a previous Pip and Biddy discussion. Good answers saw this as a transition moment in Pip and Biddy's relationship, particularly the changes brought about by Mrs Joe's death. Others noted the pathos of the description of her death, with very good answers developing this into considering concerns such as social class, status of women and true gentility. Some saw the subtlety of the two sides of Pip in his attitudes to Biddy, contrasted with his treatment of her, and how this led to his intended proposal later in the text.

## 7. ANDREW MARVELL: *Selected Poems*

This was a minority choice with very few takers for either option.

- (a) Most answers were able to select relevant poems to discuss Marvell's presentation of gardens. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase their chosen poems, with little supporting analysis. Better answers were able to contrast some of Marvell's poetic methods by reference to different poems and in very good answers, explore some of the effects created by his poetic choices.
- (b) The few responses seen showed some knowledge of the poem and, to a lesser extent, the text more generally. Better answers saw the fawn as a symbol for nature, with the wanton troopers as '*man's desire to destroy and kill without reason*,' as one put it. The Nymph, seen as Marvell himself by some, lamenting over the destruction of nature, was often also seen as a symbol of unrequited love, whose faith and virtue is destroyed by men. Other responses saw the fawn as a symbol for a child, or even reputation and virginity, the result of the liaison with Silvio, all destroyed by the cruelty of the troopers, for some representing society's need for rules and conformity. Good answers were able to support such arguments with precise reference to the wider text, including the rest of the given poem.

## 8. CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: *Selected Poems*

This was very much a minority choice with very few responses to either option, though option **(b)** was a slightly more popular choice.

- (a)** The few answers seen on this question did show some knowledge of the text and, for the most part, were able to select relevant poems to discuss Rossetti's presentation of human relationships, often paraphrasing the chosen poems' content, with little supporting commentary. Better answers were able to contrast different kinds of relationships, usually religious and secular, but there was generally little development of argument by reference to specific examples.
- (b)** Some weaker answers seemed to attempt this as an unseen poem, offering a loose paraphrase of the content, with no reference to the rest of the poem or the wider text. Better answers saw the style as relevant to a narrative poem, with some answers paying attention to the language and imagery, though poetic form was largely ignored. Others explored more metaphorical interpretations of the content, seeing it as a discussion of chastity with an underlying tone of sensuality, or even sexuality for some.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 9695/52**  
**Shakespeare and other pre-20th**  
**Century Texts**

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## General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. This was the fourth 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. Once again written 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.

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

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- (b)** Candidates should plan their essays carefully, taking into account the key terms of the task. This will often require careful selection of appropriate material to be discussed, with precise and apposite quotation from the text itself and at times from supporting secondary sources. The material chosen should then be arranged into an appropriate order, with effective and connected paragraphing. This will ensure candidates have answered the question fully and presented a developed argument, relevantly supported.

## Comments on specific questions

### **1. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Measure for Measure***

This was the minority Shakespeare text in this session, with most candidates choosing the (b) passage-based question here.

- (a)** Nearly every answer revealed some knowledge of the ambiguities surrounding Angelo. Weaker answers tended to summarise what he did in the play, offering opinions on his morality or lack of it, with some responses able to support these opinions with direct reference to the text. Better

answers considered Shakespeare's methods of characterisation and how the attitudes to and descriptions of Angelo were developed in the play and the effects of this on the audience's response. Answers which went on to consider his role in the play, in terms of plot, structure and dramatic effects often did very well.

- (b) Nearly all answers were able to provide a clear context to this passage and from that were able to explore the rising tensions in the various relationships here. Opinions on the attitudes of brother and sister revealed here varied widely, from condemnation of Claudio's selfishness and his inability to see he is putting Isabella in the same straits as himself, to others who thought Isabella's attitudes to her brother indefensible and her attacks on his parentage indicative of her own insecurities. Better answers noted her religious language, such as heaven and prayers, and remembered her postponed intention to enter the convent. The moral ambiguities of the situation were often well explored in more developed answers, eliciting some well-argued opinions; those supported by detailed reference to the passage, linked to the wider text often did very well. The entrance of the Duke and his 'lies' to Claudio were frequently discussed; as one candidate suggested: *'the Duke of dark corners [lives] up to his name and compound[s] our distrust of him with an outright lie about his closeness to Angelo'*. Others noted how this passage was a critical stage in the development of not only the characters, but also the plot, with the Duke's timing of his suit to Isabella *'very fortuitous as she is desperate to save her soul and Claudio's life, but can see no way out,'* as one suggested. The irony of her comment on the Duke was often remarked on and linked to similar episodes, such as the Duke's dialogue with Lucio later, and, for some, was evidence of the essentially comic nature of the play.

## 2. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

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

- (a) Nearly every answer agreed with the critical view given and was able to discuss Iago's character and his part in the play in some detail. Better answers explored Shakespeare's methods of characterisation, often through discussion of Iago's different relationships, contrasted with his soliloquies. For many answers, *'this was proof enough of how well his true self was hidden, from everyone except the audience.'* Good answers explored some of the effects created for the audience by understanding Iago's true intentions, with more developed answers showing a sharp grasp of the dramatic irony and the possible effects this would create. Very good answers also explored Iago's role and how his moral ambivalence, *'honesty to the audience'* and the ensuing irony, all worked to create the dramatic tensions, leading to the eventual tragic denouement.
- (b) Most answers were able to give a general context to this passage, though some were unclear as to where this fitted into Iago's temptation of Othello. There were, in weaker answers, some surprising gaps in knowledge, such as Emilia's role in the loss of the handkerchief and Othello's use of 'chuck' as an affectionate term was sometimes misunderstood. Better answers considered the situation of the different characters at this point in the play, while other answers also noted how precarious Iago's position is – *'a word of truth from Emilia here, as her mistress is castigated, would have undone Iago's plans and turned Othello's rage on him,'* as one suggested. Good responses noted the dramatic irony of Desdemona's decision to bring up Cassio, just as Othello's aside and his use of 'chuck' seemed to suggest his thawing towards her. Other good answers explored how the audience, knowing Othello's priming by Iago, reads much more into his words on Desdemona's hand than she can herself, so that, for one candidate, *'her innocence is made crystal clear to the audience, though sadly not to Othello!'* Some good answers connected the references to 'magic' here with Brabantio's accusations in Act 1, wondering if there was, in fact, some truth in them, while other answers saw the emergence of the uncivilised Othello, *'the suspicious, superstitious warrior, appearing through his façade of civilisation, recognised and released by Iago,'* as one answer put it.

## 3. JANE AUSTEN: *Emma*

This was the most popular Section B text, with the majority opting for the (a) question.

- (a) Most answers were able to discuss the various marriages and proposed marriages in some detail. Often marriage was seen through the narratives of the women, contrasting Emma, Harriet, Jane, Miss Bates and Mrs Weston. Better answer explored the possible attitudes of these women, with some answers seeing how Austen uses these attitudes to develop character, plot and, at times,

humour. Better answers compared Emma and Knightley's attitudes to Harriet and Robert Martin, noting the class and status issues, as well as the characterisation. Very good answers often saw the irony of Emma's attitude to Mr Martin here in comparison to her response to Mr Elton, '*doing for himself, with perhaps more justification, exactly what Emma was trying to do for Harriet,*' as one suggested. Answers, which were able to support such arguments with close reference to the text and show how the reader's response might be influenced by Austen's choices on this highly significant topic, often did very well.

- (b) Nearly all answers were able to give a generally relevant context to the passage, with most recognising this as Frank's first meeting with Emma. Most answers focused on the characters and what is revealed here, with better answers able to see the unaffected delight of Mr Woodhouse in the Bates family and Jane Fairfax, in contrast to Emma's humorous, yet rather undermining, comments; some were able to link this to the later Box Hill episode. Better answers, moved beyond the characters, seeing the irony of this unfolding in front of Frank with his special interest in the Bates household. Candidates, who remembered Frank's actual situation at this point, often discussed Austen's narrative structures, noting the skill with which the possible relationship between Emma and Frank is even at this stage undercut by the attitudes to the Bates household. Very good answers saw the moral ambiguities here and explored Austen's concerns, such as status, class and self-awareness as revealed here. Answers which linked such discussions to the wider text with apposite references often did very well.

#### 4. EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights*

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

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to write about the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy in detail; for many Heathcliff's actions were often explained away as revenge for Cathy's rejection of him, in favour of Edgar. More detailed answers also gave examples of his wickedness to contrast with his love for Cathy. Better answers considered how these powerful emotions were presented. For some, as one suggested, '*such emotions that continue beyond the grave, with the dark imagery of graveyards and wild imagery of the moors are unforgettable*'. For others, his treatment of Hareton, young Cathy and even his own son, Linton, were seen negatively, though some answers also saw '*the psychological truth of Heathcliff doing to Hareton what had been done to him by Hindley*'. Heathcliff's marriage to Isabella, out of revenge to Edgar and his treatment of her, from hanging her dog until her eventual death, were often seen as the worst examples of his behaviour. Very good answers explored how such contrasts and such emotions were presented through Brontë's narrative choices and structures, often did very well.
- (b) Most answers gave a generally relevant context, though some were confused about its precise place in the novel. Nearly all recognised this as the beginning of the love between Cathy and Hareton, with some weaker answers distracted into providing detailed summaries of their lives to this point. Better answers saw this developing relationship in the context of the wider narrative arc of the novel, contrasting Hareton here with the Heathcliff who overhears his Cathy's decision to marry Linton earlier in the text. Good answers explored the methods of characterisation: the use of dialogue, for example, and the narrative voice, such as 'the little rogue' and considered the effects of such choices. Answers which developed such ideas by apposite reference to the wider text often did very well.

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

This was a popular text on the paper, with an even split between the options.

- (a) Nearly every answer found relevant examples of Chaucer's use of the natural world and was able to summarise them in detail. For many answers, nature was often seen as the rocks, which for better answers were symbolic of the perils of marriage, love and chastity. For others the metaphorical meaning was more as a blockage, resulting from the selfishness in the characters of Dorigen, Aurelius and Arveragus. The magician, variously seen as part of the natural or unnatural world, clears this 'blockage', thus allowing for a better sense of 'trouthe' to emerge in all of the characters. This in good answers, sometimes led to a discussion of human nature, such as the envy of a squire to be seen as a knight. Very good answers often saw the way Chaucer explores human nature through his use of symbols and the natural world. As one suggested, this was clear from the unusual '*equality pact between Arveragus and Dorigen, at odds with convention, but natural for a successful marriage*'.

- (b) Weaker answers summarised the situation here, often giving much detail on how this had arisen and what the magician was yet to do. Aurelius's situation and his mental state were often well explored with a range of attitudes revealed such as pity at his plight: '*he has lost his love and his desire and now stands to lose his heritage and perhaps his freedom as well as his honour*,' as one suggested. Others, however, saw this as his just desserts for his attempt on '*the sanctity of marriage*'. Good answers noted this as part of the overarching themes of gentility, 'trouthe' and honour, with some answers noting the squire's desire to be as chivalrous as the knight and discussing the ramifications of that to Chaucer's overall intentions. Very good answers discussed how Aurelius is used as the mechanism by which all other characters reveal their 'trouthe', with his part in the plot of the Tale often discussed in detail.

## 6. CHARLES DICKENS: *Great Expectations*

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

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to show knowledge of the text by outlining some of the secrets in the novel, often in great detail. Better answers noted that Pip's secret about his first meeting with Magwitch and the theft of the file and the food were the start of his transformation, involving him in the criminal world, from which, for some, he never escapes. Others considered Magwitch's creating Pip's expectations and the role of Jaggers in keeping this secret, with the consequent abuse of that by Miss Havisham. Other popular examples were Wemmick's secret Walworth world and Pip's role as Herbert's benefactor. Answers which saw such points as part of Dickens's methods of characterisation and shaping the reader's responses did well. Good answers also explored how secrets are used to develop the plot, such as Estella's true parents. Answers which developed such arguments into considering Dickens's concerns more generally often did very well.
- (b) Nearly every answer had some relevant knowledge of the relationship between Pip and Estella, often presented in great detail. There was some confusion in weaker answers about the precise context of this passage. Better answers explored the ambivalence of this relationship, particularly Estella's attitudes and Pip's apparent lack of understanding. Good answers saw how Estella's narrative of Satis House tended to reinforce Pip's expectations of his marriage to Estella and Miss Havisham's role in his future. There was some confusion as to the identity of the '*imposter of a woman*' that Estella is referring to, as '*it might equally be applied to Miss Havisham as to Sarah Pocket*,' as one suggested. Answers which explored the effects of Dickens's language choices, use of dialogue and the narrative structures often did very well, especially when supported by precise references to the wider text.

## 7. ANDREW MARVELL: *Selected Poems*

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

- (a) Most answers were able to select relevant poems to discuss Marvell's use of gardens. Weaker answer tended to paraphrase their chosen poems, with little supporting analysis. Better answers were able to contrast some of Marvell's poetic methods by reference to different poems and in very good answers, explore some of the effects created by his poetic choices.
- (b) There were very few answers to this question. Some weaker answers seemed to struggle with the meaning of the poem, attempting a line by line paraphrase, with little reference to the poetic methods or the wider text. Better answers did have some knowledge of poem and text to share, though very few were able to discuss his methods and concerns with any confidence or conviction.

## 8. CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: *Selected Poems*

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

- (a) The few answers seen on this question did show some knowledge of the text and, for the most part, were able to select relevant poems to discuss, often paraphrasing the chosen poems' content, with little supporting commentary. Better answers were able to contrast different kinds of emotions, usually religious and secular, but there was little development of argument by reference to specific examples.



- (b) Some weaker answers seemed to attempt this as an unseen poem, offering a loose paraphrase of the content, with no reference to the wider text. Better answers noted the poetic form as a type of dramatic monologue with an 'invisible' counterpart to the narrator, or persona of the poem. Many noted the teasing tone and skittishness of the speaker, with some seeing this as evidence of humour in Rossetti's poetry and finding links to *Cousin Kate* and *Goblin Market*. Others explored more metaphorical interpretations, seeing a discussion of chastity and an underlying tone of sensuality, or even sexuality for some.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 9695/53**  
**Shakespeare and other pre-20th**  
**Century Texts**

## Key messages

- 1 Candidates choosing option **(b)** passage-based poetry questions should ensure that they make appropriate references to the rest of the text.
- 2 Candidates should carefully structure their arguments, after selecting the material to be discussed, before beginning to write 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 fourth 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. Once again written 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 *Wuthering Heights* – with others remaining very much minority choices, particularly Marvell and Rossetti, though the responses seen suggest these texts are very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

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

- (a)** Candidates tackling the option **(b)** passage-based poetry questions should link their analysis and arguments into the wider text, in the same way they would for a passage from a novel or play. This prompt is given and expected by the phrase ‘methods and concerns’. If the given poetry passage is an extract from a longer poem, judicious reference to the rest of the poem should be made, taking into account the precise terms of the task. Similarly, points made should be extended and developed by reference to other poems, either as a contrast or as further evidence for the point under discussion.
- (b)** Candidates should plan their essays carefully, taking into account the key terms of the task. This will often require careful selection of appropriate material to be discussed, with precise and apposite quotation from the text itself and at times from supporting secondary sources. The material chosen should then be arranged into an appropriate order, with effective and connected paragraphing. This will ensure candidates have answered the question fully and presented a developed argument, relevantly supported.

