

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LITERATURE

H472

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Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 2 series overview

Comparative and contextual study H472/02 is one of the two examined components for the English Literature A Level. This component requires candidates to study at least two texts from their chosen topic in depth, and also to develop a broader knowledge of the topic through wider reading from primary and secondary sources. Candidates are asked to write a critical appreciation of an unseen prose passage, relating their discussion to their reading in the topic; they also write an essay comparing two set texts from the topic in the light of a statement given in the question.

As with the 2018 session, almost all candidates were well prepared for the component, demonstrating substantial knowledge and insight in relation to their chosen topics. Examiners noticed expertise and enthusiasm emanating from many scripts, and were impressed by the breadth and depth on show. Once again, the three popular topics on the paper were American Literature 1880-1940, The Gothic and Dystopia; there were far fewer takers for Women in Literature or the literature of The Immigrant Experience, and so this report will have less to say about these topics (indeed, some questions on these topics received very few responses). Candidates studying the three more popular topics often focused much of their attention on female characters and the place of women, even where this was not strictly relevant to the question; centres might consider choosing the Women in Literature option if there is to be an emphasis on these areas during study.

Those who did well in the critical appreciation responded to the passage primarily as an interesting piece of writing, considering contextual issues as a secondary matter. Detailed analyses of language, form and structure were often impressive (as a rule, effective consideration of structure marks out the best candidates), and responses with a genuine feel for the subject were subtle in their appreciation of tone. Excellent answers were able to see their chosen passage as a whole and could respond to its unique and interesting qualities, since they were not simply hunting for what was 'typical'. Those who did less well often approached the passage as a kind of treasure hunt, looking for words or phrases which enabled them to move to a comfort zone of prepared contextual material. The Gothic passage in particular attracted answers which were chiefly concerned with spotting features from a mental list as if engaged in a diagnostic exercise; one finished the answer by saying 'I conclude it is very good Gothic'. Responses of this kind offered a limited sense of the shape and events of the passage, and frequently missed out on discussion of the ending. Discussion of wider contexts in both question-types often betrayed a lack of knowledge or understanding: for example, some stated with confidence that Percy Shelley was Mary's father, or her brother; and one answer referenced *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (last year's American unseen), stating that it concerns a character 'who escapes poverty by becoming a successful actress'. Evidence of genuine knowledge and wider reading, especially of literary texts, enhanced many stronger scripts.

Many candidates seemed more confident with the comparative essay question. Examiners observed that 'stronger answers were those that focused on the wording of the proposition in the question and presented a nuanced argument that really addressed the "Discuss how far you agree" prompt'. Such answers created a balanced comparative discussion, and distinguished themselves by selecting strikingly apt quotations from primary and secondary material. They also prioritised literary concerns over generalised historical discussion, which weaker answers were inclined to offer as 'context' but which sometimes became the main business of the essay. Less successful answers were particularly inclined to focus on their preferred areas for discussion rather than responding to the question as set. Many of the comparative essay questions propose that a particular theme or idea is 'central' or 'important' in the topic area; some candidates approached such questions by suggesting that an alternative theme (which they had prepared) was more important and discussed that instead. For example, an answer to Question 4a on villains in the Gothic argued that, although villains may be fascinating, 'both writers highlight the fascination behind passive women in their texts'. Suggesting that other issues are more important than the one given in the question is a legitimate point of argument, but answers should not devote the main

bulk of the essay to discussion of these issues; candidates should focus on the question which has been set.

Candidates are reminded to use the time available in the examination wisely and to plan, read and check their work rather than simply to write as much as they can in the time available. Responses that are shorter and more concise tend to be more successful than those that aim to fill up the entire answer booklet.

Key point call out

There were a number of scripts which did not follow the requirements of the paper, despite warnings in last year's Examiners' Report. The most common rubric infringements once again was where candidates automatically started work on Q1 (American Literature 1880 – 1940) without checking whether this was the correct passage for the topic they had studied (the topic is stated in bold at the top of the page above the passage). In a number of cases candidates used the American passage as their unseen, partnering this with a comparative essay from a different topic. Candidates cannot be given a total which combines marks from two different topics, so in these cases only the higher mark of the two was counted. Centres are once again strongly advised to make sure that candidates have seen and if possible practised answering from a complete past paper, so that they are used to leafing through to find their chosen topic. Careful reading of the paper, including the rubric, is always advised.

