WORLD LITERATURE

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Paper 0408/01
Portfolio

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Key messages

- Teachers should refer to the 0408 Syllabus and Coursework Training Handbook during the planning stages of the course.
- Tasks for all three categories of assignment must be worded to enable candidates to fulfil the requirements of the band descriptors.
- Written assignments should include marginal annotation by the teacher which comments on strengths and weaknesses of candidate performance and should be clearly linked to the band descriptors.
- All assignments based on short stories or poems should include reference to two stories or two poems.
- It is essential that all paperwork be checked thoroughly, not least for arithmetic and transcription errors.

General comments

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

The Critical Response

Successful responses demonstrated clear critical engagement with the selected text in response to a well-formulated task. These responses analysed the ways writers achieve effects and were supported by well-selected and concise textual references.

Weaker responses were self-penalising where only one poem or short story was referred to or a narrative approach was used. In some responses, social and cultural background information detracted from the set task and text.

For candidates to be able to meet the assessment criteria in their writing, effective tasks must be set. Examples of appropriately challenging tasks can be found in the 0408 Coursework Handbook.

The Empathic Response

The most successful responses focused on a specific character and moment in the text, offering an engagingly authentic 'voice' for the chosen character. These responses were firmly rooted in the text. Less successful responses did not focus on a precise moment and relied on speculation rather than using details from the text. Short stories are unsuitable for the empathic response, as plot and character development provide an insufficient resource on which candidates can create a sustained 'voice'. Candidates using a short story were unable to capture a suitable 'voice' and were, consequently, unable to access the higher bands of the mark scheme. Examples of good empathic tasks are given in the *0408* Coursework Handbook.

The Recorded Conversation

The most successful assessments focused specifically on the ways the writer presents a character, idea or theme, and occurred as a conversation. These responses were detailed and showed insight into the writer at work, with specific and well-selected textual references to support their ideas. Suitable questions from the teacher help candidates to explore fully their chosen topic.

Weaker responses gave prepared talks, without interruption, on a chosen character or theme with many providing character profiles or plot summaries instead of addressing how the writer achieves their effects. This is not the objective of a 'recorded conversation' and does not allow candidates to meet the criteria for high reward in the band descriptors.

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

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 stem 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 are in a better position to produce a successful analysis.
- Candidates who are able to integrate comments on language, form and structure smoothly into their discussion tend to be more successful than those who take a more rigid approach, often assigning separate paragraphs to 'form', 'structure' and 'language' as if they were unconnected features of the writing.
- 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.
- 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 … '. Particularly unsuccessful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to quote directly the words they are commenting on.

General comments

The responses offered by candidates this session in both poetry and prose showed a willingness to engage with the texts and to offer a personal response to them.

There did appear, however, to be a return this session to a more formulaic approach to analysis, with some candidates reverting to a search for literary techniques in the writing which they appeared to feel more comfortable with, rather than a more personal engagement with ideas and themes. It was not unusual to see essays beginning with, for example: *'The second and fourth stanzas are filled with detailed descriptions of what the poet sees. For instance, … '*, an approach which completely ignored the first and third stanzas and therefore undermined any chance of the essay progressing in coherent sequence through the poem, tracking its logical structure of unfolding ideas. This type of essay often returned to the earlier stanzas later in the discussion, leading to a sense of muddled, disorganised thinking.

More successful essays began with a discussion of the poem's or passage's opening, worked in sequence through the middle section and finished towards the end of the text. This sequential approach is particularly important for candidates choosing the poetry option as often poems are structured in a linear progression, introducing and developing ideas through concrete imagery, only reaching the crystallisation of an abstract idea towards the end. Centres are, therefore, strongly advised to train candidates to work sequentially through their chosen text to maximise their chances of success on this paper.