## Comments on specific questions

### **1. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Measure for Measure***

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

- (a)** Nearly every answer revealed some relevant knowledge of Angelo’s character and part in the play. Weaker answers tended to ignore the given quotation, with a consequent loss of focus. Better answers were able to select material to support and refute the Duke’s description. For some

candidates this was Shakespeare (and/or the Duke) setting Angelo up for his fall, by creating an impression on the audience which is challenged by the play. Answers which developed this into a consideration of the dramatic structure and methods of characterisation often did well. Very good responses, addressing 'Shakespeare's presentation' in the question, often explored language and imagery as well, with some considering dramatic effects such as irony. Such responses did very well.

- (b) Most candidates were able to place the extract clearly and suggested that its significance was in creating tension between the siblings. Weaker answers tended to retell the story to this point in the play. Better answers saw the changing tones of Claudio from acceptance to pleading, with some also noting Isabella's 'condescending tone' which for some became 'more persistent' with her decision to reject Angelo's offer. Other good answers questioned Isabella's character in terms of virtue or selfishness, often referring to her later actions with Marianna, while others considered how Shakespeare creates sympathy towards Claudio, often exploring the language and imagery of his speech about death. Very good answers noted how the conflict here and the difficulty of Isabella's situation, is part of the dramatic structure leading to the bed trick, with some exploring in detail the dramatic effects on the audience of this moral conundrum.

## 2. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

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

- (a) Nearly every answer agreed with the critical view given and was able to discuss Iago's character and his part in the play in some detail. Better answers explored Shakespeare's methods of characterisation, often through discussion of Iago's different relationships, contrasted with his soliloquies. Better answers showed excellent knowledge of and engagement with the text, with some focusing on 'Shakespeare's presentation' to telling effect. Other good answers argued with the view given, considering that '*Iago doesn't see people as they really are as a result of his twisted and envious outlook,*' as one suggested. Others used Emilia as an example: '*it becomes apparent that he has misread her when she reveals the truth about the handkerchief.*' This led to some candidates to hypothesise that Iago's '*real power is due to his skills of persuasion and rhetoric*', often supported by precise reference to the text. Sophisticated responses were able to explore the given view as a partial truth, suggesting for example that '*it is others' weaknesses that Iago exploits*'. Answers which supported such arguments with apposite quotation, whilst exploring the dramatic effects, such as irony, created by the methods of presentation, often did very well.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper and often well-handled, as this passage prompted most candidates to demonstrate impressive knowledge of the wider text and at times some ability to engage with the language of the extract. Better answers paid close attention to the words of the question regarding 'thoughts and feelings of an audience' which sparked some interesting debate about the sympathy (or lack of it) different audiences feel towards Othello. For instance some answers saw Othello's line, 'I have done the state some service' as giving a '*humbling sense of modesty*', suggesting it to be a '*somewhat redeeming quality, inspiring some respect towards Othello.*' Others thought this '*the simple boasting of a broken warrior, facing up to his own stupidity,*' as one put it.

Some answers focused on the dramatic nature of the ending, for example visualising Othello's suicide weapon as a sword he takes from under the bed, '*creating a sense of sympathy for a man who was unable to divide his duty between love and war.*' Very good responses also saw how other audiences might have a different view of the play. For example one candidate considered Othello's final kiss as '*hugely frustrating for a modern feminist audience*'; adding that it is '*unfair that Othello should be able to control his wife in life and death and still perceive his entitlement to her love after he wrongfully murdered her.*' Better answers remembered the bodies of Emilia and Desdemona as well as the captured Iago and the dramatic effects these sights might have on an audience.

Good answers also considered the concerns of the play, such as justice and status, often questioning, for example, is Cassio a worthy leader and what has Gratiano done to inherit Othello's wealth? Very good answers also explored the language and the imagery, with some noting Othello's return to his earlier poetic self, '*another story of his earlier life, but this time a self-eulogy,*' as one suggested.

### 3. JANE AUSTEN: *Emma*

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

- (a) Most answers agreed at least to some extent with the given view and were able to discuss the various marriages and proposed marriages in some detail. Weaker answers ignored the idea of money and status and often highlighted the narratives of the women, with some of them contrasted usefully, such as Emma and Mrs Elton, Harriet and Jane and Miss Bates with Mrs Weston. Better answers explored Austen's presentation through such contrasts, as well as considering narrative choices, language and structure. Very good answers also considered gender and age differences, contrasting for example Mr Woodhouse and Mr Knightley in their respective attitudes to the marriage of the Westons. Answers which supported such arguments with precise reference to the text often did very well.
- (b) Most candidates were able to place the passage clearly and consider what it revealed about the developing relationship between Emma and Frank. Weaker answers tended to give a summary of the relationship throughout the novel. More successful answers saw how the discussion on Jane and the Weymouth set brought out the similarities and the differences between Emma and Frank. Others noted the significance of this to the novel's structure and ironic tone. '*We remember this conversation with ironic amusement, when the true Frank/Jane situation is revealed,*' as one put it. Good answers focused on 'Austen's methods and concerns' such as characterisation, status, marriage and relationships. Those answers considering language, narrative voice and structures and the use of dialogue often did well, particularly when such considerations were developed with precise references to the wider text.

### 4. EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights*

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

- (a) Nearly every answer was at least able to write about the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy in detail and for many, Heathcliff's actions were often explained away as revenge for Cathy's rejection of him in favour of Edgar. More developed answers also gave examples of his evil deeds to contrast with his love for Cathy such as his treatment of Hareton, young Cathy and even his own son, Linton; his marriage to Isabella, out of revenge to Edgar, and his treatment of her, from hanging her dog until her eventual death, were often seen as Heathcliff at his most evil. Better answers focused on 'Brontë's presentation', such as her use of narrators, letters and shifting narrative structures. Such arguments, which also considered the effects on the reader, often did very well.
- (b) Most responses were able to place the passage clearly and relevantly, with only a few showing confusion as to the narrative voice at this point. Weaker answers explained in detail why Lockwood was ill, but better answers used his encounter with Heathcliff at Wuthering Heights as a means of informing the discussion of the narrative structures and voices in the novel generally. The passage encouraged better candidates to examine (or at least acknowledge) the narrative form of the novel. For instance, some noted that the passage sees the shift '*into the more intimate opinions of Nelly Dean*', while others showed an awareness of how the narrators in the novel are '*neither impartial nor infallible*' and saw Lockwood as '*representative of the audience*'. Very good responses explored other methods as well, such as dialogue, language and imagery, often linking their observations to the wider text with precise references.

### 5. GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*

This was a popular text on the paper, with the majority offering the passage option.

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. Most answers seen did show appropriate knowledge of the text and the key 'magical' moments. However very few answers were able to consider the 'effects' of Chaucer's choices in sufficient detail to address the task or the text fully.
- (b) Most answers had a secure knowledge of the text and some ability to place this extract clearly, although a few responses confused it for an earlier meeting between Aurelius and Dorigen. Better answers revealed a wider knowledge of the text in the thematic discussions that took place, for example to show the significance of 'gentillesse' and 'trouthe' to the text as a whole. Better answers saw the garden as a symbol of entrapment or a symbol of innocence and sin, even, for

some, the garden of Eden. Others explored the concerns, for example: '*The restrictive nature of medieval expectations of women and women's behaviour, as seen through the prism of courtly love traditions*'. Some were more critical, for example '*the absurdity of Dorigen submitting to commit adultery, in order to obey her husband's perverse view of 'trouthe' is highlighted here*'. Many good responses explored this paradox, the upholding of Dorigen's 'trouthe' to Aurelius by breaking her marriage vows to Arveragus, because he, her husband, expects her to keep her 'trouthe'. Very good answers often developed this into exploring the contrast between 'trouthe' and 'gentillesse' and linked it to the growth of a squire into a knight.

## 6. CHARLES DICKENS: *Great Expectations*

This was the most popular **Section B** text in this session, with most candidates choosing the passage question.

- (a) Nearly every answer could find relevant material to discuss, with many focusing on Pip in his different settings, often the marshes, the forge, Satis House and his London rooms, with some answers noting how in each, Dickens brings out different facets of Pip's character. Better answers saw how the older Pip's unreliable narrative clouded the reader's view of this development but that the arc of his moral and, for some, emotional growth led back to Joe and the forge. Other good answers explored how Dickens creates the depth in Wemmick's character through the contrast between his castle and Jaggers's chambers, some also noting how in contrast Jaggers appears the same and thus less engaging to the reader wherever he appears in the book – Satis House, the inn, his chambers or his home. Others noted how Magwitch is first introduced in the graveyard and needs Pip to help him escape 'death' and Compeyson; a narrative thread running through the book, again leading to the final moments and the reveal of Estella's existence to him. Very good answers considered Dickens's language choices as well, for example the descriptions of the gothic setting of Satis house and the fire that destroys it; those exploring the effects on the reader of these choices, as emotion and life comes back to Miss Havisham, often did very well.
- (b) Most candidates were prompted to show an impressive textual knowledge in response to this passage with clear placing of the extract and a general awareness of its significance in showing the 'declining' state of Pip and Biddy's relationship. Better answers paid attention to detail, seeing the effect of the repeated 'Mr Pip', Biddy's 'downcast eyes', her weeping and short replies as showing how Pip's expectations have driven them apart and how Dickens highlights Pip's flaws through Biddy's reactions to him. Some were puzzled by her reference to the '*bad side of human nature*', not connecting the reference to a previous Pip and Biddy discussion. Good answers saw this as a transition moment in Pip and Biddy's relationship, particularly the changes brought about by Mrs Joe's death. Others noted the pathos of the description of her death, with very good answers developing this into considering concerns such as social class, status of women and true gentility. Some saw the subtlety of the two sides of Pip in his attitudes to Biddy, contrasted with his treatment of her, and how this led to his intended proposal later in the text.

## 7. ANDREW MARVELL: *Selected Poems*

This was a minority choice with very few takers for either option.

- (a) Most answers were able to select relevant poems to discuss Marvell's presentation of gardens. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase their chosen poems, with little supporting analysis. Better answers were able to contrast some of Marvell's poetic methods by reference to different poems and in very good answers, explore some of the effects created by his poetic choices.
- (b) The few responses seen showed some knowledge of the poem and, to a lesser extent, the text more generally. Better answers saw the fawn as a symbol for nature, with the wanton troopers as '*man's desire to destroy and kill without reason*,' as one put it. The Nymph, seen as Marvell himself by some, lamenting over the destruction of nature, was often also seen as a symbol of unrequited love, whose faith and virtue is destroyed by men. Other responses saw the fawn as a symbol for a child, or even reputation and virginity, the result of the liaison with Silvio, all destroyed by the cruelty of the troopers, for some representing society's need for rules and conformity. Good answers were able to support such arguments with precise reference to the wider text, including the rest of the given poem.

## 8. CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: *Selected Poems*

This was very much a minority choice with very few responses to either option, though option **(b)** was a slightly more popular choice.

- (a)** The few answers seen on this question did show some knowledge of the text and, for the most part, were able to select relevant poems to discuss Rossetti's presentation of human relationships, often paraphrasing the chosen poems' content, with little supporting commentary. Better answers were able to contrast different kinds of relationships, usually religious and secular, but there was generally little development of argument by reference to specific examples.
- (b)** Some weaker answers seemed to attempt this as an unseen poem, offering a loose paraphrase of the content, with no reference to the rest of the poem or the wider text. Better answers saw the style as relevant to a narrative poem, with some answers paying attention to the language and imagery, though poetic form was largely ignored. Others explored more metaphorical interpretations of the content, seeing it as a discussion of chastity with an underlying tone of sensuality, or even sexuality for some.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/61  
1900 to the Present

## Key Messages

To do well:

- Ambitious candidates who offer a conceptualised response to the texts need to make sure that they link the discussion of sophisticated ideas to the details of the text.
- Candidates need to show more evidence of detailed study of the texts so that they can go beyond a summary of plot, ideas or description of character and discuss **how** a writer creates meaning and effects to shape a reader's response.
- Those choosing the **(b)** passage-based options need to pay more attention to the rubric of the questions and focus more closely on the 'effects of the writing' in the given passage while at the same time making appropriate, detailed references to the wider text.

## General comments

There were very few rubric errors and all questions produced answers across the range. Most candidates managed their time well and produced two evenly balanced essays of four to five sides each. Just occasionally weakness in expression or poor handwriting caused some breakdown in communication but most candidates were able to express themselves clearly enough and some were very accomplished. The more successful essays showed evidence of planning, the use of discourse markers to structure an argument together with some judicious use of critical vocabulary such as 'narrative point of view', 'persona', 'tone', 'narrativisation', 'epistolary form', 'satire', 'irony', 'juxtaposition', 'symbolism' and words to describe how the sound of words contributes to meaning and effect. Good answers were distinguished by careful attention to the terms of the questions, an ability to shape detailed material to the task and to show evidence of a personal response based on a close reading of the text. Whether they were responding to the **(a)** or **(b)** question, successful candidates used analysis to show an understanding of a range of aspects of narrative, dramatic and poetic methods and evidence of some originality in their appreciation of the effects of the writing. Some well assimilated ideas on Marxist or feminist criticism gave their discussions a level of complexity and many candidates have developed their own skills in practical criticism so that they were able to analyse the ways different writers explore and communicate feelings. Less successful answers were often characterised by a lack of detailed textual knowledge and understanding of the writer's craft and a tendency to over-invest in contextual material or sociological issues such as racism or the patriarchy. Sometimes in explaining what a writer's concerns might be, they neglected to show the various ways these ideas were presented in the text. When dealing with the drama texts for example, many candidates wrote about the playwrights' attitudes to aspects of their societies and seemed to forget that in the theatre, the immediate response of an audience is to the characters and their feelings as presented on stage. More candidates are learning how to embed brief contextual and biographical points into the body of their essays and to make this information more productive by linking it to specific details in the text, to show how this information influences a reader's response at particular moments. Generally however, candidates need to show more discrimination in how they use quotations from the critics. In an effort to cover 'O' in the mark scheme, many quote critics to make very obvious statements on aspects of theme or character, uncontroversial points which any reader could reasonably be expected to make for themselves. References to critics are useful when a candidate can show how they have illuminated a reader's understanding, and can personalise these points by the selection of detailed textual knowledge to support or question the validity of a critical comment. Less successful candidates sometimes attempted to broaden their discussions by making tenuous links to their wider reading for example linking *The White Tiger* or *Death of a Salesman* to *Othello*, *Hamlet* or *The Franklin's Tale*, but unless such references are precise enough to illuminate some understanding of a particular aspect of the primary text under discussion, then such digressions are to be avoided.

Many candidates had an impressive amount of detailed textual knowledge and the challenge for some was to shape their knowledge to the task. Less successful candidates, sometimes did not appear to consider or perhaps fully understand some of the recurring terms within the questions. Most seemed to understand ‘concerns’ as meaning themes and broader textual issues, but many limited ideas about ‘presentation’ to descriptive summaries, or paid scant attention to such key words as ‘effects of the writing’ ‘tone’, and most challenging for some – ‘dramatic effects’. In order to appreciate how the various writers shape a reader’s or an audience’s response, candidates must be prepared to look more closely at a writer’s choice and use of language, the way ideas are presented and developed and issues to do with structure and form. This is the explicit focus of the **(b)** passage-based questions, where candidates are expected to show evidence of close reading and understanding of the passage or given poem through discussion supported by some analysis of specific details and short quotations. The other explicit requirement for the **(b)** questions at A Level is for the candidate to make appropriate links with the wider text, indicated by the instruction to ‘consider how far’ or ‘in what ways’ the given extract is ‘characteristic’ of a writer’s ‘methods and concerns’ or how a writer ‘shapes a reader or audience’s response to the characters here and elsewhere’ in the text. The **(b)** questions are the most popular options across all the texts and some candidates managed to do them well. They combined detailed critical analysis with specific references to the wider text to show an understanding of the extract’s significance in terms of ideas, presentation or development of character and emotions, together with an appreciation of **how** a writer creates specific effects. Some less assured answers provided quite intelligent, detailed answers on the effects of the writing but marks were restricted because of limited engagement with the wider text. Some of those offering the poetry texts seemed to find it more difficult to relate the given poem to others in the selection and often relied on biographical or contextual material in order to discuss concerns, or did some barely contextualised feature-spotting to show knowledge of characteristic methods. The least successful answers on the **(b)** options of the prose and drama texts often stayed on the surface of the text, sometimes revealing the kind of misreading or partial understanding that suggested little detailed study of the text itself and perhaps a reliance on line-by-line summaries. At a basic level many candidates needed much more detailed knowledge of their texts. Some quite competent essay writers did less well on the **(a)** questions because although they constructed sensible, lively, coherent arguments, their knowledge of the texts was often generalised and plot-based; they made valid sometimes astute observations but failed to provide supporting evidence from the text. However, many candidates at different levels of competence managed to communicate some genuine personal engagement or enjoyment of their chosen texts and some wrote lively, perceptive accomplished essays displaying an impressive level of detailed knowledge and critical appreciation.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **1. CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE: *Americanah***

This was a fairly popular choice of text which many candidates have obviously enjoyed because they frequently show exhaustive knowledge of the main character’s experiences, have found useful support from Adichie’s TED talk and really engaged with aspects of the writer’s methods and concerns. The **(b)** question proved to be the more popular option here.