Option - American Literature 1880-1940

Question 1

- 1 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of American Literature 1880–1940. [30]

In answers on the American passage, a number of candidates impressively referred to 'naturalism' as a major literary movement to which Ferber's novel might be related, and some even namechecked Frank Norris's *The Octopus* in dealing with the final description of August Hempel. Hempel's appearance was often a discriminator. Less successful scripts omitted or marginalised him; better responses wove him into the economic pattern of the answer as a whole. The plump, colourful vegetables were foregrounded on the stronger scripts, often made to symbolise the irresistible pressure and showiness of American consumerism, as in Exemplar 1.

Answers which made use of colour symbolism were generally less convincing, as were those which forced elaborate links with historical context: 'a modern reader may identify "the tomatoes in February" as a warning sign for the panic of the Wall Street Crash, the Great Depression and the Dirty Thirties to come'. Literary echoes were thoughtfully registered at times, such as the 'something splendid... something richly prophetic' description of Selina being linked to 'something gorgeous' which Nick finds in *Gatsby*. Weaker responses sought to generalise by moving out from the passage, as in Exemplar 2.

Stronger responses stayed closely keyed to the text, as in the answer which stated 'The title of the novel 'So Big' suggests opportunity and advancement, a future ahead that is bright and big'. On the whole, answers on this passage were very good, and the range of novels and other works convincingly cited in the essays was wider and more functional than in the past. Particularly good use too was made of Thoreau on nature (via *Walden*) and Jefferson's vision of the importance of agriculture to the growth of the United States.

Exemplar 1

"rich green sheathed with lavender at the tips" uses a tone which reflects ~~that~~ a similar tone to that used in advertising, when consumerism was rapidly rising, which shows how she has become an agent of her consumerist society in pursuing her business. The tricolon of "plump, scrubt, juicy" to describe the tomatoes further seems to emphasise their nature's grand offerings to humanity which she is able to capitalise from! ^{by using consumption imagery} Yet Ferber creates tension in the qualification of

Exemplar 2

From this given passage of 'So Big' by Edna Ferber we can identify many key themes that cover most of American literature during the 1880-1940's.

Question 2 (a)

- 2 (a) F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

'Characters in American literature often seek a fresh start.'

By comparing *The Great Gatsby* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

The question on fresh starts was very popular and led to some confident historical discussions of relevant fiction, although sometimes an unreconstructed essay on the 'American dream' was too plainly visible. Many candidates chose to pair *The Great Gatsby* with *The Grapes of Wrath*, and often held out few hopes for the characters: as one candidate put it, 'a fresh start was limited as unrealistic ideals impede rationality'. One examiner pointed out that stronger responses were able to engage more closely with the literary qualities of the novels, rather than allowing them to be 'flattened by the weight of questionable historical fact'; although AO3 is heavily weighted in this part of the paper, candidates should make sure that context is always employed in the service of understanding literature, rather than the other way around. Candidates who looked outside the two core texts often chose to discuss *The Age of Innocence*, demonstrating Ellen's determination to make a fresh start, Newland's struggles with the same idea, and May's determination – along with the prevailing culture of old New York – that any change should be resisted. Some candidates saw an opportunity here to offload material on the role of women, including one who offered the abrupt transition 'Gender roles are also a common theme in American Literature'; although gender was not necessarily irrelevant here, more work was needed to integrate the material into an argument about 'fresh starts'. Work was also seen on *Huckleberry Finn*, *My Ántonia*, *Native Son* and *A Farewell to Arms*.

Question 2 (b)

- (b) John Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*

'American literature often celebrates the ordinary human being.'

By comparing *The Grapes of Wrath* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

Examiners saw very little work in response to this question; one examiner reported 'In the one or two responses I read 'ordinary' was interpreted to mean 'marginal' or 'oppressed' and therefore a gateway to writing on women or race'. To write successfully, candidates needed to arrive at a working definition of 'ordinary' to control the argument of the essay.

