

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31

Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- Questions focus on ways in which writers treat particular concerns, so successful responses focus on authors' choices of language and literary methods, and the effects these might have on a reader.
- Questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding, so answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.
- Candidates succeed best when they use secure detailed references and quotations to support points.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should examine the selected poem or extract in great detail.

General Comments

There was, on all texts, some excellent writing, where candidates advanced thoughtful arguments closely supported by detailed quotation and analysis. These demonstrated advanced appreciation of how writers choose language and how their methods affect the communication of their ideas. The strength of such answers was the blending of detailed knowledge and appreciative understanding. Responses which rely on knowledge only, of plot and character, for example, without the literary understanding, tend to lapse into paraphrase and summary, which is not successful.

Question Specific Comments

1. Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Candidates attempting this question tended to agree whole-heartedly that Hughes is the 'poetic voice of blood and guts' and were able to cite a number of appropriate poems to demonstrate his interest in violence and predatory wildlife. Successful answers were very detailed, with a developed understanding of how Hughes's choices of diction, imagery and verse structure accentuate violence, sometimes in unexpected quarters, like 'Thrushes' or 'Skylarks' as well as more obvious examples such as 'Hawk Roosting' or 'Pike'. Thoughtful answers teased out some of the differences between such poems or examined some of the significances of Hughes's interest in violence, with comparison between the natural and human worlds.
- (b) The strongest responses noted the question's prompts towards 'language and imagery', which helped target the essays on linguistic detail while still engaging with structure and form. While there were some confused answers which suggested the poem is set in a jungle, or that the jaguar physically breaks out of the cage, most candidates understood the central premise of the poem and offered some comment on the effects of Hughes's delaying of its real subject matter until the third stanza. Successful answers explored ways in which Hughes creates an atmosphere of indolence in the first two stanzas, examining the verbs, similes and metaphors applied to the animals, even ones associated with ferocity like 'tiger and lion'. Equally, the language used to show the viewers' response to the Jaguar, 'stands, stares, mesmerized', was noted to demonstrate the contrast. Candidates often wrote well about the suggestions of controlled fury in the jaguar, including the forceful plosive 'bang of blood in the brain' and the animal's transcendence of his captivity. Focused discussion of the associations of the language, its auditory effects and its arrangement, led to some exceptionally strong responses to this question.

2. Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There are a number of poems in the selection where Owen includes dialogue and the voices of individual soldiers are used to create the effects. Candidates who understood this and used such poems in their responses tended to write well, whereas candidates who chose poems without such voices, arguing that every war poem expresses the point of view of a soldier and therefore in some way creates a soldier's voice, were markedly less successful. This was a good example of careful consideration of a question and its implications paying dividends. Strong responses were focused on poems such as 'The Dead-Beat', 'The Sentry', 'The Letter' and 'Inspection'. Detailed comments on Owen's use of colloquial and barrack room language within the poems were often illuminating, candidates commenting on how the dialogue creates a sense of individual men, from ordinary backgrounds, caught up in war, individualising the experience and the suffering.
- (b) Weaker responses made no reference to the question's focus on ways in which the poem 'presents ideas about poetry'. Additionally, many candidates were unaware that this poem was written some time before World War I broke out, and is, therefore not about the war. The poem, of course, makes no reference to warfare whatsoever, but a large number of candidates wrote about it as a war poem and made no reference to 'ideas about poetry'. More alert candidates acknowledged Owen's early debts to the Romantic poets, governing both the content and the sonnet form of the poem. Strong answers noted the poem's acknowledgement of the communicative power of poetry as an exploration of emotional states, but also the limitations found in that at the central point of the poem – 'Not one verse that throbs/Throbs with my heart'. Candidates noted the effects of the repetition here and the way the poem turns from this point away from other poets' communication towards a hope for the communicative power of the speaker's own poetry, with a direct address to the reader – 'Listen; my voice my haply lend thee ease.'

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) In responses to this question, the most popular poems chosen were 'Why So Pale and Wan', 'Written The Night Before His Execution', 'When I Was Fair and Young', 'Weep You No More' and 'Walsingham', thus covering a range of 'failed hopes'. Candidates tended to write more successfully when they chose a pair of poems that contrasted in some way, either in content or form, as this gave them firmer grounds for the comparison. As ever, the strongest responses were those which focused clearly on poetic methods, considering the various ways in which the poets presented the ideas, rather than comparing the ideas themselves and limiting the essay to content and subject matter. Successful essays looked at point of view, the creation of the speaker's voice, the use of setting, language, imagery and the use of verse form.
- (b) The Shakespeare sonnet was the more popular choice and most candidates were able to trace the use of imagery of the natural world to parallel human ageing, recognising the autumnal imagery of the 'yellow leaves' and the metaphor of 'sunset'. Such imagery was discussed capably and sometimes with thoughtful sensitivity, though the 'Bare ruined choirs' puzzled many, or were ignored, and many candidates avoided close discussion of the poem's ending. Many ended the discussion with the idea of death in ll. 8-10 and did not consider the final lines or consider the use of the second person throughout the poem. Just a few candidates noted that the poem is addressed to another person and that the poem's speaker, in acknowledging his own ageing, also pays tribute to 'thou', whose love is 'more strong', even as ageing moves the speaker towards inevitable death. Such full and perceptive treatment of the poem was awarded high marks.