- (a)** This question invited candidates to go beyond a re-cap of the plot and explore various ways in which identity is constructed in the narrative. Some did this very well seeing hair, awareness of accents, relationships, a variety of social situations, blog entries on ‘race, gender and body size’ and so on as signifiers of personal development and the search for an authentic identity. Some reflected on the novel’s narrative arc, the structure of departure and return, and the retrospective account of Ifemelu’s racial, moral, and spiritual journey; concluding that while she might have got rid of the ‘cement in her soul’ by returning to Nigeria, as an *Americanah* in the Nigeropolitan Club she might not actually feel at home anywhere. Those who focused on her emotional journey and her acceptance of ‘Love as a kind of grief’ with Obinze, commented on how this, together with the rediscovery of Lagos and the expressive freedom of her blog writing generated a sense of peace so that ‘She had finally, spun herself into being.’ The best essays managed a huge amount of material in a discriminating way taking the opportunities offered by specific references and quotations to demonstrate an ability for analysis and an appreciation of how Adichie shapes a reader’s response to Ifemelu. Some for example, analysed the reflective tone of the free indirect speech within the third person narrative at a particular point – such as her reflections on being ‘fat’ and contrasted this with the confident, provocative, witty, direct address of the blogs. More modest answers made productive use of significant events with more generalised awareness of Ifemelu’s feelings about her encounters with a variety of men and women and how that affects her sense of self. Weaker answers relied on narrative summary with partial discussion of obvious aspects such



as her awareness of being black, her encounter with the tennis coach, the relaxing of her hair in order to get a job, and her relationship with Curt.

- (b) Most candidates could place the passage in the context of one of the novel's key concerns: the significance of hair for a character's identity. Many considered the importance of this memory for Ifemelu's own awareness of this issue and made relevant links to the wider text. Others chose to focus on Ifemelu's mother's transactional attitude to religion and linked this to other targets of Adichie's satire of Nigerian culture such as attitudes to marriage and corruption. Though these essays often demonstrated good knowledge of the text, there was a tendency to give insufficient attention to the 'effects of the writing' in the passage, which restricted the marks. The most successful essays stuck closely to the given passage to show an appreciation of Adichie's methods, moving between the extract and the wider text to illustrate wider concerns or characteristic aspects of the style. Most essays attempted to comment on the language used to give life to her mother's hair in the first paragraph, commenting on the effects of such language choices as: 'drank', 'sprang free and full', 'flowing like a celebration.' The best essays linked the use of personification and the image of her mother's hair lying on the floor 'like dead grass' with Ifemelu's sense of 'something organic dying' when her own hair is relaxed and flat-ironed in the US. They also focused on how Adichie uses the third person narrative viewpoint to recreate a sense of Ifemelu-the-child, who in contrast to the adult observer elsewhere did not understand what was happening but 'sensed' that 'the woman who was bald and blank, was not her mother, could not be her mother.' Successful essays were able to explore how Adichie communicates a sense of Ifemelu and her father's alienation from her mother by bringing out the significance of hair for an individual identity: Ifemelu 'watched her mother's essence take flight'. The best noted the effects of the simile of the atmosphere being 'like cracked glass' and how the sentence structure used to describe her mother's new ideas of God, reinforces the idea of her 'rigid' speech, with some commenting on how Adichie's own voice comes through to make a mockery of her beliefs. Less secure candidates were confused by the idea of Ifemelu growing up 'in the shadow of her mother's hair' and thought the description was of Ifemelu's hair. Some weaker responses focused on the passage in an indiscriminating way, giving an account of the experience with little evidence of their summaries being informed by knowledge of the wider text or of personal response to the effects of the language.

## 2. ARAVAND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*.

This was the second most popular text which many candidates have obviously enjoyed. Slightly more chose the (a) option here. Many displayed an impressive amount of detailed knowledge and made appropriate use of the social and political context, and made some references to critical views including Marxism. Less productive and credit-worthy were the sometime tenuous links to wider reading with lengthy allusions to Dickens, *The Franklin's Tale* and Shakespeare asserting that Balram was like Macbeth or Iago.

- (a) Many candidates interpreted the question in the widest way possible to allow them to write about Balram's journey from poverty and exploitation in 'The Darkness' to entrepreneurial success and independence in 'The Light'. Less assured essays adopted a narrative approach, but in passing, most were able to include the symbols associated with the darkness such as the Rooster Coop, the polluted Ganges, Balram's his fear of the fort and the significance of the symbols of enlightenment and freedom such as the chandeliers and the White Tiger. Better essays used the word 'opposition' in the question to help structure their responses and show Adiga's use of contrasts such as the inequality of access to medical facilities, the malls, fair-skinned, blonde prostitutes and on a stylistic level, the tone generated by structures such as 'two castes: Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies'. Good essays generated some complexity in their discussions by exploring how the luminous imagery betokened Balram's simultaneous awakening and moral decline into the darkness of amorality; they showed how Balram's success in 'The Light' and sense of freedom from the Rooster Coop were compromised by the same issues of bribery, corruption, violence and murder experienced by those living in 'The Darkness'. The most successful essays continually showed how the various details under discussion complicated a reader's response to Balram generating sympathy for him, delight in his satirical exposure of the realities of India's development under 'The Great Socialist' and distaste for his pragmatic ruthlessness. Many candidates also showed some originality in their choice of illustrations, for example Ashok's ignorance of the realities of life for those in the Darkness 'you people eat so well' and the way they were able to generate discussion from them, such as the ironic chiaroscuro effects of the descriptions of the fan above the chandelier and of the 'old black-and-white film' effect of the white tiger pacing in his cage. Weaker essays tended to show some clear, basic understanding of ideas but tended to restrict discussion to explaining what the symbols were.

- (b) This was often well done with essays showing evidence of close reading and appreciation of the passage, informed by selected knowledge of the wider text. Most mentioned the epistolary form with better essays specifically noting the details in the address and the incongruous register in the main body to show how they contribute to the impudent tone. The best observed that the epistolary form was a narrative device to allow the reader to stand in for the somnolent Chinese Premier and how the reader's response to Balram is compromised by 'hearing' his confession and complicated by our knowledge of his life-story and the charming, witty, cynical irony of the language given to him. Good essays focused on such details as 'I could gloat that I am not just any murderer' and the dark humour of 'murder a man, and you feel responsible for his life'. More straightforward essays adopt an explanatory approach and used that penultimate paragraph to reference the detail of his mother's foot curling up on her funeral pyre. Similarly, many explained the religious references with more sophisticated answers seeing Hanumen as an internalised instrument of repression for the disadvantaged – like the Rooster Coop. Only the best considered the language and tone; how elevating them to the deity was part of a pattern of self-aggrandisement. Most however, commented on the element of surprise in the placement and use of 'My ex.' Most looked at the quasi homoerotic description that followed with some embarking on a more complex, though not always clearly articulated discussion of mirrors as a motif for self-infatuation. In discussing the contributions to the colloquial tone of the rhetorical questions, use of italics and parentheses, most noted how the idealisation of his master was slyly undercut by the reference to punching Pinky Madam in the face. Most understood the idea of Balram as an unreliable narrator and highlighted the humour involved in Balram's hatred of self-promotion in others but not in himself. Weaker candidates however, took the last paragraph and the need for 'paper napkins' as a testimony to Balram's love for his master. This made nonsense of the overall tone and the fact that he loves him best once he has completed his 'story' by killing him, taking his name and becoming the editor of that story. Some weaker essays mistakenly and mechanically repeated partially understood ideas about the 'stream of consciousness' presenting us with Balram's 'raw unfiltered thoughts'. While this enabled some of them to note the mixture of asides, contradictions and ironies, the use of 'stream of consciousness' in the context of this novel is problematic. It ignores the fact that Balram is presented as writing for an audience, to instruct and entertain for a variety of motives, and is thus selecting or disguising, at least in part, the 'real' flow of his thoughts. Weaker essays also tended to make non-specific observations such as: '*this is funny*' or '*this shows what he is really like*' but most were able to pick up on the mixture of hypocrisy and irony. A few, perhaps wishing to avoid 'close reading' wrote more general essays on Balram as a 'devil' or 'demon' or drifted into an account of his relationship with Ashok.

### 3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

There was significant take-up of this new novel which seems to have provoked lively interest. There was some sophisticated appreciation of the ways the writer creates ambiguity and the significance of this uncertainty for a reader. Candidates are also beginning to find useful critical material from Catton herself, P Holloway and Colinescu but should be careful to link discussions to specific textual detail. The (b) passage-based question proved to be the more popular option here.

- (a) This was a straightforward question and those candidates who could refer to specific scenes in detail did well. Most could outline Stanley's role in the plot and better essays broadened this to include his role as an observer of his peers and teachers at the drama school. Some suggested his reactions to meetings with his father, to events such as the Theatre of Cruelty exercise or discovery of Isolde's identity and her parents attendance at the show acting as a moral or emotional touchstone for the reader. The best had enough detailed knowledge to show how Catton undercuts this by Stanley's awareness of himself as a performer, anxiously wanting a script or his 'self-congratulation' in confrontations with the Head of Movement and the smile before he goes on-stage after the discussion of the possibility of his 'doing a runner'. Most made some reference to Catton's central concerns about theatre as a 'point of access' and how inexperienced young people in their search for identity and knowledge of their emotions, rehearse situations and try out different roles. Good essays brought out how the structure of the novel, the switching between Stanley's 'real' encounters with Isolde and the rehearsals of the play cause confusion and complicate a reader's response to Stanley. Some for example agreed with Isolde that she had been a 'pawn' in the rehearsal for his performance, while others were convinced by his earlier denial of this in conversation with the Head of Movement. Weaker essays tended to restrict the discussion to a narrative account of his role in the plot or a descriptive portrait which were often sound enough but lacking in the kind of detail to bring out the character's significance to the wider concerns of the novel or an appreciation of the methods used to present the character. Better essays referred in passing to such methods as the use of dramatic scenes and dialogue, free indirect speech, what

other characters say to him or about him, and the use of language drawn from theatrical performance.

- (b) This was sometimes well done by candidates who could contextualise the passage within Catton's concerns about sexual identities, gender roles and exploration of the way individuals are continually acting, trying out different masks and rehearsing situations, adapting performances in response to an audience in an effort to find out who they are. The best essays showed evidence of close reading while moving confidently between the passage and the wider text. For example they noted the use of the words 'performance' and 'practice' and discussed the ambiguity of the saxophone teacher's role and her vicarious interest in her students' relationships. They examined the characterisation of Julia in the novel as a 'provocateur', here willing to challenge social norms and taboos: 'How one girl seduces another' and elsewhere for example, in the meetings with the counsellor. Most commented on some aspects of the theatricality of the writing: why it is comforting to be speaking 'someone else's lines', and how the accumulated effect of the lexical choices 'big game of let's pretend? Like a play-act?' and references to the theatrical conventions of cross-dressing' and 'the machinery of it all' suggests a quest for authenticity. Some good candidates gave intelligent expositions of complex ideas such as 'narrativisation' and the way an individual cannot guarantee how a presentation of self will be received; how in the process of interpretation and reinterpretation an identity can become blurred but without linking these ideas explicitly enough to the details within the passage. The best would take a sentence such as 'if you choose not to be deceived by the spectacle of the thing, then you will see it's actually two girls' and tease out the effects of the language and how the structure creates emphasis. Generally speaking, those candidates who did not have a conceptualised response to the novel, did not make enough of the more straightforward issue of characterisation. Most commented on the effects of the language used to change the saxophone from being a mere prop to a visual symbol of sensuality for both the characters but not many looked closely at the characterisation of Julia here as a conscientious student of the 'textbook methods' of flirting or the significance of the last word 'Danger'. Less successful essays sometimes struggled to make much of the passage. They tended to make general statements of how the passage compares life to drama, made general comments about sexuality without exploring the ideas about taboo and role-plays and sometimes diverted to an account of Julia and Isolde's relationship or the saxophone teacher's relationships with Julia and Isolde and how this reflects her relationship with Patsy.

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

This text continues to be quite a popular minority choice with candidates showing interest in the context and the characters. The (a) question proved to be slightly more popular here. The key differentiating factors for success were the extent to which candidates had detailed knowledge and quotations available from relevant scenes and the extent to which they showed appreciation of the texts as drama.

- (a) The most successful essays used their introductions to consider aspects of 'conflict'. They covered the wider political and social contexts against which characters in both plays rebelled, while at the same time looking for examples of more personal, inner conflicts and how these were presented in Fugard's use of symbolism, soliloquies or exchanges between characters. Many essays were generally sound in terms of the way Elsa and Helen struggle against the conservative, patriarchal society in *The Road to Mecca* and most could illustrate this in terms of Elsa's antagonism to Marius, Helen's use of her art as a means of personal expression and freedom and her community's reaction to it. Most also brought out the characters' personal conflicts: Elsa's with race, her disappointing affair with a married man and the abortion and Helen's fear of the dark and her suicidal tendencies; though not many discussed the use of lighting and candles in the play. Only the best referred in detail to specific scenes such as Marius's revelation to Elsa about the truth of the fire and Elsa's outrage at the betrayal of 'trust'. Perhaps candidates find it more difficult to give equal treatment to two texts in the time available but many seem to have less to say about *My Children! My Africa!* There is a tendency to explain the political situation under apartheid, the students' participation in the riots and the problem for liberal whites or moderates like Mr M. who want change but believe in 'words' rather than 'stones and petrol bombs'. There was usually a clear understanding of Thami's view of the Bantu education system and Mr M.'s role in it with some of the best essays commenting on the understandable post-colonial resistance Thami has to the literary quiz. Only the better essays covered some aspects of how this conflict is presented on stage. Very few noted the symbolic significance of the controlled conventions of the formal debate, the relevance of the gender equality issue to race and the contrast of this exercise in 'words' with the violent actions of the Comrades. A few had quotations from the soliloquies in which both Mr M. and Thami explain their conflicting ideas and could comment on the effects of the language and the

dramatic impact of this device. Some mentioned the inner conflict both male characters have to admit love for each other and how this is conveyed by what is not said at particular moments. Very few looked at the positioning of Isabel as an observer of the relationship between Mr M. and Thami and her conflicts of loyalty by being a friend of both. It was rare to find anyone who mentioned the presentation of physical violence through Mr M.'s description of what happens on the street and the sound effects of the bell and crashing glass which add urgency to Thami's mission to warn Mr M. that the mob is coming for him. Weaker answers could discuss some of the ideas in general terms but were restricted by limited plot-based knowledge of the texts.