Question 2 (c)

(c) 'Much American literature explores the changing, restless nature of society.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you have found this to be the case.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *The Great Gatsby* and/or *The Grapes of Wrath*. [30]

This question attracted more takers than Q2b but fewer than Q2a. Less successful responses were once again inclined to drag the question into their own comfort zone, which was often the status of women in society. This was a legitimate area for discussion, but some candidates were inclined to offload material on gender without tailoring it to the question. Less successful responses were also often dominated by contextual discussion of historical 'change' without any consideration of 'restlessness'. There was also some wonderful work, with continuous reference to ideas of movement, development and disaster. A popular combination of texts was *The Age of Innocence* and *The Great Gatsby*: the best responses distinguished clearly between these two satirical portraits of upper class New York, written at about the same time, but focusing on very different periods. Good approaches here were able to differentiate between those who were restless for change and those who sought to defend the status quo. Subtle discussion was generated by the ability to think through the contradictory and ambiguous relationships with change explored in the novels. For one candidate this question led to a sensitive reading of Daisy and Jordan as characters who did not necessarily seek change but remained restless. There was also a very good reading of Newland Archer as both wanting and not wanting change. Discussion of *The Grapes of Wrath* often indicated that change is forced on the migrants, not sought by them, and this offered a helpful organising principle for a number of comparative essays. Work was seen on a wide range of texts; *Sister Carrie* lent itself very well to discussion of this theme.

Option - The Gothic

Question 3

- 3 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of the Gothic.

[30]

Work on *St Irvyne* was often inclined to list its Gothic features without always analysing them or pursuing their effects. The final section of the passage, where Eloise is safely delivered into domestic comfort and the arms of her sister, was often ignored. Many responses ticked off setting, weather, the liminal, the unknown, terror, horror, vulnerable women and religion. Most candidates were content to see Eloise as weak and helpless; better responses engaged with implications of her resilience and her having some agency and her reunion with her sister. Some strong responses engaged well with the 'demoniac malice of man' to explore implications of monstrous behaviour, human evil and horror. There was sometimes very good treatment of the chateau as an embodiment of ancestry, the past or the medieval. Some perceptively picked up on its uncanny properties as both familiar and strange. Narrative voice was sometimes an area of uncertainty: some thought the extract was in the second person; many found it hard to distinguish between third person narration, Eloise's thoughts and the presentation of her viewpoint; some called this an 'unreliable narrator'. Few really engaged with the character and tone of the narrator, although some suggested that the narrative voice was in some sense ironic and developed this into a point about further subjection of Eloise to male (narrative) control. Some candidates were tempted to bring in contextual knowledge about the Shelleys which was rarely helpful in enhancing understanding of the passage; there were also frequent assertions of its 'Victorian' date (1811). This led to problematic discussion of Darwin as a context (*On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859), as in Exemplar 3

Some candidates assume that the whole of the nineteenth century can be described as 'Victorian', and also neglect the factors of change and development during the century. The best answers focused on text in preference to context, and were alert to the style and expression, like Exemplar 4.

Exemplar 3

relevant to the time. 'St Irvyne' was written as it reflects the societal debate of science versus religion and the cultural anxieties concerning Darwinism and deconstruction - the idea that if we could evolve, we could also devolve ^{into animals}. Deconstruction is further explored where

Exemplar 4

The Gothic subtitle; the opening ~~the~~ 'tricolon' of 'dark, autumnal and gloomy' is mirrored by Eloise herself - 'pale, downcast and friendless'.

Question 4 (a)

4 (a) Bram Stoker: *Dracula*

'The most fascinating characters in Gothic literature are its villains.'

