

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01
Portfolio

Key messages

- Set tasks which allow candidates to meet requirements of both the syllabus and band descriptors.
- Set tasks which focus on one key area, encouraging candidates to explore this area in depth.
- Support the moderation process with careful annotation of the written assignments' strengths and weaknesses.
- Carry out a clerical check of the transcription of marks to the Individual Record Card, the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms and Mark Sheets.

General comments

The observations in this general report should be read alongside the individual report to the Centre.

The Critical Essay

A good variety of texts was seen in the work submitted, often based on the list of suggestions in the syllabus itself. The most successful essays focused closely on the presentation of one key (and manageable) theme or character from the text, which offered opportunities for demonstrating depth of critical analysis as well as a breadth of knowledge and understanding. Many candidates chose to explore poetry and wrote confidently about a particular theme across both poems. There is no need to compare poems; stronger responses dealt with each poem in turn, offering sustained analysis free from the distraction of locating points for comparison. Prose and Drama responses also showed an impressive level of knowledge and understanding, the best being able to range confidently across their chosen text to select appropriate support for their ideas. A word might be said, however, about the use of author biographical material in essays: those candidates who spent a long time covering a writer's background inevitably left less opportunity for analysis of the text itself. Again this year, weaker responses included one or more of the following: unsubstantiated assertions; lengthy quotations (with key words unexplored); general comments on language and structure.

The Empathic Response

The strongest responses demonstrated candidates' skill in capturing a convincingly authentic voice for the chosen character and moment, thereby demonstrating an appreciation of characterisation, themes, language and structure. Candidates should, at the top of responses, indicate both the name of the character and the chosen moment in the text; this allows readers to gauge the success of the response as they read through it. Teachers are reminded that the best choices for empathic responses are significant characters in novels and plays, as these enable candidates to root the 'voice' in the detail of the text.

The Recorded Conversation

Many candidates displayed huge enthusiasm for their reading and were able to range impressively across their chosen text(s) in their conversations. Teacher prompting of less confident, shyer candidates was often helpful and, with well-considered follow-up questions, they encouraged candidates to continue their conversations. Care should be taken by the teacher, however, not to ask questions that lead candidates away from their chosen theme and/or character. The strongest responses focused on the ways in which the writers present the chosen character or theme.

The upper limit of seven minutes for a recording is not mandatory; some candidates were able to demonstrate skills in the higher bands without extending the conversation to a full seven minutes.

Teacher annotation

Teachers should use focused ticking and brief reference to the band descriptors to annotate written assignments. Such annotation complements summative comments and enables external Moderators to see the rationale for the award of a particular mark. For this reason, it is also important that Centres add comments to explain why marks have been adjusted during internal moderation.

Administration

An independent clerical check should be carried out by the Centre to ensure that no candidate is disadvantaged by any transcription errors made by the person entering marks on individual record cards, coursework assessment summary forms and mark sheets. Care should be taken over the presentation of the portfolios. The individual record card should be fastened securely (e.g. by a treasury tag) to the written assignments (and not placed in plastic wallets or cardboard folders) to ensure ease of access. Individual tracks for the recorded conversations should be named with both candidate number and name.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/21
Paper 21 Unseen

Key messages

- Candidates who maintain a focus on the exact wording of the question (written in bold in the question paper) are more likely to achieve relevance in their answers. Those who methodically work their way through the bullet points alone without reference to the question tend to offer a more general appreciation of the text, forgetting about the key focus word(s) in the question itself.
- Those candidates who allow time for thinking about the text and planning their response tend to be in a better position to give an overview of the text directed towards the question in their introductions. Those who plunge straight into writing are often still grappling with the text as they write, sometimes contradicting their own earlier comments in the process.
- Candidates who are able to integrate comments on language, form and structure smoothly into their discussion tend to be more successful than those who approach the text with a rehearsed, rigid plan, often characterised by use of a mnemonic as a starting point to planning.
- There is no automatic reward for 'feature spotting'; comments about simile, metaphor, juxtaposition, etc. should be firmly followed up by an exploration of the meaning or effect achieved. References to a writer's use of enjambment and caesura are much favoured by candidates but are often less effectively developed and can distract from genuine response to a text.
- Good quotation technique goes a long way to achieving fluency and sharp focus in answers. Those candidates who can use short quotations embedded within a sentence are more likely to achieve this than those who copy out lengthy quotations followed by 'This shows ...'. Less successful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to quote directly the words they are commenting on.