Most candidates, regardless of their choice of text, were able to make contact with at least the surface meaning of its content. They were able, therefore, to demonstrate a basic understanding of what was happening in the texts, who was involved and where the action took place. A fair proportion, however, seemed unwilling or unable to go beyond this to engage with the *art* of writing. Although some candidates showed an understanding that the writing was, indeed, consciously crafted, noting that *'The author uses rhetorical devices to make the poem more vivid.'* or *'To start off, the author choses wisely the type of words used in the text to show Guylain's impressions of his boss.'*, they often left their comments at that and failed to follow through these general statements with any practical analysis of what these rhetorical devices were or how they worked, or what particular words were wisely chosen and how they worked in conveying

meaning. Candidates should be encouraged to move beyond a simple 'translation' of surface meaning into a more analytical approach to language and how it works in a practical sense in shaping meaning.

A final two notes on things that candidates should avoid:

Candidates should avoid empty praise for the writer which cannot be rewarded as analysis. Comments such as: *'He uses the perfect diction, an incredible choice of literary devices which makes the reader really catch his emotions and feel the same way he does …'*, although possibly sincere, do not offer any insight into exactly *how* the writing achieves its impact.

Similarly, conclusions that simply repeat, sometimes verbatim, points made previously cannot add anything more of value to the discussion; since Examiners are unable to reward the same material twice, they take up valuable time that could have been spent making a final point about something in the text not already covered. Centres are advised to encourage their learners to keep both introductions and conclusions to a bare minimum, if included at all. Many successful essays dispense with them altogether, plunging straight into considered analysis of the writer at work from the start to the finish of their discussion.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

How does the poet vividly convey the impact of this day on him?

The question invited a response to the poem covering two key areas: *what* is the impact of this day on the poet and *how* is this impact vividly conveyed? The first area required the candidate to identify clearly what *are* the thoughts, feelings and reflections of the poet, whilst the second area required a practical analysis of the writer's craft in conveying these thoughts and feelings to the reader. These two areas are not, of course, separate, discrete entities and a thoughtful discussion of the poem would cover both demands of the question together. Those candidates who could identify what impact this day on the beach had on the poet made a start on their response to the question. However, only those who were also able to discuss *how* this impact is vividly conveyed were able to access the higher mark range.

The opening line of stanza two was a popular choice for discussion: *The toddlers flap like little seals*. Candidates who perhaps lacked confidence in their ideas tended to focus on the fact that they recognised a literary technique here, and so quickly asserted that the poet was *'using the perfect simile to describe the toddlers'.* Once the literary method had been identified, these sorts of responses tended to move on without any further response to the image. Some candidates, however, knew that analysis was required and made an attempt to probe a little further: *'by comparing the babies to little seals, the reader can interpret the comparison between human life and life in the ocean and make a resemblance between both living beings'*. This clearly demonstrates an understanding of what a simile is, but says little about this particular simile. Slightly more effective was: *'The poet uses a simile comparing the toddlers to seals to show how they were moving in the sea.'* There is, at least, some focus on the idea of the *movement* of the seals and toddlers being compared, but the addition of a single word moved this response into the realms of proper practical analysis for one candidate who said that the poet's use of the simile showed how the toddlers were *'moving* playfully *in the sea'*. By the addition of this single word 'playfully', this candidate showed the ability to make an imaginative connection between excited toddlers on a beach and playful seals.

The following line, '*Towards the magnet of the ocean'* was also a popular choice of image. A fair response was to see that the ocean posed some sort of threat to the children who ignored their mothers' 'piteous appeals'; for example: *'It is mentioned the 'magnet of the ocean' and this could be seen as a potential threat to the toddlers as they would be taken to the water due to the waves.'* Although there is some mention of the toddlers being '*taken to the water'* here, there is no explicit response to the most important word in this line in terms of imagery: *magnet*. A successful response to this word was the following: *'This metaphor expresses how pleasant and irresistible … that toddlers were attracted and pulled into the ocean just like magnets.'* Three key words – *irresistible, attracted, pulled* – were enough to demonstrate that this candidate had a full, practical grasp of how the 'magnet' metaphor worked in constructing the image of toddlers being drawn enticingly towards the sea.

