

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Paper 8695/91

Poetry, Prose and Drama

Key Messages

All questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding; answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.

For high marks, candidates need to know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.

Answers should always focus on the writing and the author's language and literary methods.

Answers to (b) passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.

General Comments

Although there were differences across the variant papers, Examiners saw a good range of answers on all texts. *Half of a Yellow Sun* has proved immediately popular and has prompted some excellent, informed answers, with candidates clearly stimulated by the novel, while *A Passage to India* is perennially popular and discriminates well between levels of ability. Answers on Thomas Hardy are still often obscured by unhelpful biographical discussion and hypothesis, which means that those candidates who concentrate on writing about the poetry emerge strongly and do well. Of the drama texts on the Language and Literature papers, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the most popular text by a clear margin, and often provokes interesting, personal answers.

During this session, Examiners have had the privilege of reading some excellent, detailed and focused answers which have shown a sophisticated understanding of ways in which writers present their ideas in literature, alongside work that may be more modest in attainment, but which nevertheless demonstrates candidates' thoughtful grasp of texts and interest and imaginations stimulated by what they have read.

Question Specific Comments 9695/31

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

(a) Weaker answers to this question relied on paraphrase of chosen poems, often relating them to Hardy's biography; this was usually an unhelpful approach to the essay. Stronger answers used the prompts in the cue quotation, particularly 'sees', 'hears' and 'feels', to consider ways in which Hardy's choices of language and imagery evoke particular places, events and sights for the reader. Such responses looked carefully at visual and auditory detail in the poems, reflected in both subject matter and choice of diction. 'The Voice' and 'Beeny Cliff' were popular choices here, while others looked at 'The Darkling Thrush' and 'The Man He Killed', 'At Castle Boterel', 'After a Journey' and 'The Going'. When approached appropriately, candidates were able to write about a wide range of Hardy's poems. Some candidates expanded the focus of the question, discriminating between Hardy's private world and the 'real' world – the wider public world, which allowed particularly fruitful discussion of 'The Man He Killed' and 'The Convergence of the Twain'.

(b) This poem caused problems for a number of candidates, some of whom seemed to be responding to it for the first time, without much evidence of prior study, which led to misunderstandings and uncertainties. It was, though, a popular option and attracted some strong vigorous responses. The most confident candidates developed their understanding of Hardy's methods with analysis of the structure, rhyme scheme and use of enjambement. There was useful discussion of the foreboding

tone that is established in the opening line; the negativity conveyed by the repetition of 'none', 'no' and 'not' and through diction such as 'pain', 'harrow', 'dread', 'death' and 'unhope'; the symbolic use of black; the progression from first person 'my', 'me' and 'I' through third person 'him' to the detached and anonymous 'one' in the final stanza'. There was successful discussion of the imagery of winter decay, often treated in careful and discriminating detail.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, with candidates choosing appropriate poems and characters such as Mick Joyce, Bobby Breen, Barney Devlin, the blacksmith, Heaney's own father. The most successful answers were based on detailed knowledge and showed a thorough understanding of Heaney's choices of language, imagery and form.
- (b) There were some impressive responses to this poem which engaged closely with how language and technique shape meaning in relation to the idea of physical action. There was analysis of syntax, alliteration and enjambement in responses which showed a clear and sustained awareness of genre as well as meaning. Most candidates had noted the intensity, precision, agility, stability as well as delicacy and elegance required in one simple physical action for the unique and complex skill of swinging the sledge, thus creating a strong sense of physical movement and rhythm. Stronger answers showed a more nuanced understanding of both the praise-worthy, awe-inspiring and admirable qualities of the sledge but also of its dark potential as a dangerous, destructive and menacing force ('long-nursing rage') capable of obliterating things completely and cleanly ('make air of a wall'). Subtle answers recognised the point half-way through l.9 where Heaney's perspective switches from one man with a sledgehammer to a consideration of the use and abuse of power on a global scale, with particular focus on the powerful personification used in the last line.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) A number of poems were suitable for this question, with 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death', 'Follower' and 'Tears, Idle Tears' being particularly popular. Some candidates tended to struggle to compare poetic techniques, which was the key to success in this question, but many managed to focus on the tone of the chosen poems, considering, for example, how the stoical acceptance of the passing of time is shown in 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death' or 'A Quoi Bon Dire', whereas the writers of 'Childhood' and 'One Art' seem to find that acceptance more troubling and difficult. Some successful responses considered the role of perspective, with narrators looking back in, for example, 'Childhood' and 'Country School', while others looked at ways in which changes in relationships are handled in 'Because I like You Better' and 'Cold in the Earth'.
- (b) This was an overwhelmingly popular question, and even less confident candidates found it difficult to rely entirely on narration – though a number took the poem literally, rather than recognising the narrator as a representative of humanity as a whole. Successful candidates read the question very carefully and dealt clearly with 'close commentary', 'ways' and 'the nature of humanity'. The form and structure were discussed particularly well, with most candidates recognising the development in the three stanzas and the subtle changes in language. They picked out the repeated use of the first person suggesting egotism, the wolf and forest images suggesting the primal nature of humanity and the verbs 'seized' 'tore' and 'licked' emphasising the animal nature of man. Such answers recognised the violence implied in the 'little new born child' being torn apart, while the image of running wild for centuries was used to support readings of evolution. Some candidates linked 'immemorial trees with the Garden of Eden. Many saw the shift in tone when 'the spring broke in' and commented that the seasonal imagery signifies a new beginning. Candidates could see the religious implications of the poem and commented on the idea of redemption, noting the shift from 'A wolf I am' to 'A man I am'. This was a poem where most candidates responded well to form and structure.