Consider how far you agree with this statement by comparing *Dracula* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic. [30]

This was the most popular comparative essay question for the Gothic topic. One examiner reported that 'not enough candidates had thought about the dynamic of good versus evil in Gothic (even though this is a previous question on this paper)'. There were a few accounts of Dracula's irregular charisma, but often he was seen as a minister of patriarchy perverting women; similarly, the chief use of villainy in Gothic was often seen to be the misuse of Victorian women in general. Better answers tended to see that the relationship between villain and hero provides literary tension, and may not be straightforward. As one response put it: 'In the Gothic the villains are often the most interesting characters because they are able to break social ideals and morality codes, while the 'good' characters are restrained in a straitjacket of the society at the time'. The term 'fascinating' was overlooked in many answers, but stronger responses frequently found fascination in the ambiguity of central characters. These answers sometimes questioned the morals and motives of *Dracula's* 'Crew of Light', and found plenty of discussable material in *The Bloody Chamber* where lines are frequently blurred or crossed. Although some candidates discussed *Frankenstein*, there was less attention paid to the question of its true villain – Frankenstein himself, or his Creature? – than might have been expected. The least successful responses once again were those which privileged context and prepared material, such as the candidate who stated that 'The villain in both *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker is society'. Context for *Dracula* threatened at times to overwhelm answers, and was sometimes of little value (Stoker's Irish connection, the Alien Act of 1905, the Whitechapel murders). Better responses as always privileged text over context and the imaginative and entertaining qualities of the Gothic over its perceived social message.

Question 4 (b)

(b) Angela Carter: *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories**

'Gothic writing depends on the use of traditional images and stories.'

By comparing *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories** with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

The question on 'traditional images and stories' worked well with *The Bloody Chamber*, both in terms of folklore and literary originals. Many candidates discussed 'Gothic variations of popular fairy-tales such as Snow White and Little Red Riding Hood.' Generally answers also did very well in exploring the background of slavery in *Beloved*, but the sources of other texts were sometimes less clearly registered, especially the development of the vampire legend behind *Dracula*, although some recalled Le Fanu's *Carmilla* from last year's paper. Milton's role in *Frankenstein* was occasionally discussed, as was the importance of the Prometheus legend, which gives the novel its subtitle; Dorian's yellow book was mentioned in some answers, as were the similarities of this tale to the Faust legend. Many candidates invoked a traditional image of womanhood and embarked on a discussion of gender; this was a reasonable approach to take, but rarely sustained an entire answer effectively. Some answers surveyed Gothic conventions themselves as 'traditional images and stories'. Most answers on Carter managed to reference at least three stories to demonstrate to examiners that they were drawing on 'the whole text', as the question paper requires. Many candidates continue to reference 'The Snow-Child', and many continue to miss its subtlety while responding to its shock-value: they often write as if its events are actually happening rather than representing the carefully managed effects of fantasy, thus limiting the scope of the story. A strong response showed how Carter's writing frequently empowers by offering the unexpected: 'In "The Tiger's Bride" the readers learn that the Countess "shrugs off" her "beautiful fur" to reveal that "she too" is a tiger. This suggests a sense of physical equality and emancipation; she is challenging the traditional story of suppression by arriving at a hidden strength.' Better answers continually focused on Carter's explorations of the beast in man, and indeed woman.

Question 4 (c)

(c) 'Supernatural events and effects are key features of Gothic writing.'

Compare ways in which such features are presented in at least two texts prescribed for this topic.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Dracula* and/or *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories**. [30]

The question on 'supernatural events and effects' attracted the smallest number of takers out of the Gothic options. It was important that candidates should operate within a working definition of 'the supernatural', but many avoided this step of the argument and seemed to be confused or unsure what might be meant by the term. This vagueness allowed other matters such as setting, symbolism or the role of women to intrude into the argument. Some answers took a deliberate side-step, substituting their preferred material for the supernatural for at least part of the essay, as seen in Exemplar 5.

Better answers focused on the magical and other-worldly, often featuring Carter's human/animal transformations and *Dracula*'s shape-shifting powers, but more often candidates moved away from considering the supernatural to discussing other themes and issues, as in this answer: 'Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* arguably exhibit supernatural events and effects in order to highlight gender politics and issues regarding scientific creation'.

