

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- For high marks, candidates need to know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support the points made in the essay.
- All questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding, which means that answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.
- Answers should always focus on the writing and the author's language and literary methods.
- Candidates should not begin essays with a general paragraph about the writers, their works, or biography. They should demonstrate that they are answering the question set.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus primarily on the poem printed on the question paper.

General Comments

Examiners saw a range of answers on most of the texts. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is gaining in popularity, though was not answered on as frequently as in the June session. Nevertheless, it produced some excellent, thoughtful answers. *A Passage to India* has remained very popular. It was notable in this session that many candidates on this text tended to write about general issues when attempting the passage-based questions, rather than focusing specifically on the details of the writing of the passages, as is required. As previously, responses to questions on Thomas Hardy's poetry were often hampered by biographical discussion; some candidates hardly discussed the poetry and therefore could not receive credit according to the mark scheme. Of the drama texts on the Language and Literature papers, *A Streetcar Named Desire* was the most popular text, eliciting sensitive, personal answers. There were very few responses this session on either of the other two plays.

While most candidates seemed appropriately prepared for the examination, there was sometimes evidence that answers were offered on passages from texts which had not been studied. In some cases there were significant errors of understanding, or a lack of any knowledge of relevant and informative context. These severely weaken such answers, which seldom gain significant marks. There was also quite a significant number of essays which declined into bullet points. Under pressure of time, bullet points may give some indication of where an essay was heading and are indeed better than writing nothing at all, but candidates should see this as a last resort; it is much better to plan time carefully so that two coherent answers can be written.

On the whole, the approach to passage-based questions has improved this session, with closer attention to the writers' use of language, imagery, form and structure. In some cases, however, candidates pick examples out of context, identifying a technique and sometimes suggesting some implications. It is a much more successful strategy to observe these details within the context of the passage or poem, showing how they contribute to the reader's understanding of the developing meaning.

Question Specific Comments

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) While there were not many answers to this question, candidates might have considered grief, change and loss as 'difficulties of life' explored in Hardy's poetry. This would have created opportunities to discuss a wide range of poems. As with all questions on Hardy, candidates are most successful when they do not concentrate on Hardy's biography – it is a much more successful

strategy to answer the question directly by looking closely at the poems and their methods.

- (b) There were some successful responses to the question on 'At Castle Boterel', candidates appreciated the poem's negotiation between past and present and ways in which a specific memory associated with a particular place is evoked in the poem. There was some discussion of the way the stanzas are tightly structured, with comment on the effects of the short final line of each. Candidates also commented on the caesura and rhetorical question in stanza 4, which serve to exalt the memory, and there was sensitive writing on the final stanza, its acceptance of the past clear in the repetition of 'shrinking' and the emphatic quality of the final line. Weaker answers summarised the poem, while others discussed only Hardy and Emma Gifford, using the content of the poem merely as a springboard into biographical discussion. Such answers could not be credited according to the mark scheme descriptors.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were few answers on this question. Its cue quotation gave candidates a lead into ways in which Heaney explores the crafting process of various tools and the use which people make of them. The poem from which the quotation is taken, 'Midnight Anvil', as well as 'Poet to Blacksmith', makes explicit Heaney's drawing of a parallel between these crafts and the craft of poetry, which is implicit in a number of other poems.
- (b) While there were not many responses on Heaney, this question received more attention than the (a) question. Surprisingly few candidates acknowledged that the stanza selected is taken from a longer sequence of stanzas, and only a small number were aware of Heaney's earlier 'Tollund Man' poem and its archaeological source. There was, though, thoughtful response to Heaney's creation of the voice of the Tollund Man, inhabiting the character as he contemplates his first discovery. Attention was paid to the effects of the short phrases at the poem's opening and in l.10, while candidates also discussed the sense of patience apparent in 'lay in wait/ Still waited.' Few were able to comment on Heaney's use of sonnet form.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Success in the (a) questions is often based on an appropriate choice of poems, and here candidates wrote very well on 'You Cannot Do This', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'Cambodia', 'The Reservist' and 'Attack' in particular. Many candidates showed intelligent understanding of language (particularly in 'Anthem' and 'The Reservist') and structure (particularly in 'Cambodia'). Some candidates made valiant efforts to link less suitable poems to the question, but not all succeeded.
- (b) There were many answers to this question with most candidates responding well to Bishop's poem. Even less confident candidates were able to note its progressive structure, the humorous, self-mocking tone and the fact that the repetition of the key phrase was an attempt by the narrator to convince both herself and the reader of its truth. More confident candidates picked up on aspects such as half-rhyme, the second person imperatives ('like a manual', noted one candidate), and the hyperbole of the fifth stanza. Many showed perceptive understanding of the subtleties of the last stanza, including the disruption of regular structure; the fact that the person addressed is now an individual rather than the reader; the use of the dash and parenthesis to reflect the loss of the poet's previous certainty; and what one candidate called 'the subtle modification' of the repeated phrase by the introduction of the word 'too'. Many candidates showed an implicit or explicit understanding of irony.

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

- (a) In answers to this question, most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the presentation of Richard's character without always achieving a clear focus on his role or significance – although stronger candidates tended to do this almost automatically. Candidates who wrote explicitly about Richard's role and significance referred to him as a bridge between Europe and Biafra; as a suitable spokesperson, in that he is someone who is not bound to the country by nationality; as an inspiration for Ugwu to write the story and as a catalyst for the emotional entanglements of other characters. The most successful answers examined specific episodes from the novel which illustrated these aspects, looking at, for example, his relationship with Kainene, his appointment by the Biafran government, his speaking of Igbo and his meeting with the American journalists.

- (b) The passage proved to be a popular question. Weaker answers struggled to rise above a simple paraphrase, but stronger responses focused on details such as the 'bloodied hands' and 'Success hauled him above the ground' to show the effects of war on Ugwu. Comments were made on the sense of liberation from normal discipline ('Rules relaxed') and from normal civilised behaviour, noting the aggressive nature of 'Get out! Bloody civilians'. Some candidates pointed out that Ugwu's statement 'It is enough' showed that he had retained some moral sense. Some answers noted how war had created hostile divisions between people supposedly on the same side. A few candidates wrote less successful answers as they overlooked the key requirement of the (b) question to 'Comment closely' on the extract: some made only very brief passing references, while others, while writing perfectly good general answers about the effects of the war on the various characters, made no reference to the selected passage at all.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) This question stimulated some thoughtful responses exploring the inter-racial relationships in the novel. A successful strategy was to compare the general English view, as encapsulated in the cue quotation, with the relationship between Aziz and Fielding. However, most candidates noted that despite its earlier warmth, the relationship is strained by the end of the novel. Some candidates astutely questioned whether the English ever show 'mutual respect and esteem', citing a number of examples, from the unsuccessful Bridge Party to attitudes shown at Aziz's trial. A few candidates unsuccessfully narrowed the question, taking the word 'Intimacy' out of its context in the quotation, and only discussing Aziz and Adela's experience in the Marabar caves.
- (b) Not many candidates chose the passage question on this text. Those who did attempt it wrote about the colour and activity of the festival and looked at Aziz's isolation from events, noting that he 'could not understand this' and that he 'did not pay attention to these sanctities, for they had no connection with his own'. There were also some interesting comments on the Hindu festival's inclusiveness, with the moment for the band of the 'unclean sweepers' before 'The doors were thrown open'. Successful responses looked closely at the language and imagery of the descriptions in the passage, while less successful answers summarised its content.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) 'Real Time', 'The Bath', 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' and 'Sredni Vashtar' were the most popular stories chosen in responses to this question. Candidates often found it a successful strategy to compare the stories, looking at the fearful resignation to oncoming death in 'The Bath', for example, and comparing it with death brought about by revenge in 'Sredni Vashtar'. The strongest answers looked in some detail at structure, the creation of mood and atmosphere, and at characterisation – this was much more successful than relying on a recall of plot only, a feature of weaker answers.
- (b) This passage stimulated a number of responses, many of which showed candidates' sensitive sympathy with the position of the narrator. Such answers commented on the sequence of demands made in the first section of the passage, and that the 'waited' in l.15 shows that there is no real hope that the 'checks in the mail' will be the last ones. Many candidates wrote well about the two dreams, recognising their significance. The first is a glimpse of past happiness and security and the source of the central 'elephant' metaphor, while the second shows decline and disillusion. Candidates usually recognised that these dreams hold the key to the psychology of the narrator and are therefore crucial in exploring his state of mind, sandwiched as they are in the passage between accounts of the narrator's daily life.

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Question Specific Comments

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Candidates who focused clearly on specific moments, such as the evocation of memories in 'Beeny Cliff', the singing of the bird in 'The Darkling Thrush', hearing a voice in 'The Voice', seeing the shadow in 'The Shadow on the Stone', tended to be successful, especially when they considered in detail how Hardy uses language, imagery and structure to present these moments in the poems. Essays which used poems as a launching pad for discussion of Hardy's biography were inevitably unsuccessful. Examiners found that many essays concentrated on biography to such an extent

that they contained very little reference to the poetry beyond a brief indication of content. Many answers struggled to show any understanding of the writer's methods or effects.

- (b) As with (a), the most successful responses made sparing, if any use of biography, instead of a detached observation of the man and his vision, while suggesting the poem is describing the narrator himself in the third person. This constructed detachment allows the judgement of him as 'Queer' and in 'a careworn craze'. Candidates noted that the vision presents a contrast: while 'He withers daily', she 'rides gaily' and 'Time touches her not'. Most answers recognised this as a dream vision from memory, but one deliberately constructed and held – 'A phantom of his own figuring.' Strong answers looked at ways in which alliteration, rhyme and rhythm combine to create a dreamlike tone in the poem.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) Some candidates knew their chosen poems in pleasing detail, which produced some strong answers to this question. They made effective use of their knowledge of poems such as 'The Aerodrome', 'Anahorish 1944', 'District and Circle' and 'The Nod'. Vivid details such as the 'Red beef, white string' of 'The Nod', the squealing pigs of 'Anahorish 1944', the various sights and sounds of the underground railway, from the 'tin whistle' to the 'white tiles' and the 'crowd-swept, strap-hanging' journey of 'District and Circle', and were able to convey why such details were so powerful, contributed to some developed and thoughtful responses.
- (b) Few candidates answered this question and only a small number of those who attempted it acknowledged that the stanza selected is taken from a longer sequence of stanzas, and very few were aware of Heaney's earlier 'Tollund Man' poem and its archaeological source. Some of the more confident answers were able to show how contemporary 'scans, screens, hidden eyes' contrasted with the rural references such as 'trickles of kesh water' and 'panicked snipe offshooting into twilight'. Candidates usually recognised that the Tollund Man is thus characterised as a rural figure, at home in 'bog-pooled rain' and unfamiliar with the security and electronics of a present day 'virtual city'. Some suggested a ghostliness or spirituality in the fact that he is 'Unregistered' by surveillance methods. Useful comments were made on how the rural background is reflected in Heaney's language choices, but few commented on the sonnet form of the stanza.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were some interesting choices of poems for this question. Some used poems such as 'Anthem For Doomed Youth' as an example of a poem with little hope for the future, compared with a poem which did demonstrate some hope. As long as this was clearly and explicitly argued, the strategy was successful – in many cases, though, it was not clearly argued through. Essays successfully featured such poems as 'A Man I Am', 'Friend', 'Trees' and 'Praise Song For My Mother'. 'Friend' elicited some particularly thoughtful writing, as candidates noted the progression from sad nostalgia to a tentatively optimistic ending: 'Perhaps the tree will strike fresh roots again.' The question asked for a discussion of 'ways in which poets express hope', which meant that candidates who looked closely at the progression of ideas in their chosen poems, with analysis of language and structure, were very successful, while those who were restricted to a summary of content were limited in their success.
- (b) Examiners saw an enormous number of responses to 'You Cannot Do This', a poem which does not define who or what 'you' and 'this' are. The strongest answers tackled that problem directly, making intelligent suggestions from a careful reading of the poem. Such answers were more successful than those which imposed a meaning, such as warfare or denial of women's rights. Most answers noted the authoritative voice of the speaker, the protective nature and concern for 'my people' and the sense of anger against those to whom the words are addressed, while stronger essays drew these points from close attention to details of the poem. Others appreciated the speaker's determination to record the evil committed, with references to 'the tomb' and 'I will record it also'. Answers which focused clearly on the tone and language, as required by the question, commented that the tone is variously Biblical, confrontational, threatening, accusatory and serious but also protective and defensive and the language features harsh imagery, passionate refrains and possessive pronouns, with connotations of injustice, inhumanity and ownership. Confident candidates commented on the lack of certainty conveyed through the vagueness of 'something to do with' and expressed quite perceptive and convincing interpretations of the references to School trophies ('signs of innocent glory, valued by families') and pride of the loins ('a pride in successive generations, handing down the genes'.)

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

- (a) This is an increasingly popular text, and as the central character, Ugwu was a popular character. Straightforward answers discussed Ugwu's characterisation by concentrating on his personal journey of growth and maturity from an uneducated, inexperienced village boy to a loyal, reliable servant, an ambitious, scholarly candidate ('I learn fast') a confident educator, a brave but guilt-ridden soldier ('Target Destroyer') and an accomplished author. More perceptive answers assessed Adichie's multi-faceted presentation of Ugwu's character more critically, noting that he is indulged and enriched by Olanna, inspired and transformed by Odenigbo, damaged and desensitised by the war, but that he emerges as a survivor. His significance was noted as the pivotal role in the lives of other characters and his narrative voice as a tool for Adichie to highlight the central concerns of the text – social divisions, the Biafran war and political change in Nigeria as well as sexual love, relationships and education. Such responses showed detailed knowledge of carefully selected episodes from the novel, with understanding of how they contribute to Ugwu's role and the reader's developing appreciation.
- (b) Candidates often demonstrated good and perceptive engagement with this option. Most answers discussed and illustrated successfully the effects of the horrors of war and the trauma experienced by ordinary citizens, as created through Adichie's use of brutal imagery. Some candidates noted the tense dialogue at the passage's opening and the disbelief that Port Harcourt is being attacked. There were also observant comments on the description of the aircraft and the parallel presentation of Ikejide's body movements while running and after being struck. Some candidates noted the role reversal in Richard's and Kainene's actions and reactions at the beginning and end of the passage, Harrison's calm presence of mind and the practicalities of a quick burial. The passage invited close attention to Adichie's language and candidates who accepted this invitation wrote very successfully.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Many candidates who answer on *A Passage to India* have a very good, sometimes highly detailed, knowledge of the text and most were able to use it with some relevance to the question. However, a frequent problem, which restricted many answers, was a failure to read the question carefully, which led to essays discussing British treatment of the Indians or the British attitude to Indians. Such answers missed the entire purpose of the question. More alert candidates recognised an essentially politically-directed question. Stronger answers used the debate between Aziz, Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali in Chapter 2, the bridge party and events at the Marabar caves as key episodes, while successful candidates acknowledged the Indians' dual perspectives of their rulers, reflected in the more respectful and compliant attitudes of the older passive generation, such as Godbole and Nawab Bahadur, contrasted with the younger generation, who display frustration and confrontation. There was also useful discussion of transient friendships and understanding between Aziz, Fielding, Mrs Moore and Adela, though noting that they do not ultimately last. Overall, responses to this question demonstrated the key necessity for candidates to read carefully the precise wording of the questions set.
- (b) The wording of the question is very important and the wording stated the constant requirement of passage-based questions: 'Comment closely'. A very high number of answers did not acknowledge that this was a (b) question, and instead contained general discussion of the Marabar caves. They often showed detailed knowledge of the novel and understanding of the caves' role in it, with thoughtful comments on the events that happen there. This contextual information was sometimes a part of strong answers, as long as it was used to develop the discussion of 'ways in which Forster presents the Marabar caves' in the passage. Without that close focus on the writing of the passage, such discussion, however well-founded in the text as a whole, did not answer the question set. More successfully focused answers noted the provocative opening sentences of each of the paragraphs, which combine to create a paradoxical impression of the caves. On the one hand, they 'are like nothing else in the world', while on the other they 'are readily described.' The suggestion that the caves are 'extraordinary' is balanced by a dull list of measurements. The possibility that the experience of the caves might be a 'dull one' is in turn balanced by the lyrical description of 'marvellously polished' walls and 'delicate stars of pink and gray'. Observant candidates noted the implications of diction such as 'insanely', 'dark', 'thrust' and the repetition of 'nothing'. The passage provides rich material for discussion of language, imagery and tone, so it was disappointing that so many answers did not respond to the question in the appropriate way.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) This was a popular question, with 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', 'The Moving Finger', 'Sredni Vashtar' and 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass' providing particularly fruitful material for candidates. Essays often showed good knowledge of the stories with understanding of how the writers create a sense of mystery. In 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', candidates tended to have a clear image in their minds of the setting and the characterisation of the old woman, while good use was made of the painting in 'The Moving Finger'. Candidates noted the build-up to the climax of 'Sredni Vashtar', making the point that the aunt's death is not seen, while discussion of 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass' often noted the metaphor of reflection, with the sense of mystery about the woman eventually extinguished by the mundane at the end of the story.
- (b) Among answers to this question, more successful essays commented on Ballard's creation of a claustrophobic atmosphere in the ever-diminishing space. Some answers noted the use of precise details, particularly with regard to measurements, in a story where space is so vital. Some commented on the depiction of character, for example the generosity of Ward, the fact that Helen is 'overjoyed' with a tiny amount of space and the ingratitude of the old man. Many commented on the symbolic significance of the wardrobe, linking it with its first appearance in the story. Many answers, however, lost sight of the question in terms of the effectiveness of the passage as the conclusion of the story, but one or two noted the pessimistic tone of the penultimate paragraph ('pang of regret', 'he would never see it again') and the fact that readers can appreciate the irony of the final sentence.

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Question Specific Comments

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) 'A Church Romance', 'The Self Unseeing', 'Beeny Cliff' and 'Thunderstorm in Town' were popular choices for this question, with candidates enjoying most success when they made only fleeting references to Hardy's biography. Those who concentrated on biography tended to overlook the poetic qualities of the selected material and thus missed discussion of Hardy's methods and language. This may have accounted for the success of those essays which chose poems with little

recourse to biography, such as 'The Man He Killed' and 'Convergence of the Twain', which were frequently explored thoughtfully.

- (b) 'The Shadow on the Stone' elicited some sensitive responses. Literary answers dealt with ways in which the rhyme and rhythm of the poem reflect the nostalgic mood; essays cited the alliterative effect of repeated use of 's', the use of enjambment to create a conversational, almost confessional tone and the effect in context of diction such as 'broods', 'lone' and 'apparition'. Few candidates, interestingly, commented on Hardy's neologism 'unvision'. On the other hand, there was some perceptive discussion of the role of the creative imagination which produces the vision, reflected in 'I thought', 'my belief' and 'My head unturned lest my dream should fade.' Such answers, carefully examining the language and structure of the poem, were much more successful than those which adhered closely to Hardy and Emma Gifford.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were not many responses to this question, but candidates who attempted it made good use of such poems as 'The Lift', 'A Clip', 'District and Circle', 'Out of Shot', 'The Aerodrome' and 'Anahorish 1944'. Successful answers discussed ways in which Heaney describes the various settings, establishing mood and atmosphere, and went on to acknowledge the significance of each setting to its particular poem.
- (b) Surprisingly few candidates acknowledged that the stanza selected is taken from a longer sequence of stanzas, and only a small number were aware of Heaney's earlier 'Tollund Man' poem and its archaeological source. There were some successful answers, however. Stronger answers showed an appreciation of the shift in tone of the poem, marked by a change from the diction of decay ('bog-damp', 'musty', 'withered' and 'dust' (twice) to the more optimistic connotations of 'straightened', 'benefit' and 'spirited'. Some noted how alliteration contributes to the more dynamic mood of the final lines. A few candidates appreciated the wider significance of the images, noting that the poem is about 'the inability of old methods and lifestyles to cope with the modern world'. Few commented on Heaney's use of sonnet form.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) 'Dissatisfaction with the world' was interpreted in a wide variety of ways, which gave candidates access to many poems in the selection. The war poems were frequently chosen, along with 'Because I Liked You Better', 'My Parents', 'Tears, Idle Tears' and 'Cold in the Earth'. The most successful answers were characterised by detailed knowledge of the chosen poems and strong awareness of the poet's language and methods – 'Cambodia' in particular often served candidates well here, with intelligent comments on structure. Less confident answers were limited by a lack of detailed knowledge of the poems to draw on. Most candidates maintained their focus on the specific question, but there were some responses that featured general commentary on the poems, with dissatisfaction mentioned only in passing, usually in the introduction and conclusion of the essay.
- (b) Allingham's poem was a popular choice and candidates who knew the poem well wrote successfully on aspects of technique, which proved accessible in this poem. Many essays featured sharp and intelligent comments on the effects of setting, structure, diction, and rhyme. Some candidates used context in a relevant way, mentioning Allingham's Irish roots and the Gaelic tradition of Samhain. Answers commented on the gothic opening, and the mood changes with the march of the dead, noting that 'Townsfellows' and 'Schoolmates' are terms of companionship. Candidates observed the effects of repetition, creating the sense of a never-ending stream of people before the sudden sight of the 'fair pale face' of 'Mother dear'. Candidates who were less well prepared tended to make assumptions based on the opening that the whole poem describes a frightening nightmare. Zombies were mentioned more than once and even some good answers tended to skip over the last stanza and add little after dealing with the narrator's mother.