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

- (a) It was clear that this new text on the paper had proved both popular and engaging, attracting some vigorous and enthusiastic responses. As is often the case, however, assertion and narrative summary were frequent problems with less assured candidates. It tended to be those who made fuller use of the cue quotation, picking up the words 'harrowing' and 'engaging', that wrote more subtle responses. A key discriminator was the ability to use supporting textual quotations or references. Strong candidates examined key moments, such as Olanna seeing the child's head on

the train, Ugwu taking part in the gang-rape in the bar, or the paralleling of Odenigbo's decline to that of Biafra, and explored how these moments brought the abstract horror of war vividly to life involving as they did, characters the reader has come to care about. Ugwu was a crucial character in this sense, with the rape proving particularly shocking, while some candidates were also able to make telling points about the structure of the novel, with sections concentrating on particular characters' perspectives. Such answers argued that Adichie uses Ugwu to show the insider's view of the war and how, in contrast, Richard is used to present the perspective of the white outsider who wants to be involved. They went on to show that Olanna is used to demonstrate that no-one, regardless of social class or background, is immune to the horrors of war. These candidates were also comfortable in using relevant evidence from the text to show how the personal lives of the characters become entangled with each other and with the events of the war.

- (b) There was much to discuss in the passage, though less confident candidates relied on summary and paraphrase without enough attention to the requirement to 'comment on ways', which is common to all passage-based questions. Several candidates also misunderstood or misread that Odenigbo's words to Richard were a flashback – he is remembering them – and they were not being spoken in Kainene's house. More focused answers commented on the imagery of the weather setting the mood and sharp candidates engaged with narrative perspective, noting the way in which the reader only sees Richard's perspective despite the third person narrative. Such responses noted the contrast between Kainene's control contrasted with her 'swollen and raw' eyes, while Richard becomes childlike in his guilt. Some answers related his emotional impotence here to his physical impotence earlier in the novel. The symbolic value of the burning of the manuscript by Kainene to get even and Richard's ultimate sacrifice of choosing love over art or personal ambition were also noted in most answers.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Candidates who approached this question as a 'character study' were not successful, as the question was quite specific. Successful answers looked carefully at both why a reader might feel sympathetic and unsympathetic towards Adela, providing a balanced analysis of ways in which Forster presents her character. Nuanced and balanced discussions were more successful than outright judgements on either side of the question; in these answers, the Marabar Caves incident was handled thoughtfully with candidates responding sensitively to Adela's distress and confusion; her accusation against Aziz was not used as a way of ending all discussion about whether she deserved sympathy. Candidates often noted that Adela is shown to be alienated by both the communities after the trial and argued that she is deserving of readers' sympathy for her moral courage and integrity. Others argued that despite her free-spirited and non-judgemental characterisation, she fails to engage with both communities, allowing herself to be manipulated and is responsible for ruining an innocent man's life, betraying his trust and friendship and contributing to the end of friendship between Fielding and Aziz. Looking at these alternatives, many saw Fielding's sympathy for her as a significant means of arousing the reader's sympathy.
- (b) Candidates usually showed a good knowledge of the text in lively answers and the extract prompted many developed responses addressing Forster's methods of characterisation here, while even less confident candidates were able to show an awareness of the significance of this meeting in relation to the novel as a whole. Many candidates were able to identify ways in which differences between the two are presented – Aziz's impulsiveness and Fielding's calm openness. Some stronger answers identified stereotyping and stereotypical expectations on both sides, arguing that both represent their nations but yet are different from most of their compatriots. Fielding's impatience with social restraint was noted, as well as Aziz's freedom with sitting on the bed and suggesting his game, while candidates often linked his offer of his collar stud with Ronny's reference to it later in the novel. Most candidates considered the extract's big question about friendship between Indians and British characters – some drew a comparison with the end of novel and the 'not yet' – and these consideration were very successful when drawn from a detailed consideration of the writing of the passage.