Exemplar 5

Although supernatural ~~events~~ events and effects are important within Gothic writing, they could be argued a subsidiary feature to the "central motif of transgression" (Robert Knafl). A Nameless, both Angela Carter and Mary

Option - Dystopia

Question 5

- 5 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of dystopian literature. [30]

The dystopian passage was usually handled with confidence. As it is the beginning of the novel it introduces self-contained materials, and this made the situation and possible backstories clear. Engagement with narrative voice emerged as a significant discriminator – the strongest responses picked up not just the shift from first to third person and back, with its implications of self-alienation and continued repression by external forces of control, but the seething syntax, implied instability, exaggeration, satire, even humour and mockery of the regime. One examiner stated that only the most successful candidates 'were able to engage with the passage's exploration of transgression through the analogy of self-expression with shameless exposure, despite the clue in 'self-barers' and all the language of foulness'. Many candidates discussed setting, seeing the landscape as apocalyptic and positing a possible environmental disaster. Kinnall Darival's absence of knowledge about autobiography and the lack of 'precedents' fuelled good discussion of censorship, and many answers linked his autobiographical writings with Winston Smith's diary in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Links were also made to Zamyatin's *We* and *Requiem* by Ayn Rand in some answers. The literary dystopian context supplied by candidates was generally successful, more so than attempts to work out which world event in 1971 (the novel's publication date) might have inspired this dystopian vision (candidates suggested the Cold War, second wave feminism and the Second World War, among others). Many answers seemed to engage very successfully with this passage and its intriguing central character, like in Exemplar 6.

Exemplar 6

The character of Kinnall Darival is at once proud and ashamed of himself, and these two starkly contrasting modes of being.

Question 6 (a)

- 6 (a) George Orwell: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

'Dystopian writing often involves elaborate systems of surveillance.'

By comparing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

The strongest responses to this question moved beyond a list of surveillance equipment and were able to explain how surveillance achieves control over individuals and also in some essays how effective it is in repressing autonomous thought. Understanding of doublethink and the psychological processes of totalitarian rule as well as appreciation of the breakdown of the family by the state featured in most answers. Most candidates compared *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with *The Handmaid's Tale*, usually demonstrating that in Orwell's novel surveillance is relentless and involves sophisticated technology; in Gilead, it is less strenuous, but dependent on the breakdown of trust between individuals (anyone might be an 'Eye'). There were some especially interesting answers on Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. Given the breakdown of society preceding this novel, one might expect a situation free from surveillance, but candidates argued that behaviour continues to be measured and judged as seen in Exemplar 7.

A number of similar answers quoted the boy's poignant question, 'Are we still the good guys?' *The Road* generally proved to be a striking and helpful choice by providing a strong contrast to the core texts. Another useful choice here was *Fahrenheit 451* with its surveillance carried out by mechanical hound. In response to this question as elsewhere in the exam, many candidates wrote at great length but appeared to have had limited time to provide a conclusion of substance to balance the essay, as in Exemplar 8.

When thinking about use of time, a good number of candidates would do well to write shorter, tighter essays with more developed conclusions.

Exemplar 7

Elaborate systems of surveillance arguably perform varying roles in different dystopian fictions. In '1984', the Party's ceaseless surveillance of its citizens is an ~~an~~ overtly oppressive form of control, yet in 'The Road', surveillance is less oppressive: it comes in the form of the son, morally 'surviving' the actions of his father, and the Man's own self-surveillance. One can thus contend, ~~that~~ through contrasting the dystopian worlds of '1984' and 'The Road' that it is the ^{surveillance as a concept} source of surveillance, rather than ~~the~~, which is the most significant factor in the parameters of dystopia.

Exemplar 8

To conclude, dystopian literature does often include elaborate systems of surveillance, as totalitarian regimes rely upon ~~it~~ such systems in order to maintain control.

Question 6 (b)

(b) Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid's Tale*

'The quality of human endurance is central to dystopian fiction.'

By comparing *The Handmaid's Tale* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

This was the least popular of the three options for Dystopia, but attracted some thoughtful and imaginative responses which considered the human suffering involved in these novels. One intelligent answer thought things through from first principles seen in Exemplar 9.

The strongest responses explored how endurance was achieved – through relationship, expression of autonomous sexuality, retaining control on language, protecting of individual and private thought-space – and whether it was successful, often contrasting Orwell's pessimism with Atwood's more ambiguous ending. As with all the questions, candidates who could draw apposite material from the primary texts were in a good position, as the candidate in Exemplar 10 refers to.