General comments

Candidates demonstrated clear engagement and effort, and many were able to bring a sincerity of emotional response to their writing about the texts they encountered. Fewer candidates seemed to be using rigid, pre-prepared, formulaic approaches to analysis and were much more willing to approach their choice of poem or prose passage through a sequential exploration of the text. Some candidates, however, did work their way through separate analyses of form, structure and language, particularly in the poetry responses, and these answers tended to lose a connection with real meaning in the texts, or an emotional response to them. Whilst these areas are obviously relevant to a critical analysis of a text, candidates would demonstrate more confidence in their own ability to respond meaningfully without the use of restricting frameworks. More successful responses tended to begin with an overview of the task and text, moving on to work through the poem or passage in sequence; these answers were thus better able to discuss the developing effects of the writing on the reader.

A note on planning: lack of evidence on the candidate's script of any type of planning was not necessarily a bad thing. One assumes that candidates had taken the opportunity to highlight, underline or text-mark their poem or prose passage on the question paper itself, a practice that can be extremely useful. Writing notes or underlining directly onto the text provides a visual summary of which areas of the text are to be commented on, and allows candidates to check that they are providing sufficient coverage across the whole of the poem or passage. It can also be a time-saving practice in that there is no need to copy out quotations to be used; these can simply be highlighted or underlined. Lengthy plans, however, often proved counter-productive as they ate into the limited time available for writing, with essays sometimes being a simple verbatim copy of the plan, and short, as the candidate ran out of time.

Candidates who began their introductory paragraph with an overview of key ideas in the poem directly related to the key focus points of the question, avoiding the list-like style of introduction where the question (and sometimes all of the bullet points) is simply repeated offered stronger responses overall. A good,

focused start is often an indicator of a good, focused essay that leads with a discussion of ideas pertinent to the question rather than a search for writing techniques often disconnected from each other and from overall meaning in the text itself.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Under the Lemon Tree

Explore how the poet memorably conveys the importance of the lemon tree.

To help you answer, you might consider:

- the mother's feelings about the lemon tree
- the words and images used to portray the tree
- how the poet's thoughts and feelings develop throughout the poem.

Most candidates saw that this was a poem not just about a visit to a lemon tree to enjoy its shade from the oppressive heat of summer, but about a more spiritual experience for the poet who sees the lemon tree as having a transcendental connection with her deceased mother. Many spoke of the tree as therefore 'sacred' or 'holy', as representing the Mother's spirit, or, further, saying that the tree, or the poet, or both, are reincarnations of the mother. Many responses included the sense that the tree was an instrument ('tool') for the poet to accept her mother's death and 'move on'. They noted the shift in the poem after the line, 'But her plans didn't work out', from sad to happier and lighter feelings, with this acceptance that death does not have the last word because the tree lives on and still provides shelter and fruit and the solace of memories.

Several responses included the idea that the Mother makes something 'sweet' out of the 'sour' lemons and in this, the poet echoes the way in which mothers try to make life sweeter for their children. On a similar theme, many candidates talked about the mother's preoccupation with food – feeding her child, and the tree helping her in this, such that she felt it was a friend to her in her efforts to provide for her children. One interesting interpretation made a link between the 'body of light and the breath of water' and the way a tree 'breathes in' carbon dioxide and breathes out oxygen, and takes in the sunlight to photosynthesise, arguing that this makes the tree seem more like a human being, breathing and living and responding to life and death.

The final line of the poem *My hands cup each other the way hers did* was seen by many as the poet imitating the mother's actions and in so doing forming a connection with her. Those who could move further with this image related it to religious imagery, seeing hints of religious ceremony in the action, as if the poet were somehow receiving a blessing.

All of these ideas – and many more – were valid responses to the poem and each candidate found their own interpretations of what they felt important to them. Stronger responses were marked by a personal engagement with ideas, by sharply focused quotation (commenting on individual words or short phrases) and by a critical appreciation of the writer's methods. An even balance of these elements generally ensured an interested, engaged, good quality response.

Some weaker responses saw the poem simply as a starting point for their own creative thinking about the type of person the poet was and what kind of relationship she might have had with her mother. Imagined 'back stories' were offered but with little sense of being rooted in evidence from the poem. Here, greater understanding of how to respond critically to a piece of literature to enable a more analytical and less creative approach would be beneficial. Careful reading of the text is also advised: 'salve' was misread as 'slave' (*I come here as a salve against heat*) by some who went on to construct erroneous comment on how the poet felt enslaved about having to visit the lemon tree against her will. Some wrote whole paragraphs on this idea which could not be credited.

Many candidates did pick up on the symbolism of the 'cycle of life' indicated in 'unceasingly... fall and fold into earth and begin again', and even those candidates who found it difficult to access some of the more subtle meanings in the poem were able to show engagement with this key abstract idea, lifting their discussions from a literal-level response to one that began to consider ideas more figuratively.