- (b) Successful essays offered a close reading of the extract, and made pertinent links to the wider text to bring out the significance of the details. A few were able to refer to the other play when addressing Fugard's use of symbolism or attitudes to death but most stayed within '*The Road to Mecca*'. Good essays focused on the word 'challenge' and explained why Helen liked it with reference to Elsa's earlier affirmation of Helen as a person who challenges her to 'an awareness of myself and my life'. They also referred to the issue of 'trust', the initial joke and discussions about being 'open' and telling the truth in the wider text in order to establish the tone of the scene and discuss its effects as the conclusion to the play. Most managed to look closely at Helen's long speech, picking up on the significant reference to the title of the play as a metaphor for the journey of life, her assurance that she 'won't lie' and on the implications of her saying 'This is as far as I can go.' together with the dramatic significance of her blowing out the candle. Some commented on the use of humour in the scene, particularly appreciating the irony of 'artificial sweeteners' and linked the blowing out of the candle to the symbolic and dramatic effects of light and dark elsewhere in the play. Most interpreted this as Helen's acceptance of death and Elsa's helplessness to prevent it, being indicated by the non-sequitur line 'I'm cold.' The most sophisticated argued that the lexis and sharing of the 'artificial sweeteners' undercut the joyousness of the 'trust' exercise and foreshadows suicide. Weaker essays asserted the future suicide as an incontrovertible truth without offering any evidence. Some gave an account of the extract without seeming to know it was the final scene in the play. Some essays showed more interest in ideas – such as the wider theme of friendship, or the battle against the conservative, patriarchal, Christian society and Helen's defiant embrace of the 'other', the East and Islam. Most of these ideas were sound and marks depended on how well candidates were able to tie these discussions to details within the extract.

## 5. LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

This continues to be a popular text with candidates often showing a mature appreciation of the ways Lochhead creates different tones and voices. Candidates often demonstrate a greater capacity for detailed analysis than is sometimes seen elsewhere on the paper. The (b) question proved by far the more popular option here.

- (a) This question was mostly done by those who felt they had secure knowledge of three appropriate poems and the good ones planned their approach carefully to generate a coherent argument in response to the question. Most of the successful essays included a detailed exploration of the threatening presence of the bull in *Revelation* and some used the issue of the child's point of view to progress into a discussion of uncertainty using *After a Warrant Sale* and then the adult's reflections on the uncertainties of life in *The Choosing* or *Poem for my Sister*. Others explored the black humour of *Rapunzstiltskin* and the uncertainty of what men and women want from a relationship, or the psychological darkness and insecurity in poems such as *The Other Woman* and less productively *My Rival's House*. Marks depended on the depth of the discussion, the pertinence of the quotations available and the level of detailed analysis of Lochhead's poetic methods and effects. Less successful essays tended to summarise ideas and those who chose to focus on uncertainty in love or the presentation of endings of an affair sometimes offered very partial accounts of such poems as *Obituary* and *The Bargain*. There was occasionally some serious misreading, for example in an attempt to draw out evidence of ambiguity in *Epithalamium* and make that relevant to the question.
- (b) Most candidates were able to place the poem within the context of Lochhead's interest in the roles women play throughout life: of wife, grandmother, mother-in-law and sister with some references to appropriate poems in the selection. Most commented on the expectations of mothers in society that all mothers have to conform to and the implications of the absence of fathers. There were some brilliant expositions on the allusions to the limiting tropes of fairy stories such as The Snow Queen and how women are misperceived or twisted into stereotypes by the patriarchy, such as over-bearing, repressive monsters, cold distant demons, whores and temptresses with sophisticated essays pointing out that what is being mocked here are the stereotypical complaints about mothers

that perhaps emerge in therapy sessions. Successful essays supported these discussions with copious quotation from the given poem as well as pertinent references to *Rapunzstiltskin* to illustrate what is characteristic about Lochhead's methods and effects of tone. There was some good detailed technical analysis with candidates exploring with varying degrees of assurance, the self-contradictory lexis, use of capitalisation, alliteration and repetition, ellipsis, parenthesis, rhetorical questions and varied line lengths. Many candidates at specific points expressed lively, personal, critical appreciation of the imagery, the sarcastic tone and irony and the occasional crudity of the register. Most offered sound paraphrases of the last line but only the best deconstructed it, while weaker essays ignored it. Weaker essays tended to give a generalised or partial discussion of the ideas or embarked on feature-spotting without linking the discussion to the content and context.

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

Almost every candidate offered this text. The (b) question proved to be the more popular choice here.

- (a) Most candidates offered sound ideas on the roles and functions of the different female characters; the discriminating factor was the extent to which they deconstructed the question and included some analysis of the 'dramatic effects'. Some effective answers made good use of contextual or feminist frames here to explore the context of patriarchy and how that informs the American Dream with its obsession for 'rugged' masculinity and competition; how this generates misogyny, forcing women into the stereotypical roles of domestic drudge or whore. Good essays used detailed references to the text to show how women were presented: for example the symbolic repeated use of the washing basket, the repairing of the stockings and silencing of female voices, particularly Linda's in specific scenes but also in the final scene with The Woman. The best answers included detailed discussion of the staging effects and transitions between the scenes of 'mobile concurrency' with The Woman and the rest of the play. Many discussed how the women are used as foils for the men in the play, revealing the expectations and moral status of the male characters. Criticism was directed at Willy for his infidelity and his 'little cruelties' towards Linda and also Happy for his objectification of women: his crude references to big Betsy as a 'pig', the women he knocks over like bowling pins and the fiancés of his bosses he 'ruins' to get revenge on his superiors. Weaker answers sometimes tended to drift away from the question and write more about the men and Willy in particular. Some wrote more general essays on Linda as the loyal, long-suffering supportive wife who was responsible for Willy's death because she failed to challenge his delusions or confront him about his suicide attempts. Better treatments of Linda had more detailed references to show how Miller's use of language at specific points gives her an important role in the emotional impact of the play and looked at her 'Attention must be paid' speech, her angry rejection of her sons after their abandonment of their father at Frank's Chop House and the dramatic impact of her role in the Requiem. Most candidates could only give an outline of The Woman's role in the plot. A few could show how she appealed to Willy but no one considered the dramatic effects of Biff's arrival in her final scene. Less successful answers tended to give clear but thinly evidenced accounts of the women's roles and restricted discussion of dramatic effects to the stockings which quite a few thought Linda was knitting.
- (b) Most candidates securely located the scene as an example of 'mobile concurrency' or one of Willy's hyper-real recollections mixed with delusion. Only a few commented on the dramatic impact of the appearance of the actors playing Biff and Happy as younger versions of themselves and linked this to the first time this happens, or linked the scene to later appearances of Ben and his involvement in Willy's decision-making over the 'twenty thousand' insurance money. The best answers followed the structure of the extract and explored its changing dynamics, commenting on the symbolism and significance of details and how they add depth to the characterisation of Willy, humanising him while at the same time exposing his folly. Most noted that Ben's line about walking 'into the jungle' was repeated throughout the play and that we never discover what he did to become rich. Many suggested it involved exploitation and corruption, and supported this with reference to the shocking details of the trip in the sparring bout and his threatening to blind Biff by pointing the umbrella at his eye. Very good answers noted the repetition of 'jungle' in his advice to Biff to 'Never fight fair with a stranger, boy' and using this moment to discuss how the presentation of Ben as a 'great man', and the broader issue of the American Dream is subverted by the focus on wealth and ideas about 'rugged' masculinity. Lots commented on the stage direction of Ben looking at his watch, noting the equation of time and money for those who are successful, aptly contrasting it with a Willy who is lost in a timeless world of recollections and projections. Very few however commented on the image of the frontier and the way the language presents an idealised view of the father which contrasts with what we know of Willy's life as a travelling salesman. More modest

answers tended to stay on the surface of the text, commenting on obvious aspects such as Ben's account of his success making no mention of hard work, the use of the flute, and the way Linda, Happy and Charley are ignored. Most were able to pick a few key phrases such as being 'well-liked' or 'jungle' to discuss their significance in the wider text. A few commented on Willy's characteristic dishonesty and the ridiculousness of his claim there was good hunting in Brooklyn, but most were able to use his and Ben's reactions to the theft of building materials to comment on Willy's inability to teach his boys correct values, supported by references to examples of Biff's kleptomania and time in jail. Some weaker answers were unclear about who Ben was, which compromised their interpretation of the scene or they provided very partial responses, tending to focus more generally on Willy and not including the obvious impact on stage of the fight.

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

This was the less popular choice of poetry text this session but most candidates were able to make some productive use of their knowledge of the context and development within Yeats's work.

- (a) The majority who chose this looked at the expected poems: *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, *Cold Heaven* and *The Wild Swans at Coole* with the best responses having enough quotation available to look closely at the way language and rhythm generate mood and tone. Some sophisticated responses tracked the tempering of Yeats' Romantic idiom in the service of more overtly political work with some referencing *The Fisherman* or looking at the 'unnatural' images of nature in the celestial vision of *Sailing to Byzantium* and the apocalyptic vision of *The Second Coming*. Some included human and animal nature and there were some interesting responses to *Leda and the Swan*, reflecting on how Yeats combined the personal, the sexual, the mythic, the political and the natural along with the metaphysical. Good essays showed understanding of the development of the ideas in the poems as well as appreciation of Yeats' poetic methods and effects. Less successful essays tended to offer summaries, or focused rather narrowly on details of nature without much discussion of their significance to the whole poem or appreciation of their presentation.
- (b) The best responses located the poem contextually in terms of its content and addressed its world-weary tone linking the poem to others associated with Maud Gonne such as *The Wild Swans at Coole* or *No Second Troy*. As they progressed through the poem they made brief references to others featuring Yeats' views on society's lack of appreciation of the arts, or the poet's awareness of age and disappointment. Good essays worked through the poem, looking at the use of voices, the 'feminine' imagery of 'stitching and unstitching', how the wounded self-justification of the poet's profession is generated and its tonal contrast with the aloof apostrophised 'you'. The best also considered in detail the changing ideas about love, the implications of the language, e.g. 'high courtesy', 'idle trade' and the delicate, symbolic imagery used to describe the moon and how this creates the sense of his being 'weary-hearted.' Those who recognised the sense of a faded chivalric ideal in the Chaucerian reference to 'high courtesy' sometimes referred productively to *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*. Weaker essays showed a partial understanding of the poem, not quite understanding the biblical reference of the title and the idea of 'labour' as a curse. Some mistook the 'beautiful mild woman' as Maud Gonne. They tended to consider the first two stanzas and then to discuss in summary form ideas in other poems rather than the poetic methods and effects available here. Many surprisingly did not consider the ending at all.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/62  
1900 to the Present

## Key messages

To do well:

- Candidates need to show more evidence of detailed study of the texts so that they can go beyond a summary of plot, ideas or description of character and discuss **how** a writer creates meaning and effects to shape a reader's response.
- To do this they need more detailed specific textual references and a supply of useful, short, pertinent quotations so that they can analyse a writer's choice of language and other technical devices.
- Those choosing the **(b)** passage-based options need to pay more attention to the rubric of the questions and focus more closely on the 'effects of the writing' in the given passage while at the same time making appropriate, specific references to the wider text.

## General comments

There were very few rubric errors and most questions produced answers across the range. Most candidates managed their time well and produced two evenly balanced essays of four to five sides each. Just occasionally weakness in expression or poor handwriting caused some breakdown in communication but most candidates were able to express themselves clearly enough and some were very accomplished. The more successful essays showed evidence of planning, the use of discourse markers to structure an argument together with some judicious use of critical vocabulary such as 'narrative point of view', 'persona', 'tone', 'epistolary form', 'satire', 'irony', 'juxtaposition', 'symbolism' and language to describe how the sound of words contributes to meaning and effect. Good answers were distinguished by careful attention to the terms of the questions, an ability to shape detailed material to the task and to show evidence of a personal response based on a close reading of the text. Whether they were responding to the **(a)** or **(b)** question, successful candidates used analysis to show an understanding of a range of aspects of narrative, dramatic and poetic methods and evidence of some originality in their appreciation of the effects of the writing. Their discussions had some level of complexity and an appreciation of the ways different writers explore and communicate feelings. Less successful answers were often characterised by a lack of detailed textual knowledge and understanding of the writer's craft and a tendency to over-invest in contextual material or sociological issues such as racism or the patriarchy. In explaining what a writer's concerns might be, they neglected to show the various ways these ideas were presented in the text. When dealing with the drama texts for example, many candidates wrote about the playwrights' attitudes to aspects of their societies and seemed to forget that in the theatre, the immediate response of an audience is to the characters and their emotions as presented on stage. More candidates are learning how to embed brief contextual and biographical points into the body of their essays, linking the information to specific details in the text, to illuminate an idea or interpretation at a particular point in the text. Some weaker answers on Miller and Yeats however were padded out with overlong paragraphs of general information. There was some evidence of critical reading with some candidates making productive use of Marxist or feminist viewpoints, but generally candidates need to show more discrimination in how they use quotations from the critics. In an effort to cover 'O' in the mark scheme, many quoted some very obvious, uncontentious statements on aspects of theme or character, points which any reader could reasonably be expected to make for themselves. Candidates can make more productive use of critical opinions by selecting detailed textual knowledge and analysing it to support or question the validity of the critical view. Some candidates attempted to broaden their discussions by making tenuous links to their wider reading for example linking '*The White Tiger*' or '*Death of a Salesman*' to '*Othello*', '*Hamlet*' or '*The Franklin's Tale*', but unless such references are precise enough to illuminate some understanding of a particular aspect of the primary text then such digressions are to be avoided.

Some candidates sometimes did not appear to consider or perhaps fully understand some of the recurring terms within the questions. Most seemed to understand ‘concerns’ as meaning themes and broader textual issues, but many limited ideas about ‘presentation’ to descriptive summaries, or paid scant attention to such key words as ‘effects of the writing’ ‘tone’, ‘dramatic effects’ and the extent to which the methods and concerns are ‘characteristic’. In order to appreciate how the various writers shape a reader’s or an audience’s response, candidates must be prepared to look more closely at a writer’s choice and use of language, the way ideas are presented and developed and issues to do with structure and form. This is the explicit focus of the **(b)** passage-based questions, where candidates are expected to show evidence of close reading and understanding of the passage or given poem through discussion supported by some analysis of specific details and short quotations. The other explicit requirement for the **(b)** questions at A Level is for the candidate to make appropriate links with the wider text, indicated by the instruction to ‘consider how far’ or ‘in what ways’ the given extract is ‘characteristic’ of a writer’s ‘methods and concerns’, or how a writer ‘shapes a reader’s or audience’s response to characters here and elsewhere’ in the text. The **(b)** questions are the most popular options across all the texts and some candidates did well because they managed to combine a perceptive, detailed critical analysis of the given extract with specific references to the wider text to show an understanding of the extract’s significance in terms of ideas, presentation or development of character or emotions, together with some appreciation of a writer’s methods. Some less assured answers provided quite intelligent, detailed responses on the effects of the writing but marks were restricted because of limited engagement with the wider text. Those offering the poetry texts seemed to find it particularly difficult to relate the given poem to others in the selection and often relied on biographical or contextual material in order to discuss concerns, with some barely contextualised feature-spotting to show knowledge of characteristic methods. Less successful candidates stayed on the surface of the text, often revealing the kind of misreading or partial understanding that suggested little detailed study of the text itself and perhaps a reliance on line-by-line summaries. At a basic level many candidates needed much more detailed knowledge of their texts. Some quite competent essay writers did less well on the **(a)** questions because although they constructed sensible, lively, coherent arguments, their knowledge of the texts was often generalised and plot-based; they made valid sometimes astute observations but failed to provide supporting evidence from the text. However, many candidates at different levels of competence managed to communicate some genuine personal engagement or enjoyment of their chosen texts and some wrote interesting, perceptive accomplished essays displaying an impressive level of detailed knowledge and critical appreciation.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **1. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah***

This was quite a popular text which candidates have obviously enjoyed. The **(a)** question was the more popular option here.