The best responses took full account of the nature of the experience lived by the central characters; weaker responses reverted to a prepared essay on hope (usually characterised as the key to endurance) or dwelt extensively on historical contexts at the expense of literary insight.

Exemplar 9

Firstly, it must be noted that without human endurance, the entire genre of dystopia ceases to have any real basis upon which it can be built. It is only through human

Exemplar 10

yourself to get ^{overly} angry at the regime, a line from Offred's monologue reading 'thinking can ~~not~~ hurt your chances, and I intend to last'. This quote emphasises her determined nature to survive and be reunited

Question 6 (c)

(c) 'Dystopian regimes spend much time and effort on the process of indoctrination.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, explore how far you agree with this view.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and/or *The Handmaid's Tale*. **[30]**

A number of examiners reported that there was significant crossover between answers to this question and to Question 6a on surveillance. This seemed to be the case especially where (as quite frequently happened) candidates had no clear working definition of 'indoctrination', and took it mean something looser such as 'control'. Candidates who were clear about the meaning were inclined to go straight for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where O'Brien requires Winston Smith to subscribe to the belief that '2 + 2 = 5'; the purity of this example made it very discussable and helpful in shaping the argument of the essay. Most candidates compared the core texts, and tended to suggest that indoctrination is a far more important issue in the Orwell, whereas in Atwood the ruling powers are not so interested in what the characters believe, as long as they cooperate. Most answers compared the Two Minutes Hate in Orwell and the Particution in Atwood as similar events which get into the heads of the participants. *Brave New World* featured in a number of answers, especially focusing on the development of its different castes, and *A Clockwork Orange* was also quite commonly cited. Many candidates in response to all the Q6 options also referenced other popular dystopian texts such as *The Hunger Games*, often to good effect; the only drawback came in answers which offered such a wide range of reading that they struggled to find space for a detailed comparison of their two main texts.

Option - Women in Literature

Question 7

- 7 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading concerning Women in Literature. [30]

Although there were relative few takers for this topic, the Trollope passage was often very confidently done, with tone and nuance leading to some perception of the irony of Crosbie's position; answers were often contextualised through discussion of the relative indissolubility of mid-Victorian marriage. The symbolism of Lady Alexandrina's 'trappings', standing for Crosbie's obligations and her trivial pursuits, featured in more successful responses such as Exemplar 11.

Almost all answers recognised that the extract is written in the third person but presented from the male point of view; more reductive responses were inclined to take sides against Crosbie (and even Trollope), while more sophisticated answers remained more detached. Some excellent answers suggested that both husband and wife are entrapped in this unpromising marriage, much as they are confined in the small compartment of the railway carriage. Treatment of Lilian Dale was quite varied: one examiner reported that 'the responses I read tended to situate Lily Dale as emancipated and intellectually ambitious in the mould of a Jane Eyre and didn't pick up on the implication of restrictions still for Lily in her role in relation to Crosbie'. One candidate suggested that 'a woman who had even flirted with a man who she did not marry would be looked down on. A woman like Lilian would be excluded from society'. The best answers picked up the way that Trollope invites the reader to compare the women as seen in Exemplar 12.

Exemplar 11

The description of Crosbie having 'tucked' Alexandrina 'up' in her 'trappings' parallels how a baby is wrapped up in swaddling garments, thus symbolising the restriction and restraints women were wed to during this period, demonstrated by Alexandrina's submission to ~~the~~ her husband dressing ~~her~~ and wrapping her up. It is also symbolic she is 'tucked' up in 'bright-coloured trappings' as this demonstrates how women were ornamental features, ~~to be~~ ^{to be decorated} and pleasing for men to look at. The idea

Exemplar 12

Throughout, Trollope counterbalances the Lily's 'would have' with Alexandrina's 'never yet' setting her indifference with 'never cared for such trifles' in antithesis to Lily's 'eagerness'. Through

Question 8 (a)

8 (a) Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

'Rather than making things happen, female characters in literature tend to be observers.'