Question 2

Prose passage about a couple looking at an album of cards.

Explore the ways in which the writer vividly conveys the impact of the album on the couple's relationship.

To help you answer, you might consider:

- the description of the first time the young man shows the album to the young woman
- some of the words and images used to describe the different cards
- the effect on the couple of finishing the album.

Those candidates who thought about and digested the premise of this story were able to write about it with a good degree of confidence, showing an appreciation of the symbolic significance of the album and its contents. Crucial to a good response was a grasp of the contents of the album, hinted at in the opening paragraphs of the passage: this was a collection of picture cards on a wide variety of topics (*all the marvels of the universe*) that the young man had faithfully collected in childhood until *all the landscapeless windows ... were filled*. The young couple are imagined going through the album together, section by section, with each section of picture cards symbolising a stage in the development of their relationship.

Most candidates were able to comment on the ways in which the young couple's excitement and anticipation are conveyed, picking out details like their eyes being *bright with impatience* and the young woman having *barely taken her place* before beginning to unwrap it. Stronger answers were able to focus on these short phrases, integrating them smoothly into their own discussion, avoiding copying out large 'chunks' of text followed by a general statement saying 'This shows ...', where it is not clear exactly which words within the lengthy quotation 'This' pertained to. The image of the opening of the album being *like the birth of a child* captured the imagination of many candidates who used it as an example of this shared experience being 'exciting' or 'a really big event'. Those who could delve further into the image, commenting on how it conveys a momentous occasion that will impact the quality of the couple's relationship in the way that the arrival of a child leaves an indelible impression on parents, produced very strong responses.

Some strong answers picked out the image of pulling the petals off a flower *as if their happiness, a Yes or a No, depended upon the answer* for particular comment. This was seen as a reference to the 'Loves me, loves me not' game. Stronger responses developed this idea further, suggesting the image introduced an idea of uncertainty about the outcome of the relationship, which until this point had been described as a *humble love* characterised by the young man's *perseverance and constancy*. It is worth noting here that candidates who can make structural connections like this, commenting on a turn or change of direction in the narrative are beginning to show an ability to stand back and engage with the text on a wider level, and that this ability to 'zoom in' for close language analysis and 'zoom out' for broader structural observations is often the mark of higher order reading skills at play.

There follows in the passage a series of descriptions of various cards and the reactions in the young couple that they provoke. Many commented on *The Butterflies* card, noting the boyfriend's jealousy, though felt that this was justified as the young woman had been flirting with another man. This assumption was based on their reading of a sentence that is written from the young man's perspective. Careful reading of the following sentence, however, would have revealed that *she had not, in fact, even looked at that other man*, which is written from an authorial perspective. It appears, therefore, that some learners might need to be encouraged to think about matters of perspective in texts to allow them to access some of the subtleties of meaning in their reading.

There were too many cards in the story for candidates to address all of them, and Examiners respected the choices candidates made. Most were able to see that the album which had drawn the couple together also contributed to the relationship's demise, though some candidates did not reach the end of the passage and concluded that the couple were left *tanned and exhilarated*, in a state of joyful happiness.

For weaker responses, the main cause of a lack of engagement with the ideas in the text was a misunderstanding of the nature of the album itself, which coloured their whole perception of the story and acted as a barrier that many could not overcome. Instead of an *album of picture cards*, some perceived it to be a photograph album that documented events from the couple's relationship up to this point, and which they were sharing together, reminiscing over shared memories of happy times from the past. This false impression seemed to dominate some candidates' thinking, and therefore much of the passage did not make sense to them within this framework. They were able to track, to a certain extent, the ups and downs of the

relationship, but many skipped over any mention of the cards and simply referred to 'the album' as a single entity. This surface level of reading led to little analysis of the writer's methods, or any close connection with the deeper implications of the writing, limiting the ability of these candidates to access the higher bands.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/22
Paper 22 Unseen

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Boy With His Hair Cut Short

How does the poet create vivid impressions of the brother and sister and the life they lead?

To help you answer, you might consider:

- how the poet describes the surroundings
- how she portrays the relationship between the boy and his sister
- how her writing makes you feel about their life.

This poem proved accessible to all candidates, who perhaps identified with the youth of the brother and sister at the centre of its 'story'. There was much sympathy expressed for the struggles of the young pair in the face of hardship, revealing a clear emotional engagement with the text, and a grasp of their situation.

Many began their analysis with references to light and colour in *Twilight and bulb define the brown room*, but for those willing to tackle the slightly more obscure opening sentence: *Sunday shuts down on this twentieth-century evening*, there were opportunities to talk about how the poet sets the initial tone of the piece. Some stronger answers noted the idea of endings in 'Sunday' (end of the week), 'shuts down' and 'evening', suggesting that this brings a negative sense of the closing down of things, helping to set the tone of lack of opportunity and despair that follows. The inactivity of a Sunday evening was seen as an appropriate backdrop to the static nature of the siblings' lives which are stuck in a revolving cycle of failure, unable to progress.