- (a)** The best answers saw that there were three aspects to this question and focused on what Ifemelu discovered about herself, how the writer presented this in terms of narrative methods and how this shaped a reader’s response to the character and the broader textual issues. Some linked the ‘journey’ to the picaresque structure of the novel and to Ifemelu’s position at the end of not quite belonging anywhere. Less assured answers were able to give evidence from the plot about events which influenced Ifemelu’s development. A few candidates however struggled to focus on the character and wanted to write more general essays on Adichie’s concerns such as racism and gender issues. Those who competently explored Ifemelu’s shifting sense of identity linked this to place and relationships showing how she perceives her blackness, weight and appearance differently at different moments. They also focused on hair, accents and her reactions to things other people say about her. In weaker answers treatment of the relationships tended to be generalised and uneven with more detail available on Curt and very little on Blaine. A few good essays perceptively discussed what her comments on cross-cultural relationships revealed about her sense of self and why the relationship with Obinze was never just about sex. Better essays used examples from the blogs to illustrate the development of a different, more confident, humorous voice and candidates obviously enjoyed the character’s assertiveness and her reactions to other prominent black people such as the Obamas and the compromises they make with white norms. Successful essays had a good level of detailed knowledge to support a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of Ifemelu’s experiences and feelings about herself, while more limited attempts relied on thin, narrative summary and over-simplified judgements about her selfishness.



- (b) Most candidates showed a clear understanding of Adichie's concerns about marriage and that social insecurity and financial dependence lay behind Nigerian women's transactional attitude to relationships. Many used the final sentence as a jumping off point to discuss the wider text having some details on the relationship between Ifemelu's parents and her father's failure to provide for his family; Auntie Uju's relationships with the General and Bartholomew and Kosi's attitude to her marriage with Obinze. This approach tended to restrict marks to levels three and two depending on the level of specific detailed knowledge available and how much or how little comment was made on the effects of the writing in the passage. Most for example noted Ifemelu using Blaine as 'armour' to protect herself from pitying friends and the idea of status being dependent on how many governor's attended the wedding. Better essays combined references to the wider text with detailed analysis. There was plenty of interesting material in this passage for candidates to discuss point of view and the writer's use of Ifemelu as an outsider and keen observer of people and social attitudes. Alongside Tochi's 'battle with Ifemelu's Americanness' there was some comment on the issue of change and reference to Ifemelu's experience of the Nigeropolitan Club. Some candidates did very well on the language of the passage, showing an understanding of how the satirical tone is generated for example by the descriptions of husbands in the first paragraph, and Priye's 'sinister' appearance. Those with more technical assurance discussed the symbolism of the 'auburn straight weave,' the colours: 'brittle pink' and 'sparkly bronze' and the way all the details supported the figurative description of Priye's personality having 'hardened', been 'coated in chrome'. Though not many could use the term 'indirect free discourse' some did comment effectively on the way the reader is given access to Ifemelu's thoughts despite the use of third person narrative and how it shapes the reader's response to Ifemelu as a character, and how the use of dialogue allows the reader to judge other characters on the basis of their given attitudes and language. Less assured essays focused more narrowly on the characters commenting in a straightforward way on evidence of Tochi's jealousy and Ifemelu's desire to 'appease' her or Priye's hard, pragmatic personality. The best of these clearly understood what Ifemelu was feeling but could not engage with the wider textual issues such as what the writer is revealing about Nigeria through Ifemelu, or how Priye's attitudes shape a reader's response to Ifemelu's pursuit of 'love' and relationship with Obinze. No one really explored the irony here and elsewhere in the novel of the former colonised country's obsession with British clothes and education. Weaker essays gave an account of the passage with some personal reflections on marriage and materialism.

## 2. ARAVIND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*

This was the most popular prose text. Many candidates wrote interesting, perceptive essays sometimes with an impressive level of detailed knowledge. The (a) question was the less popular option here.

- (a) Good answers selected a wide range of symbols often skilfully linking them into a framework based on the significance of references to the 'Light' and 'Darkness'. They included some detailed commentary on specific scenes involving the fort, the polluted Ganges, the idea of India being a 'jungle' or 'zoo' with the significance of the landlord's nick-names and Balram as the White Tiger, and the ubiquitous entrapment of the Rooster Coop and luxury of the chandelier. Many commented on the epistolary form of the novel and how these symbols are presented as a function of Balram's ironic personality and satirical viewpoint. Insightful responses explored how these symbols are used by Adiga to allow Balram to explain and justify his actions and so complicate a reader's response to the murder of his master. Very good answers often had very pertinent quotations to show how details such as the 'human spiders', the lizard, the 'sealed black egg' of the car, mirrors and the colour of a prostitute's hair acquire symbolic significance by repetition. Modest answers had enough knowledge of the text to describe the more obvious symbols but often neglected to link this information to Balram's characterisation. These candidates could explain the significance of the Rooster Coop, but did not have a quotation to show the shocking impact of the language given to Balram in his explanation of it, or how he drops the phrase into a variety of situations – such as when being teased by the other drivers for doing Yoga in the car or explaining he would not have thought of telling a judge the truth about his false confession to Pinky Madam's hit-and run accident. Those candidates who had a good level of quotation were more successful because they had aspects of narrative method and effects to comment on and were able to display a deeper level of personal response. There were quite a few weaker answers which gave very generalised explanations of a narrow range of symbols or were confused as to what it was and included the presentation of family, poverty and corruption as 'symbolic'.

- (b) The question specifically asks for a discussion of language and tone and the good essays explained some of the ways Adiga creates Balram's voice in the context of the epistolary form, Balram's character and Adiga's satirical purposes. Good responses commented on the humorous effects of the incongruity of register in a letter to the Premier of China: the informality of the rhetorical questions, the repeated use of 'See' and 'Now' and various lexical choices such as the alliterative 'plump paunchy men and even plumper paunchier women', the effects of 'munching' and 'fatsoes'. Some caught the sarcasm in the comments about the 'usual genius' of the town planners and most candidates commented on the contrast of the list of buildings for the rich and 'the pavement outside ... for the poor to live on'. Only a few made a specific comment on the use of the word 'live' but some saw the irony of the internalised colonialism or pretension of 'Buckingham Towers' and how ludicrous this is in the context of 'Block B' which sounds like a prison wing with its 'exercise ground'. Many answers identified the differences between the rich and poor as one of Adiga's major concerns and most appreciated of the irony of the rich wishing to be like the poor and how a rich man can acquire a toupee. Some commented on the luxury of 'mineral water and clean towels' in comparison to the cockroach-infested basements inhabited by the servants. Most missed the opportunity to comment on the way the sentence structure contributes to the graphic description of the masters' routine around line 20 and what this reveals about Balram's attitude to their 'walking'. Many discussed the relationship between masters and servants here and elsewhere in the novel. Some commented on the implications of 'monkey circle' within the symbolic framework of the novel, the slapstick level of the drivers' revenge in using sudden braking to dislodge the wig and noted Balram's stance, here and elsewhere as an outsider. Some saw the irony in Balram's professions of loyalty, his determination to protect his master's privacy but take his life. Others saw something homoerotic in Balram's references to Ashok's body but better answers noted the growing revulsion at the sweat, the paunch and the moral outrage at the 'nights of debauchery' as an element of foreshadowing of the murder. Weaker answers gave an account of the passage, often with little sense of being informed by knowledge of the wider text, seeing Balram as a loyal servant. Others tried to write generally on Adiga's critique of social inequalities and injustices or the commercial development of India prompted by the reference to the town planners building over of natural areas.

### 3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

A new text in 2017 and at the moment, the least popular choice of the novels though some candidates have obviously enjoyed the subject matter and are beginning to come to terms with the narrative technique which challenges a reader to work out what seems to be real or improvised by the characters.

- (a) The question invited candidates to explore Catton's concern with the way young people find their identity by rehearsing different roles and feelings. Some considered Isolde's choices in how to react to her sister's affair; how to react to Julia's interest in her and the implications of this for her sexual preferences; and how she used Stanley as a 'kind of protection' some 'proof' of her heterosexuality. Better essays were able to put the discussion into the context of Catton's use of the theatrical conceit and could refer in some detail to scenes with the saxophone teacher to show that Isolde is acting and how Catton signals this with references to lights and props. Less successful essays relied on rather thin, narrative accounts of Isolde's role in the plot.
- (b) There were some effective essays which successfully linked the passage to the novel's wider theme of authenticity, impersonation and role-play through Catton's exploitation of the drama school scenario and dramatic presentation of this scene through dialogue and the description of gestures. Good essays looked at the language and commented on Stanley being addressed 'as if you really are your father' and yet encouraged 'to make up' the answers. They appreciated the irony of Stanley pretending that he did not know whether he was a good actor or not by showing with reference to the wider text just how well Stanley was capturing the personality of his father. They analysed the language: 'all at once he was guiltless, and unapologetic and mischievous.' to show what Stanley thinks of his father and of himself. There was some perceptive discussion of the nonchalant tone with which Stanley-as-father talks about the dirty jokes and the wider significance of the one he tells. Some reflected on the wider scope of relationships of power in the novel between parents and children and teachers and students. Some contrasted Stanley's feelings of wary embarrassment in other scenes the ease with which he creates his father's tone and gestures and how the language used creates a sense of enjoyment at making his audience laugh. Others noted the reversal of power suggested by Stanley's cool look at the Head of Acting 'as if ... [his] wants and fear and hopes and faults were laid bare to him' which is subverted by the use of 'as if' and the teacher's impassive stare in return. Less assured answers gave an account of the passage focusing on the character of Stanley as described by Stanley-as-father, or a descriptive account of

Stanley's relationship with his father. Many missed an opportunity here to relate this scene to other scenes in the drama school such as the theatre-is-a-point-of-access scene' or the Theatre of Cruelty session and Stanley's response to it.

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

This continues to be a popular choice of text with candidates becoming increasingly more competent in dealing with the characters and issues, though more attention needs to be paid to the texts as drama. Context was generally well done though some candidates misunderstood the meaning of Afrikaner and thought that Helen was a black African rather than a white native of South Africa.

- (a) Those who considered the dramatic means by which Fugard presents his female characters did well. They were able to link the characters to each other through exploration of the themes of rebelliousness, showing how Helen, Elsa and Isabel challenge social expectations in terms of their attitudes to race and gender and how their desire for self-determination and self-expression has wider implications for social responsibility and respect for others. Good candidates also discussed the indirect presentation of other women such as Patience and Katrina through the words of Elsa and Helen, and understood their role in illustrating aspects of gender issues in the Apartheid system and conservative religious ideas about marriage while revealing aspects of the main characters' thinking and feelings. Competent essays used quite a lot of plot-based knowledge to discuss the female characters' roles as outsiders. They often covered Elsa's attitudes as a teacher, Elsa's affair with a married man the abortion and her opposition to Marius, alongside Isabel's winning of the debate on equality of opportunity for women in a black school against a black male opponent. There was some generalised discussion on the significance of Helen's art but less on the wider symbolism of Mecca. Very few considered the presentation of her suicidal tendencies with the use of lighting, stage props such as candles and mirrors and the effects of the lyrical language in her long speeches about her fear of the Darkness and the courage which came from the 'little uncertain light' of the candle. Candidates cannot be expected to cover every possible aspect of a text in equal amount of detail, but they do need to be discriminating and to select material which allows them to display a range of skills particularly an understanding of how writers create dramatic effects. In plays this means having some detailed references to relevant scenes and some pertinent quotations. Weaker essays for example gave descriptions of the characters praising Elsa for her kind support of Helen but without mentioning the dramatic tension that is generated on stage in specific scenes over issues of trust. Discussion of Isabel was generally less well-handled. A few saw the wider ironic significance of the opening debate in the context of the struggle for black rights and equality, and asserted how strong and articulate she was, but most did not have enough detail on her role in challenging both Mr M. and Thami to show how Fugard uses her principled character to present and explore the white liberal position in South Africa.
- (b) Most answers explained the significance of the scene with reference to the political context, while better answers referred to particular scenes in the wider text where Isabel discusses separately with Mr M. and Thami how their relationship is affected by what they believe and how they feel about each other. Good essays noted that Mr M. is always the teacher and discussed the various layers of irony in 'if you've got a problem, put it into words ...'. This often included some sensitive understanding of the dramatic effects of the ellipses, pauses and body language and what they reveal about what is said and unsaid. Many discussed in detail the ambiguity of Thami's failure to meet Mr M.'s eyes and the extent to which he might be lying when he says 'I'm not doing it for you.' Some good essays looked at the way the scene builds to its ironic conclusion through the reversal of power as for the first time Mr M. appears to have taken Isabel's advice and is listening while Thami assures him of his leadership – that when he vouches for Mr M.'s innocence he will be believed. Some reflected on examples of the subdued tenderness in the scene and the disappointment in Mr M. at the end that Thami cannot admit that he cares for him. Less effective answers were sound in their ideas but less detailed in the analysis of the text, discussing the significance of the mob burning the school, and Mr M.'s betrayal of the list of names more generally. A few revealed some insecurity about the issues of the Bantu education system and thought Mr M. was murdered by a gang of 'marauding whites'. Generally speaking though, at most levels of competency, candidates were able to discuss some examples of language and tone in terms of dramatic effect, though many ignored the second part of the question about the shaping of an audience's response to the characters elsewhere in the play.

## 5. LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

The **(b)** question was the more popular option and some candidates used it very productively to display their skills in practical criticism.

- (a)** Given the number of poems available which deal with aspects of romantic relationships: the tender celebration of them in such poems as 'Persimmons', 'Epithalamium' and 'The New-married Miner' or the disappointment in 'Obituary', 'After a Warrant Sale' and 'Rapunzstiltskin' it was surprising that so few candidates chose this question. Competent answers chose some contrasting poems and were able to give a fairly detailed account of three while making a few comments on Lochhead's use of personas or different voices to create a variety of tone and communicate a range of feelings. Weaker essays seemed to struggle to find three and used very thin summaries or in the case of 'The Bargain' focused very narrowly on the end of the poem to address the question. The main issue across the range of responses was the lack of detailed knowledge and scarcity of quotation to provide opportunity for some analysis of poetic methods and effects.
- (b)** While it was clear that some candidates were doing this as an unseen, others who were supported by some critical reading that described Lochhead as a 'painterly poet' did some excellent close reading of *Notes on the Inadequacy of a Sketch*. Most focused on the implications of the title – the inadequacy of art to represent the nuanced detail of a particular scene and understood the central irony of language's ability to do just that, even when composed and presented in Lochhead's characteristic, colloquial style. Some were able to discuss the significance of the sketch being 'a simile at best. It's no metaphor' and use this to explore one of Lochhead's major concerns: the value of very precise use of language to establish the truth of a situation or feeling. These looked other lexical choices in this poem such as the effects of 'crude', 'scrawl', 'scribbled', 'jotted', 'sheer', 'façade', and 'face value' both in their immediate context and the accumulative effect. They also broadened the discussion by making productive use of 'Poet's Need Not' and 'Persimmons'. Many candidates enjoyed commenting on the technical aspects of the poem – its use of caesura, parentheses, sibilance, varied line lengths which combine with the language to mimic the theme. Many commented on these effects at particular points in the poem such as the splitting of 'piecemeal' at the end of the first line. This willingness to look at the detail: the imagery, the confrontational asides, the antiphonal effect of two voices rendered by the brackets, enabled many candidates to discuss the tone of voice here and elsewhere in the selection. Many effectively analysed the impact of the imagery connected with mortality and the body such as the 'the ribs/where the plough had skinned [the fields] alive' or the complex sound effects and visual impact of the 'rickle of rabbit bones/ribcage and spine in splinters' etc. In attempting to focus on the sound effects of the language some candidates however made extravagant claims such as '*when the word inadequacy is said out loud, it leaves a feeling of emptiness created by the q*'. Less successful essays attempted to give an account of the poem, and in striving to extract meaning, often missed the central irony or opportunities to display an understanding of poetic methods and effects.