Another image that featured frequently in essays was, '*Three dolphins ballet in the din'*. The obvious word to focus on here is *ballet*, and some candidates seemed to know that figurative language is not necessarily *real*, noting that, for example: *'This metaphor portrays how the animals in the sea are swimming. It is not possible that a dolphin practise ballet. However, we can have a clearer view of how they are swimming'*. Although

there is some knowledge of what metaphorical language is and does in this response, there is, sadly, no practical analysis of the image. The following response thinks carefully about what the word 'ballet' conveys to the reader, and applies it to the movement of the dolphins: *'By stating that they danced to ballet, he utilizes metaphorical language to compare their swimming to that of a gentle and harmonious dance, in which the three animals synchronised to do so.'* Another candidate moved the discussion further into the wider atmosphere of the beach as a whole: *'Comparing their actions to a ballet, an extremely flawless and graceful dance, the poet demonstrates the serenity and gracefulness by which the dolphins move … reflects the atmosphere on the beach: although it is full of energy and chaos with bursts of noise (similar to a ballet) there is a feeling of tranquillity amongst everyone.'*

The colder imagery of the last two stanzas was dealt with in less detail by most candidates and only those with enough stamina to sustain their analysis were able to demonstrate some grasp of the significance of these stanzas in conveying the poem's 'message'. There was some confusion about where the poet might be next year; some candidates thought that Australia was going to be extremely cold in '92, but others were able to relate to the sentiment of the last two lines: *Yet I'll be warm wherever I go/If Red Rock burns beneath the snow*, seeing the poet's intention of conveying the idea of the power of pleasant memories in keeping our spirits up in harsher times.

A final word about comments on form and structure: as mentioned in the Key messages above, responses that simply identified that the poem has six stanzas of six lines each, with an a, b, a, b, c, c rhyme scheme did little to add anything of value to their discussion. Neither did responses that asserted that the poet's use of commas (often identified wrongly as 'caesura') conveyed – in themselves – everything from his abandoned joy at being on the beach, to his devastating melancholy at freezing in the winter cold. Punctuation, in itself, cannot convey this type of meaning. Candidates should avoid this type of technical 'analysis', and instead be encouraged to comment confidently and meaningfully, as this candidate did: *'Just like the ocean is described as coming into the shore then back out to sea in a constant pattern, so too does the rhyme. This consistency of rhyme is extremely pleasing to the ear, just as the forward and backward motion and sound of waves is to the ear.'*

Question 2

Explore how the writing vividly conveys Guylain's experiences of working at the recycling factory.

As with the poetry question, the key to success in the prose study lay in the candidate's ability to respond to the 'how' in the question; not only identifying *what* Guylain's experiences were, but exploring in detail the craftsmanship of the writer at work, offering an explanation as to *how* the writing converys meaning.

At a basic level, most candidates understood that Guylain does not particularly enjoy his work, that his boss is abusive to those employees beneath him, and that the machine was regarded as being almost alive. Responses at this level tended to work their way through the passage at a narrative level, re-telling the story with the addition of quotations that were often too lengthy to offer any meaningful focus on language.

The passage was dense with well-crafted writing that made much use of figurative language, and so there was much to choose from for candidates to comment on. Those who were able to focus on a well-chosen selection of key images did best. A popular choice was the following sentence: *From up there, Kowalski could see everything, like a little god keeping watch over his dominion.* Some candidates recognised this image as central to establishing Kowalski's character, selected the sentence for quotation, and followed up by saying that it made him look like a 'god'. Unfortunately, comment was often left there in a simple repetition of a key word from the quotation. There appeared to be a lack of understanding amongst a proportion of candidates that language needs to be interpreted, not simply repeated; thinking about a word's connotations would be helpful for some weaker candidates who are only just beginning to develop their skills of analysis.

The word 'god' makes us think of someone powerful, all-seeing and is someone who might judge us on our behaviour. If a candidate is able to gather together three thoughts like this before they start to comment on the impact of a word, then they are well on the way to constructing an observant response to the writer's craft, like the following: *'This passage paints a picture of how Guylain views his boss, an omnipotent figure that can't be questioned and is constantly monitoring for even 'the tiniest slip-up'.*

This same candidate went on to look closely at the word *dominion*: *'Also, he uses the word 'dominion' which is a piece of land owned by someone of power. The use of the word gives Kowalski more power and a territory which he dominates.'* and even took the analysis into a more abstract level by noting that *'Having the boss introduced above all the workers visualises the hierarchy in the business. It shows the boss's power since he can oversee everything and control everyone.'* Of course, not all candidates will have the language

skills or skills of analysis to perform at this level, but even those just beginning to develop their response to literature should be encouraged to move beyond the literal meaning of words to think about how they work at a more subconscious level.