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

- (a) There were some observant answers about Odenigbo, with candidates recognising the change in his character through the time period of the novel, beginning as an active, energetic intellectual, providing a role model to Ugwu, and ending disillusioned, weakened and inactive, with Ugwu taking the dominant role. This disillusionment during the war was central to good answers. As one candidate commented, 'Odenigbo's ideas are theoretical and far less convincing when he has to

apply them in practice.' Other good responses explored Odenigbo as a character caught between the two worlds of traditional village life, susceptible to palm wine and Amala, and to a westernised life of tennis and debating. Some argued that his intellectual life is a post-betrayal of his African roots, which leads to his decay during the action of the novel. Some also thoughtfully discussed how Adichie balances his political life with his private concerns, considering the 'revolutionary's relationship with Olanna, the birth of Baby and his patronage of Ugwu.

- (b) This passage stimulated many very good answers, closely focused on the writing of the passage and commenting on aspects such as the creation of a calm ordinary mood through the natural, friendly dialogue between Richard and Nnaemeka, which is then destroyed when the side entrance 'burst(s) open'. Many noted the description of the soldiers' eyes as 'red and wildly glassy' and the frantic, hostile tone of the questions. Perceptive answers noted the contrasting effect of dramatic short sentences ('The lounge was silent') and the long listing sentence ('more soldiers, more shots, more shouts') together with powerful diction such as 'writhing', 'gurgle' and 'guttural', which, for a number of candidates, painted a particularly graphic and horrific picture. The sympathy the reader has with Nnaemeka, established through the earlier conversation, was cited as an added device in heightening the shock of his death. There were neat comments about the sentence structure at the end of the passage, where Richard's extreme physical reaction of vomiting is stated almost as an add-on to the more prosaic 'he almost missed his flight'. From this came a good structural point that the violence which erupts so quickly is framed by the initial announcement of Richard's boarding instruction and his walk to the plane. Others noted how Adichie subtly introduces the importance of ethnicity and accent with the note early in the passage of the 'elegant Hausa accent' of the boarding announcement and Richard's line of Igbo to Nnaemeka.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) A few responses based the argument on the cue quotation in the question, and wrote well on the almost sanctifying characterisation of Adela and Ronny as 'victim' and 'martyr', noting the elevation of Ronny despite Adela apparently having suffered the actual assault. This led to some interesting discussions of English attitudes after the Marabar incident. Answers covered Turton's comments at Aziz's arrest and McBryde going through his papers. Candidates noted the isolation of Fielding at the gathering at the club and the elevation of Mrs Blakiston as a symbol of English womanhood. Many candidates wrote well about the behaviour of the women and their sudden devotion to Adela, the subject of previous sneers, which dissolves rapidly when she reveals the truth at the trial. Characters like Mrs Moore and Fielding were used to provide contrast and there was also some sympathy for the English as a people very far from home, bewildered by their alien environment and feeling a sense of threat from everything they cannot understand. Less successful answers dealt with English attitudes to the Indians in a general way, missing the more specific focus of the question.
- (b) Many candidates showed an intelligent understanding of the passage in relation to the wider novel. Some commented on how the confusion at the beginning reflects the English experience of India as portrayed in the novel as a whole, while others noted how features such as the thumping engine, the concealed inscriptions and the draughtsman's slip reflected the influence of the British on Indian life. More literary answers commented on the shift in focus which occurs when Godbole is introduced and the reader begins to see things from his perspective. From the initial chaos, there develops a more genuine sense of spirituality, conveyed through the description of the singers' expressions as 'fatuous and languid'. Finally, several noted how the pace of the writing increases to describe what one candidate described as the 'sensory overload' of the ceremony. Examiners were pleased to see that several candidates appreciated the humour in the passage, with the image of the girl's leg 'like an eel' as well as the visual images of the two men singing into each other's moustaches and the people lifted up still in squatting position to make way for the Rajah. Many candidates were also able to link Godbole's memories of Mrs Moore with quick references to other parts of the novel in order to comment on the novel's exploration of spirituality.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) Candidates attempting this question made effective use of stories such as 'The Prison', 'Elephant', 'The Enemy' and 'Sredni Vashtar'. Less successful answers described the relationships in question, relying on narrative summary, pointing out that they were 'difficult'. More successful responses explored how the reader is told about the relationships, how the difficulties are communicated, and how those difficulties inform the reader's understanding of the story. In this

way the contrast in the relationships between the boy and his mother and father was a source of exploration in 'The Enemy', with particular reference to the terrifying night with his mother and his argument with his mother about his homework. The aunt's mean-spirited treatment of Conradin in 'Sredni Vashtar' was explored by many, who had some sympathy with his subtle and deadly means of revenge. Several candidates wrote well on both content and style concerning the laconic disillusionment with every relationship the narrator of 'Elephant' has had.

- (b) Less confident candidates answering this question relied on a loose narrative summary of its content. As the narrative drive is quite diffuse in the passage, this was not a rewarding approach. There were, though, some strong and subtle answers which noted the centrality of the 'looking-glass' and discussed literal and metaphoric reflection in the passage, considering how fully a 'reflection' portrays or reveals the reflected reality. This proved very fruitful, encouraging a detailed consideration of the passage and the use of some knowledge of the rest of the story. Perceptive answers showed that the passage is visualised from the point of view of the mirror – thus Isabella Tyson 'had vanished, sliced off by the gilt rim'. This makes the rest of the description of her the object of guesswork, seen in such diction as 'presumably' and 'suggested', questioning the reality of the romantic imagery of flowers, reflective 'comparisons' which are 'worse than idle and superficial'. Candidates commented well on the disillusionment of the final paragraph, when 'Suddenly these reflections were ended violently'.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates need to be reminded that all routes through the paper are equally challenging, so there is no advantage to doing all **(a)** questions, all **(b)** questions, or a mixture of both.
- As reported in previous sessions, candidates need to be aware that if choosing a **(b)** question, they must be prepared to deal with the detail of the passage printed, not simply use it as a starting point for a more general essay.
- When prompts are provided in an **(a)** question, the best answers deal with the specifics of the prompt, not merely with the general topic area that it announces.

General comments

It was clear that most candidates had a sound knowledge of the texts that they had studied. For some, knowledge only really extended as far as the plot of a play or a limited sense of the characters. But the majority were able to use their knowledge in order to construct an argument in relation to the question asked. Along the way, through examination of matters of character, language, form and structure, candidates showed understanding of various ways in which writers create meaning in dramatic texts. The best candidates showed a willingness to engage with the texts in dramatic terms by considering how the words on the page are brought alive on the stage. By way of contrast, less able responses often simply talk of the plays as 'the book' or draw attention to matters of punctuation – an aspect of a text that will not be seen or heard by an audience. Instead, candidates should write perhaps about pauses, sentence length or coherence of a character's expression as a means of demonstrating dramatic awareness.

Essay type **(a)** questions are carefully framed and often include a 'prompt' for the candidates. This prompt should be seen as an integral part of a successful answer, not merely as a way in. Thus, in **Question 1 (a)**, candidates were being asked to deal with an issue in the play, but part of their reflection needed to be on the fact that the opposition is set up by two of the characters whose opinions are fairly obviously biased.

On the whole, candidates are now much better at working outwards from textual detail, rather than inwards from what they have been told about the various contexts of a text. Nonetheless, it is wise to note that questions never expect candidates to show knowledge of a writer's life. Neither, for that matter, are candidates ever expected to be able to apply extraneous knowledge in order to write a response. It is important, therefore, that candidates use background knowledge with care and discretion, ensuring that it is included only when it supports the argument of the essay. Although it is interesting to know that candidates can sometimes make connections between texts that they have studied, this is not required. The prime focus must always be on the particular text and on specific, precisely analysed detail.

In order to rise through the mark bands, responses need to show a skill in 'selecting relevant knowledge from the text to address the question.' This means that candidates need to be careful when planning what they write: brevity and planning can be helpful here. Above all, candidates need to avoid the temptation to throw everything they know at the question in the hope that some of it will be relevant. Often, it is useful to simply concentrate on a few specific moments in the text, examining them in detail, rather than on trying to cover all the moments in the play that might be connected to the question. In the same vein, it is always good to see work that quotes briefly and then discusses the quotation in depth.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Most responses showed understanding of the issue and of the tension between past and present that Albee evokes in the play. Weaker responses tended towards character study of Nick and George, whilst top answers reflected astutely on ways in which the issues are dramatized through a range of exchanges between all the characters, not merely Nick and George. A number of candidates saw George as a victim of history, not merely a teacher of it, and this proved a fertile line of discussion. Similarly, Nick's relationship with Honey was sometimes usefully seen as an exposition of the limitations of biological theories of 'fitness' (i.e. suitability).
- (b) The formula 'How might an audience react...' is one candidates should be ready to answer. What it does not mean is that candidates should over-exaggerate ('the audience would be on the edge of their seats' etc.) Instead, it suggests that there should be focus on the ways in which the dramatic action develops, on the 'arc' of the scene as well as on its details. In this case, the audience is being invited to look deeper into the motivation of characters and to see that the apparently ideal relationship between Nick and Honey has many resemblances to that of George and Martha (Honey 'snapping' in line 2 has resonances in many other parts of the play, for example, as does Nick's coercive 'I like you to dance' of line 13). Stronger responses noted that an audience feels uncomfortable here as the sexual agenda starts to become overt. Candidates who chose to deal with the extract sequentially quite often ran out of time before they could start to deal with the new direction of the passage at line 45. One or two exceptional answers focused on George's perception of Martha as having 'ugly talents' and used this as a means of focusing and interpreting the whole.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) There were not many answers on this question. Weaker responses saw the question as simply an invitation to write a character study of Polixenes. Stronger answers noted that he contributes to the themes and concerns of the play as a parallel with Leontes. By Act Four, he displays a misplaced jealousy on his son's behalf that echoes much of what went on in the first half of the play. The question asks for 'dramatic significance' and whenever that prompt appears, it should trigger discussions that do not centre on character but on theme and dramatic realisation.
- (b) Responses here usually showed understanding of the context of the speech and of this moment as being the absolute turning point of the play in terms of genre, the moment where potential tragedy turns to romance. Sadly, few candidates chose to think about the dramatic impact of the bear or, indeed, whether Antigonus's exit should be seen as a moment of comedy or tragedy. Analysis of Antigonus's speech was often clear and detailed, though many responses could have made more of the contrast of register that arrives with the Shepherd which provides such a strong contrast in the last lines of the extract.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Responses here showed understanding of the state of England as a consequence of Richard's actions. The best responses dealt clearly with particular moments. Scenes with the citizens or with the royal women were often adduced as metaphors for the state of chaos in the country as a whole. The ending of the play – the re-establishment of order with Richmond – provided many candidates with suitable points of contrast with Richard. Richard's wilful instigation of chaos and the language with which it is invoked provided suitable areas for discussion.
- (b) Candidates were familiar with this speech, and most were able to make clear points about how Richard portrays himself and about how his attitudes towards power and women are being established here. Better answers looked at the staging of the piece, noting that as Richard is the first to appear, our sympathy initially goes with him, particularly because of his invocation of others' attitudes towards him.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) Answers were often confident about relevant examples, with the throwing of the meat and the rape evoked in most essays. A number of essays simply created lists of examples. With slightly more sophisticated responses, the aggression and violence was almost always seen as an obviously bad thing, whereas (in the instance of the meat), it is clear that Stella is both excited and attracted by the implicit symbolism of Stanley's gesture. Instances of verbal aggression proved harder to pin down, though many responses were able to pinpoint Stanley's stark realism and his refusal to conspire with Blanche's romantic view of the world.
- (b) This question offered a good opportunity for candidates to discuss the back-story to Blanche's visit, whilst at the same time addressing Stanley's dislike for her through analysis of Stanley's words and actions. Stronger answers managed to balance knowledge of the play in general with discussion of specifics from the passage. Less skilled responses offered large amounts of background and plot-driven narrative and therefore did not really address the tensions present at this particular moment. The strongest answers paid attention to the staging of the scene and Stanley's aggressive going through of Blanche's trunk. Some candidates – rightly – noted that part of the tension comes from Stella's awareness ('hush', line 5) that Blanche must be able to hear what is going on from the bathroom. Sadly, the significance of Blanche's appearance in the red satin robe at the very end of the exchange was uncommented upon, even by the ablest candidates.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Some responses simply saw the question in terms of character study. Scripts at this level saw Lord Goring's influence over Mrs Cheveley and his interventions in the Chilterns' marriage. Stronger responses were able to see his function in terms of the themes of the play. There was sometimes discussion of his role as a dandy, but few candidates then went on to point out that he is not simply living for pleasure. Despite what he says, Goring has a strong moral sense and he is certainly capable of acting decisively and with steely authority when it is necessary. Contrasts between his laconic epigrammatic style early on in the play, when compared to his frank and devastating realism in the bracelet scene provided some candidates with strong material for seeing him as a more rounded and more sympathetic character than would at first appear.
- (b) Most responses handled this question with some skill and were able to focus on the insidious nature of Mrs Cheveley's delivery and how it gradually reveals the immoral hold she has over Sir Robert. However, a number of candidates got bogged down in the back-story in order to explain Sir Robert's predicament, often relating matters of plot and discussing the Chilterns' marriage. This meant that the passage printed was not fully considered and this denied the candidates opportunities for demonstrating skills of analysis.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates need to be reminded that all routes through the paper are equally challenging, so there is no advantage to doing all **(a)** questions, all **(b)** questions, or a mixture of both.
- As reported in previous sessions, candidates need to be aware that if choosing a **(b)** question, they must be prepared to deal with the detail of the passage printed, not simply use it as a starting point for a more general essay.
- When prompts are provided in an **(a)** question, the best answers deal with the specifics of the prompt, not merely with the general topic area that it announces.

General comments

It was clear that most candidates had a sound knowledge of the texts that they had studied. For some, knowledge only really extended as far as the plot of a play or a limited sense of the characters. But the majority were able to use their knowledge in order to construct an argument in relation to the question asked. Along the way, through examination of matters of character, language, form and structure, candidates showed understanding of various ways in which writers create meaning in dramatic texts. The best candidates showed a willingness to engage with the texts in dramatic terms by considering how the words on the page are brought alive on the stage. By way of contrast, less able responses often simply talk of the plays as 'the book' or draw attention to matters of punctuation – an aspect of a text that will not be seen or heard by an audience. Instead, candidates should write perhaps about pauses, sentence length or coherence of a character's expression as a means of demonstrating dramatic awareness.

Question **(a)** type essays are carefully framed and often include a 'prompt' for the candidates. This prompt should be seen as an integral part of a successful answer, not merely as a way in. Candidates should also note that in **(B)** questions, a line by line approach often means that the whole passage is not fully considered.

On the whole, candidates are now much better at working outwards from textual detail, rather than inwards from what they have been told about the various contexts of a text. Nonetheless, it is wise to note that questions never expect candidates to show knowledge of a writer's life. Neither, for that matter, are candidates ever expected to be able to apply extraneous knowledge in order to write a response. It is important, therefore, that candidates use background knowledge with care and discretion, ensuring that it is included only when it supports the argument of the essay. Although it is interesting to know that candidates can sometimes make connections between texts that they have studied, this is not required. The prime focus must always be on the particular text and on specific, precisely analysed detail.

In order to rise through the mark bands, responses need to show a skill in 'selecting relevant knowledge from the text to address the question.' This means that candidates need to be careful when planning what they write: brevity and planning can be helpful here. Above all, candidates need to avoid the temptation to throw everything they know at the question in the hope that some of it will be relevant. Often, it is useful to simply concentrate on a few specific moments in the text, examining them in detail, rather than on trying to cover all the moments in the play that might be connected to the question. In the same vein, it is always good to see work that quotes briefly and then discusses the quotation in depth.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Stronger responses on this question made good use of clear, specific examples from this act of the play. Candidates were usually able to describe the games played, but it was only the more sophisticated who were able to discuss the ways in which we become aware that these games are played in total seriousness, as the opening skirmishes on the way to 'total war.'
- (b) Candidates who were prepared to talk about the detail of Martha's monologue wrote convincingly about her self-revelation at this point in the play. Stronger responses noted that George is the source of the red-eyed white mouse description of Daddy, but most simply saw it as a sign that Martha has finally stopped hero-worshipping her father. More explicit reference to the question would have helped a number of responses: the 'significance to the audience' is plainly that the foul-mouthed, strong Martha is revealed here as a mess of insecurities that can evoke our sympathy. The strongest responses were able to see that Martha's relationship with George is not one of unrelenting dislike and noted that her need for him (lines 5-8) demonstrates her reliance upon him as a means of creating significance in life.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) Basic answers often simply recorded what happens in the play as time goes by. More sophisticated responses were aware of Time as a character and a chorus in the play and as a means of enabling various effects such as the contrast between tragedy and comedy, the movement towards repentance and forgiveness. Some answers relevantly pointed out the many references to time passing in the play, such as the symbolic nine-month duration of Polixenes's visit. In less competent hands, such observations sometimes led to plot telling and speculation about Hermione's pregnancy. There were some interesting responses that pointed out that time is variously featured as going past at double speed (the instant rush of Leontes's jealousy, for example, or the sixteen years that pass in a trice, as opposed to the glacial passing of time for Leontes and Hermione, with their relationship seemingly frozen. There were some useful discussions of seasonal references in the play.
- (b) Responses varied according to the quality of analysis of the text given. Weaker answers placed the extract in context, often by plot-telling and narration. There was a lot of reference to Leontes's language as harsh or rude, but only the stronger responses substantiated the point with examples, despite the passage being full of them. Many made much of Leontes's constant use of questions and his determination not to listen to Camillo's attempt to calm him and make him see the truth. More could have been made of Camillo's role in the scene as Shakespeare's means of making us see how deranged Leontes has become. Only the best candidates dealt fully with the range and complexity of Leontes's language and syntax.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Naturally, the focus of the replies was on Richard himself. However, some responses saw the question more widely, with Buckingham featuring or, indeed, Richmond seen as someone who says all the right things about the good of the nation but is, in fact, himself, ambitious. The question uses the word 'presentation,' and this of course implies that candidates should talk about detail. The best responses did this consistently and with great skill, seeing ambition as both a political and a personal obsession for Richard. These responses also tussled with an audience's increasing lack of sympathy for Richard and his values as the play develops. Less skilled responses showed understanding of Richard's rise and fall, but were less secure on how Shakespeare manipulates our response.
- (b) Most candidates were able to talk about this scene as the moment where Richard's full majesty is revealed as an attempt to conceal his dubious methods. Stronger responses noted that this is a turning point in the play, where our sympathy starts fully to turn away from the new king. The best

answers noted that Richard's regality (the train, the drums, the trumpets) does not lose sight of the women's onslaught, and that his tone is soon reduced to that of a child arguing with his mother ('And brief, good mother; for I am in haste') instead of imperious majesty.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) The concept of victims was flexibly treated. Some saw it in terms of characters being victims of others, whilst others looked at the women as victims of social expectations or of their own histories or personal weaknesses. Weaker answers took a narrative approach. Oddly, few candidates spent time talking about the rape – an obvious aspect of the question. A number of candidates wrote ably about Stella as a willing victim who has chosen the New Orleans life with Stanley over the restraints of Belle Reve and her family. The best responses looked closely at particular moments, with a number drawing attention to Blanche's 'epic fornications' and her later downfall. Strong responses paid close attention to the prompt in the question.
- (b) Stronger responses here were able to use Blanche's opening statement as a means to evoke the dramatic tensions that already exist before the scene begins and the dramatic irony which underlines everything that takes place here. Weaker responses tended to fill in the background and context too fully thus limiting the possibility of detailed discussion of the precise nature of the tensions between these three characters at this particular moment. Proficient responses noted the implications of this being Blanche's birthday and were able to discuss Stella's ambiguity towards both Blanche and her husband – the various ways in which she is torn between the two, with her sympathy for Blanche (lines 15-17) set against Stanley's promises of the 'noise in the night' and the 'coloured lights'. The strongest responses often made much of the last section of the extract, when Blanche and Stanley can no longer control their visceral dislike of each other and where Blanche finally recognizes that he has won ('She sinks back in her chair with a frightened look').