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

Almost every candidate offered this text and both questions proved popular with the **(b)** passage-based question being the slightly preferred option. Performance on both questions was sometimes compromised by insecure or very generalised plot-based knowledge which did not allow the candidates to display an understanding of the complexities of the writer's concerns, the characters, or an appreciation of the text as drama.

- (a)** Many candidates considered the terms of the question and composed lively coherent arguments about how far Linda understood Willy and to what extent her efforts to support him might be termed 'heroic'. Most argued that she was a product of her time, the stereotypical, self-sacrificing, loving, patient, perfect wife who heroically tried to manage the family finances and the relationships between her husband and sons but who yet did not have the courage to confront Willy about his delusions and attempted suicide bids and therefore was to some extent responsible for his death. There was a tendency for less successful essays to treat the character as a real person. Some presented a feminist reading, and saw her as the subordinated woman endlessly validating a foolish man who did not deserve her. Others demonstrated the limitations of the psychological approach by asserting that Linda could have saved Willy by explaining to him about his id, ego and super-ego. How far candidates were rewarded for these arguments depended on the level of specific reference to the text and whether there was some analysis or understanding of the dramatic methods used to present the character. Some, for example, misunderstood that the

'mobile concurrency scenes' are dramatic representations of the inside of Willy's head and thought that Linda is colluding with Willy's delusions by pretending to talk to Ben and the boys. Better essays examined the language in Miller's initial introduction of her, looked closely at how she protects Willy's self-esteem in the first scene and contrasted that with the tough language and tone she uses with the boys in the 'Attention, attention must finally be paid' scene and her furious rejection of them after their abandonment of Willy in Frank's Chop House. The majority of candidates though, tended to underestimate the importance of the language given to Linda in shaping an audience's response to Willy as an individual and in universalising his situation. Many candidates who wrote quite competently in general terms about her role and significance did not have any quotations at all from these dramatic scenes which restricted the marks. More successful essays did focus on a narrow range of dramatic methods used in her presentation: they pointed out that in Willy's mental projections of the boys' youth her domestic role is indicated by the presence of the washing basket. They also looked at what the boys and Willy say about her or to her, using the discussion about the visit to Bill Oliver to show how she is ignored and yelled at, so revealing the conflict between Biff and Willy. Weaker essays sometimes tended to drift away from the question and wrote more about Willy or Happy's attitude to women than Linda. Most mentioned the stockings and could explain the significance of her mending them but more successful essays brought out the dramatic effect of the action by looking at a precise point in the play and discussing Willy's reaction and the effect on the audience. A surprising number of weaker candidates asserted that Linda knew about Willy's affair and had forgiven him for it without offering any evidence for this interpretation, so what could possibly have been seen as interesting 'O' thereby became suggestive of insecure 'K'. Better essays used this ignorance about the affair to challenge the proposition in the question that she understands Willy though surprisingly few discussed her final lines in Requiem.

- (b) Good answers looked closely at the question and in focusing on aspects of dramatic methods and effects were able to make some pertinent links to the wider text though very few referred to Howard elsewhere in the scene: his fascination with the recording machine and its symbolic significance in terms of modern technology or consumerism from which Willy is excluded. Most candidates explored Willy's slow degradation indicated in his declining sense of what he is worth and referred to his denial asking for favours while taking loans from Charley. Many considered some of the details which shape an audience's response to the characters by noting for example, the moments of pathos when Willy admits the truth that he is 'a little tired' and 'They don't know me any more'. Good essays brought out the irony of this scene by comparing his actions here with the scene in which he gives advice to Biff about meeting Bill Oliver: 'start big and you'll end big; tell a 'couple of stories', 'don't pick up anything, they have office boys for that'. Most essays appreciated the irony of Willy's admiration for Dave Singleman and deconstructed the significance of his name, his continuing to work at the age of 84 and the contrast between attendance at his funeral and Willy's. Not everyone picked up on Willy's statement of values: 'respect, comradeship and gratitude' but most clearly understood that in his story about holding Howard in his arms and naming him, Willy was attempting to emotionally blackmail Howard, he expected respect and gratitude. Many contrasted the confessional idiom of Willy's back-story, his out-dated belief in personal connection with the uncompromising coldness of Howard's clichéd 'Business is business', the disrespectful inappropriate use of 'kid' and the insincerity conveyed in the violent basket-ball reference that 'If I had a spot I'd slam you right in, but I don't have a single solitary spot.' Weaker answers displayed some insecurity of knowledge in that they thought Willy was asking for a raise. They tended to offer partial discussions about the American Dream in relation to the gold strikes and Willy's view of Dave Singleman's success with many asserting that Willy does not understand that hard work is necessary to become rich. Some used the extract as a jumping off point for a more general essay on Willy making some use of the wider text but not showing sufficient attention to the detail of the passage.

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

This was the more popular of the poetry texts but a minority option. More candidates had some success with the (b) question which was the preferred choice but some answers on both questions relied too heavily on biographical material about Yeats' relationship with Maud Gonne.

- (a) There were a few essays which outlined areas of conflict for Yeats and most chose appropriate poems to bring out his feelings about Ireland, Irish society and the struggle for independence; his feelings about art and the lack of appreciation of it; and his reflections on his love for Maud Gonne. Popular choices which produced some productive exploration of ideas were *September 1913*, *Easter 1916*, *Adam's Curse*, *Sailing to Byzantium*, *The Wild Swans at Coole* and *No Second Troy*. Better essays had enough detail to argue the relevance of the chosen poem to the question. Sometimes candidates attempted to use less obvious poems such as *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* which was seen as the creation of a dream world to satisfy the desire for peace and tranquillity in natural surroundings in contrast to the dissatisfaction experienced on the grey pavements of the city. How far these discussions were rewarded depended on the extent to which candidates were able to consider specific aspects of Yeats' poetic methods and effects. There were some very weak summaries of poems which revealed partial understanding of the ideas and limited appreciation of choice of language and tone.
- (b) Some wrote very well on *No Second Troy*, making effective connections to the imagery of war, myth and romance in *Leda and the Swan* and other poems. Some explored the Helen of Troy image effectively, equating the ruined Troy with the ruined Yeats himself, as well as a degraded Ireland that had fallen under Maud Gonne's influence. Most commented on the effect of the poem's repeated rhetorical questions with some seeing an irony in the opening one because they appreciated the ambivalence in the lexis of 'high', 'solitary', 'stern', 'hurled', 'bow' and 'fire' as images of ruthless and destructive cruelty and so felt despite his protestations to the contrary, he was blaming her. Good essays looked closely at the impact of the language such as the idea of her beauty not being 'natural' just as a bow is not. Some commented on the simplicity on the language in the penultimate line and interpreted it as rueful acceptance of her nature while others saw the final lines as a warning to other men to avoid Yeats' fate, to avoid being 'burned' in her 'fire' as he had been. Weaker essays attempted to extract meaning by paraphrase and often showed partial understanding. They also found it difficult to relate the poem to the wider text and if they knew about Maud Gonne, provided information about her political activities and her unrequited relationship with Yeats. Some attempts were severely limited by lack of knowledge; some candidates had no idea about the allusion to Helen of Troy and thought Troy was another man.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/63  
1900 to the Present

## Key Messages

To do well:

- Ambitious candidates who offer a conceptualised response to the texts need to make sure that they link the discussion of sophisticated ideas to the details of the text.
- Candidates need to show more evidence of detailed study of the texts so that they can go beyond a summary of plot, ideas or description of character and discuss **how** a writer creates meaning and effects to shape a reader's response.
- Those choosing the **(b)** passage-based options need to pay more attention to the rubric of the questions and focus more closely on the 'effects of the writing' in the given passage while at the same time making appropriate, detailed references to the wider text.

## General comments

There were very few rubric errors and all questions produced answers across the range. Most candidates managed their time well and produced two evenly balanced essays of four to five sides each. Just occasionally weakness in expression or poor handwriting caused some breakdown in communication but most candidates were able to express themselves clearly enough and some were very accomplished. The more successful essays showed evidence of planning, the use of discourse markers to structure an argument together with some judicious use of critical vocabulary such as 'narrative point of view', 'persona', 'tone', 'narrativisation', 'epistolary form', 'satire', 'irony', 'juxtaposition', 'symbolism' and words to describe how the sound of words contributes to meaning and effect. Good answers were distinguished by careful attention to the terms of the questions, an ability to shape detailed material to the task and to show evidence of a personal response based on a close reading of the text. Whether they were responding to the **(a)** or **(b)** question, successful candidates used analysis to show an understanding of a range of aspects of narrative, dramatic and poetic methods and evidence of some originality in their appreciation of the effects of the writing. Some well assimilated ideas on Marxist or feminist criticism gave their discussions a level of complexity and many candidates have developed their own skills in practical criticism so that they were able to analyse the ways different writers explore and communicate feelings. Less successful answers were often characterised by a lack of detailed textual knowledge and understanding of the writer's craft and a tendency to over-invest in contextual material or sociological issues such as racism or the patriarchy. Sometimes in explaining what a writer's concerns might be, they neglected to show the various ways these ideas were presented in the text. When dealing with the drama texts for example, many candidates wrote about the playwrights' attitudes to aspects of their societies and seemed to forget that in the theatre, the immediate response of an audience is to the characters and their feelings as presented on stage. More candidates are learning how to embed brief contextual and biographical points into the body of their essays and to make this information more productive by linking it to specific details in the text, to show how this information influences a reader's response at particular moments. Generally however, candidates need to show more discrimination in how they use quotations from the critics. In an effort to cover 'O' in the mark scheme, many quote critics to make very obvious statements on aspects of theme or character, uncontentious points which any reader could reasonably be expected to make for themselves. References to critics are useful when a candidate can show how they have illuminated a reader's understanding, and can personalise these points by the selection of detailed textual knowledge to support or question the validity of a critical comment. Less successful candidates sometimes attempted to broaden their discussions by making tenuous links to their wider reading for example linking *The White Tiger* or *Death of a Salesman* to *Othello*, *Hamlet* or *The Franklin's Tale*, but unless such references are precise enough to illuminate some understanding of a particular aspect of the primary text under discussion, then such digressions are to be avoided.

Many candidates had an impressive amount of detailed textual knowledge and the challenge for some was to shape their knowledge to the task. Less successful candidates, sometimes did not appear to consider or perhaps fully understand some of the recurring terms within the questions. Most seemed to understand ‘concerns’ as meaning themes and broader textual issues, but many limited ideas about ‘presentation’ to descriptive summaries, or paid scant attention to such key words as ‘effects of the writing’ ‘tone’, and most challenging for some – ‘dramatic effects’. In order to appreciate how the various writers shape a reader’s or an audience’s response, candidates must be prepared to look more closely at a writer’s choice and use of language, the way ideas are presented and developed and issues to do with structure and form. This is the explicit focus of the **(b)** passage-based questions, where candidates are expected to show evidence of close reading and understanding of the passage or given poem through discussion supported by some analysis of specific details and short quotations. The other explicit requirement for the **(b)** questions at A Level is for the candidate to make appropriate links with the wider text, indicated by the instruction to ‘consider how far’ or ‘in what ways’ the given extract is ‘characteristic’ of a writer’s ‘methods and concerns’ or how a writer ‘shapes a reader or audience’s response to the characters here and elsewhere’ in the text. The **(b)** questions are the most popular options across all the texts and some candidates managed to do them well. They combined detailed critical analysis with specific references to the wider text to show an understanding of the extract’s significance in terms of ideas, presentation or development of character and emotions, together with an appreciation of **how** a writer creates specific effects. Some less assured answers provided quite intelligent, detailed answers on the effects of the writing but marks were restricted because of limited engagement with the wider text. Some of those offering the poetry texts seemed to find it more difficult to relate the given poem to others in the selection and often relied on biographical or contextual material in order to discuss concerns, or did some barely contextualised feature-spotting to show knowledge of characteristic methods. The least successful answers on the **(b)** options of the prose and drama texts often stayed on the surface of the text, sometimes revealing the kind of misreading or partial understanding that suggested little detailed study of the text itself and perhaps a reliance on line-by-line summaries. At a basic level many candidates needed much more detailed knowledge of their texts. Some quite competent essay writers did less well on the **(a)** questions because although they constructed sensible, lively, coherent arguments, their knowledge of the texts was often generalised and plot-based; they made valid sometimes astute observations but failed to provide supporting evidence from the text. However, many candidates at different levels of competence managed to communicate some genuine personal engagement or enjoyment of their chosen texts and some wrote lively, perceptive accomplished essays displaying an impressive level of detailed knowledge and critical appreciation.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **1. CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE: *Americanah***

This was a fairly popular choice of text which many candidates have obviously enjoyed because they frequently show exhaustive knowledge of the main character’s experiences, have found useful support from Adichie’s TED talk and really engaged with aspects of the writer’s methods and concerns. The **(b)** question proved to be the more popular option here.

- (a)** This question invited candidates to go beyond a re-cap of the plot and explore various ways in which identity is constructed in the narrative. Some did this very well seeing hair, awareness of accents, relationships, a variety of social situations, blog entries on ‘race, gender and body size’ and so on as signifiers of personal development and the search for an authentic identity. Some reflected on the novel’s narrative arc, the structure of departure and return, and the retrospective account of Ifemelu’s racial, moral, and spiritual journey; concluding that while she might have got rid of the ‘cement in her soul’ by returning to Nigeria, as an Americanah in the Nigeropolitan Club she might not actually feel at home anywhere. Those who focused on her emotional journey and her acceptance of ‘Love as a kind of grief’ with Obinze, commented on how this, together with the rediscovery of Lagos and the expressive freedom of her blog writing generated a sense of peace so that ‘She had finally, spun herself into being.’ The best essays managed a huge amount of material in a discriminating way taking the opportunities offered by specific references and quotations to demonstrate an ability for analysis and an appreciation of how Adichie shapes a reader’s response to Ifemelu. Some for example, analysed the reflective tone of the free indirect speech within the third person narrative at a particular point – such as her reflections on being ‘fat’ and contrasted this with the confident, provocative, witty, direct address of the blogs. More modest answers made productive use of significant events with more generalised awareness of Ifemelu’s feelings about her encounters with a variety of men and women and how that affects her sense of self. Weaker answers relied on narrative summary with partial discussion of obvious aspects such



as her awareness of being black, her encounter with the tennis coach, the relaxing of her hair in order to get a job, and her relationship with Curt.