Neither should candidates be afraid to use their imagination when responding to language. The ability to visualise in the mind's eye images suggested by certain word choices can go a long way in helping to construct a response to a writer's use of language. The following line was picked out for comment by many candidates: *Felix Kowalski didn't speak; he barked, yelled, bellowed, cursed and roared …*

Whilst some candidates saw this simply as 'rude' behaviour and left it at that, a more imaginative response was: *'Also the use of the words barked and roared compare Kowalski with an animal, making him seem rabid like a stray dog or angry like a lion.* Here, we see the candidate picking up on the word *barked* and imagining a rabid dog, with the vision of an angry lion an obvious response to *roared*. This candidate took the analysis deeper, developing the analogy even further: '*This also ties back to the idea of dominance, since lions, like dogs, are very dominant animals, territorially and hierarchically.'* Again, this level of performance cannot be expected from all candidates, but centres would do well to encourage their learners to be imaginative, to visualise language, rather than to treat words as simply denoting a given meaning.

The presentation of the recycling machine, the Zerstor 500, caught many candidates' attention, though, surprisingly, few took time to comment on Guylain's naming it 'the Thing', with its undertones of a threatening horror movie monster. Nonetheless, most could see that it was regarded by him as something living, with many candidates keen to identify this as 'personification', even though the machine was presented as more of an unspecified creature than as a human being. Its fondness for rats was seen as disgusting, and some candidates even found time to comment on the ambiguous mention of Giuseppe's 'accident' and the potential for Guylain to lose his hands to the Thing's voracious appetite.

As a final word on the response to the prose passage, candidates should be reminded that it is entirely appropriate to use the same skills of analysis that they employ in the poetry option. Just because a piece of text is prose does not mean that it is prosaic; they are just as likely to find as many imaginative uses of figurative language and impactful structural features as they would do in poetry and should be willing to engage with prose on this level.

WORLD LITERATURE

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Paper 0408/23
Paper 2: Unseen

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

How does the poet strikingly convey to you the person's thoughts and feelings about this experience?

The question prompts candidates to explore two key areas: *what* are the person's thoughts and feelings about the experience and *how* are these thoughts and feelings *strikingly* conveyed? Success in responses to this question depended very much on candidates addressing both of these focuses, and was an absolute requirement for reward in the higher mark range.

The poem *Very Large Moth* was very accessible in terms of its content, as most of us have at some time experienced the type of encounter it describes, and so personal connection with the sentiments in the poem was a common feature of responses.

Most candidates noted the poet's initial fear of the creature, and were able to select appropriate quotation to support this idea. A key to successful quotation is to select just enough text to illustrate your point and no more. Quotations that simply copy out full lines – finishing at the end of the line whether or not grammatical sense has been preserved – rarely succeed. A basic, yet reasonably effective, method is to select a piece of text and make a comment on it, like the following: *'black wings clatter' this is describing that the moth is scared and trying to save itself from any harm.* This comment describes the 'what' – what the moth is doing, though there is not enough here to address the 'how' of the question. Candidates performing at a basic level tended to leave their comment here and move on to the next point, feeling that the quotation itself was enough to illustrate their point. This particular candidate, however, realising that some analysis was required, went back into the quotation, picking out the word 'clatter' for further investigation: *'the word 'clatter' in this case means fast and wild. The moth is moving fast and wildly around to protect itself from getting hurt.'* Although 'clatter' might more obviously be connected with sound than movement, the candidate at least demonstrates some understanding of the effect this word has on the reader's comprehension of the moth's behaviour. Centres with candidates who are just beginning to develop their essay-writing skills and who are under-confident about looking at language might do well to encourage this approach of 'dipping back into' a quotation with their learners.