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) A number of candidates saw this question as an invitation to talk about Lady Chiltern. Whilst this was, of course, a legitimate element of the discussions, the question's real focus needed to be on the prompt, and most particularly the influence of the past on the action of the play and on ways in which people should be judged. Better responses were able to see that Lady Chiltern's inflexible opinion is interrogated and dismissed by the action of the play, particularly through our sympathy for Lord Goring's attitudes towards human weakness. Strong candidates were able to see that people can change for the better, and some were critical of Lady Chiltern's desire always to see the world in starkly black and white terms. She herself is a block to the success of her own marriage and to her own happiness. Many responses were sympathetic to Sir Robert and felt that he should not be judged by his past; more sophisticated discussions often took a more cynical view of the play, noting that Sir Robert is still attracted by power and that he does not surrender the profits of his earlier misjudgements.
- (b) In asking about audience reaction, the expectation is that candidates will do more than note that there might be moments of surprise, puzzlement or disappointment. The real thrust of such questions is to ask candidates to see that what is printed is a dynamic, developing and dramatic moment. Stronger candidates were able to work this through in detail, placing Sir Robert's original dismissal of Mrs Cheveley (and its rather imperious tone) against her gradual insistence and her cool determination that leads to her dominance at the end of the exchange, as she reduces Sir Robert to terse reactions of shock. A number of candidates were able to use the stage directions to help make these points, and responses like this showed that there was a strong sense of how the scene works on an audience in a dramatic way.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key messages

- Candidates need to be reminded that all routes through the paper are equally challenging, so there is no advantage to doing all **(a)** questions, all **(b)** questions, or a mixture of both.
- As reported in previous sessions, candidates need to be aware that if choosing a **(b)** question, they must be prepared to deal with the detail of the passage printed, not simply use it as a starting point for a more general essay.
- When prompts are provided in an **(a)** question, the best answers deal with the specifics of the prompt, not merely with the general topic area that it announces.

General comments

It was clear that most candidates had a sound knowledge of the texts that they had studied. For some, knowledge only really extended as far as the plot of a play or a limited sense of the characters. But the majority were able to use their knowledge in order to construct an argument in relation to the question asked. Along the way, through examination of matters of character, language, form and structure, candidates showed understanding of various ways in which writers create meaning in dramatic texts. The best candidates showed a willingness to engage with the texts in dramatic terms by considering how the words on the page are brought alive on the stage. By way of contrast, less able responses often simply talk of the plays as 'the book' or draw attention to matters of punctuation – an aspect of a text that will not be seen or heard by an audience. Instead, candidates should write, perhaps, about pauses, sentence length or coherence of a character's expression as a means of demonstrating dramatic awareness.

Question **(a)** type essays are carefully framed and often include a 'prompt' for the candidates. This prompt should be seen as an integral part of a successful answer, not merely as a way in. For example, **Question 5 (a)** on this paper was often simply treated as inviting a discussion about marriage and its presentation. The prompt, however, asked candidates to think about whether it is presented as 'a hopeless, one-sided institution.'

On the whole, candidates are now much better at working outwards from textual detail, rather than inwards from what they have been told about the various contexts of a text. Nonetheless, it is wise to note that questions never expect candidates to show knowledge of a writer's life. Neither, for that matter, are candidates ever expected to be able to apply extraneous knowledge in order to write a response. It is important, therefore, that candidates use background knowledge with care and discretion, ensuring that it is included only when it supports the argument of the essay. Although it is interesting to know that candidates can sometimes make connections between texts that they have studied, this is not required. The prime focus must always be on the particular text and on specific, precisely analysed detail.

In order to rise through the mark bands, responses need to show a skill in 'selecting relevant knowledge from the text to address the question.' This means that candidates need to be careful when planning what they write: brevity and planning can be helpful here. Above all, candidates need to avoid the temptation to throw everything they know at the question in the hope that some of it will be relevant. Often, it is useful to simply concentrate on a few specific moments in the text, examining them in detail, rather than on trying to cover all the moments in the play that might be connected to the question. In the same vein, it is always good to see work that quotes briefly and then discusses the quotation in depth.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Some candidates saw this question simply as an invitation to talk about Nick's character. Stronger responses were able to focus on the discussions of evolution and procreation in the play and see that Nick's status as a representative of the superiority of the future is not borne out by his behaviour in relation to his wife. Some responses sought to analyse his responses to his situation in terms of his professional desire for tidy answers to complex problems, a useful area for discussion. Contrasts with George were sometimes tellingly made.
- (b) Responses here showed appreciation of a variety of ways in which Albee is shaping our initial response to these characters. There was useful awareness of what is going on under the surface. A number of able candidates were able to see that Martha's reference to Bette Davis is a character note. More could have been made, perhaps, of George's wilful misunderstanding of Martha at a number of points in the extract. He is not simply a victim here – he deliberately ignites Martha's irritation and contempt.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) Weaker responses to this question sometimes confused the two countries and the values of each. Many simply trotted out pre-prepared views about contrast between court and country, winter and spring. Stronger responses were able to see that the two sections act as mirrors of each other. Polixenes' jealous reaction to Perdita resonates with Leontes's ragings earlier, for example. Many responses did not give full enough weight to the detail of what actually happens in the pastoral scenes. More skilled responses looked carefully at contrasts and were able to see the change of tone that happens when Antigonus arrives on the coast of Bohemia.
- (b) Responses here were able to place the incident in context, whilst at the same time focusing on the detail of the passage presented. Strong answers located Paulina's determined forcefulness of language and her bravery in challenging the king and not surrendering to his bullying. The best responses noted that Leontes fails to speak directly to Paulina for much of the scene, an acknowledgement of his weakness in the face of an uncomfortable truth. A small number of responses noted how Antigonus fuels the tension between the two.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Candidates responded strongly to the question on treachery and intrigue. Stronger responses noted that the play is full of plotting, both by Richard and by others. Even Richmond can at times be seen as self-serving with his rhetoric about the good of the land clearly obscuring a strong personal ambition. Unsympathetically seen, Richmond's concern for England is, in itself, a manipulation and, indeed, plainly treachery as he attempts to overthrow the king.
- (b) Most answers focused clearly on Clarence's state of mind, but there was sometimes a lack of close reference to the passage itself. Stronger responses noted how Clarence's state of mind changes and develops during the course of the scene. Most knew about the relevance of dreams in the play as a whole, as well as this particular moment. Although the question asks about Clarence, the Keeper acts as a foil and so his role could have perhaps been more fully appreciated. The best answers focused clearly on the vividness of Clarence's language and on his feelings of remorse for his previous sins. Some responses drew relevant parallels with Richard's dreams at the end of the play.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) There were many extremely able answers on this question. Candidates saw immediately that they should direct themselves toward the effects created by music and sound, and most were able to reflect on ways in which the music conjures up the atmosphere of New Orleans or the chaos going on inside Blanche's head. There was also much interesting observation about the way that more random sounds – the whistle of the locomotive, the street cries, contribute to our understanding of Williams's concerns and dramatic techniques. Weaker responses tended to list examples without quite analysing their effects.
- (b) The formula 'How might an audience react....' focuses on an area candidates should be ready to discuss. What it does not mean is that candidates should over-exaggerate ('the audience would be on the edge of their seats' etc.) Instead, it suggests that there should be focus on the ways in which the dramatic action develops, on the 'arc' of the scene as well as on its details. Candidates found much to explore in this passage. Many focused a good deal of their answer onto the stage directions, and this often provided interesting insight into what Williams intends us to see as Blanche's nervous state of mind at this point in the play. Stronger responses also noted that Blanche's statement to herself (line 11) demonstrates a self-knowledge and control that is not apparent when she talks to other people. The best responses, of course, caught her over-dramatising nervousness that is conveyed by her gushing speech. A small number of candidates engaged too lengthily with matters of Blanche and alcohol and this distracted focus from the detail of this particular scene. More sophisticated responses noted that her searching innocently for the bottle once Stella arrives is the start of our realisation that we, the audience, know more about her than the characters on stage and can see the disparity between appearance and reality.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) A majority of the answers focused on the Chilterns' marriage and saw its faults. Stronger responses were able to deal with ways in which various marriages are presented or discussed in the play and of its endorsement as a social good through the promise of Goring's marriage to Mabel. The best answers tussled with the fact that this speech is made by Lord Goring and with the observation that actually the play does not present marriage as either one-sided or hopeless. There were a few excellent answers which engaged with the word 'institution' and started to see that although the outer shell of all marriages may be conventionally the same, the inner reality is somewhat different.
- (b) Some candidates digressed into contextual narrative rather than analysis of the scene itself. A small number of candidates did not seem to appreciate that Sir Robert's refusal to give Goring his consent is not altogether a matter of perversity, but one of pragmatic protection of his friend: if the truth comes out about the Chilterns, the whole family will be disgraced. There was also some confusion about the contents of each of the letters. Most responses were able to see that issues are being resolved here and that magnanimity is the order of the day, with all the characters feeling that an injustice has been done to them somewhere along the way. The best responses were able to see that Wilde is tidying up his tale in dramatic terms whilst at the same time leaving some of the issues that have been raised tantalisingly unresolved.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should address all parts of the question, selecting the most relevant material to support answers before beginning their responses.

Candidates should have a detailed knowledge of their set texts through studying the text itself and be careful of using other versions of the text such as film or TV.

General Comments

The overwhelming majority of candidates displayed a detailed knowledge of their chosen texts and many were able to respond to the questions with enthusiasm and skill. Marks in the top band were achieved by some candidates on every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and only rarely did candidates seem to have timing problems. However it is important that all candidates understand the demands of the paper and therefore avoid unfortunate errors by attempting too many questions or spending too long on their preferred text.

There are two general issues to address this session:

- (a) Some candidates do not address all of the task set and this can limit the overall level of achievement. The option (a) question on *Coriolanus* referred to 'dramatic effects', but in considering the presentation of Coriolanus himself and Tullus many candidates concentrated on the narrative and the characters, without paying sufficient attention to the effects created by their contrasting roles and characterisation. Questions at this level will often focus on the effects created by the writer and candidates should therefore shape their material in order to address this part of the task.
- (b) Importance of the text – a number of candidates in this session referred to particular film versions of set texts, most often when answering Shakespeare or Austen questions. It is important that candidates know where a secondary version of the text differs from the text itself and avoid only using 'evidence' from the film to support points made in the essay. Reference to a film may be very useful when indicating that a different 'reading' of a specific character or event is possible, but only as an adjunct to a discussion of the detail in the text itself.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

As You Like It

This proved to be a popular text. Option (a) was the majority choice and was often very well done, with most candidates showing a thorough and detailed knowledge of Rosalind's role and character. Weaker answers tended to focus on the events, especially where Rosalind could be described as the 'heroine'. These candidates were often able to spot where any 'ambiguity' was to be found, even if the effect of this was not always explored; typically in her relationship with Orlando when in disguise and also with Celia and her father. More successful answers focused on the dichotomy between 'simple' and 'ambiguous', often seeing her as contradictory – 'not sure of herself as either a woman or a man' as one candidate suggested. Those answers which focused on her dramatic role in terms of the structure and development of the play often did very well, while other answers identified her variety – from tragic through romantic to comic – often making pertinent points about dramatic conventions and genres.

Option **(b)** was less popular and on the whole not as successfully tackled – candidates too often spent much time considering other scenes in which Touchstone appears in order to make their points about his role and characterisation. Those answers which did focus on the detail of the passage often did well, with some seeing him as a bridge between the court and the country, while others saw this exchange as evidence of his desire to be back in the court. There was at times some confusion of interpretation – some candidates not understanding the meaning of ‘respect’ for example. Many answers focused on the comedy, with some seeing Corin as the ‘straight man’; others focused on the verbal dexterity on display, noting how Corin is successfully able to hold his side of the argument, though weaker answers saw him as simpler and less intelligent than Touchstone. Those who saw Touchstone’s words as in part a satirical commentary on both court manners and country life often did very well.

Coriolanus

Option **(a)** was popular and nearly all candidates were able to discuss in what ways the two are contrasted. Some essays however did make too much reference to the recent film adaptation to support the points made and, without adequate textual reference as well, this was a limiting factor. More focused answers saw the many contrasts the play offers in terms of their roles and actions, often concluding that whilst Coriolanus may be considered the more honourable, Tullus is clearly the more successful politician. Stronger answers dealt with the dramatic effects of these contrasts, many candidates identifying the conflict between the two characters as a key element of the dramatic success of the play, leading as it does to Coriolanus’s internal, familial and patriotic conflicts and thereby to his death.

Option **(b)** was less popular. Nearly all candidates were able to place the scenes correctly. Most also saw the treachery of the ‘Roman’ in scene 3 as a comment on the ensuing treachery of Coriolanus himself. This was often seen in terms of audience response. Others noted that the conflict between the two nations is not reflected in the lower orders and in this saw an explanation of the Roman citizens’ attitudes to war, the patricians generally and Coriolanus in particular. Nearly every answer referred to the ‘surprise’ of Coriolanus’s arrival in Antium and how an audience might respond was variously described as ‘with horror, leading to a reassessment of the hero’ to ‘regret that he did not act so politically when in Rome itself’. Better answers considered the structuring of these two short scenes and the dramatic effects thereby created, whilst others explored the detail of Coriolanus’s soliloquy and what it reveals of his state of mind.

Section B

Sense and Sensibility

Option **(a)** was a popular choice. Nearly all candidates had a detailed knowledge of the text, so that careful selection and structuring of relevant material was important. Many answers focused on the second part of the quote and question, discussing each couple in turn, considering how well they were matched, with some answers finding useful comparisons to support their views. More successful answers challenged the proposition, arguing that Austen’s presentation of marriage was bleak because John and Fanny Dashwood, for example, made a well matched couple. Other essays considered Austen’s presentation of marriage through the various couples, often concluding that a balance between emotional attraction and financial pragmatism was the key to a successful relationship. Many candidates did challenge Marianne’s relationship with Colonel Brandon, for as one put it: ‘it was an unlikely match, the reason for which appears to be Marianne’s near death experience’. Answers that focused on the novel’s structure of opposing and conflicting relationships, exploring in some sophisticated answers Austen’s use of language and narrative techniques, often did very well.

Option **(b)** was also popular and there were many sensitive and thoughtful responses to Brandon’s situation, with some candidates well prepared to analyse Austen’s methods in developing his role and characterisation, here and elsewhere. Better answers explored the narrative structure, noting how this passage resolves the mystery of the Whitwell party and the coolness between the Colonel and Willoughby, though almost no candidates appeared to understand the significance of the last line of the passage, suggesting as it does there has been a duel between the two rivals for Marianne. Other answers also noted Elinor’s role as the attentive listener. As one said ‘her reactions are just what the reader is thinking’ and this approach was at times developed into a comparison of the language and tone of Brandon and Elinor, with many concluding that they are alike as symbols of sense and decorum. Some answers noted Austen’s narrative structure which enabled Willoughby’s rival for Marianne to be the one who unmasks him, though some found this to be too contrived and convenient. Weaker answers concentrated on the character of Brandon, at times getting drawn into a detailed, narrative summary of his role in the novel as a whole. It is important that the main focus of the answer in a passage question is on the detail of the passage itself.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Option (a) was a very popular choice and nearly all answers concentrated on the Pardoner himself as revealed in the Prologue, often showing a detailed knowledge of the text to support the points made. Many referred to his fraudulent claims and fake relics as symbolic of corruption by a desire for wealth, in spite of his calling and role in the church. Weaker answers drifted into a wider discussion of his role generally, which was only loosely connected to the task; selection of relevant examples is an important point in planning the essay. Many answers also discussed the Tale in detail, with more successful answers noting the symbolic nature of the three rioters, the old man and the gold. Most answers referred to the irony of the Pardoner's claim to have only one subject 'Radix malorum est cupiditas' and this led some candidates into considering Chaucer's style and methods in more detail.

Option (b) was much less popular, though candidates often had a clear understanding of the meaning of the passage and were able to explain its significance in terms of the Pardoner's Prologue as a whole and Chaucer's concerns as revealed through the various vices attacked by the Pardoner, this being one of the few, according to some answers, which the Pardoner was less guilty of. A few more sophisticated answers wondered if there was a blurring of the line between the Pardoner as narrator and Chaucer, whose own concerns were perhaps revealed here. Others noted that the final outcome of the Tale depended on the 'chance choosing of the poisoned bottle in an ironic twist of fate'. Those essays which focused on the detail of the Pardoner's language, use of exempla and moral judgements, against the knowledge of his openly admitted hypocrisy often did very well.

John Donne Selected Poems

This was a minority choice with only a few candidates offering either option. Those who attempted option (a) often agreed with the proposition, seeing his use of argument, implied dialogue and dramatic imagery and language as connecting the poems. Others saw the development of his concerns and style, from the lighter, perhaps ironically amused, tone of some of his love poems – 'The Sun Rising' often quoted in this context – through to the genuinely conscience stricken penitent. Others though saw his poems as always concerned with Donne and as one remarked: 'Really not treating God any differently from a lover in that he is simply trying to persuade both of them into giving him something he wants'. Those essays which focused more on the style, especially the language and imagery in both types of poems, and were able to give specific examples to support the points made, often did very well.

Option (b) was a minority choice and many candidates did not have a thorough understanding of the meaning and concerns, though most were able to attempt a basic paraphrase and to link some of the issues in the poem to the wider canon. Candidates who did have a good knowledge of the poem and were able to explore some aspects of Donne's style with specific references to the given poem and the wider canon did better, with a few essays noting that though the amused, at times shocking language was replaced here by a more reflective analytical lexis, there was still the same assumption of superiority in his argument as displayed in his less serious poems.

Silas Marner

This was a very popular text. Answers on (a) showed a good knowledge of the text and nearly all candidates discussed a number of families in detail, weaker essays summarising their strengths and weakness in turn. Stronger answers saw however how Eliot carefully structures the novel to encourage comparisons and evaluation of familial behaviour. Nearly every answer considered the significance of the dysfunctional Cass family and the life revealed in the early chapters with the Squire, with more sophisticated approaches exploring the effect of Nancy, balanced against Godfrey's previous selfishness. Many answers also commented on Eppie's role, rescuing Silas from his isolation, following his rejection from 'the family of the church', as well as symbolising the 'wickedness of the first Godfrey Cass family' in her abandonment by mother and father. For some though her main role was as a symbol of the family that Godfrey could never have, tellingly revealed in his absence from her special day with Aaron, and most dramatically in the confrontation between her two fathers in Marner's cottage.