There was mixed success in references to *The L passes* on the second line, some candidates seeing its use in establishing the poor, urban surroundings of the young pair – after all, who but the poor would choose to live in an apartment block so close to a railway? Others, perhaps misled by the 'high-level' in the glossary notes, thought that this meant that they lived in a wealthy area in the suburbs with good public transport links to the city. It is perhaps worth pausing here to comment on this type of misreading, as several Examiners noted similar trends in attempts to analyse other parts of the poem. Some candidates seem so keen on close analysis of language that they miss tonal cues in the text as a whole. The result is that they often over-analyse perceived connotations of an individual word or image without taking account of the context in which the word appears. This type of analysis often took candidates down a false path, pursuing ideas that did not, in fact, fit with the writer's intentions. Some learners, therefore, need practice in gathering their thoughts on the overall impact and tone of a text before plunging into a close analysis of elements within it. Previous advice in the 'General Comments' section about planning an approach to a text before writing the essay proper would be useful for these learners.

The poem offered a wide variety of ideas that allowed candidates to connect with a writer at work. The dullness of the room, with its dark brown and plum colours, the thinness of the sister's hands and her use of *cheap* shears were all seen as indicators of the pair's poverty. Most appreciated that this was a domestic setting, but more than a few candidates seemed to think that the brother and sister ran a barber shop, again missing contextual cues like the sofa, the neighbours, the boy's suit being laid out ready, the fact that there are only two people in the room, etc. Most, however, appreciated the sister's *solicitous* attention to her brother as suggesting that she had taken a motherly role in the relationship, and some commented that the absence of parents or adults in the house might indicate that this role had come out of necessity. Those who simply commented that *solicitous* suggested that she was 'caring' could not be given much credit, however, as this was just a repetition of the word given in the glossary, and so perhaps candidates could be alerted to the need to interpret or find an alternative word when making use of the glossary explanations.

Much was made of the presentation of the sister as standing tall over her seated brother, giving her the appearance of an adult, with him perceived as a child. However, some candidates saw this as the sister being 'intimidating' with threatening *shears* in her hands, even though they later went on to see her as encouraging and motherly. These clashing responses to the sister might suggest a candidate who has not read over the poem carefully before beginning to write, who has made no notes, and who is writing in 'real

time' as they read through the poem for the first time, stanza by stanza. Some learners, therefore, need to be encouraged to see the benefit of thinking and planning time in order to construct a coherent shape to their responses before they start their essays.

High-achieving essays were those that accessed some of the deeper implications of the writing. The mocking irony of the neighbour radio 'singing' serenades about stocks and shares in the face of the siblings' grinding financial distress was appreciated by some, but only a fluent articulation of this idea marked a clear, critical understanding of the image. The neon arrow pointing to repeated, unfailing success every time was also seen as a cruel reminder of the boy's repeated failure, and his admiration of it – *impressed by that precision* – served simply to underline the pathos of his situation. The ambiguity of the final phrase describing the sister's temple vein *pitifully beating* was noted as indicating the uncertainty of the pair's future: does the *beating* of blood around the system indicate that the fight for survival/success goes on? Or does the *pitifully* indicate the inevitable futility of their efforts?

Question 2

Prose passage about a family trespassing on a baron's estate.

How does the writer make this moment so strikingly dramatic?

To help you answer, you might consider:

- how the writer builds up to the arrival of the man in uniform
- how he describes the man and his dog
- how he creates tension in the passage as a whole.

This was a text that was accessible to all candidates at some level, and one that presented plenty of opportunities for a practical analysis of consciously-crafted writing. Although a few responses saw the family as real criminals who deliberately deceive the guard and who deserve all they get, the vast majority were able to sympathise with them and their dilemma, and show an appreciation of the writer's methods in creating a gripping story.

The first bullet was often addressed through an examination of the contrast between the father's confident, light-hearted tone and the mother's hurried impatience to open the *ultimate* door, which was seen as introducing an element of uncertainty as to whether the family would, in fact, conquer the final hurdle leading to their summer holiday. The father's *laughing* tone of voice and the mother's panicked repetition of *Quickly ... quickly ...* were commonly cited to illustrate this contrast. In this choice of analysis, candidates were not only addressing the writer's use of language and its effects, but through their use of the word 'contrast' were demonstrating an awareness of structural features of the writing, and so lifted a simple language point into a wider appreciation of how texts work. If responses went on from here to comment on the dramatic turn of tone in the father's voice from *laughing* to *toneless* on discovering that the door was padlocked, they were further tracking the structural twists and turns of the story, and if they could tie their comments firmly to the question about how the writer makes the moment 'strikingly dramatic', the responses were strong. It is worth pausing to note here the importance of relating comments on the text firmly to the question. Candidates should link their comments to the question to avoid the risk of simply tracking relevant elements of the text, quoting appropriately, but ultimately producing a rather narrative/descriptive style of response. Some evaluative comment on *how* the writing creates drama, on its effect on the reader, is needed.