By comparing *Sense and Sensibility* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you have found this to be the case. [30]

Examiners saw little work in response to this question. One reported, 'I saw very few responses to this task but they were well done and explored the presentation and personality of characters to their contextual setting. There was a good understanding of writers' perspectives and purposes'. Candidates had some difficulty in deciding what was 'observing' and what was 'making things happen'; Elinor was sometimes criticised for watching Marianne's errors without intervening, sometimes praised for her actions in comforting and counselling her sister. Most agreed that Elinor often has no choice but to act, even though this might be behind the scenes. This can be seen in Exemplar 13.

Less successful responses were sometimes dominated by biographical accounts of the authors.

Exemplar 13

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor's 'sense' places her in a unique situation of maintaining her appearance but actually doing rather 'many' jobs such as ~~run~~ working out all their families finance and accounts. This behavi-

Question 8 (b)

(b) Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

'The contrast of age and youth is a key element in the presentation of female characters in literature.'

By comparing *Mrs Dalloway* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

This was the most often attempted of the three options for Women in Literature. One examiner noted, 'This was a more popular choice but some candidates tended to focus on a very narrow range of characters which limited their arguments. Often only Clarissa was referenced in *Mrs Dalloway* and only Jane in *Jane Eyre* or Marianne and Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility* which led to a skewed exploration of the novels and their contexts'. As in the other topics, candidates who knew the entire text and were ready to select from any part of it were at an advantage. Responses on *Mrs Dalloway* sometimes left out the scenes from Clarissa's youth in Bourton, therefore losing much valuable material for their answers. Better answers responded freshly and seemed to develop their ideas through comparison of the texts, which is the best way to tackle the comparative essay. Exemplar 14 successfully compares Clarissa Dalloway and Jane Eyre.

Another candidate took the same two characters and compared them in a contrasting way: 'Both Brontë and Woolf juxtapose the vibrant and rebellious youth of their female protagonists with their repressed nature in ageing in order to present the expectation for women to conform to patriarchy'. One examiner reported on an answer which took a strikingly literary route of comparing 'how the structures of *Jane Eyre* and *Mrs Dalloway* help the exploration of the contrast between age and youth in the two protagonists'. There were some helpful references in some candidates' work to Esther's struggles with taking on adult responsibilities in *The Bell Jar*.

Exemplar 14

in Bourton. Arguably, Clarissa does not retain her independence, unlike Jane, as she grows older. The marriage, which is described as having 'gone under' and a merging of 'her will into his' and thus seems to have given up her selfhood. This is certainly

Question 8 (c)

(c) 'Motherhood is central to literature by and about women.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, explore how far you agree with this claim.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Sense and Sensibility* and/or *Mrs Dalloway*. [30]

One examiner reported, 'I saw some good answers to this question but where candidates focused on a very narrow range of characters their answers were more limited and lacked full engagement with the novels and the writers' ideas'. Once again, it was clear that candidates who had studied entire texts in detail were at an advantage, and could provide impressive material such as this: 'However, the presentation of Lady Middleton's motherhood does not seem a particularly positive one, as she is satirised for finding her children adorable even when they are doing things such as '[throwing] Miss Steele's handkerchief out of the window'. In this way, Lady Middleton seems to be Austen satirising the traditional assumption that the role of a woman is only to have, and be absorbed in, her children'. Most answers focused on Clarissa Dalloway, her relationship with her daughter Elizabeth and her experience of the menopause (Exemplar 15).

Work on *Sense and Sensibility* sometimes ran a little thin on examples of motherhood, but some resourceful candidates suggested that Elinor Dashwood often rises to the challenge of fulfilling a motherly role where necessary. There were some interesting references to Jeanette's adoptive mother in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, and some thoughtful accounts of Tess as both a mother and a daughter in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

Exemplar 15

In *Mrs Dalloway*, motherhood ~~is~~ ^{is} a central part as Clarissa is always aware of mortality and fertility. She is afraid of leaving this part of her life behind her; 'The five acts of the play ... were now over' and there will be no more 'having of children'. This repeats throughout

Option - The Immigrant Experience

Question 9

- 9 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading concerning the Immigrant Experience. [30]