6. Stories of Ourselves

- (a) A wide range of stories was used for this question as candidates interpreted change and progress in human society in a range of different ways, from developments in society as a whole to individual, personal change. While the latter area was not the intended target of the question, Examiners gave credit to sensible answers which were supported and aimed at the question. *The Hollow of the Three Hills, The Moving Finger, The Lady in the Looking Glass, Billennium, Report on*

the Threatened City, *The Prison* and *Elephant* were among the stories chosen by candidates. A greater problem was the number of candidates who attempted to answer the question by retelling the stories of their chosen stories, ignoring literary considerations of ways in which change is explored. Simple narrative recall is not an aim of the syllabus and so cannot be rewarded – candidates need to demonstrate understanding of writers' choices of form, structure and language. Too many answers showed insufficient textual knowledge with very few supporting quotations or direct references evident. The most successful responses tended to be those which looked at the science fiction stories, considering the importance of the narrative point of view in *Report on the Threatened City*, for example, or the structured sequence of events and increasing constriction in *Billennium*. Point of view was often an important part of successful exploration of *The Prison* and *Elephant*, suggesting that continual change is presented as pessimistic development for society within which individuals are helpless or seek escape.

- (b) Candidates often find it challenging to write about humour and so it proved with this question, though happily there were many examples of candidates writing enthusiastically and even delightedly about Proulx's writing in this passage, which offered rich opportunities. The contrast between the book *Amanda* brings in and the *Pee Wee* regulars themselves was fruitfully examined, as were the imaginative ways of promoting beard growth. Many candidates responded well to Proulx's ridicule of her characters' bizarre behaviour, desperate actions, outrageous dialogue, absurd obsession, ridiculous colloquial names, pointless conflicts and the absurdity of the situation and location. Most answers also acknowledge Proulx's means of achieving humorous effects through the use of hyperbole, language, innuendoes, puns, characterisation, while candidates often found as much relish in the strange words in the book as the *Pee Wee* regulars themselves. Examiners saw some very subtle answers which explored the humour created by using elevated or educated language (polysyllabic words and complex sentence structures) to tell a story dealing with uneducated people in rural America. Comparatively few answers, however, located the passage contextually, drawing attention to the ironic conclusion of the story.

7. Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

- (a) There were few answers on this text, and nearly all candidates chose this question, appreciating that, although Daddy does not appear physically in the drama, his unseen presence affects much of its action. Candidates looked at his influence over the marriage of Martha and George and the disappointed hopes in George's career, once seen as a potential successor to his father-in-law. The weakness of many of these answers was that they gave a thorough account of this background information to the characters and their relationship, without sufficiently examining how Albee makes it dramatically apparent – this needed much more detailed reference to the play's action and dialogue than many candidates were able to show.
- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

8. William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

9. Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- (a) While Blanche herself did not receive a great deal of sympathy from candidates, most were nevertheless outraged by Mitch's line in the cue quotation. More successful answers went beyond identifying where their sympathies lay and looked more carefully at the wording of the question, which asked about sympathy with Mitch's line, rather than the character, and specifically about how the play directs that sympathy.

- (b) This answer drew some sensitive and careful writing from candidates, usually heightened by a strong sense of the context of the scene, shortly following Stanley's assault on Blanche. Blanche's lack of awareness of events, highlighted by her initial question in the passage, was seen as a sign of her mind slipping away. Candidates noted how this is assisted by the avoidance and deceits of Stella and Eunice, discussing her 'vacation' and her clothing. Alert candidates discussed the stage directions with care, noting the uncertainty between Stella and Eunice and the behaviour of the men in the opening section and the climactic appearance of the medical staff at the end. The romantic vision of death in Blanche's final speech also received much comment.