The appreciation of how the family are presented as being in a dilemma and at odds with each other as to how to proceed proved a good opening to essays that were now prepared to deal with the sudden arrival of the man in uniform. Indeed, noting that the guard's arrival is 'sudden' was enough evidence to demonstrate a continuing awareness of the structural movement of the passage, and candidates should be aware of the power of a single word like this to signpost this kind of understanding. Some very strong answers noted the echoing or mirroring of the word *trespassing* from the father's whisper (suggesting his awareness of transgression) to the guard's shout of '*Trespassing!*' and his repetition of *trespass*, seen as bringing their 'crime' volubly out into the open.

The second bullet pointed candidates towards some comment on the portrayal of the man and his dog and most were able to observe their repulsiveness and the fear that they induced in the family. For some, the fact that the dog had to be restrained on a *leash, at the end of a chain* suggested that it was barely under control which added to its threat. Many responses quoted the line: *It was a big, bovine beast with a bull-dog's head* to support the idea that this dog posed a very real threat, and though many candidates recognised the writer's use of alliteration, some were able to tease out exactly how it achieved its effects, commenting on

the heavy, antagonistic plosive sounds created by the repetition of 'b' as echoing the dog's potential for violence. Careful reading of the following paragraph was then required to avoid thinking that it was, in fact, the man himself whose hair was dirty yellow in colour, who had mange and whose leg was twitching.

The writer's description of the man was seen by most candidates as making him seem vulgar and repulsive, and these ideas were adequately supported with textual reference. The family's various responses to the man were picked out and some managed to comment on the writer's use of *trembling roses* in the description of the mother. Many candidates finished their analyses here, perhaps running short of time, though there were still some good points made by some about the father's polite, possibly ingratiating use of *Monsieur* to address the man, the aggressiveness of the guard's repeated questions, and the idea of the revolver *jerking ... upwards* taking on a life of its own and threatening to fire off without warning at any given moment. Those who did reach the end of the passage often saw it as a 'cliff-hanger', which was felt added to the drama.

Those candidates who kept a sharp focus on the methods used by the writer to build drama (both in the situation/unfolding events of the narrative *and* in the crafting of the writing) and who could support their ideas with a judicious selection of close textual reference produced the strongest responses.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/31
Paper 31 Set Text

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a command of the detail of the set texts studied
- focus on the specific demands of the question throughout
- provide careful support for points made
- explore in convincing detail the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- consider aspects of form.

General comments

In general, the majority of candidates demonstrated at least a sound understanding of the texts they had studied. There were examples of very perceptive writing, showing a sustained engagement with both texts and tasks, together with an evident enjoyment of the texts. The most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set, lack of specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions and insufficient reference to the extract in **Section A** passage-based questions.

The most successful responses showed an impressive command of the detail of texts studied. This enabled candidates to explore closely the effects of the writing in passage-based questions, to consider the context of the passage within the wider text, and to deploy careful support for the line of argument advanced in general essay questions. Successful responses focused sharply on the specific demands of questions from the start to the end of essays, integrating well-selected references not only by way of substantiation but also as the starting-point for the close exploration of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. In these responses, there was a clear appreciation of form, with dramatic impact explored in plays, narrative viewpoint in prose fiction and poetic methods in poetry. Words such as 'striking', 'memorable' and 'powerful' are used in IGCSE questions to elicit a personal response to qualities of the writing, and the most successful responses took note of this.

Less successful responses lacked sufficient knowledge of the text and, in the absence of telling details, resorted to generalisation and unsupported assertion that were often unconvincing. These responses sometimes noted, for example, the character or theme indicated in the question and wrote at length about it but without tailoring the material to the particular thrust of the question. This resulted in essays reading like general overviews or character sketches, explanations rather than close analysis. Responses that logged techniques in the printed extract (or poem in the case of **Question 5**) and write about connotations should ensure that they relate these to the word choice and to the ideas or events conveyed by the writer. General comments on punctuation (especially dashes, exclamations and ellipses in drama extracts) and structure (e.g. ABAB rhyme schemes in poems) often did not offer meaningful exploration of writers' ideas. Candidates should be advised to think twice before writing that enjambment makes the writing flow and that an experience is simply 'relatable'. Many responses wrote about plays as 'books' and mentioned the 'reader' rather than 'audience', which denied candidates the opportunity of responding to drama texts as plays intended for performance.