Although many examiners reported that candidates responded well to this passage, there were also comments about a degree of confusion in answers: some candidates thought all the characters were members of the same immigrant family, which created some problems in understanding, and many did not seem to pick up the light, comic tone. The passage does depend on a degree of misunderstanding from Mrs Patton, and a number of candidates fell into her misconception that Arun must have starved at home, rather than lived in a household where he not been involved in preparing meals. A number also assumed that Arun knew how to cook, and considered that Melanie's disgust at his improvised concoction was racist rather than merely outspoken. There were good answers which recognised that food is often important in narratives of immigration: for example, one saw the focus on food as 'an extended metaphor for acceptance or rejection of an immigrant in society' and linked this with the shared meal in the frame narrative of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The same candidate also saw that there was something 'performative' about Arun's making of the food, and that he is therefore being treated as 'exotic' and 'other'. Mrs Patton's earnest errors were discussed by this candidate, who also commented on her use of 'we' as a method of 'othering' Arun (Exemplar 16).

There were some interesting sidelights in the form of context, such as references to Ashima's attempts to recreate Bengali dishes with foreign ingredients in *The Namesake*.

Exemplar 16

country'. opposing his experience is Mrs Patton who argues 'we don't know how to eat', 'we've got to learn'. The use of repetition highlights her stubbornness and inability to accept alternative views. This is typical of the reception many immigrants face upon arrival ~~to~~ ^{from} others and their preconceived views. This evidence of this

Question 10 (a)

10 (a) Henry Roth: *Call it Sleep*

'The search for identity is central to literature about immigration.'

By comparing *Call it Sleep* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

Call It Sleep is certainly the least studied of the core texts on the paper in this least popular topic option, but it consistently shows itself to be worth the time and effort of reading and responding. Several examiners particularly admired work in this topic area, one reporting: 'Some of the most illuminating responses came from the least popular Immigrant Experience, where candidates often dealt with questions through rich task and textual engagement - I would encourage centres to explore this option if given the opportunity'. This short extract starts to give a sense of the rewards offered by this evocative account of immigration, given from a child's point of view (Exemplar 17).

Exemplar 17

'*Call it Sleep's* David is at first unaware of his search for identity but is ~~intrigued~~ intrigued by his homeland. When hearing girls sing "Wasser: wildflower" David begins to feel nostalgic, thus sparking his fascination of home. Described

Question 10 (b)

(b) Mohsin Hamid: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

'The literature of immigration does not focus just on the experience of the immigrant; the response of the host nation is presented too.'

By comparing *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

Most candidates tackled Question 10 (c), but one examiner reported reading 'some solid answers on the racial prejudice of the host nation, especially in *Small Island*, with plentiful historical discussion'.

Question 10 (c)

(c) 'Immigrants in literature frequently express disappointment and frustration.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Call it Sleep* and/or *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. [30]

One examiner reported that she had only seen work on Question 10 (c) for this option, and that 'the essays written were among the most successful I read'. Candidates often discussed the pressure of hope as central to the reason for frustration. One candidate discussed *Call It Sleep* and focused here on David's father Albert, who can make so little of the opportunities offered in New York (Exemplar 18).

The answer interestingly compared the novel with *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, contrasting the struggling tenement life of David and his family with the initial New York experience of Changez, who 'seems to fall into the American dream'. Interesting use was made again this session of *Goodbye Columbus*, which enables candidates to engage with the experience of second-generation immigrants (Exemplar 19).

Exemplar 18

New world breathed a chill on us'. This disappointment is continued as David's father falls a 'wretched wandering from job to job' aligning with the situation of many Americans at the time. It is this which, as described by Lewis Gannett, makes the novel so 'agonizingly real' leading to feelings of frustration so clearly represented in the character of

Exemplar 19

in America. Brenda mentions that she had her nose "fixed", saying "I was pretty, now I'm prettier", in reference to the surgery done to change her stereotypically Jewish nose in order to look more American. The verb "fixed" however ~~wasn't~~ suggests that ~~the~~ Brenda views her Jewish identity as something wrong and bad, perhaps as a result of assimilation of American society and adoption of American beauty standards.

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