Option (b) was also popular with many candidates exploring the way Eliot carefully crafts the growing relationship between the infant Eppie and her new 'father', with some essays exploring how Marner's growing sensitivity and love for his new 'treasure' is revealed in Eliot's use of telling details – the weaving (for some candidates a symbol of his isolation from humans) set aside, his inability to 'hurt her' and how the 'stone hut' becomes a 'soft nest'. Others explored the use of narrative perspective, third person observation and precise dialogue to show how Eliot carefully controls and develops the reader's response to this relationship, creating both sympathy and humour. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage and

explore the relationship in the rest of the novel in too much detail, often not identifying the context of the passage and precisely what Eppie is being punished for. Only a few candidates considered Deane's role in helping to forge the relationship between Eppie and Marner.

The Return of the Native

This was a less chosen text on the paper with option **(b)** the more popular choice. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to relevant moments in the novel, often giving detailed narrative summaries of the action and discussing in what ways it was coincidental or fortuitous. This led weaker answers into summarising less relevant parts of the text; stronger answers planned the response, carefully selecting key moments in the structure of the novel or in the characterisation to explore some of the different ways in which Hardy uses these methods. More successful answers saw these elements as part of Hardy's wider concern with fate and how he 'shapes individual destinies despite the individuals' best efforts to avoid them,' as one candidate put it, citing Eustacia and Wildeve as two key examples.

Option **(b)** was more popular with most candidates showing a detailed knowledge of Venn's narrative and therefore able to explore the significance of the revelation of his past liaison with Thomasin at this point in the text. Weaker answers tended to summarise in detail the rest of Venn's part of the novel and did not develop therefore into discussing his role and how Hardy develops his characterisation in the passage. More successful answers were able to link this into the context, ironic for some, of Venn being the means of bringing Thomasin back from her failed wedding. Other essays also focused on the narrative techniques – the free indirect discourse, the use of the letter, the precise and at times intimate focus on his actions and thereby his thoughts. A few essays discussed how Hardy creates sympathy for Venn here so that when later in the novel he is treated as a 'bogey' man, the reader retains the sympathetic connection made at this point, a contrast, as some stronger answers noted, with Hardy's presentation of Wildeve for example.

The Changeling

This was more popular but still a minority choice in this session. Those who opted for **(a)** often had a detailed knowledge of the text, citing many examples of both deception and disguise, with the main focus on Beatrice and De Flores, though some answers also referred to the subplot and how that helped to shape audience response to the main characters. Weaker answers tended to summarise relevant parts of the plot, with a few references to the key characters. Better answers saw how Middleton shapes the drama and develops his characterisation through these elements, but particularly through Beatrice's self deception, though some argued this was in fact naivety. Many answers also considered the outward deception of De Flores was balanced by an internal self honesty, for some undermined by his vision of Piracquo's ghost. Sophisticated essays argued that it was through these methods of developing plot and characterisation that Middleton created the complexity and disturbing tone of the play, that some found so memorable.

Option **(b)** was less popular. Most answers were able to give this passage a clear context, leading to an understanding of Beatrice's sudden recognition of De Flores's usefulness and, for some in her words here, the hint of the misunderstanding to follow that leads to her sexual entrapment. Weaker answers focused on the Alsemero and Beatrice narrative, often summarising in too much detail other parts of the play. Stronger answers focused on how in this first private meeting, secret as it is and underpinned by the threat of violence in Alsemero words, the relationship is doomed. Some noted it is Alsemero who first mentions killing and explored the effect of that, whereas others noted how rational and clear Beatrice is in setting aside his proposed challenge. Better answers focused on the language and tone of the passage, exploring how Middleton balances religious references with more violent expressions of murder, so that, as one candidate expressed it, 'from the start the would-be lovers are associated with death even in their first secret meeting.'

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

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Section B

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

As You Like It

This was a popular text. Option (a) was the majority choice and was often very well done, with most candidates showing a thorough and detailed knowledge of Rosalind's role and character. Weaker answers tended to focus on the events, typically in her relationship with Orlando when in disguise and also with Celia and her father. More successful answers focused on the dichotomy between Rosalind in her disguise and as herself, with some answers seeing the lines between the two roles blurred at moments of dramatic tension – her fainting for example on seeing the bloodstains. Those answers which focused on her dramatic role in terms of the structure and development of the play often did very well, while other answers identified her variety – from tragic through romantic to comic – often making pertinent points about dramatic conventions and genres, including the Epilogue and Hymen.

Option (b) was less popular and on the whole not as successfully tackled – candidates often spent too much time considering other scenes in which Jacques appears, often focusing on the seven ages of man speech

without sufficient link to the given passage. Those answers which did focus on the detail of the passage often did well, with some answers seeing his role here as developed from his previous melancholy. Other candidates however saw in his relationship with the Duke and his desire to 'cleanse' the world the same, for some, arrogance and self isolation. Some answers focused on the detail of his description of Touchstone and what that revealed about his own character and attitudes, though only more sophisticated answers considered what is revealed about him by the Duke's harsh language at the end of the passage.

Coriolanus

This was a popular choice. Nearly all candidates tackling option (a) were able to discuss the gap suggested by the quotation. Weaker answers tended to summarise in turn how others saw Coriolanus, often seeing contrasting views of him. Better answers noted that the dramatic effects of the different views were created because the audience saw, for example, how he reacted to his mother, unlike the Tribunes whose sneering references to her were often seen as evidence of the gap noted in the question. Answers which moved beyond a more straightforward narrative summary often did well and those which developed an argument about the social and political concerns of the play, created by the differing views of Coriolanus, often did very well.

Option (b) was also popular. Nearly all candidates were able to place the scene correctly, though only a minority referred to the preceding tensions and violence which Menenius is facing down with his 'fable'. Even fewer essays referred to the imminent first entrance of Coriolanus and in what ways this extract prepared the audience for it. Weaker answers tended to summarise and paraphrase the passage, especially the fable itself, often showing a basic understanding of the meaning and of Menenius's role here. Those candidates who could interpret and analyse the detail of the passage in terms of the social and political context often did well. Other successful answers noted the use of the first citizen as symbolic of how Menenius manipulates his audience, with others noting how underneath his apparent sympathy, it was still possible for the audience to see the patrician disdain and lack of real understanding of the citizens' plight that characterizes Coriolanus's own response and attitudes later in the play.

Section B

Sense and Sensibility

Option (a) was a popular choice. Nearly all candidates had a detailed knowledge of the text, so that careful selection and structuring of relevant material was important. Many answers discussed each couple in turn, considering how far they represented the proposition given, with some wondering 'if John and Fanny Dashwood had ever been in the slightest bit passionate'; this approach led to some answers finding useful comparisons between couples to support their views. More successful answers challenged the proposition, arguing that Austen's presentation of marriage suggested that only for the morally bankrupt characters such as Lucy and Willoughby was this accurate; more morally sound characters such as Elinor and Brandon saw the need for an appropriate balance. Other essays considered Austen's presentation of marriage through the various couples, often concluding that a balance between emotional attraction and financial pragmatism was the key to a successful relationship. Many candidates did challenge Marianne's relationship with Colonel Brandon, for as one put it: 'it was an unlikely match, the reason for which appears to be Marianne's near death experience'. Answers that focused on the novel's structure of opposing and conflicting relationships, exploring in some sophisticated answers Austen's use of language and narrative techniques, often did very well.

Option (b) was also popular and there were many sensitive and thoughtful responses to Brandon's situation, with some candidates well prepared to analyse Austen's methods in developing his role and characterisation, here and elsewhere. Stronger answers explored the narrative structure, noting how this passage involves the reader in a conversation that takes place with the Colonel watching Willoughby and Marianne dancing and thus developing our view of both Brandon and Elinor in the novel as a whole. Other answers focused on the language and tone showing how this created an air of mystery and melancholy around the Colonel, with more sophisticated answers noting Elinor's role and how she acts as the voice of the reader in her wondering about his previous history. It is important that the main focus of the answer in a passage question is on the detail of the passage itself, as some candidates discussed in detail the narrative of Brandon's relationship with Marianne and in some cases Eliza and Willoughby, rather than analysing in detail the language and tone of the passage.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

This was a minority choice with Option **(a)** the less popular choice. Nearly all answers concentrated on the Pardoner himself as revealed in the Prologue, often showing a detailed knowledge of the text to support the points made. Many referred to his attitude to the poor and weak, as well as his fraudulent claims and his relics as symbolic of his corruption in spite of his calling and role in the church. Weaker answers drifted into a wider discussion of his role generally, which was only loosely connected to the task; selection of relevant examples is an important point in planning the essay. Many answers also discussed the Tale in detail, with more successful answers noting the symbolic nature of the three rioters in terms of the task. Stronger answers explored the reactions of the 'congregations and various audiences' to the Pardoner's preaching, suggesting that with the Old Man these represented the other side of the human nature, though the general consensus was that there was little cause for optimism in Chaucer's presentation of humanity.

Option **(b)** was much less popular, though candidates often had a basic understanding of the meaning of the passage and were able to explain its significance in terms of the Pardoner's Tale and Chaucer's concerns in the rest of the Prologue and Tale. Stronger examples explored the presentation of the Old Man, discussing the symbolism of the gold and the reaction of the three rioters to it. More sophisticated answers considered the various layers of irony, both within the Tale and in the context of the wider presentation of the Pardoner, who, for some candidates, had 'like the rioters forgotten his own promises in the desire for wealth and easy living,' as one put it.

John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with only a few candidates offering either option. Those who attempted option **(a)** often had a detailed knowledge of the text and were able to refer widely to a range of effects in Donne's presentation. Weaker essays tended to summarise the poems without exploring the presentation in sufficient detail. Stronger answers were able to develop a balanced argument and by careful choice of specific references to religious and love poems demonstrate a thorough understanding of Donne's methods and concerns, with some very good explorations of his language and imagery and the range of effects created.

Option **(b)** was a more popular choice and many candidates had a thorough knowledge of the meaning and concerns, though some weaker answers only attempted a basic paraphrase with brief links to the wider canon. Many answers did refer to the violent and, for some, tortured language, with more insightful answers exploring what this revealed about Donne's state of mind, which as one candidate suggested 'could be seen as just as self absorbed in speaking to God as it was when persuading his reluctant lovers'. Stronger essays did have a good understanding of the poem and were able to explore some aspects of Donne's style, often contrasted tellingly with the language and imagery of his love poems. Sophisticated answers were able to develop the detailed analysis into a thoughtful exploration of his religious doubts and concerns, here and in other poems.

Silas Marner

This was a popular text. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of the text and nearly all candidates had at least a sound knowledge of the two narratives, with weaker answers summarising in too much unfocused detail. Stronger answers saw however how Eliot carefully structures the novel to encourage comparisons and evaluation of the two characters, with a general agreement that justice is served upon them. Many answers also commented on Eppie's role and how in their contrasting responses to her Eliot develops the characterisation through the action. Stronger answers also drew comparisons between their early history, the Lantern Yard community seen as being as destructive as the Cass household under the Squire, with some candidates referring to the lack of motherly or feminine influence, later provided by Eppie and Dolly for Silas and by Nancy for Godfrey.

Option **(b)** was also popular with many candidates exploring the way Eliot carefully controls the reader's response to Dunstan by her use of voice and language. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage with some responses drifting into a summary of Dunstan's role in the novel as a whole. Stronger answers were able to give the passage a precise context, exploring how the preceding events partly explained Dunstan's actions here and also the ominous significance of the last sentence. Candidates who focused on the language and the precision with which Eliot builds the tension leading to the dramatic ending often did well, with others noting that in his 'dread' there is at least a hint of a conscience in the otherwise repellent Dunstan, though for some the 'logic' of his self justification for the theft was indicative of the thoroughly selfish and unlikeable character we see tormenting Godfrey elsewhere in the novel.

The Return of the Native

This was very much the minority text on the paper. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to identify relevant moments in the novel, often giving detailed narrative summaries of the Mummerys section, the welcome of the heath folk to the 'newlyweds' or the use of bonfires, for example. This led weaker answers into summarising less relevant parts of the text; better answers planned the response, carefully selecting key moments in the structure of the novel or in the characterisation to explore some of the different ways in which Hardy uses the traditions to develop his plot. More successful answers saw these elements as part of Hardy's wider concerns with the rural landscape, especially the heath itself.

Candidates tackling option **(b)** had at least a basic knowledge of the context and most had some understanding of the significance of this passage in the structure of the novel. Stronger answers considered Hardy's methods for developing the tension and how carefully he reveals the scene to the reader, as Eustacia and Wildeve watch her mother in law from the shadows. Other answers explored how Hardy uses them to reveal to the reader what is happening, noting the use of dialogue to shape response and his narrative techniques in driving forward the action. More sophisticated answers were able to link this to the context tellingly, considering how this situation had arisen and why that would affect the two watchers and later Clym and Thomasin.

The Changeling

This was a popular choice in this session. Those who opted for **(a)** often had a detailed knowledge of the text, with candidates, who selected relevant material carefully, able to address the task in detail. Weaker answers tended to summarise relevant parts of the plot, with a few references to the key characters, considering whether their specific outcome was appropriate. Stronger answers saw how Middleton develops complexity of response through his characterisation of, especially, Beatrice and De Flores. Other answers saw just and unjust in terms of right and wrong or moral and immoral and were often able to develop a clear, even at times, sophisticated argument. Candidates who identified and evidenced the duality of much of the play's moral and social concerns often did very well.

Option **(b)** was also popular. Most answers were able to give this passage a clear context, leading to an understanding of Beatrice's attempt to shift the blame onto De Flores. Most candidates had a reasonable knowledge of the meaning with weaker answers tending to drift into a retelling of the whole of the Alsemero, Beatrice and De Flores triangle. Stronger answers concentrated on the detail of this passage, noting for example the use of religious and violent language, linking that to other parts of the play where Middleton uses the same methods. Many answers kept the audience clearly in view and were able to identify the various reactions that the words and action might engender, from horror at Beatrice's duplicity to sympathy for Alsemero and at least a reluctant acknowledgement of De Flores's honesty.

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20th Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates need to demonstrate a close reading of the texts. At a basic level they need more factual knowledge and understanding of plot, characters and concerns.

Those choosing **(a)** questions need to shape their material to the task and aim to cover a range of ideas as well as demonstrate an appreciation of a writer's methods by including some quotations for analysis.

Those choosing **(b)** questions need to understand that the main focus of the essay should be on the effects of the writing in the given extract or poem, with some detailed reference to the context or wider text to be able to show how far the printed passage is characteristic of a writer's methods or concerns or has significance for the whole text.

General comments

All questions proved accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements though some candidates seem to be interpreting 'concerns' as an invitation to discuss a writer's personal issues and attempted to interpret everything in the light of their biographies. Questions using a leading quotation offered the opportunity to candidates to adopt a critical stance, but these questions often prompted the most wide-ranging, perceptive and well structured responses. Strong answers developed ideas with clear paragraphing, offering discrete, relevant points supported by pertinent textual references and quotations. Well chosen connectives such as *moreover*, *furthermore*, *in addition* and *on the other hand* were used to help structure interesting, well informed, coherent arguments which arrived at a substantial personal conclusion in response to the question. Some candidates answering **(b)** questions found it more difficult to structure their responses and often resorted to the running commentary approach which was rather close to paraphrase, or wrote as if they were compiling a list of foot-notes to explain the significance or effect of a particular phrase or detail. Both approaches made it more difficult to generate a coherent, sustained discussion of relevant ideas and an appreciation of how writers shape meaning and a reader's response. Some candidates used the printed passage from the novel or play as a stimulus for more general discussion of the text and paid insufficient attention to the effects of the writing in the passages. Poetry was generally less well done. Good candidates who opted for **(b)** questions on poetry were secure in their understanding of the poem and able to analyse how aspects of form, choice of language and a variety of sound and rhythmic effects contributed to meaning and effect. Poor answers came from candidates who were often struggling to grasp the meaning of a poem or who drifted into personal reflections on what was being said.

The standard of expressive English was usually good or fluent enough to sustain communication of reasonably complex ideas. At many levels there was evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues, useful critical reading and personal insights into specific details. Many candidates communicated a real enjoyment and critical engagement with the texts they had studied. Others however seemed to have focused on summaries of the plot which limited their ability in **(a)** questions to discuss the significance of particular characters or ideas within the text, and compromised their ability to analyse language in answers to **(b)** questions. At all levels, candidates could improve their performance in the examination, by studying the mark scheme so they can learn to construct their answers more strategically. They need to choose those questions which allow them to demonstrate that they can select detailed knowledge and use relevant quotations to demonstrate a sound understanding of a range of literary methods and effects.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. Both questions produced answers across the range but there was often too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing, and personal response to the situations rather than discussion of Adcock's poetic methods and effects. On a technical level, some candidates mistakenly referred to lines as 'verses'.

- (a)** Candidates chose relevant poems: 'For Andrew', 'Toads', 'Willow Creek', 'In Memoriam: James K Baxter' and 'Mr Morrison'. Stronger candidates were able to make some comparison, mostly in terms of different attitudes to death or brushes with death, caused by different situations and relationships. Most, however, gave more or less detailed accounts of three poems. There was some attempt to discuss Adcock's use of different viewpoints, of how form contributed to meaning and effect, the use of colloquial diction, sentence structure and conversation. Too few, however, were prepared to look closely at how choice and placement of particular words, generated feeling and tone.
- (b)** 'House-talk' was attempted quite productively, usually through a running commentary approach with varying levels of detail. Stronger essays focused on the question and attempted to put the poem into the context of Adcock's family concerns or ideas about the past, with brief references to other poems to support ideas about her use of form and language. Literary appreciation of the poem was often competent but rather mechanical in noting the use of the senses, onomatopoeia, simile and rhyme. Stronger candidates sensed that the depth of the poem lay in the final stanza and discussed the effects of 'Surely', 'must', and the significance and possible tone of the final sentence. Weaker candidates tended to resort to paraphrase and wrote non-literary responses to parental attitudes to teenagers returning home late.

Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

Auden was not so popular this session with candidates doing better on the **(a)** question than the **(b)**.

- (a)** This was an open, accessible question and some candidates relished the opportunity to select some of the well known poems to show the variety of tone and effects of the voices in 'Refugee Blues', 'The Unknown Citizen', 'O what is that sound...?' and 'Musée des Beaux Arts'. Most essays tended to deal with one poem at a time and in weaker essays there was some reliance on summaries. Stronger essays, with quotations available, looked at the dramatic effects created by the use of point of view, situation, choice of language, structure and form. Occasionally a few candidates contrasted these with more intimate personal poems such as 'Lay your sleeping head' or 'The More Loving One', though consideration of love led to some irrelevant discussion of Auden's homosexuality rather than the poetic methods and effects.
- (b)** This issue also appeared in essays on 'A Walk After Dark'. Stronger answers understood Auden's use of the night sky as being emblematic of Nature's indifference to human affairs and made the occasional useful link to 'The More Loving One' or, if they understood the ending, discussed Auden's forebodings about developments in Europe and made reference to 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats', 'September 1st, 1939' or 'Refugee Blues'. Most attempted a running commentary, but only a few could track the ideas of youth and middle age, past and present coherently. Some candidates could explain the allusion to 'lacrimae rerum' but did not look closely enough at what follows to explain its significance within the context of the poem. Very few had the confidence to discuss the effects of 'clockwork spectacle', 'faultless machine', verbs like 'soaring' or 'hurled', phrases like 'the first little No' and the effects of the diction, sentence structure and rhyme in 'What needn't have happened did.' Weaker answers attempted to extract meaning and sometimes struggled to create a coherent paraphrase.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This novel continues to generate interest but many candidates write about it as though it were a straightforward autobiography and any quirkiness in content and style the result of mental illness.