The strongest responses were carefully argued and supported from start to finish. Other responses, however, were hampered by the perceived need to follow a particular template for the writing of essays. This often included a lengthy introduction, a kind of courtesy introduction in which candidates set out at length to

explain what they are going to do in the essay rather than simply getting on with addressing the key words of the question. Some responses began with extraneous background material which had little bearing on the question. Often responses with lengthy introductions had similarly long conclusions which merely repeated to little effect the content of the introduction or main points of the essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – Brecht

The strongest responses demonstrated some understanding of the significance of the questions being asked and of the symbolism of the chain Simon hangs around Grusha's neck. Some candidates showed an awareness of the dramatic impact of the formal way in which they address each other during this moment and also how this scene is significant in terms of preparing for later events. Less successful responses explained in basic terms the situation between the characters and made basic comments on the way they were setting up their relationship. Few responses really addressed throughout the key word 'memorably'.

Question 2 – Dangarembga

There was generally at least a sound understanding of the extract and its significance. Most grasped a change in Tambu's attitude to her mother and the problems caused by both 'Englishness' and the patriarchal nature of society. Fewer responses understood the more complex shift in her decision not to be brainwashed but to return to Sacred Heart: '...something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed'. Those who did explore this aspect of the extract were often successful in linking it to the main thrust of the question on the ways in which Dangarembga makes this a 'satisfying ending' to the novel.

Question 3 – Franklin

Most responses commented on the way this extract reinforced Sybylla's attitude towards marriage and to her situation with the M'Swat family, but few explored just how powerfully she expresses her feelings or demonstrated understanding of the appalling horror (to her) of Mr M'Swat's mistaken assumption. In less confident responses, there was some comment on specific word choices (without relating them to ideas in the extract) and generalisations on punctuation such as exclamation marks to show her being angry. Candidates who mistakenly thought that Sybylla wanted to marry Peter and that Mr M'Swat was against this put themselves at a disadvantage.

Question 4 – Ibsen

The most successful responses noted Nora's judgement that this is the first serious talk between husband and wife and also the comparison she makes about the role of the two men closest to her during her life: her husband and father. There was often a clear appreciation of the impact of the references to 'baby doll' and 'doll child' and also of the way in which Ibsen presents Helmer's bewilderment. There was a sound understanding of the significance of this scene, though some candidates spent much time explaining how Ibsen leads up to this scene, preparing the audience for Nora's attitude to Helmer and their marriage, with a number focusing on very little detail from the extract itself. Exploration of what makes the scene 'dramatic' was as a consequence less evident, except in general terms relating to its shock value.

Question 5 – Songs of Ourselves

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 6 – Stories of Ourselves

Many candidates explained the situation and how the character of the mother is presented and her relationship with the son, but fewer focused on how the narrator's thoughts and feelings are presented. Stronger responses made some comment about the impact on the son's thoughts and feelings of the accusation against his mother. These responses explored key images and the specific words that convey his anger/bitterness/frustration/guilt. Less successful responses adopted narrative or descriptive approaches and focused on his hatred of the wealthier middle and upper classes without acknowledging that his future career in law would lead to a shift in his own wealth and class status.

Section B

Question 7 – Brecht

Most candidates were able to identify a range of examples of corruption in the play and provide some evidence such as corruption in politics, justice, religion and among the higher classes. However, they were less successful in exploring how ‘strikingly’ corruption is presented and its impact on the dramatic action of the play.

Question 8 – Dangarembga

The strongest responses were able to construct a clear line of argument, for example, appreciating the demands and challenges faced by Babamukuru yet being appalled by his treatment of the female characters. The most successful responses provided careful substantiation for the perceived flaws in his character: his stubbornness and reluctance to compromise; his lack of empathy in relation to his wife, his daughter and to Tambu. The most successful responses showed a secure grasp of the cultural and gender-related issues as revealed by the text, looking closely at specific moments and at the language and narrative viewpoint used by the writer to manipulate the reader’s attitude to Babamukuru.

Question 9 – Franklin

Few responses were seen, and these were often very general, with limited focus on specific moments.

Question 10 – Ibsen

Candidates generally demonstrated at least a sound understanding of Krogstad’s behaviour and actions and the reasons for them. They were generally able to see how Ibsen encourages the audience to take a more positive attitude to him as the play develops and as more is revealed of his background and relationship with Mrs Linde. The strongest responses looked more closely at the words he speaks and the stage directions indicating him spoiling a game of hide and seek between Nora and the children (and possible interpretations of this) as well as his impact in those moments of the play where he enters and exits.