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Question Specific Comments 9695/32

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

(a) Despite a question explicitly about the use of landscape, many candidates nevertheless wrote about Hardy's relationship with Emma, which led to unsuccessful answers in the main. Some other candidates tried to steer the question towards poems they knew rather than poems which were appropriate – 'The Self-Unseeing' cropped up several times despite being set indoors – which again was not a successful strategy. More appropriate and focused responses argued that Hardy's vision of the rural landscape shows his admiration for what is enduring and optimistic about the natural world, despite whatever the seasons throw against landscape, animals, birds or flowers, in contrast to man's inability to endure or view life optimistically. Others looked at how landscape is used as a trigger for memory, and is evoked through careful choices of language and imagery. 'At Castle Boterel' and 'Beeny Cliff' were particularly popular choices, but candidates also wrote illuminatingly about 'Afterwards' and 'The Darkling Thrush' among others.

(b) 'In Tenebris II' provoked some careful and thoughtful responses. The poem was generally well understood in terms of meaning, mood and tone, though there was occasional confusion over isolated words and phrases. Successful answers showed good understanding of the structure of the poem, commenting on how the first three lines of each stanza reflect the view of the majority, while the last line focuses on Hardy himself in a self-critical manner. Some candidates expanded

on this point by noting how the two questions in the poem suggest that Hardy, or his narrator, is searching for answers to the reasons for his apparent outsider status. The harsh alliteration of 'cramped', 'crookedness' and 'custom' was noted as 'perhaps expressing the hostility Hardy feels that society feels towards him.' A tone of scorn towards the multitude was picked up in several answers and such essays often noted Hardy's switch from the first person to the third in the final stanza, creating a sense of detachment or universality.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were not many answers on Heaney on this paper. Of those who had studied his poetry, the overwhelming majority chose to answer on 'The Turnip-Snedder'. Responses were often successful; most candidates found something useful to say about the poem, often commenting on how the language evokes the metallic hard qualities of the snedder, as well as imagery of the mediaeval knight, four-legged animal and the turnip god. Most candidates were able to pick out effective uses of sibilant sounds ('juiced up', 'sliced mess') and the fact that visually the couplets seem 'mechanical' or 'brutal' or 'chopped'. Some candidates thoughtfully related the poem to larger and more horrific ideas of mechanised mass murder.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) This question gave access to a wide range of poems, with Examiners seeing essays exploring nearly every poem in the selection. Some candidates focused on the representation of sociocultural change while others focused on individual epiphanies; either approach was credited as long as clear support was provided. In terms of detail, most candidates discussed imagery, but strong answers also considered structure and form successfully.
- (b) 'For Heidi With Blue Hair' was the overwhelmingly popular choice. An enjoyment of the poem and its issues was apparent in nearly all the answers and the majority of candidates had a confident appreciation of the meaning and narrative of this poem. Less assured candidates found it tricky to engage precisely with 'ways in which the writer presents Heidi's story', writing instead a straightforward critical analysis of the poem stanza by stanza or by retelling the story. Strong answers dealt confidently with Adcock's use of point of view, dialogue, parentheses and caesurae, noting the way in which the School is not explicitly given a voice (apart from the 'twittering teachers' which elicited some neat analysis) and how this influences the reader's sympathies. The quiet emergence of the mother's death towards the end of the poem was considered structurally, as was the repetition of the phrase 'School colours'. The poem's use of the second person prompted much discussion, candidates characterising the narrator as the father, an anonymous friend or even the deceased but onlooking mother. All these views are supported by the affectionate and understanding tone of the narrative and connect with the use of 'For' in the title, indicating that the poem is a tribute. Many candidates connected Adcock's use of free verse with the ideas of freedom explored in the poem.