- (a)** Despite the clear rubric to discuss the methods and effects of Frame's presentation of Grace, many candidates tried to show what Grace reflects of Janet Frame. The abundant autobiographical material was not helpful, especially when linked to schizophrenia and treatment. More perceptive answers considered Grace's ideas of how witty and entertaining a writer was expected to be and

referred with different levels of detailed knowledge to her humiliating interviews about the radio or with Philip Thirkettle. Some commented on the contrast between how witty she was in her private world of thoughts and memories and how awkwardly inarticulate in conversation. A few noted her obsession with words as a child, and the importance and vividness of her imagination when she recalls her memories. Very few referred to the scene in Philip's room where Grace describes what entering the creative zone, 'the View' feels like. Modest answers which attempted to focus intelligently and sympathetically on the question tended to suffer from a lack of specific textual reference. Ideas about method were mostly confined to the 'migratory bird' motif, and some general remarks about the use of internal monologues or stream of consciousness.

- (b) Similarly in dealing with the passage, many candidates could identify the immediate context and focused in a general way on Grace's social anxieties, particularly her fear of children, picking up the references to the 'migratory bird' motif and making relevant links to the wider text but with little reference to narrative methods. More productive essays looked in detail at the first paragraph and appreciated how some of the metaphorical references generated a sense of Grace's feelings. They understood the significance of 'The door to the other world stood wide open' to be the human world of awkward interaction and dialogue. A few confident candidates paid close attention to the way the dialogue was constructed to reveal Grace's difficulties and could refer to other occasions to show Grace's delight at her imagined conversations and self-denigration for her attempts in reality. Weaker answers attempted character portraits based on the passage or paraphrases.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

Both questions were equally popular and elicited answers across the range. The best were well informed about the broader textual issues of language and colonialism, were able to integrate this knowledge into their responses while at the same time considering dramatic effects and audience response.

- (a) Stronger essays briefly considered the issues and then showed Hugh's contribution to them showing detailed knowledge and intelligent understanding of his discussion with Yolland about language in Act 2 Scene 1. They discussed the significance for Gaelic of his love of Latin and Greek, his perception that 'a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of....fact.' and the dramatic effect of his inability to remember his translation of Virgil's the Aeneid. The best essays showed intelligent understanding of Hugh's function as well as an appreciation of his dramatic presence, confidently roaming around the play to demonstrate the complexity of the character: his romantic traditionalism, chauvinism with regards to the English language, pragmatism, and the way he is used to generate comic effects and pathos. Weaker answers took up critical positions which focused on a limited view of his character as being a selfish father, an irresponsible teacher and an alcoholic who was disrespected by his candidates.
- (b) This question was less well done. Candidates who did well were those who considered the dramatic function of the material in the scene, contrasting the pace of the short exchanges at the beginning, and the reflective descriptions of Lancey and Yolland's father which allowed Friel to show Yolland as a different sort of colonist, a romantic looking for self-realisation and identity. They commented intelligently on details, considering the foreshadowing of Yolland's death and Doalty's role in it with the image of him as a Grim Reaper bearing a scythe, and relished other examples of irony like Yolland's belief in his luck, the significance of his father's belief in 'a new world' and an awareness that despite Yolland's anxiety to learn to pronounce Gaelic words correctly, he would not be an outsider for long because he would soon be dead. More modest answers often displayed some imbalance with responses offering excessive discussion of the wider dramatic context, or having noted the lack of communication between Yolland and Doalty, drifting into a generalised discussion about language or Yolland and Maire's relationship. Those that focused narrowly on the passage tended to offer a character portrait of Yolland, treating the character as real and explaining him as a disappointment to his father and an admirer of Lancey, but romantically disposed to love Ireland because he was in love with Maire. Answers which used a running commentary approach also revealed a superficial reading and knowledge of the text. Interpretations of the significance and tone of Doalty's speeches were wide and many took the references to cattle to mean disrespectful references to the English. Doalty's cutting a path round Yolland's tent was used to suggest his kindness, and the brevity of Owen's speeches to suggest he could not really understand Yolland. There was some confusion over whom Yolland was talking about, Lancey or his father in the long speeches and while some attempted to summarise these there was little sense of their dramatic significance.

Question 5 L.P. HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This is becoming a popular text with some candidates showing detailed knowledge of the text and a good understanding of the characters with some appreciation of Hartley's narrative methods and effects. The novel often provokes strong views and candidates need to make sure they offer literary responses rather than emotive, empathetic or judgemental personal responses.

- (a) Those candidates who carefully considered the quotation did well. The best essays focused on the 'emotions', on how Hartley used the elderly Leo who referred to himself as a 'cindery creature' devoted to a 'life of facts, to present the young Leo as intensely emotional but innocent. They focused on his lack of understanding about adult emotions and relationships, particularly 'spooning', and his belief in his power to influence the outcome of Ted and Marion's affair. Others focused on the idea of Leo being a 'foreigner' in the upper class, adult world of Bandham Hall which they could illustrate well, and his adolescent crush on Marion with his loyalty to Trimingham which they understood but could not fully explore. Weaker essays resorted to retelling the love story and Leo's role, or taking a strong moral stance against Marion and Ted's affair and what was seen as their cynical exploitation and destruction of Leo.
- (b) Stronger answers were able to contextualise the passage with some efficient links to the wider text, to discuss significance and the use of symbolism. They explained the association of the belladonna with Marion and looked in some detail at Leo's description of it, picking on specific details like 'shady secret' and commenting on the effects of the grammatical parallelism of 'something of me I could not give....something that I did not want.' They also pointed out that though Leo did not know what he was hearing, he described it very accurately in the language of the elder Leo: 'a blend of urgency, cajolery and extreme tenderness.' Candidates were less secure on discussing the effects of the dialogue between Marcus and Leo, but some picked up the irony that the 'unforgiveable sin' was to be boring. Less productive essays attempted to paraphrase the passage or summarise the story of the affair.

Question 6 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

As with Janet Frame's *Towards Another Summer*, candidates do better when they focus on the fictionality and construction of the novel rather than biographical details. Many candidates had detailed knowledge of the text but struggled to shape it effectively to the tasks.

- (a) There were some impressive essays which effectively considered the question and discussed the methods used by Roy to present the relationship between the twins. They used ideas about parallel structures and comparisons with other relationships to show their contribution to themes such as the offence against the 'Love Laws', the significance of 'small things' and 'Loss'. Most answers described the nature of the twins' 'Siamese' relationship, demonstrated their ability to share dreams, the taste of tomato sandwiches and an awareness of feelings, showed their role as catalysts for a disastrous sequence of events and interpreted the incest as a means of dealing with their 'hideous grief'. Weaker answers focused on their role as victims of others and recounted the plot or could not get further than the incest which was often read as being a result of lust which suggested a limited understanding of Roy's purpose and the effects of her writing at that moment in the text. Candidates revealed partial understanding of the roles and significance of the twins when they treated them as real and wrote a case study explaining that the incest came about because they were deprived of love as children, because they were separated, that making love was quite normal because other members of the family had had inappropriate relationships. The best scripts offered a much more subtle, nuanced reading based on the language used by Roy at that point in the text.
- (b) This was a very rich and central descriptive passage in the text and those who read it closely, were able to show some sound, intelligent understanding of its function and effects. Good essays explained the narrative structure and discussed point of view here, picking a range of details to discuss how language conveyed decay, corruption and indifference. Some candidates saw the state of the river as reflecting the damage done to Rahel. They explained the significance of the river as a witness to happier times and the death of Sophie Mol, and how in the passage, not only was this reflected in the imagery of the skull, or the V-shaped wake of the speedboat, but that the description of the changes universalised Roy's concerns: that suffering in the book was not confined to specific individuals but to people of all levels of society. Many candidates understood and explored the socio-political satire evident throughout and were good on tone, though some made rather too much of Roy's reputation as an activist. Weaker candidates gave little sense that

they understood what was going on in the rest of the novel and attempted to pass the passage, tending to focus on the social concerns of pollution and poverty.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was the most popular text on the paper, with the majority opting for the (a) question. Both questions produced answers across the range, with some candidates showing some real appreciation of Soyinka's dramatic methods and comic effects.

- (a) Good essays were those where candidates had carefully considered the question and realised that the main thrust of it was 'By what means and with what effects...' They discussed in detail the use of Jero's soliloquies and how this 'honesty' affected an audience's response to the character, the changes in Jero's appearance and setting in the two plays as well as how other characters were used to show the nature of Jero's power and Soyinka's wider social and political concerns. Good essays looked at particular moments, like the final scene in *The Trials* and showed how a combination of action, lighting and quick-witted manipulation demonstrated his power. More modest answers had enough detailed knowledge of both plays to give evidence of Jero's strategies for gaining followers in the first play and blackmailing his rivals and politicians in the second. Weaker answers gave more or less detailed character studies, with little reference to the question and much discussion of his hypocrisy and weakness for women.
- (b) This was less popular, perhaps because of the absence of Jero until the end, although the significance of his arrival and the effects of his gestures and language were productively analysed in some good answers. Good candidates could explain the context and the comedy in the scene. They focused on the contrasting diction given to Silva and Chume to discuss music, the absurdity of the food imagery and Chume's outrage at the insult to his 'traditional food' set against the need for a 'straightforward rehearsal' for the next day's 'executions'. Some candidates considered Soyinka's broader satirical concerns, and interpreted Chume's defiant flourishes and dancing as an assertion of individualism against the repressive, conformity demanded by Silva as a representative of the educated, governing classes. Less assured answers tended to simplify the situation, thought Silva was a representative of British colonialism and that Chume knew nothing about music, could not play the trumpet and was just a stupid, ignorant fool, soon to be deceived into following Jero once again. Others resorted to a character study of Chume and gave an account of his role in *The Trials*.

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Key Messages

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General comments

All questions proved accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements though some candidates seem to be interpreting 'concerns' as an invitation to discuss a writer's personal issues and attempted to interpret everything in the light of their biographies. Questions using a leading quotation offered the opportunity to candidates to adopt a critical stance, but these questions often prompted the most wide-ranging, perceptive and well structured responses. Strong answers developed ideas with clear paragraphing, offering discrete, relevant points supported by pertinent textual references and quotations. Well chosen connectives such as *moreover*, *furthermore*, *in addition* and *on the other hand* were used to help structure interesting, well informed, coherent arguments which arrived at a substantial personal conclusion in response to the question. Some candidates answering **(b)** questions found it more difficult to structure their responses and often resorted to the running commentary approach which was rather close to paraphrase, or wrote as if they were compiling a list of foot-notes to explain the significance or effect of a particular phrase or detail. Both approaches made it more difficult to generate a coherent, sustained discussion of relevant ideas and an appreciation of how writers shape meaning and a reader's response. Some candidates used the printed passage from the novel or play as a stimulus for more general discussion of the text and paid insufficient attention to the effects of the writing in the passages. Poetry was generally less well done. Good candidates who opted for **(b)** questions on poetry were secure in their understanding of the poem and able to analyse how aspects of form, choice of language and a variety of sound and rhythmic effects contributed to meaning and effect. Poor answers came from candidates who were often struggling to grasp the meaning of a poem or who drifted into personal reflections on what was being said.

The standard of expressive English was usually good or fluent enough to sustain communication of reasonably complex ideas. At many levels there was evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues, useful critical reading and personal insights into specific details. Many candidates communicated a real enjoyment and critical engagement with the texts they had studied. Others however seemed to have focused on summaries of the plot which limited their ability in **(a)** questions to discuss the significance of particular characters or ideas within the text, and compromised their ability to analyse language in answers to **(b)** questions. At all levels, candidates could improve their performance in the examination, by studying the mark scheme so they can learn to construct their answers more strategically. They need to choose those questions which allow them to demonstrate that they can select detailed knowledge and use relevant quotations to demonstrate a sound understanding of a range of literary methods and effects.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. Both questions produced answers across the range but there was often too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing, and personal response to the situations rather than discussion of Adcock's poetic methods and effects. On a technical level, some candidates mistakenly referred to lines as 'verses'.

- (a)** Candidates chose relevant poems: 'For Andrew', 'Toads', 'Willow Creek', 'In Memoriam: James K Baxter' and 'Mr Morrison'. Stronger candidates were able to make some comparison, mostly in terms of different attitudes to death or brushes with death, caused by different situations and relationships. Most, however, gave more or less detailed accounts of three poems. There was some attempt to discuss Adcock's use of different viewpoints, of how form contributed to meaning and effect, the use of colloquial diction, sentence structure and conversation. Too few, however, were prepared to look closely at how choice and placement of particular words, generated feeling and tone.
- (b)** 'House-talk' was attempted quite productively, usually through a running commentary approach with varying levels of detail. Stronger essays focused on the question and attempted to put the poem into the context of Adcock's family concerns or ideas about the past, with brief references to other poems to support ideas about her use of form and language. Literary appreciation of the poem was often competent but rather mechanical in noting the use of the senses, onomatopoeia, simile and rhyme. Stronger candidates sensed that the depth of the poem lay in the final stanza and discussed the effects of 'Surely', 'must', and the significance and possible tone of the final sentence. Weaker candidates tended to resort to paraphrase and wrote non-literary responses to parental attitudes to teenagers returning home late.

Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

Auden was not so popular this session with candidates doing better on the **(a)** question than the **(b)**.

- (a)** This was an open, accessible question and some candidates relished the opportunity to select some of the well known poems to show the variety of tone and effects of the voices in 'Refugee Blues', 'The Unknown Citizen', 'O what is that sound...?' and 'Musée des Beaux Arts'. Most essays tended to deal with one poem at a time and in weaker essays there was some reliance on summaries. Stronger essays, with quotations available, looked at the dramatic effects created by the use of point of view, situation, choice of language, structure and form. Occasionally a few candidates contrasted these with more intimate personal poems such as 'Lay your sleeping head' or 'The More Loving One', though consideration of love led to some irrelevant discussion of Auden's homosexuality rather than the poetic methods and effects.
- (b)** This issue also appeared in essays on 'A Walk After Dark'. Stronger answers understood Auden's use of the night sky as being emblematic of Nature's indifference to human affairs and made the occasional useful link to 'The More Loving One' or, if they understood the ending, discussed Auden's forebodings about developments in Europe and made reference to 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats', 'September 1st, 1939' or 'Refugee Blues'. Most attempted a running commentary, but only a few could track the ideas of youth and middle age, past and present coherently. Some candidates could explain the allusion to 'lacrimae rerum' but did not look closely enough at what follows to explain its significance within the context of the poem. Very few had the confidence to discuss the effects of 'clockwork spectacle', 'faultless machine', verbs like 'soaring' or 'hurled', phrases like 'the first little No' and the effects of the diction, sentence structure and rhyme in 'What needn't have happened did.' Weaker answers attempted to extract meaning and sometimes struggled to create a coherent paraphrase.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This novel continues to generate interest but many candidates write about it as though it were a straightforward autobiography and any quirkiness in content and style the result of mental illness.

- (a)** Despite the clear rubric to discuss the methods and effects of Frame's presentation of Grace, many candidates tried to show what Grace reflects of Janet Frame. The abundant autobiographical material was not helpful, especially when linked to schizophrenia and treatment. More perceptive answers considered Grace's ideas of how witty and entertaining a writer was expected to be and

referred with different levels of detailed knowledge to her humiliating interviews about the radio or with Philip Thirkettle. Some commented on the contrast between how witty she was in her private world of thoughts and memories and how awkwardly inarticulate she was in conversation. A few noted her obsession with words as a child, and the importance and vividness of her imagination when she recalls her memories. Very few referred to the scene in Philip's apartment where Grace describes what entering the creative zone, 'the View' feels like. Modest answers which attempted to focus intelligently and sympathetically on the question tended to suffer from a lack of specific textual reference. Ideas about method were mostly confined to the 'migratory bird' motif, and some general remarks about the use of internal monologues or stream of consciousness.

- (b) Similarly in dealing with the passage, many candidates could identify the immediate context and focused in a general way on Grace's social anxieties, particularly her fear of children, picking up the references to the 'migratory bird' motif and making relevant links to the wider text but with little reference to narrative methods. More productive essays looked in detail at the first paragraph and appreciated how some of the metaphorical references generated a sense of Grace's feelings. They understood the significance of 'The door to the other world stood wide open' to be the human world of awkward interaction and dialogue. A few confident candidates paid close attention to the way the dialogue was constructed to reveal Grace's difficulties and could refer to other occasions to show Grace's delight at her imagined conversations and self-denigration for her attempts in reality. Weaker answers attempted character portraits based on the passage or paraphrases.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

Both questions were equally popular and elicited answers across the range. The best were well informed about the broader textual issues of language and colonialism, were able to integrate this knowledge into their responses while at the same time considering dramatic effects and audience response.

- (a) Stronger essays briefly considered the issues and then showed Hugh's contribution to them showing detailed knowledge and intelligent understanding of his discussion with Yolland about language in Act 2 Scene 1. They discussed the significance for Gaelic of his love of Latin and Greek, his perception that 'a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of...fact.' and the dramatic effect of his inability to remember his translation of Virgil's the Aeneid. The best essays showed intelligent understanding of Hugh's function as well as an appreciation of his dramatic presence, confidently roaming around the play to demonstrate the complexity of the character: his romantic traditionalism, chauvinism with regards to the English language, pragmatism, and the way he is used to generate comic effects and pathos. Weaker answers took up critical positions which focused on a limited view of his character as being a selfish father, an irresponsible teacher and an alcoholic who was disrespected by his candidates.
- (b) This question was less well done. Candidates who did well were those who considered the dramatic function of the material in the scene, contrasting the pace of the short exchanges at the beginning, and the reflective descriptions of Lancey and Yolland's father which allowed Friel to show Yolland as a different sort of colonist, a romantic looking for self-realisation and identity. They commented intelligently on details, considering the foreshadowing of Yolland's death and Doalty's role in it with the image of him as a Grim Reaper bearing a scythe, and relished other examples of irony like Yolland's belief in his luck, the significance of his father's belief in 'a new world' and an awareness that despite Yolland's anxiety to learn to pronounce Gaelic words correctly, he would not be an outsider for long because he would soon be dead. More modest answers often displayed some imbalance with responses offering excessive discussion of the wider dramatic context, or having noted the lack of communication between Yolland and Doalty, drifting into a generalised discussion about language or Yolland and Maire's relationship. Those that focused narrowly on the passage tended to offer a character portrait of Yolland, treating the character as real and explaining him as a disappointment to his father and an admirer of Lancey, but romantically disposed to love Ireland because he was in love with Maire. Answers which used a running commentary approach also revealed a superficial reading and knowledge of the text. Interpretations of the significance and tone of Doalty's speeches were wide and many took the references to cattle to mean disrespectful references to the English. Doalty's cutting a path round Yolland's tent was used to suggest his kindness, and the brevity of Owen's speeches to suggest he could not really understand Yolland. There was some confusion over whom Yolland was talking about, Lancey or his father in the long speeches and while some attempted to summarise these there was little sense of their dramatic significance.

Question 5 L.P. HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This is becoming a popular text with some candidates showing detailed knowledge of the text and a good understanding of the characters with some appreciation of Hartley's narrative methods and effects. The novel often provokes strong views and candidates need to make sure they offer literary responses rather than emotive, empathetic or judgemental personal responses.

- (a) Those candidates who carefully considered the quotation did well. The best essays focused on the 'emotions', on how Hartley used the elderly Leo who referred to himself as a 'cindery creature' devoted to a 'life of facts', to present the young Leo as intensely emotional but innocent. They focused on his lack of understanding about adult emotions and relationships, particularly 'spooning', and his belief in his power to influence the outcome of Ted and Marion's affair. Others focused on the idea of Leo being a 'foreigner' in the upper class, adult world of Bandham Hall which they could illustrate well, and his adolescent crush on Marion with his loyalty to Trimmingham which they understood but could not fully explore. Weaker essays resorted to retelling the love story and Leo's role, or taking a strong moral stance against Marion and Ted's affair and what was seen as their cynical exploitation and destruction of Leo.
- (b) Stronger answers were able to contextualise the passage with some efficient links to the wider text, to discuss significance and the use of symbolism. They explained the association of the belladonna with Marion and looked in some detail at Leo's description of it, picking on specific details like 'shady secret' and commenting on the effects of the grammatical parallelism of 'something of me I could not give....something that I did not want.' They also pointed out that though Leo did not know what he was hearing, he described it very accurately in the language of the elder Leo: 'a blend of urgency, cajolery and extreme tenderness.' Candidates were less secure on discussing the effects of the dialogue between Marcus and Leo, but some picked up the irony that the 'unforgiveable sin' was to be boring. Less productive essays attempted to paraphrase the passage or summarise the story of the affair.