- (b) Most candidates could place the passage in the context of one of the novel's key concerns: the significance of hair for a character's identity. Many considered the importance of this memory for Ifemelu's own awareness of this issue and made relevant links to the wider text. Others chose to focus on Ifemelu's mother's transactional attitude to religion and linked this to other targets of Adichie's satire of Nigerian culture such as attitudes to marriage and corruption. Though these essays often demonstrated good knowledge of the text, there was a tendency to give insufficient attention to the 'effects of the writing' in the passage, which restricted the marks. The most successful essays stuck closely to the given passage to show an appreciation of Adichie's methods, moving between the extract and the wider text to illustrate wider concerns or characteristic aspects of the style. Most essays attempted to comment on the language used to give life to her mother's hair in the first paragraph, commenting on the effects of such language choices as: 'drank', 'sprang free and full', 'flowing like a celebration.' The best essays linked the use of personification and the image of her mother's hair lying on the floor 'like dead grass' with Ifemelu's sense of 'something organic dying' when her own hair is relaxed and flat-ironed in the US. They also focused on how Adichie uses the third person narrative viewpoint to recreate a sense of Ifemelu-the-child, who in contrast to the adult observer elsewhere did not understand what was happening but 'sensed' that 'the woman who was bald and blank, was not her mother, could not be her mother.' Successful essays were able to explore how Adichie communicates a sense of Ifemelu and her father's alienation from her mother by bringing out the significance of hair for an individual identity: Ifemelu 'watched her mother's essence take flight'. The best noted the effects of the simile of the atmosphere being 'like cracked glass' and how the sentence structure used to describe her mother's new ideas of God, reinforces the idea of her 'rigid' speech, with some commenting on how Adichie's own voice comes through to make a mockery of her beliefs. Less secure candidates were confused by the idea of Ifemelu growing up 'in the shadow of her mother's hair' and thought the description was of Ifemelu's hair. Some weaker responses focused on the passage in an indiscriminating way, giving an account of the experience with little evidence of their summaries being informed by knowledge of the wider text or of personal response to the effects of the language.

## 2. ARAVAND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*.

This was the second most popular text which many candidates have obviously enjoyed. Slightly more chose the (a) option here. Many displayed an impressive amount of detailed knowledge and made appropriate use of the social and political context, and made some references to critical views including Marxism. Less productive and credit-worthy were the sometime tenuous links to wider reading with lengthy allusions to Dickens, *The Franklin's Tale* and Shakespeare asserting that Balram was like Macbeth or Iago.

- (a) Many candidates interpreted the question in the widest way possible to allow them to write about Balram's journey from poverty and exploitation in 'The Darkness' to entrepreneurial success and independence in 'The Light'. Less assured essays adopted a narrative approach, but in passing, most were able to include the symbols associated with the darkness such as the Rooster Coop, the polluted Ganges, Balram's his fear of the fort and the significance of the symbols of enlightenment and freedom such as the chandeliers and the White Tiger. Better essays used the word 'opposition' in the question to help structure their responses and show Adiga's use of contrasts such as the inequality of access to medical facilities, the malls, fair-skinned, blonde prostitutes and on a stylistic level, the tone generated by structures such as 'two castes: Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies'. Good essays generated some complexity in their discussions by exploring how the luminous imagery betokened Balram's simultaneous awakening and moral decline into the darkness of amorality; they showed how Balram's success in 'The Light' and sense of freedom from the Rooster Coop were compromised by the same issues of bribery, corruption, violence and murder experienced by those living in 'The Darkness'. The most successful essays continually showed how the various details under discussion complicated a reader's response to Balram generating sympathy for him, delight in his satirical exposure of the realities of India's development under 'The Great Socialist' and distaste for his pragmatic ruthlessness. Many candidates also showed some originality in their choice of illustrations, for example Ashok's ignorance of the realities of life for those in the Darkness 'you people eat so well' and the way they were able to generate discussion from them, such as the ironic chiaroscuro effects of the descriptions of the fan above the chandelier and of the 'old black-and-white film' effect of the white tiger pacing in his cage. Weaker essays tended to show some clear, basic understanding of ideas but tended to restrict discussion to explaining what the symbols were.

- (b) This was often well done with essays showing evidence of close reading and appreciation of the passage, informed by selected knowledge of the wider text. Most mentioned the epistolary form with better essays specifically noting the details in the address and the incongruous register in the main body to show how they contribute to the impudent tone. The best observed that the epistolary form was a narrative device to allow the reader to stand in for the somnolent Chinese Premier and how the reader's response to Balram is compromised by 'hearing' his confession and complicated by our knowledge of his life-story and the charming, witty, cynical irony of the language given to him. Good essays focused on such details as 'I could gloat that I am not just any murderer' and the dark humour of 'murder a man, and you feel responsible for his life'. More straightforward essays adopt an explanatory approach and used that penultimate paragraph to reference the detail of his mother's foot curling up on her funeral pyre. Similarly, many explained the religious references with more sophisticated answers seeing Hanumen as an internalised instrument of repression for the disadvantaged – like the Rooster Coop. Only the best considered the language and tone; how elevating them to the deity was part of a pattern of self-aggrandisement. Most however, commented on the element of surprise in the placement and use of 'My ex.' Most looked at the quasi homoerotic description that followed with some embarking on a more complex, though not always clearly articulated discussion of mirrors as a motif for self-infatuation. In discussing the contributions to the colloquial tone of the rhetorical questions, use of italics and parentheses, most noted how the idealisation of his master was slyly undercut by the reference to punching Pinky Madam in the face. Most understood the idea of Balram as an unreliable narrator and highlighted the humour involved in Balram's hatred of self-promotion in others but not in himself. Weaker candidates however, took the last paragraph and the need for 'paper napkins' as a testimony to Balram's love for his master. This made nonsense of the overall tone and the fact that he loves him best once he has completed his 'story' by killing him, taking his name and becoming the editor of that story. Some weaker essays mistakenly and mechanically repeated partially understood ideas about the 'stream of consciousness' presenting us with Balram's 'raw unfiltered thoughts'. While this enabled some of them to note the mixture of asides, contradictions and ironies, the use of 'stream of consciousness' in the context of this novel is problematic. It ignores the fact that Balram is presented as writing for an audience, to instruct and entertain for a variety of motives, and is thus selecting or disguising, at least in part, the 'real' flow of his thoughts. Weaker essays also tended to make non-specific observations such as: '*this is funny*' or '*this shows what he is really like*' but most were able to pick up on the mixture of hypocrisy and irony. A few, perhaps wishing to avoid 'close reading' wrote more general essays on Balram as a 'devil' or 'demon' or drifted into an account of his relationship with Ashok.

### 3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

There was significant take-up of this new novel which seems to have provoked lively interest. There was some sophisticated appreciation of the ways the writer creates ambiguity and the significance of this uncertainty for a reader. Candidates are also beginning to find useful critical material from Catton herself, P Holloway and Colinescu but should be careful to link discussions to specific textual detail. The (b) passage-based question proved to be the more popular option here.

- (a) This was a straightforward question and those candidates who could refer to specific scenes in detail did well. Most could outline Stanley's role in the plot and better essays broadened this to include his role as an observer of his peers and teachers at the drama school. Some suggested his reactions to meetings with his father, to events such as the Theatre of Cruelty exercise or discovery of Isolde's identity and her parents attendance at the show acting as a moral or emotional touchstone for the reader. The best had enough detailed knowledge to show how Catton undercuts this by Stanley's awareness of himself as a performer, anxiously wanting a script or his 'self-congratulation' in confrontations with the Head of Movement and the smile before he goes on-stage after the discussion of the possibility of his 'doing a runner'. Most made some reference to Catton's central concerns about theatre as a 'point of access' and how inexperienced young people in their search for identity and knowledge of their emotions, rehearse situations and try out different roles. Good essays brought out how the structure of the novel, the switching between Stanley's 'real' encounters with Isolde and the rehearsals of the play cause confusion and complicate a reader's response to Stanley. Some for example agreed with Isolde that she had been a 'pawn' in the rehearsal for his performance, while others were convinced by his earlier denial of this in conversation with the Head of Movement. Weaker essays tended to restrict the discussion to a narrative account of his role in the plot or a descriptive portrait which were often sound enough but lacking in the kind of detail to bring out the character's significance to the wider concerns of the novel or an appreciation of the methods used to present the character. Better essays referred in passing to such methods as the use of dramatic scenes and dialogue, free indirect speech, what

other characters say to him or about him, and the use of language drawn from theatrical performance.

- (b) This was sometimes well done by candidates who could contextualise the passage within Catton's concerns about sexual identities, gender roles and exploration of the way individuals are continually acting, trying out different masks and rehearsing situations, adapting performances in response to an audience in an effort to find out who they are. The best essays showed evidence of close reading while moving confidently between the passage and the wider text. For example they noted the use of the words 'performance' and 'practice' and discussed the ambiguity of the saxophone teacher's role and her vicarious interest in her students' relationships. They examined the characterisation of Julia in the novel as a 'provocateur', here willing to challenge social norms and taboos: 'How one girl seduces another' and elsewhere for example, in the meetings with the counsellor. Most commented on some aspects of the theatricality of the writing: why it is comforting to be speaking 'someone else's lines', and how the accumulated effect of the lexical choices 'big game of let's pretend? Like a play-act?' and references to the theatrical conventions of cross-dressing' and 'the machinery of it all' suggests a quest for authenticity. Some good candidates gave intelligent expositions of complex ideas such as 'narrativisation' and the way an individual cannot guarantee how a presentation of self will be received; how in the process of interpretation and reinterpretation an identity can become blurred but without linking these ideas explicitly enough to the details within the passage. The best would take a sentence such as 'if you choose not to be deceived by the spectacle of the thing, then you will see it's actually two girls' and tease out the effects of the language and how the structure creates emphasis. Generally speaking, those candidates who did not have a conceptualised response to the novel, did not make enough of the more straightforward issue of characterisation. Most commented on the effects of the language used to change the saxophone from being a mere prop to a visual symbol of sensuality for both the characters but not many looked closely at the characterisation of Julia here as a conscientious student of the 'textbook methods' of flirting or the significance of the last word 'Danger'. Less successful essays sometimes struggled to make much of the passage. They tended to make general statements of how the passage compares life to drama, made general comments about sexuality without exploring the ideas about taboo and role-plays and sometimes diverted to an account of Julia and Isolde's relationship or the saxophone teacher's relationships with Julia and Isolde and how this reflects her relationship with Patsy.

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

This text continues to be quite a popular minority choice with candidates showing interest in the context and the characters. The (a) question proved to be slightly more popular here. The key differentiating factors for success were the extent to which candidates had detailed knowledge and quotations available from relevant scenes and the extent to which they showed appreciation of the texts as drama.

- (a) The most successful essays used their introductions to consider aspects of 'conflict'. They covered the wider political and social contexts against which characters in both plays rebelled, while at the same time looking for examples of more personal, inner conflicts and how these were presented in Fugard's use of symbolism, soliloquies or exchanges between characters. Many essays were generally sound in terms of the way Elsa and Helen struggle against the conservative, patriarchal society in *The Road to Mecca* and most could illustrate this in terms of Elsa's antagonism to Marius, Helen's use of her art as a means of personal expression and freedom and her community's reaction to it. Most also brought out the characters' personal conflicts: Elsa's with race, her disappointing affair with a married man and the abortion and Helen's fear of the dark and her suicidal tendencies; though not many discussed the use of lighting and candles in the play. Only the best referred in detail to specific scenes such as Marius's revelation to Elsa about the truth of the fire and Elsa's outrage at the betrayal of 'trust'. Perhaps candidates find it more difficult to give equal treatment to two texts in the time available but many seem to have less to say about *My Children! My Africa!* There is a tendency to explain the political situation under apartheid, the students' participation in the riots and the problem for liberal whites or moderates like Mr M. who want change but believe in 'words' rather than 'stones and petrol bombs'. There was usually a clear understanding of Thami's view of the Bantu education system and Mr M.'s role in it with some of the best essays commenting on the understandable post-colonial resistance Thami has to the literary quiz. Only the better essays covered some aspects of how this conflict is presented on stage. Very few noted the symbolic significance of the controlled conventions of the formal debate, the relevance of the gender equality issue to race and the contrast of this exercise in 'words' with the violent actions of the Comrades. A few had quotations from the soliloquies in which both Mr M. and Thami explain their conflicting ideas and could comment on the effects of the language and the

dramatic impact of this device. Some mentioned the inner conflict both male characters have to admit love for each other and how this is conveyed by what is not said at particular moments. Very few looked at the positioning of Isabel as an observer of the relationship between Mr M. and Thami and her conflicts of loyalty by being a friend of both. It was rare to find anyone who mentioned the presentation of physical violence through Mr M.'s description of what happens on the street and the sound effects of the bell and crashing glass which add urgency to Thami's mission to warn Mr M. that the mob is coming for him. Weaker answers could discuss some of the ideas in general terms but were restricted by limited plot-based knowledge of the texts.

- (b) Successful essays offered a close reading of the extract, and made pertinent links to the wider text to bring out the significance of the details. A few were able to refer to the other play when addressing Fugard's use of symbolism or attitudes to death but most stayed within '*The Road to Mecca*'. Good essays focused on the word 'challenge' and explained why Helen liked it with reference to Elsa's earlier affirmation of Helen as a person who challenges her to 'an awareness of myself and my life'. They also referred to the issue of 'trust', the initial joke and discussions about being 'open' and telling the truth in the wider text in order to establish the tone of the scene and discuss its effects as the conclusion to the play. Most managed to look closely at Helen's long speech, picking up on the significant reference to the title of the play as a metaphor for the journey of life, her assurance that she 'won't lie' and on the implications of her saying 'This is as far as I can go.' together with the dramatic significance of her blowing out the candle. Some commented on the use of humour in the scene, particularly appreciating the irony of 'artificial sweeteners' and linked the blowing out of the candle to the symbolic and dramatic effects of light and dark elsewhere in the play. Most interpreted this as Helen's acceptance of death and Elsa's helplessness to prevent it, being indicated by the non-sequitur line 'I'm cold.' The most sophisticated argued that the lexis and sharing of the 'artificial sweeteners' undercut the joyousness of the 'trust' exercise and foreshadows suicide. Weaker essays asserted the future suicide as an incontrovertible truth without offering any evidence. Some gave an account of the extract without seeming to know it was the final scene in the play. Some essays showed more interest in ideas – such as the wider theme of friendship, or the battle against the conservative, patriarchal, Christian society and Helen's defiant embrace of the 'other', the East and Islam. Most of these ideas were sound and marks depended on how well candidates were able to tie these discussions to details within the extract.

## 5. LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

This continues to be a popular text with candidates often showing a mature appreciation of the ways Lochhead creates different tones and voices. Candidates often demonstrate a greater capacity for detailed analysis than is sometimes seen elsewhere on the paper. The (b) question proved by far the more popular option here.

- (a) This question was mostly done by those who felt they had secure knowledge of three appropriate poems and the good ones planned their approach carefully to generate a coherent argument in response to the question. Most of the successful essays included a detailed exploration of the threatening presence of the bull in *Revelation* and some used the issue of the child's point of view to progress into a discussion of uncertainty using *After a Warrant Sale* and then the adult's reflections on the uncertainties of life in *The Choosing* or *Poem for my Sister*. Others explored the black humour of *Rapunzstiltskin* and the uncertainty of what men and women want from a relationship, or the psychological darkness and insecurity in poems such as *The Other Woman* and less productively *My Rival's House*. Marks depended on the depth of the discussion, the pertinence of the quotations available and the level of detailed analysis of Lochhead's poetic methods and effects. Less successful essays tended to summarise ideas and those who chose to focus on uncertainty in love or the presentation of endings of an affair sometimes offered very partial accounts of such poems as *Obituary* and *The Bargain*. There was occasionally some serious misreading, for example in an attempt to draw out evidence of ambiguity in *Epithalamium* and make that relevant to the question.
- (b) Most candidates were able to place the poem within the context of Lochhead's interest in the roles women play throughout life: of wife, grandmother, mother-in-law and sister with some references to appropriate poems in the selection. Most commented on the expectations of mothers in society that all mothers have to conform to and the implications of the absence of fathers. There were some brilliant expositions on the allusions to the limiting tropes of fairy stories such as The Snow Queen and how women are misperceived or twisted into stereotypes by the patriarchy, such as over-bearing, repressive monsters, cold distant demons, whores and temptresses with sophisticated essays pointing out that what is being mocked here are the stereotypical complaints about mothers

that perhaps emerge in therapy sessions. Successful essays supported these discussions with copious quotation from the given poem as well as pertinent references to *Rapunzstiltskin* to illustrate what is characteristic about Lochhead's methods and effects of tone. There was some good detailed technical analysis with candidates exploring with varying degrees of assurance, the self-contradictory lexis, use of capitalisation, alliteration and repetition, ellipsis, parenthesis, rhetorical questions and varied line lengths. Many candidates at specific points expressed lively, personal, critical appreciation of the imagery, the sarcastic tone and irony and the occasional crudity of the register. Most offered sound paraphrases of the last line but only the best deconstructed it, while weaker essays ignored it. Weaker essays tended to give a generalised or partial discussion of the ideas or embarked on feature-spotting without linking the discussion to the content and context.