Question 11 – Songs of Ourselves

There were only a few responses to this question and a large discrepancy between a limited number who provided reasonably developed and supported responses to the poems in addressing the question set and others who made sweeping assertions and/or commented on details in isolation, leading to the absence of a clear overview of either poem. There was for the most part a better understanding of ‘Song’, with some relevant references to language and form, but very little detail referred to in discussing ‘Touch and Go’.

Question 12 – Stories of Ourselves

There were a few strong responses that grasped how techniques such as personification and use of colour reflected Leila’s feelings; the success of these responses depended to a great extent on a candidate’s grasp of the detail of the story. Without access to the text, however, many candidates found it difficult to move beyond generalisations in explaining how Leila’s changing emotions are expressed in the story, with some even resorting to made-up quotations. Many responses showed an understanding of the shift in her feelings after her dance with the old man, but only a few were able to deploy specific textual detail to support their points.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/32
Paper 32 Set Text

Key Messages

Successful responses:

- show a command of the detail of the set texts studied
- focus on the specific demands of the question throughout
- provide careful support for points made
- explore in convincing detail the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- consider aspects of form.

General comments

In general, the majority of candidates demonstrated at least a sound understanding of the texts they had studied. There were examples of very perceptive writing, showing a sustained engagement with both texts and tasks, together with an evident enjoyment of the texts. The most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set, lack of specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions and insufficient reference to the extract in **Section A** passage-based questions.

The most successful responses showed an impressive command of the detail of texts studied. This enabled candidates to explore closely the effects of the writing in passage-based questions, to consider the context of the passage within the wider text, and to deploy careful support for the line of argument advanced in general essay questions. Successful responses focused sharply on the specific demands of questions from the start to the end of essays, integrating well-selected references not only by way of substantiation but also as the starting-point for the close exploration of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. In these responses, there was a clear appreciation of form, with dramatic impact explored in plays, narrative viewpoint in prose fiction and poetic methods in poetry. Words such as 'striking', 'memorable' and 'powerful' are used in IGCSE questions to elicit a personal response to qualities of the writing, and the most successful responses took note of this.

Less successful responses lacked sufficient knowledge of the text and, in the absence of telling details, resorted to generalisation and unsupported assertion that were often unconvincing. These responses sometimes noted, for example, the character or theme indicated in the question and wrote at length about it but without tailoring the material to the particular thrust of the question. This resulted in essays reading like general overviews or character sketches, explanations rather than close analysis. Responses that logged techniques in the printed extract (or poem in the case of **Question 5**) and write about connotations should ensure that they relate these to the word choice and to the ideas or events conveyed by the writer. General comments on punctuation (especially dashes, exclamations and ellipses in drama extracts) and structure (e.g. ABAB rhyme schemes in poems) often did not offer meaningful exploration of writers' ideas. Candidates should be advised to think twice before writing that enjambment makes the writing flow and that an experience is simply 'relatable'. Many responses wrote about plays as 'books' and mentioned the 'reader' rather than 'audience', which denied candidates the opportunity of responding to drama texts as plays intended for performance.

The strongest responses were carefully argued and supported from start to finish. Other responses, however, were hampered by the perceived need to follow a particular template for the writing of essays. This often included a lengthy introduction, a kind of courtesy introduction in which candidates set out at length to

explain what they are going to do in the essay rather than simply getting on with addressing the key words of the question. Some responses began with extraneous background material which had little bearing on the question. Often responses with lengthy introductions had similarly long conclusions which merely repeated to little effect the content of the introduction or main points of the essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – Brecht

The most successful responses focused on both the ‘entertaining’ and ‘significant’ elements of the question. They commented on the greed of the Mother-in-Law, the role of the ineffectual and drunk Monk and the comic handling of the wedding ceremony, exploring closely Brecht’s dramatic methods in creating humour and, some wrote, using it as a distancing technique. The strongest responses often explored the dramatic function of the Singer. Some less successful responses explained the significance of the extract’s position within the wider play and commented on broader themes such as corruption but were less skilful at exploring closely the ‘writer at work’ within this fast-moving extract.

Question 2 – Dangarembga

Stronger responses addressed the key word ‘memorable’ throughout, focusing on Dangarembga’s presentation of the conflict within Babamukuru’s immediate family. They considered the account of Maiguru’s leaving home as viewed from the perspective of Tambu the narrator. They looked too at the impact of Maiguru’s departure on Nyasha, herself ‘trapped by that man’ just like her mother. Perceptive responses explored closely aspects of the writing such as the bleak note on which the extract ends: ‘Poor Nyasha. She could not conquer the hopelessness.’ Less successful responses provided a narrative re-telling of what happens in the extract, with little exploration of the writer, treating characters as real-life people rather than fictional constructs. Some responses focused more on general context (evident in assertions about Babamukuru’s patriarchal role) rather than exploring the detail of the extract.