The colour imagery of *not black but brown* drew much attention from candidates. Most commented that black connoted something 'bad' or 'evil' that could make the moth seem frightening. Brown was a little more difficult for some to examine and was often ignored, but for those who could make the comparison, much meaning was drawn out from the poet's use of these colours:

> *'Traditionally, black's symbolism connotes menacing threats and is a stereotypical colour of something fearful, however brown is a much warmer colour with great depth and indicates nature therefore changing the moth to something less terrifying.'*

The final phrase of this comment is important: *'therefore changing the moth to something less frightening'*, as it indicates that the candidate understands the importance of relating language use to its overall effect. This can often be a weak link with some candidates who can display some adeptness at looking at the connotations of particular language use, but who fail then to bridge that gap between the language analysis itself and the overall impact of the language on the meaning it creates.

The image of the moth with its *orange eyes* that *sparkle like televisions* was also a popular choice for discussion, though with various levels of success in analysis. Strangely, the orange of the eyes was not much commented on, given candidates' awareness of the black/brown colour imagery immediately before. Most saw the comparison of the moth's eyes with a television as suggesting that the moth was attractive or entertaining, since we generally like to watch television, which was fair comment. One candidate, however, changed the perspective of this image, looking outwards from the moth rather than inwards towards it with: '*The simile 'sparkle like televisions' makes the moth's eyes appear incredibly bright, even emitting a large amount of light – this elevates the moth's overall image to something more radiant as compared to the dark, sinister picture earlier.'* Here, the candidate's use of the word 'emitting' really gets to the hub of the television image, whilst 'radiant' touches not only on the bright light that is emitted from a television, but also responds to the writer's use of 'sparkle'. Two other things to note here: notice the candidate's casual use of the word 'simile' which is slipped smoothly into the structure of the sentence, a much more effective technique than the rather clunky and self-conscious references to terminology that are a common feature of some essays. Secondly, look at the end of the comment: *'as compared to the dark, sinister picture earlier'*. This is a great example of a candidate who is thinking not only of individual instances of language and imagery, but who is also able to comment on structural features of the text as it unfolds and to weave these comments smoothly and organically into the flow of their discussion. This structural observation was hammered home with the candidate's final sentence:

'It also suggests that the person now marvels at the moth instead of fearing it greatly, and the reader can understand this through the evolving descriptions.'

The structure and layout of this poem was, however, unusual and so separate comment on it did not seem an unreasonable path to take. Candidates were able to note the wide gaps between certain words, forcing the eye to swing back and forth between sections, and also noted the rather random distribution of these gaps. The large number – eleven – of short, two-line stanzas was also seen. Bearing in mind comments made above, it was, however, only those responses that could then link these structural features to the effects created by them that were able to achieve any real meaning. Candidates who simply gave a technical, arithmetical description of layout, stanza length and rhyme form achieved very little in terms of a personal response to the poem. One candidate who did relate surface features to meaning wrote about the effects of punctuation – or the lack of – as follows: *'… there is no punctuation present throughout the poem, which can connote that their thoughts and reactions are flustered and flowing out without proper thinking, taking no breaths or pauses – conveying no calm thinking and sudden changes in mood.'*

This response demonstrates a sound understanding of the impact that the lack of punctuation has on the poem.

The ending of the poem – perhaps unsurprisingly as the clock ticks down under exam conditions – did not receive as much attention as earlier passages. However, many candidates found time to at least make an attempt to sum up what they saw as the 'message' of the poem. Humankind's relationship with wild creatures – particularly those we may find repulsive – was at the heart of most comments, and many noted the ambivalence of our feelings about creatures 'we want not to hurt' but 'prefer not to touch'. Better answers, like the following, moved from specific material and images in the poem towards a more reflective and abstract generalisation about the human condition: *'Despite all of the tension, the person still released the moth which may suggest that humans can feel empathy for others, regardless of who they are or what kind.'*

Question 2

How does the writer vividly convey Romola's thoughts and feelings in this passage?

This question similarly required candidates to look at two key areas: here, *what* are Romola's thoughts and feelings, and *how* are these thoughts and feelings vividly conveyed? Discerning what Romola's feelings are demanded close reading of the text, often responding to subtleties of suggestion, subtext or symbolism; responding to *how* her feelings are conveyed required a keen eye for and sharp analysis of the writer's methods. There was much in the passage for candidates to engage with, and most found something interesting to say about the character of Romola and her presentation.