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

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly all the answers to this text were responses to the passage from Chapter 3. There were some misunderstandings, for example, several candidates believed that Susan was in fact Richard's wife, which skewed their reading of the extract. Most candidates, though, commented on Adichie's presentation of Kainene's poise and how her control over the conversation in this extract prepares the reader for the power she later wields in her relationship with Richard. Candidates noted her candid assessment of her own situation and her dry, sarcastic tone in her frank dialogue. Most too picked up on Richard's almost instant fascination with Kainene and how the narrative reveals his desperation to continue the conversation and make a favourable impression. Strong answers showed their awareness that, though written in the third person, the passage is written from Richard's perspective and showed skill in tracing how the language shows his self-awareness yet shows the gaucheness of his words and behaviour in the encounter with Kainene.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Mrs Moore proved a popular character and this was a popular question. What made the difference between strong and weak answers was the level of precise reference and quotation to support points and the consideration of characterisation, rather than character. Less accomplished candidates tended to describe episodes with Mrs Moore, relying on assertion about what a reader might conclude, without support from specific textual detail or analysis. There was also a tendency to regard her rather simplistically and uncritically. Stronger answers looked at ways in which her character is shaped, examining her behaviour after Aziz's arrest to explore the complexities of her characterisation, balancing her actual significance with her symbolic significance, prompted by the question's cue quotation. Some candidates were very aware of her contribution to the novel's religious interests and how her appearance, presence and physical departure but spiritual presence are linked to the structure of the novel. Many answers included examples of her openness and tolerance, her questioning of Anglo-Indian values and her disillusion following the Marabar Caves incident. Successful answers recognised the significance of the first meeting between Aziz and Mrs Moore in the Mosque and of him calling her an 'Oriental'. Her treatment of the wasp was frequently referred to, as was her 'relationship' with Godbole. Developed responses recognised the symbolic importance of her role, especially after her death at sea, and the importance of her memory to the relationships at the end of the novel. Most answers were able to place the quotation 'Esmiss Esmoor...' and many were able to relate the misuse of her name to what they perceived as the 'muddle' of India.
- (b) This was a popular passage and elicited some perceptive and detailed answers. It differentiated candidates' abilities well. Most candidates were able to show the significance of the photograph being seen by Fielding and many explored the details of the dialogue; only stronger answers looked closely at the narrative of the rest of the passage, commenting, for example, on the image of the flowers between the stones of the desert. Many attributed Aziz's first dismissiveness to embarrassment about his home and commented on his emotional responses to the world around him, unlike Fielding's rational reserve. Some subtle readings noted that Aziz is described through third person narration and revealed in the dialogue whereas Fielding's thoughts are shown by free indirect thought and dialogue, meaning that the reader is privy to Fielding's thoughts but not those of Aziz. Candidates noted that it is Fielding's criticism of Callendar which brings the two men together and also saw the significance of the phrase 'there will be no more purdah', relating it to the wider idea of relationships between nations.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) Candidates tended to choose appropriate stories to answer this question and the quality of answers depended on how adept they were at creating an argument rather than relying on narration. Popular stories were 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', 'Elephant', 'The Bath', 'Billennium', 'Report on the Threatened City', 'Real Time' and 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', used in different ways to highlight different facets of pessimism. The discussion of a pessimistic view of humanity seemed to strike a chord with many candidates and answers were often marked by lively personal response. Answers on Frame's 'The Bath' were often marked by perceptive appreciation of how the bleakness of the struggles of age is presented.
- (b) Examiners saw some responses to this question which indicated that candidates thought that the two sections were separate and unrelated, indicating a lack of secure textual knowledge, but many responded very well to the two different perspectives, noting the differences between close observation and detached judgement. Many candidates commented successfully on the first narrator's alien view of earth and its inhabitants, presenting his thoughts in the form of a report. There was interesting discussion of the type of language used – how the diction indicates a lack of familiarity and complete comprehension while offering what was sometimes perceived as arrogant judgement. Alert responses noted that the two sections together are used by Lessing to present humanity's hypocritical use of war under the pretence of seeking peace. A few candidates noted the continuing relevance of Lessing's criticisms. Some candidates suggested that the use of an alien viewpoint makes Lessing's view of humanity more telling or more effective through the use of irony.

7. Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

8. William Shakespeare: *Richard III*
- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
9. Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- (a) Occasionally candidates digressed into writing about Blanche with reference to Stella, which avoided the thrust of the question. Those candidates who directed their answers more successfully noted the difference between the two characters, originally coming from the same background. They noted ways in which Williams makes clear Stella's ease with her surroundings and her physical and sexual joy with Stanley. Her name was frequently cited, and her protection of Blanche through the action of the play before her perhaps conscious refusal to believe Blanche's story of Stanley's assault. Candidates who focused on the implications of this final self-deceit tended to be writing very strong answers.
- (b) Strong answers to this question paid a lot of attention to the stage directions as well as the dialogue, picking out the violence of '*jerks*', '*slams*' and '*throws*' while Blanche '*winces*' and '*laughs breathlessly*'. Candidates noted Stanley's control of the scene through his dialogue and actions, combined with Blanche's weak attempts to prevaricate and avoid subjects. Some also commented that Stanley's final line to Blanche in the extract shows that the tension is not finished, but delayed – in fact creating more tension for a later part of the play.