Question 6 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

As with Janet Frame's *Towards Another Summer*, candidates do better when they focus on the fictionality and construction of the novel rather than biographical details. Many candidates had detailed knowledge of the text but struggled to shape it effectively to the tasks.

- (a) There were some impressive essays which effectively considered the question and discussed the methods used by Roy to present the relationship between the twins. They used ideas about parallel structures and comparisons with other relationships to show their contribution to themes such as the offence against the 'Love Laws', the significance of 'small things' and 'Loss'. Most answers described the nature of the twins' 'Siamese' relationship, demonstrated their ability to share dreams, the taste of tomato sandwiches and an awareness of feelings, showed their role as catalysts for a disastrous sequence of events and interpreted the incest as a means of dealing with their 'hideous grief'. Weaker answers focused on their role as victims of others and recounted the plot or could not get further than the incest which was often read as being a result of lust which suggested a limited understanding of Roy's purpose and the effects of her writing at that moment in the text. Candidates revealed partial understanding of the roles and significance of the twins when they treated them as real and wrote a case study explaining that the incest came about because they were deprived of love as children, because they were separated, that making love was quite normal because other members of the family had had inappropriate relationships. The best scripts offered a much more subtle, nuanced reading based on the language used by Roy at that point in the text.
- (b) This was a very rich and central descriptive passage in the text and those who read it closely, were able to show some sound, intelligent understanding of its function and effects. Good essays explained the narrative structure and discussed point of view here, picking a range of details to discuss how language conveyed decay, corruption and indifference. Some candidates saw the state of the river as reflecting the damage done to Rahel. They explained the significance of the river as a witness to happier times and the death of Sophie Mol, and how in the passage, not only was this reflected in the imagery of the skull, or the V-shaped wake of the speedboat, but that the description of the changes universalised Roy's concerns: that suffering in the book was not confined to specific individuals but to people of all levels of society. Many candidates understood and explored the socio-political satire evident throughout and were good on tone, though some made rather too much of Roy's reputation as an activist. Weaker candidates gave little sense that

they understood what was going on in the rest of the novel and attempted to pass the passage, tending to focus on the social concerns of pollution and poverty.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was the most popular text on the paper, with the majority opting for the (a) question. Both questions produced answers across the range, with some candidates showing some real appreciation of Soyinka's dramatic methods and comic effects.

- (a) Good essays were those where candidates had carefully considered the question and realised that the main thrust of it was 'By what means and with what effects...' They discussed in detail the use of Jero's soliloquies and how this 'honesty' affected an audience's response to the character, the changes in Jero's appearance and setting in the two plays as well as how other characters were used to show the nature of Jero's power and Soyinka's wider social and political concerns. Good essays looked at particular moments, like the final scene in *The Trials* and showed how a combination of action, lighting and quick-witted manipulation demonstrated his power. More modest answers had enough detailed knowledge of both plays to give evidence of Jero's strategies for gaining followers in the first play and blackmailing his rivals and politicians in the second. Weaker answers gave more or less detailed character studies, with little reference to the question and much discussion of his hypocrisy and weakness for women.
- (b) This was less popular, perhaps because of the absence of Jero until the end, although the significance of his arrival and the effects of his gestures and language were productively analysed in some good answers. Good candidates could explain the context and the comedy in the scene. They focused on the contrasting diction given to Silva and Chume to discuss music, the absurdity of the food imagery and Chume's outrage at the insult to his 'traditional food' set against the need for a 'straightforward rehearsal' for the next day's 'executions'. Some candidates considered Soyinka's broader satirical concerns, and interpreted Chume's defiant flourishes and dancing as an assertion of individualism against the repressive, conformity demanded by Silva as a representative of the educated, governing classes. Less assured answers tended to simplify the situation, thought Silva was a representative of British colonialism and that Chume knew nothing about music, could not play the trumpet and was just a stupid, ignorant fool, soon to be deceived into following Jero once again. Others resorted to a character study of Chume and gave an account of his role in *The Trials*.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
20th Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates need to demonstrate a close reading of the texts. At a basic level some candidates need more factual knowledge and a deeper understanding of plot, characters and concerns.

Those choosing **(a)** questions need to shape their material to the task and aim to cover a range of ideas as well as demonstrate an appreciation of a writer's methods by including some quotations for analysis.

Those choosing **(b)** questions need to understand that the main focus of the essay should be on the effects of the writing in the given extract or poem, with some detailed reference to the context or wider text to be able to show how far the printed passage is characteristic of a writer's methods or concerns or has significance for the wider text.

General comments

The questions proved accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements. The best scripts were characterised by wide-ranging, perceptive, well structured responses which offered some sustained discussion of relevant ideas and detailed analyses of how writers shape meaning and a reader's response. They showed a sensitive awareness of the significance of social, cultural and literary contexts. Even at a more modest level, it was clear that many candidates are developing a framework of literary ideas and critical skills which they are able to apply to some degree to the passages. It was good to see candidates confidently considering structure, point of view and symbolism, particularly in the novels. Sometimes, however they identified a few specific aspects of method or concerns which they could discuss with some sensitivity but they did not show how these discussions contribute to the development of ideas, significance or effect within a passage. Weaker candidates still tend to rely on narrative summary and paraphrase, offering personal views on what is being presented rather than how it is done. It was also rather noticeable this session that some candidates are using quotations from their critical reading as a substitute for personal discussion, and having quoted, do not follow up with specific references and more detailed analysis.

Candidates could improve their analytical skills by being encouraged to make a point, support it with a quotation and then explore how the significance or effect is achieved by making a specific comment on the choice of language. This applies to all the genres but candidates seem particularly inhibited in commenting on language in the poetry texts, tending to focus on extracting meaning rather than commenting on the effects achieved by the choice and placing of specific words. Some scripts in the lower bands were compromised by a lack of textual knowledge or tangential material, either biographical details or non-literary personal reflections and opinions. The standard of expressive English was usually very good or fluent enough to sustain communication of reasonably complex ideas. At many levels there was evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues and personal insights into specific details. Many candidates communicated a real enjoyment and thoughtful engagement with the texts they had studied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. In answers to both questions, there was often too little attention to Adcock's poetic methods and effects and rather too much irrelevant speculation about Adcock as a person.

- (a)** This was a straightforward question and most were able to choose appropriate poems. Stronger essays chose poems which allowed them to compare and contrast or to develop the treatment of a

concern such as death using 'For Andrew', 'Toads' and 'Willow Creek', or distance and place. The majority gave more or less detailed accounts of the poems and were usually able to discuss the situation and feelings involved. To do well candidates needed to consider the 'presentation' in the question and show how Adcock creates a sense of situation: her use of a particular moment, voices and conversation and explores her feelings through choice of language and tone, symbolism, control of rhythm and sound effects within a variety of poetic forms. Many candidates had an impressive amount of quotation available but need to use it more productively for analytical purposes to show their understanding of poetic methods and effects.

- (b) The issue here was to balance a detailed analysis of the printed poem with relevant, selected references to the wider text to discuss to what extent 'The Pangolin' was characteristic of Adcock's work. Stronger answers linked this poem to Adcock's concerns about the natural world and appreciation of individuality using some detailed references to 'The Three-toed Sloth', or 'Tadpoles', though they were less successful in trying to make use of 'Regression'. The best answers gave a sensitive, detailed exploration of 'The Pangolin', and discussed the animal imagery in some detail, working through the idea of how dreams can become not just bizarre but threatening. They also tracked the tone and noted the use of contrast both in adjectives and size or type of animal, with some enjoying the juxtaposition of 'vegetable animal' and the extended description that followed. A few considered the effect and implications of words like 'rest' 'cage' and 'invite' and were confident enough to focus on the sentence structure at various points such as, 'Yes, he would fit' within the context of the form and use of colloquial language and rhythms. Very few considered the impact of the final line: 'if he would care for it'. More modest answers tended to offer a paraphrased summary of content, without appreciating the poetry, while reference to other poems took the form of listing the titles or asserting that themes and concerns were also treated elsewhere.

Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

This was a popular text with candidates finding both questions accessible, though Stronger candidates tended to choose the (a) question.

- (a) Most candidates who tackled this question, recognised the context of the quotation and focused productively on the different ways Auden spoke out about world affairs. Essays talked about his concern with the indifference of humanity to the suffering of individuals and the best made relevant comparisons between examples of the what is assumed to be the poet's voice in 'September 1st. 1939', or 'Musée des Beaux Arts' with voices that are adopted for dramatic purposes in 'Refugee Blues' or 'The Unknown Citizen'. Most essays however, tended to deal with one poem at a time and those with quotations available were able to discuss with varying degrees of competence, some examples of Auden's choice of language and tone, some visual and sound effects and occasionally some aspects of form. In weaker essays there was some reliance on summaries and while understanding of the poems was generally clear, Auden's homosexuality is so central in the minds of some people that it had prominence even in this question. No credit can be given in responses for biographical speculation.
- (b) The same issue was inevitably raised by the printed poem, 'The More Loving One', though good candidates specifically commented on how the use of the stars and the pronoun 'we' universalised the reflections and explored how the poem dealt with the challenge of dealing with loss and rejection within a relationship. The shifts of tone in the poem, the use of colloquial expressions and the recognition of the ambivalent, wistful feeling in the final stanza were sometimes considered very productively. Stronger candidates attempted to focus on aspects of poetic method: for example the effects in specific places of the rhyme, the structural function and shift in ideas signalled by the change in rhythm and line length in the third stanza, the conversational rhythms of the sentence structure, the effect of 'terribly' on the tone and the depressing resonance of the assonance and alliteration in 'Were all stars to disappear or die'. Those who offered a linear approach often relied on paraphrases which revealed partial understanding: many could not work out how 'indifference is the least/We have to dread from man or beast' and the word 'sublime' proved a challenge. Some candidates took the words 'hell', 'beast', 'burn', 'damn' and the dark out of context to suggest Auden was aware his love was a sin and he feared the Final Judgement. Weaker candidates over-invested in too much empathetic personal response, ruminating on stargazing and the common occurrence of inequality in love.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This was a less popular text this session and though both questions provided answers across the text, candidates answered the (a) question more successfully. Some candidates seem to think that knowledge of the 'migratory bird' motif is all they need in answer to any question, and often struggle to get beyond a basic explanation of this.

- (a) The extent to which this question was well done depended on the availability of detailed knowledge and the way it was used to develop ideas. Most could explain Grace's need for an imaginary world, though many essays offered a mixture of psychological and biographical discussion rather than the literary approach that was required to answer the question: 'By what means and with what effects...' The question offered great scope for discussion of the way Frame presents Grace: the internal monologues which reveal her self-image, her desire to be thought witty and intelligent, the perfect guest and of course, her identity as a migratory bird. A few good candidates could refer in detail to specific places where the image cropped up and comment on the effects of the language, for example just after the humiliating radio interview, her arrival at Relham Station, or her walk to find the 'Industrial School' and her vision of the woman transforming into a magpie. Her constant retreat into an inner world in anticipation of social interactions or during them were also discussed generally and illustrated by a few. Attempts to make use of her memories were less successful because candidates tended to drift into narrative summary, rather than selecting specific examples of her isolation or anxiety over words and relationships.
- (b) Candidates who did well on this question were clear about the context and that this scene took place in Grace's head as a rehearsal and they enjoyed commenting on the way the sentence structure and choice of detail betrayed Grace's anxiety and coping mechanisms for going down to breakfast and telling the Thirkettles that she wished to go home. A few were able to track and comment on how Frame portrayed Grace's feelings: the apparent casualness with which she announces she was a migratory bird, the excitement with which she talks about the 'elaborate cement-mixer' processing thoughts, the talk about Time, culminating in the assertive demand 'listen to me. I matter.' Very few were able to contrast these flights of fancy with the deflation and embarrassment Grace felt when she actually arrived in the kitchen, 'too early. I have no sense of time' and broke the news she was homesick for her typewriter. More modest essays made some sensible links to the wider text and used the passage to support a character portrait of Grace, showing how she wanted to be the perfect guest, admired for her wisdom and capacity for fluent verbal display. Less secure candidates attempted to give narrative paraphrases of the passage or seized on the counting of the potatoes and the migratory bird motif as symptoms of Grace's mental illness which was then explained in terms of Frame's biography.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

This was a popular choice of text and both questions often elicited well-supported discussions showing evidence of the broader textual issues. There was extensive evidence of critical reading, on the issue of language, colonialism and the play itself. As always the test is how well this material is integrated into an argument, relevant to the question which also considers the text as drama. There was a tendency in both questions for some candidates to use quotations from the critics as a substitute for personal response and discussion.

- (a) This was a popular choice and those who considered the word 'hero' and the way Hugh is used to give the audience an understanding of the significance of the situation did well. Most competent essays presented an argument against his being a hero, as such, whilst seeing that he saw more fully than others what was happening and was also, in the final act showed that he was adjusting his attitudes towards acceptance of inevitable change. Crucial to the discussion was knowledge of what he says about language in conversation with Yolland in Act 2 Scene 1 with the best answers producing key quotations and intelligent discussion on the way Friel has given him some rueful irony, that Gaelic has 'a syntax opulent with tomorrows' and a pragmatic understanding that 'a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of... fact.' Good answers were also able to intelligently discuss the significance of his failure in the final scene to quote from the Aeneid, a poem written in the language of the victor about the fall of Carthage and how this paralleled the destruction of Irish culture and reflects the tragedy of the play. More modest essays provided a more or less detailed character study, the better ones balancing his positive qualities with his less desirable traits, his general slovenliness, exploitation of Manus and his drinking. Weaker essays often showed limited textual knowledge and strong personal response to the character as though he were real. It was claimed that Hugh was too drunk and

irresponsible to be a head teacher, was rude to his candidates and selfish in his... Manus, particularly in going for the headship of the national School. Many mistakenly... did become head of the new School in the end. It was also asserted that he cynically re... teach English because he needed the money, and that the real heroes of the play were Doan... the Donelly twins because they actively resisted the English, while he did nothing. These sim... views revealed a very partial understanding of the play and Hugh's role in it.

- (b) The passage was the more popular choice and most candidates were aware of the scene's significance as the crisis in the play. It often prompted close and appreciative analysis of its dramatic methods, particularly the visual and emotional impact of Lancey and Sarah's actions. There were apt references to other parts of the text, key aspects being the change in Lancey's manner from his first appearance earlier in the play and the clearly implied shifts in Owen's allegiance. The latter's earlier translations were compared with those of this scene and candidates clearly enjoyed tracking the use of irony from his translations of the place names from English into Gaelic, through Lancey's intimidating 'I know you. I know where you live' to Owen's use of the Gaelic 'Bun na hAbhann' as a defiant response to Lancey's aggressive bullying of Sarah. Most candidates showed a clear understanding of Sarah's symbolic role here, though weaker essays tended to explain this rather than focus on Friel's dramatic presentation of this in the scene. The immediate context of the disappearance of Yolland, the intense uncertainty about the future and the comic but fearful impact of Doalty's announcement enabled good essays to link the extract very firmly to its immediate and wider textual and historical contexts. Weaker essays tended to simplify the issues and lecture on the chaos and instability to follow if people don't learn a common method of communication.

Question 5 L.P. HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This is becoming a popular text with some candidates beginning to show a real understanding of the function of the dual perspective of the elder and younger Leo and some appreciation of the effects. However, both questions also occasioned some extended generalised personal response and assertions about Hartley's view of religious education and society which revealed a very partial understanding of the novel and Hartley's concerns.

- (a) There were some well illustrated expositions of magic and rituals. Many candidates included the Zodiac as part of Leo's ritualistic framework for making sense of his world, but otherwise well informed candidates did less well when they converted the question into one on symbolism. Strong answers included arguments about the way magic spells offer the young Leo the comfort of self-deception and apparent power but, at the same time, reveal his naivety and immaturity. These essays explained the zodiacal view as part of Leo's attempts to glorify Brandon Hall and his place in it, giving him the illusion of experiencing a golden age and inflating his sense of his own powers. Others looked closely at the implications of his obsession with the temperature. The best answers showing the most insight, were the ones which had significant quotations available, particularly of the destruction of the belladonna and his curse, so they could comment on how Hartley's language reveals what these meant to Leo. More modest answers gave more or less detailed factual accounts of key moments with some clear explanations of what they showed about Leo's character. A few candidates read the novel very literally, with little sense of there being an elder Leo who in the Prologue makes it clear that he does not believe in magic, knows the events at School were due to coincidences and who also colours the tone and shapes a reader's response to subsequent examples of young Leo's belief in his powers. There was much concern, for example, that Leo felt he was standing in a 'magic circle' on the cricket field, that this evidence of his belief in 'black magic' was the cause of the tragedy and that Hartley's purpose was to show the need for proper religious education.
- (b) The passage also produced a wide range of personal responses. Good candidates gave a close reading of the passage in the light of Leo's previous discussions with Marion's grandson. Many focused on the language used by Marion, her contradictions and illusions, her rhetorical questions designed to argue herself into maintaining her false view of the past. Many saw her as utterly heartless and manipulative, saw the irony of her assertion that she and Ted made Leo 'happy' and expressed some outrage at the use of the word 'instrument'. More nuanced readings understood the irony but wondered if Marion knew how the experience had affected Leo and looked more closely at his responses and the implications of his agreeing to act as go-between once more in these circumstances where Marion was wanting him relieve the 'spell or curse' of her grandson's shame. These more balanced answers looked more closely at the language, noting the structural elements, such as her reference to 'curse' and in particular 'the denatured humanity and planted

death' which they referenced back to the belladonna. Weaker answers either were character studies or narrative summaries or over-invested in personal response. They were angry at Marion for selfishly ruining Leo's innocence, for heartlessly not mentioning Ted in the deaths, and going against her class. They asserted that Hartley was concerned to show a causal link between Marion's immoral behaviour and her loneliness and saw the decline of the Maudsley family as symptomatic of the decline of Britain and the hideousness of the 20th century.

Question 6 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This continues to be a popular text, with candidates displaying an impressive amount of knowledge, though not always able to shape it in response to the task. The (b) question was the favoured option and generally better done.

- (a) Those candidates who picked up on the idea of 'structure' did well. There was some clear understanding of Rahel's role as narrator and that the reader engages with the novel through the experiences of the twins as presented by Roy through the interplay between past and present. The good essays were clear on the roles of the twins, in the way they were used to expose aspects of Roy's familial and social concerns through their treatment by other characters. Their incest was not only explained in terms of the nature of their relationship but understood as part of a thematic framework in the novel. Good essays considered what their relationship contributed to discussions about the 'Love Laws' and the other parallel, inappropriate relationships in the novel. Less assured essays described the twins singly and then their relationship, looking at their role as victims and tending to see them as catalysts for the plot. This resulted in a lot of quite detailed narrative summary. A few essays could see no further than the incestuous event and sought to explain it rather like a social worker's case study, with the weakest limiting their response to moral outrage at the bad examples of Ammu's marriage and affair, and their influence on the twins.
- (b) The passage was the more popular choice and some candidates were able to contextualise it briefly and quite precisely before offering close readings of its detail. A number considered the point of view, particularly who was making the bracketed comments, and were able to show appreciation of how a variety of language features and details linked back to the beginning of the book and Sophie Mol's funeral, or forward to her drowning. Much was made of the irony of Margaret's list of 'small things' to cover all events, the reference to Estha's recognition that 'Anything Can Happen To Anyone' and how no one could have anticipated Sophie Mol's death. They found both humour and foreboding in their considerations of more subtle details of tone and descriptive effects and discussed the full implication and effects of the capitalisation, imagery and sentence structure in the final paragraph. More modest answers often took a linear approach, focusing first on Chacko's relationship with Margaret and then Sophie Mol's behaviour and desire to be friends. They tended to consider the more obvious features of the writing such as the use of capitalisation, small objects and minor sentences in a more general way. Weaker essays relied on narrative summaries of the passage or of the whole novel or drifted into over-long discussions about overlapping Indian and Western cultures and hybridity.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was a popular text and both questions produced answers across the range. The passage was more popular than the (a) question.