Question 3 – Franklin

There were few responses seen to this question. Responses tended to focus on the ‘significant’ aspect rather than the ‘entertaining’ aspect of the question, with some comment made on the significance of the phrase ‘brilliant career’ within the context of both Sybylla’s life and the wider novel. Little exploration was in evidence of the effects of the dialogue or of the humour in Grannie’s notions regarding the stage or the ripeness of her denunciations such as ‘An actress, a vile, low, brazen hussy!’

Question 4 – Ibsen

The more successful responses showed from the start an understanding of Nora’s motives and explored the flirtatiousness evident in her words and actions and the witty dialogue between her and Dr Rank towards the beginning of the extract. They charted the tension within the scene and the shift in mood marked by Rank’s declaration of love, looking carefully at dramatic effects. Some responses showed a genuine sense of outrage that a married woman should be behaving in such a shocking fashion with a family friend. Other responses thought she was using the only strategy available to her. The least successful responses simply narrated the content of the extract with little sense of the dramatic form. Some less successful responses commented on the power of the ellipsis, dash and exclamation mark rather than exploring closely the effects of the words actually spoken by the characters.

Question 5 – Songs of Ourselves

Most responses showed evidence of a personal response to the content and techniques of the poem and focused on the sadness of the migrant’s realisation that she was not actually settled, but in transit. The strongest responses considered the shift in perspective towards the end of the poem that served to distance the woman, placing the reader as a part of ‘we’. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the content of the poem or offer extraneous background material (e.g. the writer’s biography or general observations about the slave trade and modern migration). Less confident comments on poetic techniques included generalisations about enjambment which ‘made the poem flow’ and identification (not always correct) of plosives and sibilants. Responses that identify features should clearly link them to the ways in which the poet communicates ideas and experiences.

Question 6 – Stories of Ourselves

There were few responses seen. There was a tendency to re-tell the story rather than focus on the key words of the question 'striking impressions'. There was little evidence of the exploration of Narayan's writing: e.g. the use of dialogue to convey the shop man's deliberate bullying of Muni or the wistfulness of the description of Muni's earlier and more prosperous life and its contrast with his present day circumstances.

Section B

Question 7 – Brecht

The quality of response was dependent on the choice of moment and the focus on the key words 'dramatically powerful'. Popular choices of moment included the crossing of the bridge, the reunion of Grusha and Simon and the business of the chalk circle. The strongest responses explored aspects of form in a text that demands to be seen as drama, focusing on characterisation and function. Less confident responses tended to re-tell the chosen moment, with characters discussed as real-life people rather than dramatic constructs. These responses addressed neither 'dramatically' nor 'powerful'.

Question 8 – Dangarembga

The strongest responses addressed explicitly the question's focus on the 'conflict between generations', in particular, the presentation of Tambu's conflict with her father about her education and the role expected of her, and also the impact of Babamukuru's use of violence against Nyasha. There were instances of candidates writing about 'gender' without linking their points to the main thrust of the question on 'generations'. The least successful responses simply narrated or described moments of conflict. Only a minority of responses explored narrative viewpoint, the ways in which events in the novel are viewed from Tambu's perspective.

Question 9 – Franklin

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 10 – Ibsen

Stronger responses incorporated effective and focused comment on Torvald – commenting on the stereotype that he represented and were able to explore the dramatic impact of his reaction to the IOU. Some commented on, with careful substantiation, Torvald's insecurity as an explanation of his need to dominate at home. Others regarded him as a victim of society too. The strongest responses had an assured command of the detail of the play and supported points with considerable care. Less successful responses re-told the play or focused on the development of Nora's character that led up to her departure, neglecting the key focus on 'Ibsen's portrayal' of Helmer.

Question 11 – Songs of Ourselves

Popular choices of poem were *Children of Wealth*, *Boxes*, *Shirt* and *To a Millionaire*. Those candidates who took this option often did very well, producing detailed and sensitive responses to the language, in some cases, drawing perceptive comparisons between them (though the latter is not a requirement of the question). Most responses engaged effectively with form, structure and the impact of phrases such as 'lovers eat each other' and the 'unlighted streets' and the lonely being 'battered slowly like pebbles'.

Question 12 – Stories of Ourselves

There were few responses seen, which re-told the story without addressing the ways in which Lahiri vividly conveys 'the narrator's impressions of life'.