Most recognised Romola's anxiety in visiting the burger restaurant and understood that she was a visitor in a foreign land, unused to American culture. Her feelings of being overwhelmed by the busy and colourful interior of the restaurant were grasped, and candidates were able to describe some of the sights and sounds that she found herself immersed in. It was pleasing to see most candidates taking a logical, sequential

approach to the text rather than beginning their essays with a comment on some feature from the middle or end of the passage.

Many essays, therefore, began with a look at Romola's presentation at the start of the passage, focusing on the opening sentence *Romola stood on the street clutching her handbag.* This quotation was often followed up by a '*This shows … '* type of comment, noting her nervousness, anxiety or reluctance to enter the restaurant. This sort of approach did the job of addressing the 'What?' strand of understanding: *what* are Romola's feelings? The candidate identifies the feelings and provides some supporting textual detail, which is fine. The problem, however, lies with the 'How?' strand of understanding, which is not really being addressed. Candidates must therefore move towards analysis at word level to identify which part of the sentence is effectively conveying the thoughts and feelings they wish to explore. The Examiner cannot simply assume a focus on the word 'clutching', the candidate must identify this. Language analysis must be present in the comment for the response to be considered in the upper bands of the mark scheme. Comments like the following, where the single word 'clutching' is isolated and looked at in a little more detail, moved into a more analytical response to language: '*The word 'clutching' could symbolise her anxious state and fear, since she is holding on to the only thing that belongs to her.'* The candidate is just beginning here to see the clutching of the handbag as signifying Romola's clinging on to the known and familiar.

Colour imagery – always a favourite with candidates – was selected for comment by many, some noting that red and yellow are bright and brash primary colours that assault the senses. Others saw them as more welcoming: '*The colours red and yellow are warm tones, their brightness also symbolises joy and happiness, hence highlights the cheerful atmosphere of the restaurant.'* Notice how this candidate does not forget to comment on the *effect* created by the writer's use of these warm-toned colours.

The temptation to 'spot' literary techniques was irresistible for some and the 'alliteration' in *soaked in sunny syrup* appeared in a great number of discussions. The full image of Formica and plastic being bathed in cheerful music *as if soaked in sunny syrup* was a little too detailed and complex for most candidates to 'unpick', but even those who simply said that it made the restaurant seem bright and sweet and happy were making a good response to the effects of the language here. Some recognised the repeated 's' sound as 'sibilance', and suggested that it created quite a soothing sound, making the restaurant attractive. In general, those who could move beyond a simple 'spotting' of the language feature and who could engage with its effects added value to their essays.

The image of *a lonely matchstick of a fry sitting in a smear of ketchup* was equally as popular. Many saw the abandoned fry as a metaphor for Romola herself who perhaps felt alone and somewhat abandoned in these alien surroundings. This was a perfectly acceptable interpretation of the writer's intent. However, some candidates took up the idea of ketchup as being like 'blood' (it is described as being *as thick as blood* a couple of lines further on) and ran with it, though perhaps a little too far. Thus, we had suggestions that this 'blood imagery' connoted ideas of violence and murder and the hostility of the restaurant, somewhat out of keeping with the general tone of the passage. Romola may feel a little overwhelmed and out of place in her surroundings, but she is never in fear for her life. Whilst the attempt to address the deeper implications of language choice is to be applauded, perhaps learners need to be reminded that 'red' does not always mean blood and gore and violence, and that they should think carefully about the overall context of an image before rushing to extremes of interpretation.

Many candidates commented on Romola's comparison of the 'Holy trinities' of fries, burger and soda to the Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Some thoughtfully suggested that it illustrated the decadence of American culture where religion had been replaced by the 'worship' of the god of fast food. One candidate suggested that the comparison was '*showing that Romola is able to bridge the differences of two worlds and see that both places may not be so different after all'*, another thoughtful comment that moves the perception of the concrete images into an abstract reconstruction of ideas.