- (a) Good answers used the question to structure a detailed, coherent argument, most suggesting that the female characters, particularly Amope and Rebecca, but also the minor characters, had equally serious significance in exposing aspects of Jero, revealing Soyinka's social and political concerns as well as comic appeal. Those who could, discussed comedy in terms of satire and Soyinka's targets, stock characters such as Amope as the hen-pecking, never-satisfied wife or Rebecca as the evangelising convert, and specific scenes were referred to discuss a variety of verbal and visual effects which included the brief appearances by other women. More modest answers discussed the roles and significance of the characters and discussed 'comic effects' in passing. Some candidates attempted to consider a feminist reading, but usually struggled to create a coherent argument that was effectively illustrated by the text. Weaker answers were less secure on detailed knowledge and dealt rather generally with each female character in turn.

- (b) This question offered a good opportunity to analyse Soyinka's dramatic presentation and was the more popular choice. The extent to which candidates did well, depended on how effectively they discussed Soyinka's satirical purposes, made good use of the variety of stylistic detail in the passage and could link it to the wider text to show in what ways it was characteristic of his methods and effects. There were some very good detailed discussions of the effect of Soyinka's use of the soliloquy on the audience. Candidates did not need to have studied Brecht to discuss this but wider reading on drama theory, the issue of realism in the theatre and how dramatists manipulate a relationship with the audience certainly helped to sharpen up discussion of methods and effects here. There were some good comparisons of this passage with the opening of Jero's *Metamorphosis* to discuss how setting, physical appearance, clothes, the picture of the uniformed figure and his relationship with Rebecca show the development of Jero as a character and the shift in the playwright's focus onto politics. Good candidates used the passage to show how Soyinka generated an ambivalent response to Jero in the first play and discussed the function and dramatic effect of the Old Prophet. To be at least competent, answers needed to have a balance of discussion between the passage and the wider text. The danger was that candidates would either confine themselves to the passage or use it as a jumping off point for a more general essay on Jero, which many did. Some answers covered the obvious aspects of the passage, the absurdity of being on the one hand 'born a natural prophet' and on the other referring to his vocation as a 'trade'; the use of the women in the territorial war to capture converts and evidence of Jero's strategies to gain power. Some weaker candidates read the plays very literally or had a very limited understanding of Soyinka's satirical purpose and thought he was mocking Christianity. They tended to write emotive character studies to expose Jero as an immoral man and false prophet who was in it for the money.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71
Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered each poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their responses.

Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages, upon how these shape meaning; they should not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.

Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, but – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poems or passages are written, not just to what is said.

Answers should maintain very tight focus on the given poems or passages, and not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General Comments

All Examiners reported that candidates showed a very good understanding of what the two prose passages said, and an often good understanding of the poem, though this question was much less commonly attempted. There was considerably less reliance upon simple narrative or paraphrase than has sometimes been the case in past years, with a consequently greater emphasis upon how each writer uses his language and his literary techniques to create meaning and to shape reader responses; this is what is expected in critical commentary. Answers were generally well organised, and in most cases showed that candidates had read the passages or poem carefully and thoroughly before embarking upon a critical discussion, so that there was clear evidence of a whole-passage or whole-poem understanding, and of how each small aspect of the writing contributed to this.

There were virtually no rubric concerns, with just one candidate responding to all three questions instead of the required two; most candidates completed both their answers, though a small number did resort to brief bullet-points when time had clearly curtailed their second answer – it is very important that no more than one hour should be spent on the first question, so that a further full hour can be spent on the second, and where this was the case then the second answer was often at least as good as the first, and sometimes better.

Technical terminology was better managed this session; most candidates *made use of* such terminology briefly and appositely, rather than just noting or identifying it.

Most answers demonstrated at least some degree of personal response to the writing, though this was rather too often a response to what is written, or to what happens in the passage/poem, rather than to the ways in which the writing works. Candidates are expected to argue and illustrate a personal appreciation of the writing put before them, and where this happened it invariably added strength to the response. One Examiner put it in this way: *“Most answers in higher Bands tended to take a view on the extract or on an aspect of it....and then drew on a series of examples to support and develop the ideas proposed”*.

One unusual feature of the responses this session was how relatively few candidates addressed the poem (**Question 2**), perhaps assuming that the two prose passages would necessarily be easier to manage, an assumption that was not always the outcome: there was certainly some very good understanding of both **Question 1** and **Question 3**, but much more could often have been made of each of them, and there were at the same time some very thoughtful, perceptive and occasionally very strong personal responses to the poem.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This question was very popular – almost all candidates attempted it, and almost all responded to the extract from the novel with a clear understanding of the text, and with at least some critical and personal engagement with Kingsolver's writing. Most saw how the pace of the passage develops and changes, moving from its strange and eerie opening to a faster-moving section as both Leah and Nelson begin to realise what has happened to Ruth May and become panic-stricken and in Leah's case guilty; the contrast between Leah's inability to move and Nelson's desperate attempts to save the child was well noted by all candidates.

The opening paragraph was well explored, with many candidates noting the dreadful irony in the description of Ruth May's cry as being "*like a baby taking its first breath*", when the reality is that the child is taking her very last breath. The expression "*a nervous wind*" was picked up by many as an effective example of a transferred epithet – the wind cannot itself be nervous, but Leah and Nelson certainly are. And many candidates considered the phrases "*the awful silence*" and "*the voiceless empty skin of my baby sister*" in paragraph two as further evidence of a growing horror at what has happened, even if the characters themselves are still unaware. Leah's attempts to reassure her sister in paragraph three suggest her great affection and concern for Ruth May, as well as offering evidence in its childish language that Ruth May is indeed very young.

Some candidates made the assumption in paragraph four that Nelson was in love with Ruth May, and even that they were physically lovers, hence his growing desperation to save her life; he certainly "*loved Ruth May.....I've seen how he sings to her and protects her*", but it is surely just the almost parental or avuncular love of a grown man for a child, nothing more. Leah's developing panic in this paragraph was well noted by most, culminating in the strange but very powerful two-word expression "*No eyes*", following the very striking image of a blue mask, suggesting the child's imminent or actual death from the snake bite.

The contrasts then drawn between Leah's panic-stricken shouting, followed by her horrific realisation that Ruth May's last impression of her sister could be of her screaming angrily at her, and Nelson's initial shock, followed in turn by his desperate actions in attempting to save her, were very well noted and discussed by almost all candidates. Similarly, Leah's curious concern for the buttons was discussed, usually as suggesting her refusal to believe what is happening, or her attempts to deny the truth to herself, though some candidates did take this to imply a criticism of the American girl's greater materialistic concerns than was justified in an African setting.

The closing paragraph returns to the quietness of the passage's opening, a point made by several candidates; almost all, however, commented on the irony of just two "*small and tidy*" marks being able to kill the child. The comparison of these two dots with "*punctuation marks at the end of a sentence*" was almost invariably noted as suggestive of the awful simplicity and finality of Ruth May's death.

There were no really poor responses to this passage, and some of the strongest were very astute and critically confident; some candidates correctly noted the difference between the adult narrator and the younger Leah's perceptions as described and remembered by her when adult, and commented thoughtfully on the fragmented nature of the writing, and thus of how memory can work.

Question 2

This was the least popular question, but it did elicit some interesting and often very thoughtful responses. Some less secure responses tended to describe or paraphrase what they felt was being written in the poem, though with varying degrees of confidence and understanding. Almost all answers identified that there is some contrast between inside and outside, with winter and the freezing wind outside and warmth and snugness inside, and that the walls and thatch keep the cold out. There is perhaps love between the speaker and another person, a love which overcomes adversity or keeps winter out, and creates a place of safety shut off from the outside world. There was also some recognition of possible progression of ideas, or perhaps a story with the death of the loved one occurring at some point, as implied in the final stanza. Words in the poem such as "*buried*" and "*ghost*" tended to be quoted to support this interpretation, though without necessarily appreciating what they appear to mean within their actual contexts.

There was usually clear identification of the very regular patterning of the poem, together with observation of the regularity of aural sound (rhythm and rhyme) and identification of some features – personification of the

wind or the coal for example – though many candidates found it harder to explain how these features helped to convey meaning. More confident candidates were able to go further than identification, and attempted to explain some possible effects of these features on the reader – effects of the aural and visual patterns of the poem being variously identified as calming or loving, or exemplifying the idea of safety, or that the contrast between the regular pattern emphasises the theme of unchanging love or Time, surely a central theme within the poem. This is a particularly interesting idea, showing the importance of going beyond simply identifying a particular technique and attempting to explore its possible effects and implications. Sound imagery was also identified and some contrast was noted between the wind's shout and the small voice of the coal. Stronger answers also recognised the concept of the lovers' microcosmic world – their "*small infinity*" – and linked this to the other ideas of Time within the poem.

The most confident responses began to access and explore ideas within the poem, for example the idea of Time as a ghost suggesting that Time itself is dead within the lovers' world – or that since you cannot see Time passing it is like a ghost; time is personified by Fairburn as a thief stealing Spring and turning it to Winter – primeval forests becoming coal and the fire releasing the sunlight with the blue flames being "*violet*". This possibly links with the dream face of the loved one who is possibly dead, yet very much alive to the poet, the final phrase ("*like young leaves in a forest place*") firmly rounding the poem off with a striking contrast to its opening lines.

The relatively few responses showed some confident critical perception, and an understanding of how each stanza, and even each line and image, contributes to an overall purpose and meaning. There were some very strong and personal ideas about what the poet is saying, and even when such ideas appeared to misread or misinterpret they were frequently – indeed more often than not – well and confidently argued and illustrated. The question was not popular, but it was on the whole well managed.

Question 3

As with **Question 1**, this passage was very popular, and elicited some strongly personal and critically perceptive responses; possibly because the situation described by Paul Watkins was very similar to some candidates' experiences there was clearly a good deal of sympathy for the boy narrator (though of course he is in reality writing in retrospect as an adult), and very often some clear antipathy towards his parents' apparent attitudes, and some strong dislike of Mr Vicker, the boy's new housemaster.

Almost all candidates commented on the abruptness of the opening sentence, and how it attracts immediate attention from a reader, together with the perhaps unexpected nature of the clothing that the boy is wearing in paragraph two – clearly unsuitable for a children's party, but at seven years old the boy is innocently unaware of this. In the same way, while he does see his mother's "*tear-blotchy face*" he does not – unlike the adult writer, and indeed the reader at this point – know why she is weeping at the apparent fact that her son is going to a party. Much the same was the case with candidates' responses to the father's seemingly cold handshake and simple "*Goodbye*" to his son, without even finishing his glass of sherry; several possible explanations were offered: the two parents had had an argument and did not want to go to the School together; they were cold and unfeeling parents, possibly even cruel; their son (as is perhaps hinted in lines 40-44) was poorly behaved and needed School discipline rather than parental love. Whatever the reason, most candidates clearly responded with some personal interest to this aspect of the extract.

Most, too, spent a good deal of time considering the writer's portrayal of Mr Vicker, whose "*stubby chin*", hair that was "*sharp like steel wool*" and trousers with "*hard creases*", is clearly depicted as cold and unfeeling, and the word "*swatted*" in line 26 simply but effectively emphasises his apparent dislike of the lively and would-be friendly boy who tries to touch his hair to see if it really is hard enough to cut. The fact that both his parents have effectively abandoned him to a housemaster who seems to dislike young boys, but who seems also to like drinking and smoking (line 34), called up a lot of thoughtfully argued and aptly supported sympathy from candidates.

Mr Vicker's voice echoing as if into a canyon (line 30), and then the narrator's sudden realisation that his father really has gone and that he now faces three months in this strange place, reinforces the loneliness and lack of understanding that he feels and that as an adult writer he re-creates with some very effective and moving writing. Many candidates commented on the fact that towards the end of the passage, after he realises that his naïvely hopeful dreams of working his passage back to America are simply ignored, he sits alone and "*between two dustbins*", almost as if he is himself a piece of abandoned rubbish, perhaps a little bit like the "*half-full sherry glasses*" that parents have left for Mr Vicker to tidy away. Among the most strikingly effective responses came to Mr Vicker's trouser creases: the fact that they "*fell back into their lines*" was suggested by some candidates to reflect just how Mr Vicker expected the new School boys also to fall into line.

There is much material in the passage to consider, and which creates for readers the mind of a young boy who is suddenly – though possibly not entirely unexpectedly – left by his parents in a new School, in a new continent, and among other young boys, none of whom seem at all interested in him or his brand of playing cards. All candidates who tackled this question made some interesting and thoughtful critical comments on it; some relied a little too heavily upon narrative, though in doing so often showed an implicit appreciation of how the boy's character is created by the writer; more confident ones managed, however, to explore much of the writing, and looked closely at its language and images. As one Examiner put it, *"Some of the best responses drew together a variety of examples of diction and imagery, conceptualising the idea and explaining cumulative presentational effects – for example linking the cauliflower jungle and the long thundering journey as ways of presenting the child's imaginative mind (not quite able to grapple with reality and living more in the world of imagination and stories) processing the distance between himself and home – the jungle being a hostile and impassable wilderness but juxtaposed with the prosaic meal-time image of cauliflower."*

Overall, then, a passage that is on one level very straightforward as a piece of narrative, but which is written with considerably more skill and sophistication than may initially be seen, and which certainly attracted some very thoughtful and critically successful writing from many candidates.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72 Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages

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Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, but – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poems or passages are written, not just to what is said.

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General Comments

All Examiners reported that candidates showed a very good understanding of what the two prose passages said, and an often good understanding of the poem, though this question was much less commonly attempted. There was considerably less reliance upon simple narrative or paraphrase than has sometimes been the case in past years, with a consequently greater emphasis upon how each writer uses his language and his literary techniques to create meaning and to shape reader responses; this is what is expected in critical commentary. Answers were generally well organised, and in most cases showed that candidates had read the passages or poem carefully and thoroughly before embarking upon a critical discussion, so that there was clear evidence of a whole-passage or whole-poem understanding, and of how each small aspect of the writing contributed to this.

There were virtually no rubric concerns, with just one candidate responding to all three questions instead of the required two; most candidates completed both their answers, though a small number did resort to brief bullet-points when time had clearly curtailed their second answer – it is very important that no more than one hour should be spent on the first question, so that a further full hour can be spent on the second, and where this was the case then the second answer was often at least as good as the first, and sometimes better.

Technical terminology was better managed this session; most candidates *made use of* such terminology briefly and appositely, rather than just noting or identifying it.

Most answers demonstrated at least some degree of personal response to the writing, though this was rather too often a response to what is written, or to what happens in the passage/poem, rather than to the ways in which the writing works. Candidates are expected to argue and illustrate a personal appreciation of the writing put before them, and where this happened it invariably added strength to the response. One Examiner put it in this way: *“Most answers in higher Bands tended to take a view on the extract or on an aspect of it....and then drew on a series of examples to support and develop the ideas proposed”*.

One unusual feature of the responses this session was how relatively few candidates addressed the poem (**Question 2**), perhaps assuming that the two prose passages would necessarily be easier to manage, an assumption that was not always the outcome: there was certainly some very good understanding of both **Question 1** and **Question 3**, but much more could often have been made of each of them, and there were at the same time some very thoughtful, perceptive and occasionally very strong personal responses to the poem.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

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The opening paragraph was well explored, with many candidates noting the dreadful irony in the description of Ruth May's cry as being *"like a baby taking its first breath"*, when the reality is that the child is taking her very last breath. The expression *"a nervous wind"* was picked up by many as an effective example of a transferred epithet – the wind cannot itself be nervous, but Leah and Nelson certainly are. And many candidates considered the phrases *"the awful silence"* and *"the voiceless empty skin of my baby sister"* in paragraph two as further evidence of a growing horror at what has happened, even if the characters themselves are still unaware. Leah's attempts to reassure her sister in paragraph three suggest her great affection and concern for Ruth May, as well as offering evidence in its childish language that Ruth May is indeed very young.

Some candidates made the assumption in paragraph four that Nelson was in love with Ruth May, and even that they were physically lovers, hence his growing desperation to save her life; he certainly *"loved Ruth May.....I've seen how he sings to her and protects her"*, but it is surely just the almost parental or avuncular love of a grown man for a child, nothing more. Leah's developing panic in this paragraph was well noted by most, culminating in the strange but very powerful two-word expression *"No eyes"*, following the very striking image of a blue mask, suggesting the child's imminent or actual death from the snake bite.

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The closing paragraph returns to the quietness of the passage's opening, a point made by several candidates; almost all, however, commented on the irony of just two *"small and tidy"* marks being able to kill the child. The comparison of these two dots with *"punctuation marks at the end of a sentence"* was almost invariably noted as suggestive of the awful simplicity and finality of Ruth May's death.

There were no really poor responses to this passage, and some of the strongest were very astute and critically confident; some candidates correctly noted the difference between the adult narrator and the younger Leah's perceptions as described and remembered by her when adult, and commented thoughtfully on the fragmented nature of the writing, and thus of how memory can work.

Question 2

This was the least popular question, but it did elicit some interesting and often very thoughtful responses. Some less secure responses tended to describe or paraphrase what they felt was being written in the poem, though with varying degrees of confidence and understanding. Almost all answers identified that there is some contrast between inside and outside, with winter and the freezing wind outside and warmth and snugness inside, and that the walls and thatch keep the cold out. There is perhaps love between the speaker and another person, a love which overcomes adversity or keeps winter out, and creates a place of safety shut off from the outside world. There was also some recognition of possible progression of ideas, or perhaps a story with the death of the loved one occurring at some point, as implied in the final stanza. Words in the poem such as *"buried"* and *"ghost"* tended to be quoted to support this interpretation, though without necessarily appreciating what they appear to mean within their actual contexts.

There was usually clear identification of the very regular patterning of the poem, together with observation of the regularity of aural sound (rhythm and rhyme) and identification of some features – personification of the

wind or the coal for example – though many candidates found it harder to explain how these features helped to convey meaning. More confident candidates were able to go further than identification, and attempted to explain some possible effects of these features on the reader – effects of the aural and visual patterns being variously identified as calming or loving, or exemplifying the idea of safety, or that the contrast between the regular pattern emphasises the theme of unchanging love or Time, surely a central theme within the poem. This is a particularly interesting idea, showing the importance of going beyond simply identifying a particular technique and attempting to explore its possible effects and implications. Sound imagery was also identified and some contrast was noted between the wind's shout and the small voice of the coal. Stronger answers also recognised the concept of the lovers' microcosmic world – their "*small infinity*" – and linked this to the other ideas of Time within the poem.

The most confident responses began to access and explore ideas within the poem, for example the idea of Time as a ghost suggesting that Time itself is dead within the lovers' world – or that since you cannot see Time passing it is like a ghost; time is personified by Fairburn as a thief stealing Spring and turning it to Winter – primeval forests becoming coal and the fire releasing the sunlight with the blue flames being "*violet*". This possibly links with the dream face of the loved one who is possibly dead, yet very much alive to the poet, the final phrase ("*like young leaves in a forest place*") firmly rounding the poem off with a striking contrast to its opening lines.

The relatively few responses showed some confident critical perception, and an understanding of how each stanza, and even each line and image, contributes to an overall purpose and meaning. There were some very strong and personal ideas about what the poet is saying, and even when such ideas appeared to misread or misinterpret they were frequently – indeed more often than not – well and confidently argued and illustrated. The question was not popular, but it was on the whole well managed.