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

Almost every candidate offered this text. The (b) question proved to be the more popular choice here.

- (a) Most candidates offered sound ideas on the roles and functions of the different female characters; the discriminating factor was the extent to which they deconstructed the question and included some analysis of the 'dramatic effects'. Some effective answers made good use of contextual or feminist frames here to explore the context of patriarchy and how that informs the American Dream with its obsession for 'rugged' masculinity and competition; how this generates misogyny, forcing women into the stereotypical roles of domestic drudge or whore. Good essays used detailed references to the text to show how women were presented: for example the symbolic repeated use of the washing basket, the repairing of the stockings and silencing of female voices, particularly Linda's in specific scenes but also in the final scene with The Woman. The best answers included detailed discussion of the staging effects and transitions between the scenes of 'mobile concurrency' with The Woman and the rest of the play. Many discussed how the women are used as foils for the men in the play, revealing the expectations and moral status of the male characters. Criticism was directed at Willy for his infidelity and his 'little cruelties' towards Linda and also Happy for his objectification of women: his crude references to big Betsy as a 'pig', the women he knocks over like bowling pins and the fiancés of his bosses he 'ruins' to get revenge on his superiors. Weaker answers sometimes tended to drift away from the question and write more about the men and Willy in particular. Some wrote more general essays on Linda as the loyal, long-suffering supportive wife who was responsible for Willy's death because she failed to challenge his delusions or confront him about his suicide attempts. Better treatments of Linda had more detailed references to show how Miller's use of language at specific points gives her an important role in the emotional impact of the play and looked at her 'Attention must be paid' speech, her angry rejection of her sons after their abandonment of their father at Frank's Chop House and the dramatic impact of her role in the Requiem. Most candidates could only give an outline of The Woman's role in the plot. A few could show how she appealed to Willy but no one considered the dramatic effects of Biff's arrival in her final scene. Less successful answers tended to give clear but thinly evidenced accounts of the women's roles and restricted discussion of dramatic effects to the stockings which quite a few thought Linda was knitting.
- (b) Most candidates securely located the scene as an example of 'mobile concurrency' or one of Willy's hyper-real recollections mixed with delusion. Only a few commented on the dramatic impact of the appearance of the actors playing Biff and Happy as younger versions of themselves and linked this to the first time this happens, or linked the scene to later appearances of Ben and his involvement in Willy's decision-making over the 'twenty thousand' insurance money. The best answers followed the structure of the extract and explored its changing dynamics, commenting on the symbolism and significance of details and how they add depth to the characterisation of Willy, humanising him while at the same time exposing his folly. Most noted that Ben's line about walking 'into the jungle' was repeated throughout the play and that we never discover what he did to become rich. Many suggested it involved exploitation and corruption, and supported this with reference to the shocking details of the trip in the sparring bout and his threatening to blind Biff by pointing the umbrella at his eye. Very good answers noted the repetition of 'jungle' in his advice to Biff to 'Never fight fair with a stranger, boy' and using this moment to discuss how the presentation of Ben as a 'great man', and the broader issue of the American Dream is subverted by the focus on wealth and ideas about 'rugged' masculinity. Lots commented on the stage direction of Ben looking at his watch, noting the equation of time and money for those who are successful, aptly contrasting it with a Willy who is lost in a timeless world of recollections and projections. Very few however commented on the image of the frontier and the way the language presents an idealised view of the father which contrasts with what we know of Willy's life as a travelling salesman. More modest

answers tended to stay on the surface of the text, commenting on obvious aspects such as Ben's account of his success making no mention of hard work, the use of the flute, and the way Linda, Happy and Charley are ignored. Most were able to pick a few key phrases such as being 'well-liked' or 'jungle' to discuss their significance in the wider text. A few commented on Willy's characteristic dishonesty and the ridiculousness of his claim there was good hunting in Brooklyn, but most were able to use his and Ben's reactions to the theft of building materials to comment on Willy's inability to teach his boys correct values, supported by references to examples of Biff's kleptomania and time in jail. Some weaker answers were unclear about who Ben was, which compromised their interpretation of the scene or they provided very partial responses, tending to focus more generally on Willy and not including the obvious impact on stage of the fight.

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

This was the less popular choice of poetry text this session but most candidates were able to make some productive use of their knowledge of the context and development within Yeats's work.

- (a) The majority who chose this looked at the expected poems: *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, *Cold Heaven* and *The Wild Swans at Coole* with the best responses having enough quotation available to look closely at the way language and rhythm generate mood and tone. Some sophisticated responses tracked the tempering of Yeats' Romantic idiom in the service of more overtly political work with some referencing *The Fisherman* or looking at the 'unnatural' images of nature in the celestial vision of *Sailing to Byzantium* and the apocalyptic vision of *The Second Coming*. Some included human and animal nature and there were some interesting responses to *Leda and the Swan*, reflecting on how Yeats combined the personal, the sexual, the mythic, the political and the natural along with the metaphysical. Good essays showed understanding of the development of the ideas in the poems as well as appreciation of Yeats' poetic methods and effects. Less successful essays tended to offer summaries, or focused rather narrowly on details of nature without much discussion of their significance to the whole poem or appreciation of their presentation.
- (b) The best responses located the poem contextually in terms of its content and addressed its world-weary tone linking the poem to others associated with Maud Gonne such as *The Wild Swans at Coole* or *No Second Troy*. As they progressed through the poem they made brief references to others featuring Yeats' views on society's lack of appreciation of the arts, or the poet's awareness of age and disappointment. Good essays worked through the poem, looking at the use of voices, the 'feminine' imagery of 'stitching and unstitching', how the wounded self-justification of the poet's profession is generated and its tonal contrast with the aloof apostrophised 'you'. The best also considered in detail the changing ideas about love, the implications of the language, e.g. 'high courtesy', 'idle trade' and the delicate, symbolic imagery used to describe the moon and how this creates the sense of his being 'weary-hearted.' Those who recognised the sense of a faded chivalric ideal in the Chaucerian reference to 'high courtesy' sometimes referred productively to *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*. Weaker essays showed a partial understanding of the poem, not quite understanding the biblical reference of the title and the idea of 'labour' as a curse. Some mistook the 'beautiful mild woman' as Maud Gonne. They tended to consider the first two stanzas and then to discuss in summary form ideas in other poems rather than the poetic methods and effects available here. Many surprisingly did not consider the ending at all.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 9695/71</b> <b>Comment and Appreciation</b></p>
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## Key messages

Good answers:

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- Do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase, but focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passages, and upon how these shape meaning.
- Show how literary devices and techniques are used by the writers to create particular effects and responses.
- Use personal responses to reflect 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 the response, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.
- Do not use speculative comments without any evidence from the poem or passage to support them.
- 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

There was as usual a very good range of responses to the three questions in the Paper, and most candidates had clearly read the poem and passages carefully before starting to write about them and it was evident that most had spent some time in thinking and planning before beginning to write. There were few responses which relied on simple paraphrase or narrative, and there was plenty of critical discussion of language and structure, particularly of the poem. Some candidates spent unnecessary time speculating or giving personal views and opinions on social or cultural issues raised by the text, particularly with regard to **Question 1**. Very often these were unhelpful, and rarely added any value to the close reading of the text itself that is expected. The best responses, as always, focused entirely and solely upon what was printed on the question paper.

There were few rubric errors and the majority of candidates succeeded in finishing both questions generally producing two responses that were balanced in coverage of the texts they had chosen to write about. This reflected positively on candidates' ability to manage their time effectively in the exam and most had clearly recognised the importance of allowing themselves to spend no more than about one hour on their first response, so that they had a similar time to complete their second.

There was much very good work seen this session with few completely, or even largely, narrative summary or paraphrased responses and almost all candidates attempted some critical discussion. However, on occasion candidates drifted away from close analysis of the language of the passage or poem, sometimes to write about broad-based contextual ideas, frequently detached from critical analysis and sometimes to make conjectural comments that were unsubstantiated by the texts themselves. In some, candidates' responses poor handwriting, poor expression or both hampered the clarity of the arguments or the discussion they offered. All examiners understand the pressure that candidates are under during this timed examination, and that, having a chosen poem or passages they wish to write about they have only a short time in which to do this. 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 is essential that candidates follow this requirement.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1: *The Good Earth- Pearl S. Buck***

This was a popular choice and the majority of candidates showed a clear understanding of the text. Most candidates spent some time discussing the presentation of the role of women in the passage, the stronger responses making it clear that culture and time were important factors here. For a small number of candidates though, this aspect became the single most important feature of the passage and so the focus of their responses became the presentation of their strongly held, and clearly heartfelt, views on anti-feminism and the patriarchal society. This took them away from the text itself and consequently, their responses lacked the close focus and critical analysis of language and effects that this Paper requires.

Many candidates made some sound comments on the first half of the passage. A range of ideas were covered such as rain being welcomed, as perhaps a symbol of how the marriage would also be fruitful; Wang Lung's normally slow rising, but this morning he sprang out of bed; the poverty of the accommodation; the ill health of his father, and Wang Lung's love and care, although several responses saw him as a grudging carer because he did not leap up immediately to give his father water. Many also offered ideas on the significance of the fact that on this particular morning he washed himself all over – some seeing this as cultural (washing was not a usual thing to do), some as preparing himself for his new wife seeing him, and others seeing it as him looking forward to a sexual experience.

Less confident responses castigated Wang for his selfish attitude but at the upper end of the mark range candidates saw that he was a product of the society he lived in and discussed the shift in Wang's life and his excitement reflected in his behaviour and the weather. Most candidates saw the poverty of Wang's home and understood his dependence upon Nature for his livelihood and some recognised his almost reverential relationship with the Earth and his respect for it. The parallels between the 'fruitful' earth and his own hopes of having children were made by many and some commented perceptively on the importance of the family unit in this society and the inter-dependence of the generations.

Some candidates seemed less secure on the second part of passage often focusing on Wang Lung's selfishness in expecting his wife to do all the work and misunderstandings of the last few paragraphs were common; several, for example, assumed he already had many children and many made no comment on the significance of the final sentence. Some however, saw in this final sentence an indication of the family line continuing through the children that Wang Lung and his new wife would produce and others commented on the idea of the young bringing warmth and new sense of life to the old.

#### **Question 2: *Long Years Ago- Joseph Furtado***

This was the most popular question on the paper with the majority of candidates choosing to answer it. Candidates addressed the poem with varying degrees of success. Most candidates understood that the persona is reflecting on his memory of a childhood sweetheart who he had parted with many years before. Almost all noticed the repetition of 'Long years ago' in each stanza (although some continue to insist on calling them paragraphs) and commented on its effects – most seeing it as simply repeating and emphasising the idea of the long period of time that has passed since he last saw her; though some did use it as supporting the idea of the gentle lyrical nature of the poem. Some candidates misinterpreted ideas, or created additional details not present in the poem, thinking that the couple had married, had children and separated because they could not bear the social gossip about their different backgrounds; others suggested that the maiden was the speaker's maid-servant, they survived some dreadful weather, but the maiden died. Others asserted that they had been married with children, 'light-hearted children', and that their final separation was because she died. Some candidates focused on the difference in their upbringing and how this was the reason for his, 'woe'.

Although many made fruitless attempts to identify the poetic form variously seeing it as a narrative poem, a ballad, and in one case a limerick, some sensible thoughts about structure were made. Many noted that there are five six-lined stanzas, but failed to analyse the effect of this structure. The use of repetition was often noted (the word anaphora cropped up quite frequently), some alliteration and its effects identified and explained, and some thoughts about the weather were presented. The word 'haunt' seemed problematic though, as some who mentioned it assumed that it can be used only in a ghostly, spooky sense, which made for some strange comments such as 'the speaker is finding it hard to recall the maiden because her memory frightens him so much'. More effective responses recognised 'haunt' as a sad remembrance of the maiden which has stayed with the narrator.



The rhetorical question, 'What could we know?' was discussed with varying degrees of success with less confident candidates offering stock responses on its function, but stronger candidates saw that it referred to their youthful naivety and innocence. A number of candidates focused on the structure and form of the poem with a range of responses on the use of repetition, enjambment and some interesting ideas on the inclusion of the exclamation mark at the end of the first stanza. Some candidates commented sensitively on the tone of the poem and the wistful, melancholic sense that it creates and there were some perceptive points discussed about the effects of the shift from past to present in the final stanza.

### **Question 3: *The Mountain is Young- Han Suyin***

This was the least popular text on the whole, although a wide variety of responses were seen. Most candidates focused on the different characters and how they are portrayed (or rather how the candidates saw them), and some candidates did produce some interesting and thoughtful responses on this passage. Interesting ideas on the Nepalese or English breakfast and the significance of the choices the characters make were commented on and candidates generally saw John as an unsupportive husband who effectively lowered Anne's self-esteem. Many focused on the contrast between John and Unni and responded to the latter positively, some making perceptive comments on his sensitivity of the situation, his support of Anne and his awareness of the attitude of John towards her. Stronger responses discussed the culture clash between the two men and their value systems, some seeing a possible tension between them and a vying to be the dominant male. Several candidates also made interesting comments on the contrast between the easy drive with Unni despite the 'boulders' whilst Anne feels every 'pebble.'

However, there were some surprising mis-readings here: Anne became Jane at least twice; she was married to Paul, and had romantic feelings for Unni (though possibly correctly some thought that he had romantic feelings for her); John was often criticised for his quite bitter feelings about Anne and her driving, when as her husband he should have encouraged her. Unni was generally admired for his courage in the face of possible death, and his singing as proof of this. Several saw the bumpy and precipitous road as analogous to their marriage, which was perhaps effective if explored effectively. However, more responses wanted it to illustrate how in life we should face up to all our problems and not be downcast by them, which was generally less closely tied to the details of the writing. There was also some confusion around the list of mountain names at the end of the passage, with some thinking they were the names of some of the engineers who had died. There was limited critical discussion of what is surely a very powerful sentence about the grandeur of the view in lines 64–65, though several commented on Father MacCullough's awe-struck 'Breath-taking, breath-taking'.

It was seen in a number of candidates' responses that they left too little time to properly discuss the ending of the passage. In almost all cases this was the second answer and it provides further evidence of the need to manage time effectively and to give equal time to each of the questions. However, those who did reach the end of the passage were able to present interesting ideas on the irony of Anne's drive alongside the loss of so many lives building the road and discussed the effect of the mountains upon the characters and the sense of the infinite that they inspire.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 9695/72</b> <b>Comment and Appreciation</b></p>
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## Key messages

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- 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

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# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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<p><b>Paper 9695/73</b> <b>Comment and Appreciation</b></p>
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