Finally, some candidates who had managed their time effectively realised the value of making some response to the very ending of the passage. Indeed, many candidates *did* have time to make useful comment here, but chose instead to fashion what they regarded as a 'proper' conclusion which almost invariably consisted of a simple reiteration or, at worst, a verbatim repetition of the same ideas already covered in the main body of the essay. Better responses considered the ending of the passage more carefully, like this candidate:

'*The phrase 'moved briskly like a conveyor belt' is powerful as it compares the restaurant to a factory making it seem even more artificial. This is again emphasised by the 'rat-a-tat-tat' rhythm as workers perform their task so much like a machine that they are at a constant pace. The numbers 'always going up and up' further emphasise the popularity of the restaurant and its factory-like processes.'*

Although *Romola's thoughts and feelings* are not explicitly mentioned here, her impressions of the restaurant are implicit in the analysis. What this paragraph serves to illustrate is that candidates who write points of analysis up until the last tick of the examination room clock rather than slavishly summarising previous material stand a better chance of adding value to their response, and are therefore likely to be rewarded with a mark from a higher band.

WORLD LITERATURE

> **Paper 0408/31**
> **Paper 3: Set Text**

Key messages

Successful responses:
*   show a detailed knowledge of texts studied
*   answer the question
*   provide textual support
*   include detailed exploration of writers' methods.

Less successful responses:
*   have a sketchy or limited knowledge of texts studied
*   lose focus on the question set
*   make unsupported assertions
*   describe or simply identify writer's techniques.

General comments

There was much evidence of candidates' personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the texts they had studied. Occasionally, there was a sense that prose and drama extracts were being approached as 'unseen' texts in answers which lacked an awareness of the wider context of the novel or play. There were only a few rubric errors, where candidates answered two questions from the same section.

Detailed knowledge of the text

For high reward, there has to be a detailed knowledge of the text. This enables candidates to explore the topics of questions in depth. The best **Section A** answers selected their material judiciously from the printed extract whereas less confident answers tended to track the extract exhaustively, which led to overly descriptive and explanatory accounts. Often **Section B** answers were weaker because they were overly general; a lack of detailed knowledge led to unsupported assertions.

Focus on the question

The best responses sustained a close focus on the key words of the question throughout, selecting material carefully and tailoring it to meet the specific requirements of the question. Question words such as 'vividly', 'memorable' and 'significant' are used to direct candidates to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects, and these words were directly addressed in the most successful responses. Less confident responses sometimes showed a reasonable understanding of content but lost focus on the question. Sometimes extraneous background material was offered at the expense of actually answering the question. This was especially true of the questions on Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, where vague assertions about women's roles 'back then' were a prominent feature of answers.

Candidates are advised to consider the structure of their responses carefully. They should engage with the question and address the key words of question straight away; there is no need for 'courtesy' introductions (e.g. 'In this essay, I am going to…'). Likewise, conclusions that simply re-state, often at length, the main points of the answer are to be avoided. Teachers should remind candidates that answering the question is more important than following a pre-conceived idea about what constitutes a so-called 'model' essay.

Writers' methods

The strongest answers were able to explore with confidence writers' methods, including the use of narrative voice (e.g. in *Nervous Conditions*) and the impact on an audience (e.g. in *A Doll's House*). Weaker responses simply wrote about characters as real-life people rather than as fictional constructs. Candidates who had a detailed knowledge of their texts (including direct quotations) were better able in their **Section B** answers to analyse with some competence the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less productive ways of engaging with writers' effects included:
•   simply identifying or logging writers' use of devices
•   merely listing those words belonging to what is often termed a 'semantic' or 'lexical' field
•   writing about possible connotations of words without considering their meanings within context.

Some candidates described in general terms a writer's use of exclamation marks, dashes, ellipses but neglected a more fruitful exploration of the effects of the actual words the writer uses. There is little merit in writing about punctuation in a drama text at the expense of examining dialogue for its impact on an audience.

Personal response

The strongest responses engaged directly with those words in questions that are designed to elicit a personal response to the writing. Less confident responses contained rehearsed arguments and/or extraneous background material. All candidates would benefit from opportunities to articulate their own views about key aspects of text, substantiating them by careful reference to relevant detail in the text.

WORLD LITERATURE

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