Question 3

As with **Question 1**, this passage was very popular, and elicited some strongly personal and critically perceptive responses; possibly because the situation described by Paul Watkins was very similar to some candidates' experiences there was clearly a good deal of sympathy for the boy narrator (though of course he is in reality writing in retrospect as an adult), and very often some clear antipathy towards his parents' apparent attitudes, and some strong dislike of Mr Vicker, the boy's new housemaster.

Almost all candidates commented on the abruptness of the opening sentence, and how it attracts immediate attention from a reader, together with the perhaps unexpected nature of the clothing that the boy is wearing in paragraph two – clearly unsuitable for a children's party, but at seven years old the boy is innocently unaware of this. In the same way, while he does see his mother's "*tear-blotchy face*" he does not – unlike the adult writer, and indeed the reader at this point – know why she is weeping at the apparent fact that her son is going to a party. Much the same was the case with candidates' responses to the father's seemingly cold handshake and simple "*Goodbye*" to his son, without even finishing his glass of sherry; several possible explanations were offered: the two parents had had an argument and did not want to go to the School together; they were cold and unfeeling parents, possibly even cruel; their son (as is perhaps hinted in lines 40–44) was poorly behaved and needed School discipline rather than parental love. Whatever the reason, most candidates clearly responded with some personal interest to this aspect of the extract.

Most, too, spent a good deal of time considering the writer's portrayal of Mr Vicker, whose "*stubby chin*", hair that was "*sharp like steel wool*" and trousers with "*hard creases*", is clearly depicted as cold and unfeeling, and the word "*swatted*" in line 26 simply but effectively emphasises his apparent dislike of the lively and would-be friendly boy who tries to touch his hair to see if it really is hard enough to cut. The fact that both his parents have effectively abandoned him to a housemaster who seems to dislike young boys, but who seems also to like drinking and smoking (line 34), called up a lot of thoughtfully argued and aptly supported sympathy from candidates.

Mr Vicker's voice echoing as if into a canyon (line 30), and then the narrator's sudden realisation that his father really has gone and that he now faces three months in this strange place, reinforces the loneliness and lack of understanding that he feels and that as an adult writer he re-creates with some very effective and moving writing. Many candidates commented on the fact that towards the end of the passage, after he realises that his naïvely hopeful dreams of working his passage back to America are simply ignored, he sits alone and "*between two dustbins*", almost as if he is himself a piece of abandoned rubbish, perhaps a little bit like the "*half-full sherry glasses*" that parents have left for Mr Vicker to tidy away. Among the most strikingly effective responses came to Mr Vicker's trouser creases: the fact that they "*fell back into their lines*" was suggested by some candidates to reflect just how Mr Vicker expected the new School boys also to fall into line.

There is much material in the passage to consider, and which creates for readers the mind of a young boy who is suddenly – though possibly not entirely unexpectedly – left by his parents in a new School, in a new continent, and among other young boys, none of whom seem at all interested in him or his brand of playing cards. All candidates who tackled this question made some interesting and thoughtful critical comments on it; some relied a little too heavily upon narrative, though in doing so often showed an implicit appreciation of how the boy's character is created by the writer; more confident ones managed, however, to explore much of the writing, and looked closely at its language and images. As one Examiner put it, *"Some of the best responses drew together a variety of examples of diction and imagery, conceptualising the idea and explaining cumulative presentational effects – for example linking the cauliflower jungle and the long thundering journey as ways of presenting the child's imaginative mind (not quite able to grapple with reality and living more in the world of imagination and stories) processing the distance between himself and home – the jungle being a hostile and impassable wilderness but juxtaposed with the prosaic meal-time image of cauliflower."*

Overall, then, a passage that is on one level very straightforward as a piece of narrative, but which is written with considerably more skill and sophistication than may initially be seen, and which certainly attracted some very thoughtful and critically successful writing from many candidates.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered each poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their responses.

Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages, upon how these shape meaning; they should not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.

Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, but – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poems or passages are written, not just to what is said.

Answers should maintain very tight focus on the given poems or passages, and not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General Comments

Examiners reported that candidates this session showed a generally good understanding of what the three passages (two prose and one poem) say, and of how they are written. There was rather less reliance upon simple narrative or paraphrase than has sometimes been the case in past years, with a consequently greater emphasis upon how each writer uses language and literary techniques to create meaning and to shape reader responses; this is how critical commentary should be approached and constructed. Answers were generally well organised, and suggested that in most cases candidates had read the passages or poem carefully and thoroughly before embarking upon a critical discussion, so that there was clear evidence of a whole-passages or whole-poem understanding, and of how each small aspect of the writing contributed to this.

There were no rubric concerns; most candidates completed both their answers, though a small number did resort to brief bullet-points when time had clearly defeated their second answer – it is very important that no more than one hour should be spent on the first question, so that a further full hour can be spent on the second, and where this was the case then the second answer was often at least as good as the first, and sometimes better.

Comment will be made later about the use made of technical terminology, but this was again something that was on the whole better managed this session; many candidates *made use of* such terminology briefly and appositely, rather than just noting or identifying it. A few candidates did offer an almost list-like approach, identifying a series of literary techniques and where possible illustrating these from the extracts, with little or sometimes no evidence that they could see the impacts that these techniques created; such an approach inevitably led to some very piecemeal responses, and could not be marked highly, so it is strongly recommended that this kind of response is firmly discouraged in future.

Most answers demonstrated at least some degree of personal response to the writing, though this was rather too often a response to what is written, or to what happens in the passage/poem, rather than to the ways in which the writing works. Candidates are expected to argue and illustrate a personal appreciation of the writing put before them, and where this happened it invariably added strength to the response. One Examiner put it in this way: *“Most answers in higher mark bands tended to take a view on the extract or on an aspect of it....and then drew on a series of examples to support and develop the ideas proposed”*.

Mention has been made in the past of the presentation of work, and this is something that should be repeated, so that future candidates can keep it in mind. No marks were given for good presentation, but marks were taken away for poor presentation – whether of handwriting, spelling, punctuation, or paragraphing – but in the future, for the sake of their personal pride candidates should be strongly advised that paying careful attention to these factors inevitably leads to more appealing and more confident scripts. Space was not always managed well between the two questions, even to the point once or twice where it was not clear where one ended and the next began; beginning the second response on a new side of paper was invariably clearer, and more helpful to Examiners.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This was addressed by most candidates with some sensitivity to the situation presented by the writer, and to the ways in which he shows Bigger's nervousness in the face of an authoritative but clearly kindly white man. The opening sentence was used by most candidates as evidence of this anxiety: Bigger whispers, fumbles with his cap and even finds breathing to be an effort, all points that most candidates noticed and identified. The following few lines similarly show uncertainty: Mr Dalton's questions are clear and firm, while Bigger's replies are brief and repetitive. Dropping his cap in line 12 was seen by some more confident candidates as suggestive of an awareness of his inferior position, though at this point – despite what the introductory rubric says – there is no explicit sense in the writing of any racial status or inequality; this, however, is a feature of the extract that clearly, and rightly, became the focus of some responses.

The fact that in line 17 the cat is white was taken by some candidates to be symbolic of Mr Dalton's race, and the ways that he is "*stroking the cat's fur and smiling*" was taken by some to be further evidence of the man's clear feeling of racial superiority and indeed smugness, a point that was certainly arguable but perhaps not quite as definite in the extract as this suggests. It was at this point that some candidates began to lose touch with the writing, and moved away from it to consider and discuss their own views of the apparently racist attitude demonstrated in the passage, and in mid-20th century America more generally; as noted in the General Comments above, personal response is certainly looked for and expected in answers, but it must very firmly be to *how* the writing is managed, rather than simply to *what* is said and written, and certainly not to more general contextual matters.

Whatever may possibly be the case in the whole novel from which this extract is taken, there can be no doubt that throughout its 91 lines Mr Dalton is presenting himself as a kindly and warm man, trying his best to put Bigger at ease, a point made by many candidates, who singled out a range of points to support this: Mr Dalton says (line 34) "*Take your time*"; he invites him (line 60) to sit down rather than stand; he is clearly aware that Bigger has in the past been accused of theft, but (lines 78-80) he tells Bigger not to feel ashamed of this, and says that "*I was a boy myself once*", so understands Bigger's actions, and invites him to smoke. This could of course be seen, as a few candidates suggested, to mean that he is a criminal himself and is simply trying to persuade Bigger to join in with some illegal activity, but nothing of this sort is made explicit. The fact is that by the end of line 91 he has persuaded Bigger to show his true feelings, and the shy and uncertain young man finally demonstrates a real and angry reaction to the apparently false accusation that has been levelled at him.

There are many interesting things that can be said about the ways in which the writer portrays the two characters in this extract, and all candidates picked up at least some of them; even when answers were more narrative than critical in focus there was usually enough reference to the text to show at least an implicit understanding. However, supportive illustrations and above all else direct quotations from the passage were not always as full or frequent as they could have been.

Question 2

This is a rich and powerful poem, with plenty of ideas and certainly plenty of specific literary techniques to consider, and those who did write about it often made some very thoughtful and interesting critical comments.

As is often the case, though for some reason with poems more than prose or drama, some candidates spent a perhaps unhelpfully long time wondering about its title: why, they wondered, should it be called a "song", when the speaker is so obviously in distress? and why a "village" song? The answers to these questions may in the end have to remain the knowledge of the poet alone, and speculation is never helpful in a piece of critical writing, but two perfectly sensible and valid points were made by some candidates: the speaker is

presumably from a remote village, as she has to fetch water rather than rely upon taps. The poem is significantly the whole poem is about isolation, loneliness, fear; it is also a poem that relies very much on rhyme and repetition for its effects, and in that sense can be seen to act and sound much like a song.

Several candidates noticed the apparently strange inversions in the opening two lines – “Full are the pitchers”, “Lone is the way” – but only a few suggested that by doing this the poet is laying particular and heavy stress upon the first word in each case, to make very clear what the speaker is feeling. In the same way, lines 3 and 4 begin with significant words, and the repeated “Why” in line 3 is mimetic of the girl’s fear and worry, knowing that she has been “lured” by the seductive song of the boatman. Already we are made aware of her very mixed feelings of fear, worry, and a longing for something more than tiring menial work. At the same time, the poet gives these four lines very tight rhythm and rhyme; the speaker’s emotions are powerful but kept under control, perhaps suggesting her strength of character; most candidates noted the rhyme and rhythm, but did not often try to explore possible reasons or possible effects.

In a similar way, the pace of the first stanza (and indeed the second, which has the same pattern and control) picks up from line 5 onwards, the triple rhyme in lines 8-10 making the speaker’s thoughts even faster and more desperate, leading to the brief but very powerful cry in line 11, tied by its rhyme to “the wild owl’s cry” of line 7. This stanza form is in some ways quite strange – it is rare for there to be 11 lines, with a rhyming pattern ABABCCDEEED, and lines of apparently randomly varying lengths – but because the second stanza has exactly the same structure it is clearly deliberate, and candidates who tried to explore at least something of why the poet has done this made much more critically successful responses than did those who simply noted and listed the apparent strangeness.

Candidates also noted the accumulation of dark and fearful words in the poem – *shadows of night, wild owl, darkness, serpent, evil spirit, shadows of evening, black birds, storm, lightning* – and more confident ones could clearly see how these are used by the poet to suggest how the girl is so frightened of what has happened, and of what might therefore be the result, hence her repeated cry of “*Ram Re Ram*” at the end of each stanza. There is, however – a point noticed by a few perceptive candidates – a slight but very significant difference here: stanza 1 ends on a note of ominous terror (“*if an evil spirit should smite me...*”), while stanza 2 has a much more hopeful tone, despite its last three words – its call to a god to “*succour my footsteps and guide me*” is strong and even optimistic in its inferences, so that the poem does indeed end in an almost positive and arguably song-like manner.

Those relatively few candidates who tackled the poem often saw at least some of the ideas suggested above, and some began to explore ways in which its structure created particular effects. Those who simply paraphrased it, or who listed its literary techniques but with little or even no sense of how these were working, could not show so much critical confidence, and could therefore not be rewarded so highly.

Question 3

Candidates who tackled this passage found plenty of material to consider, and looked at both the small details of the writing in it and at its overall form and structure; its very melodramatic nature was well noted by many, who found ample evidence of this in the language and images used, and in the way in which the writer presents the various actions and discoveries that she is creating for her readers.

Most commented very aptly on the shadowy, gloomy and already melodramatic nature of the opening paragraph: the words *terribly pale, dim dusk, pale and shadowy, long feverish slumber* are all used to portray a disturbed character within a highly disturbed atmosphere, and the string of adjectives that is then used to describe Aurora herself – *passionate, impetuous, spoiled child of fortune* – make it very clear that she is likely to prove overly self-conscious and dramatic in her actions, a view proposed by some perceptive candidates, and reinforced by the way in which she leaps up and greets her husband in lines 8 to 14; her husband was seen by many as perhaps being equally melodramatic, and – as evidenced by what is said later in the extract – arguably entirely hypocritical as well in his highly exaggerated words in lines 17 to 20.

The pace of the extract slows at this point, as Talbot Bulstrode takes control; all appears calm and relaxed while he speaks, and many candidates noted Aurora’s almost complete transformation, while still commenting on her over-romanticised belief in the apparent perfection of her husband (she is “*supremely unconscious that the scheme of creation included anything beyond this stalwart Yorkshireman*”).

There is, however, quietly but very significantly, another shift in the mood, and the most perceptive candidates noted that at this point in line 36 Talbot lights a lamp; it may be only shaded, and it may throw only a dim light, but it nonetheless foreshadows the entirely unexpected fact that a further trial is to be carried out, and, later in the passage, that Aurora herself is a suspect of the murder. For a few moments all is still

relatively quiet, but as once more some candidates saw, the writer makes Aurora look at the light again symbolic of her growing realisation of the horror surrounding her. Unlike the melodrama of the opening paragraphs, however, her attitude this time is quiet and quite strong in its determination to face the truth. It is her husband, as better candidates saw, who this time is perhaps exaggeratedly romantic in what he says in lines 62 to 65, as he tries to justify both his own wavering belief about his wife's innocence and his own folly in believing her to be guilty of murder. Aurora's final words, after the writer deliberately makes her pause, are suggestive of a character who may in the end be stronger than her husband, an idea proposed by a few candidates.

As with **Question 1**, and to a lesser extent **Question 2**, there were some candidates who did relatively little but narrate and paraphrase, sometimes but not always with supporting quotation; their responses certainly showed some outline knowledge of what happens, and what is said, in the extract, but as has been said earlier in this Report and indeed in others before this, knowledge by itself is not enough for a high mark. Candidates are always in this Paper expected to show at least some sense of how a writer selects and uses words and images to create her or his effects, and of how personal and individual critical responses to the writing are influenced and formed. To show an awareness that Bigger (**Question 1**) is nervous, and overawed by being in the presence of a powerful and dominating white man, or an understanding that Aurora (**Question 3**) is assailed by a range of highly exaggerated emotions, and that her husband is perhaps not quite so much in love with her as she believes, was certainly to show a response and an appreciation of what is written, but unless it went further than this an answer was never likely to move beyond a low mark; higher marks could be awarded only to those answers which at least tried to explore and understand how each writer works, with the highest marks reserved for those showing a real perception and an individuality of critical insight.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

Key Messages

Good answers will:

- address the two questions and texts with clear and concise focus;
- explore how the two writers create their particular effects, discussing their literary techniques in some detail;
- support what is said with brief, apt textual quotation and reference;
- make some appropriate use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments;
- where practicable, write on individually selected and worded tasks, to make responses as personal as possible;
- ensure that the work submitted remains within the overall 3000 word limit.

Coursework folders were carefully and efficiently completed, with very obvious care having been taken when considering the marks to be awarded; annotations and summative comments were helpful and often very detailed, and where they were combined with double marking it was evident that teaching staff had spent a lot of time and concern over the work of their candidates. The work itself was of course quite varied, in both character and critical quality, but what was evident yet again was that almost without exception candidates demonstrated at the very least a sound knowledge of their two chosen texts, and in most cases an awareness that considerably more than simple knowledge was required, so that close critical reading and judgement, supported by plenty of textual quotation and/or reference, were the norm rather than the exception. There was no poor work, some work was of a very confident and sophisticated nature, with a clear appreciation of the best academic and critical conventions.

Most Centres, as in previous sessions, had clearly offered their candidates a range of questions, and sometimes also of texts, though except in unusually large Centres the latter was necessarily quite rare. Less confident candidates are often helped by being given a more straightforward question, while the most confident on the other hand may be best served by being given a more difficult and demanding one; teaching staff of course know their candidates in ways that no external Moderator possibly can, and the choice and decision must be theirs alone, but it is almost invariably the case that some of the best work seen by Moderators comes from candidates who have worked on questions that not every other candidate in the Centre has done. Where this was the case this session then their responses were more independent and individual, and while there had of course been much common teaching, discussion and preparation, what candidates wrote was almost always fresher and more personally independent.

Personal response is very important, perhaps especially so in Coursework, where there has been time for some wider reading and research, and it was clear that most candidates had been encouraged to make use of such research in what they wrote, in the form of relevant contextual ideas, and a few aptly quoted critical comments from secondary sources, whether from printed material or from websites. There could not be a huge amount of this – it is very important that the overall 3000-word limit is adhered to, as indeed it was by all candidates – but a few relevant thoughts and ideas certainly helped candidates as they worked towards and developed their own ideas. Most such material was, as it must be, properly and appropriately *used* by candidates, not simply quoted for its own sake; no credit could ever be given just for showing that critical texts or websites had been consulted, but where they formed an integral part of an argument they were quite correctly rewarded. In most cases, this material was properly and often fully acknowledged in either footnotes or in a summative bibliography; quite apart from helping to guard against possible plagiarism, such acknowledgement is an essential factor in academic work, and candidates who adopted such an approach were certainly being thoughtfully guided towards what they will face as they undertake further and higher study.

Similarly, some contextual material was often very helpful in adding weight to an argument; such material that candidates introduced was biographical, social, historical, cultural, and while again it had no particular

value on its own, where it was used to help and support a developing argument it frequently added to what was written.

A few more general points are worth making in conclusion:

- annotation by the Centre has been mentioned, and it is worth reiterating that most this session was very detailed and helpfully directed, showing Moderators exactly where and in what ways each candidate had addressed the demands of the Syllabus and marking criteria; marginal annotation was not over-detailed – in fact if it is so then it can be unhelpful and even distracting; summative comments on each piece, however, were particularly useful, especially when using terms found in the marking scheme;
- when a collection of poems is used, it is vital that enough poems are considered to make it clear that a substantial number has been studied. It is impossible to define exactly what such a number must be, because so much must depend upon the length and the complexity of any poem, but it is unlikely that a high mark should be awarded to any essay that relies upon fewer than five or six; the same is true if a collection of short stories is used. Most candidates this session covered an apt number, and their responses demonstrated some good appreciation of how the selected poems could be linked, both to each other and to wider issues of their collection as a whole;
- all relevant paperwork should be enclosed with candidates' work: the MS1 mark sheet (or a hard copy of an electronic equivalent), the Assessment Summary Form for the Centre, and the individual cover-sheet for each candidate's work; draft work and notes should *not* be attached; Centres this session almost invariably demonstrated correct and helpful adherence to these procedures.

A few of the most successful texts that candidates used this session are listed below; the range is considerable, of period and genre, with some (Dickens and Larkin, for example) being perennially popular, but also some that are rarely used by candidates (Raymond Chandler and Bob Dylan); all, however, were well used by candidates, who showed good and often detailed textual knowledge, combined frequently with sharp critical judgement:

Bernard Shaw: *Pygmalion*
John Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*
Harold Pinter: *Old Times*
Katherine Mansfield: *Short Stories*
Charles Dickens: *Nicholas Nickleby*
Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*
Philip Larkin: *Selected Poems*
Ted Hughes: *Crow Poems*
Bob Dylan: *Selected Lyrics*
Raymond Chandler: *The Big Sleep*
Ernest Hemingway: *The Sun Also Rises*
Cormac McCarthy: *The Road* and *Blood Meridian*