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Question Specific Comments 9695/33

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

(a) In this question, the **(a)** option proved more popular than the **(b)**. The question created opportunities to discuss a wide range of poems, though 'The Darkling Thrush', 'At Castle Boterel', 'The Voice' and 'A Church Romance' were particularly popular. A number of responses were simply descriptive, referring generally to Hardy's description with little focus on the use of detail in the poems. Stronger answers were able to support comments on details with apposite quotation and show how observation of details, carefully rendered in the poem's language, evoke memories for the narrator in some poems or create vivid visualisation for the reader in others.

(b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

(a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

(b) There were some impressively sharp answers on 'The Harrow-Pin' developing full and detailed arguments. The symbolism was often explored effectively and much was made of the violent nature of much of the poem's imagery.

3. Songs of Ourselves

- (a) There were only a small number of responses to this question, a popular pairing being 'A Quoi Bon Dire' and 'Cold in the Earth', where a sense of loss is portrayed in two quite different poems. Other poems featuring in responses were 'One Art' and 'Elegy for My Father's Father'. As with other answers, the most successful essays were those built on detailed knowledge, carefully chosen quotation and specific points on the poets' choices of language and other poetic methods.
- (b) There were a number of sensitive responses to this poem, which recognised the importance of the form of the poem to its overall effect, commenting in particular on the repeated final line of each stanza. A number of candidates offered detailed and conceptualised readings of the whole poem in very structured answers, though some were hampered by making sense of individual images without considering how they fitted into the poem. A number of candidates struggled because they took the poem line by line, rather than reading its sentences; the lack of awareness of enjambement and its impact on meaning limited the quality of some responses significantly.

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

- (a) There were very few answers to this question and many responses were largely narrative. Candidates were confident with the content of the novel, but had difficulty linking the personal stories to the political/historical ones.
- (b) There were few responses to this question too; most candidates put the passage into context and reported what had apparently happened to Kainene, missing opportunities to explore the passage's balance between the official announcement and the private tragedy. Few really focused on the question and explored ways in which Adichie presents the differences in the characters' reactions to Kainene's disappearance – particularly Richard's desperation and lack of control compared with Olanna's determination to carry on as normal to mask her worry.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There was a small number of responses to this question, mostly competently done with a clear recognition of the context of the passage and the significance of the meeting between Aziz and Fielding at this late stage in the novel. Some answers were restricted by a narrative tendency where the whole story was re-told in order to put the passage into context. However, more successful answers focused on the way Forster uses dialogue to present character and in particular the embarrassment that Aziz faces. The change in Aziz's character was noted, as was the importance of this moment to the novel as a whole – with many being aware of the importance of Mrs Moore's role.

6. Stories of Ourselves

- (a) This question was often most effectively answered by candidates who chose to write about 'Report on the Threatened City' and 'Billennium', but there were also imaginative uses of 'Elephant', 'The Prison' and 'The Bath'. More successful answers avoided the retelling of narrative and looked carefully at how the stories' authors treated subjects such as politics, population growth, materialism, isolation and old age.
- (b) This question and passage was particularly successful in guiding candidates to analyse Naipaul's writing. Most candidates worked effectively, not just with plot and character, but also with aspects of language, pathetic fallacy, sentence structure and the structure of the passage as a whole. There was some insightful analysis of the effects of the first person narrative and the role reversal between the father and the son and how this in itself creates a sense of terror. Candidates were able to respond effectively to the gradual build up of terror throughout the passage, with reference to the way the author introduces the elements outside set against the sense of claustrophobia inside. They commented on the short, sharp moments of activity or sound, coupled with the effects of the dialogue between father and son.

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- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
8. William Shakespeare: *Richard III*
- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
9. Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- (a) Some candidates were uncertain to whom Mitch addresses his line in the cue quotation, but candidates tended to explore a range of options in the blame for Blanche's fate, usually being Blanche herself, Mitch or Stanley. There were some very judgemental answers, arguing strongly that Blanche only has herself to blame, while others attacked Stanley's brutal masculinity. The most successful answers were more nuanced, looking at the contribution made by different characters, their influence on each other, the setting and circumstances of the play.
- (b) There were fewer answers to this question, but strong answers featured close detailed comment on the passage to comment on the early impression Blanche might make on an audience. A number saw in Blanche a conscious theatricality in the stage directions, the pauses created by hyphens, the italicisations to create emphasis and the repeated exclamations. With the long speech, Blanche dominates the scene and candidates noted Stella's smaller part, asking questions and often interrupted. While concentrating on the impression created by the scene, good answers also suggested how these impressions prepare the ground for the play to follow.