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

- (a) Most candidates were able to select appropriate characters and write about them with some knowledge. Occasionally candidates spread themselves too thinly by writing an essay on three, four or five characters. While there is no marking penalty for this, such an approach is self-penalising because it inevitably means that the essay cannot consider any one of them in sufficient detail. Odenigbo, Olanna and Ugwu were the favoured characters, with a focus on Odenigbo's strengths before his mother dies and his descent to alcoholism; Olanna's beauty, patience and teaching during the war balanced against her sleeping with Richard; and Ugwu's loyalty before his conscription and his participation in the gang rape. There were also some very interesting responses to Richard. The most successful answers explicitly considered the word 'heroic' in the question as well as 'flaws', which led to fuller discussion of character roles, the situations in which they are placed and actions and attitudes which might be considered 'heroic'. Thus the apparent heroism of Odenigbo's 'revolutionary' language was compared with his collapse during the war,

while Olanna's selfless work during the war in contrast to her privileged upbringing was noted, and offset her momentary infidelity in most readers' eyes. While Ugwu's participation in the rape was universally reviled, it was noted that he is shown to share the revulsion, haunted by it through the rest of the novel, and his penning of *The World Was Silent When We Died* was often seen to be a heroic act, recording the truth for the victims.

- (b) Some less good answers spent too much time recording the context for this passage, so that they retold the story of Mama's manipulation of Amala and her son; such responses did not attract high marks as they did not focus clearly on the writing of the set passage. More focused answers found much of interest in the sixty lines, carefully noting the effects of Adichie's choices of detail: Odenigbo's hands behind his back, his clumsy attempts to appear sorry and his tentative grip on the steering wheel. Olanna's decisiveness, refusal to acknowledge Odenigbo and her direction to the nurse to give the baby to him were all noted and discussed. Strong answers noted the mixture of narrative and dialogue and some very careful answers showed a sophisticated appreciation of the narrative position of the passage, which, while being written in the third person, closely follows Olanna's perceptions and responses, giving the reader an empathetic position with regards to her while maintaining a separation from Odenigbo.

5. **E.M. Forster: *A Passage to India***

- (a) It was clear from most answers to this question that candidates know this novel extremely well. The cue quotation from Mrs Moore was often clearly placed and candidates were able to draw on a number of key reference points to develop their view of Forster's presentation of India. The strongest responses were clearly organised, considering the idea of 'muddle' in separate categories. In this way candidates structured their consideration of the muddled setting of ramshackle Chandrapore, the muddled plot and uncertainty about what exactly happens to Adela, and the muddled relationships seen in Aziz's and Fielding's misunderstandings and Ronny and Adela's on-off engagement. Some candidates continued to consider religion and colonial politics. Well developed answers considered these big issues through an examination of telling detail, like the failure to identify the green bird or the cause of the road accident, and the difficulty of classifying the caves. There was also much useful comment on the failure of British attempts to sort out the muddle, like numbering the caves or setting out the streets on a grid system. Many candidates saw an incompatibility between Indians' open acceptance of spirituality and lack of rigidity with the British predilection for rules and identification.
- (b) Much of the passage from Chapter 9 is dialogue, so candidates who only provided a summary of the extract without a close examination of the writing were far from successful. Stronger answers were careful in their analysis not only of what is said, but of tone of voice and implications, matched by the narration which gives the reader insight into Fielding's thoughts. This allowed for greater subtlety and a variety of interpretation. Most candidates, for example, found Fielding's answers articulate and convincing, while others found him stumbling and banal. Some candidates suggested that despite the elaborate courtesy of many of the questions put to him, they are in fact rude and prying, while others noted the careful formality of the Indians' sentence construction, compared with the more relaxed idiomatic English of Fielding. Through these details, there was some thoughtful discussion of differing attitudes to the British, to colonialism and to religion, while the passage develops further the reader's understanding of Fielding as a British man separated from conventional British attitudes and opinions.

6. ***Stories of Ourselves***

- (a) Some candidates considered the apparently ordinary boy who commits extraordinary vicarious murder in 'Sredni Vashtar', the lowly and disillusioned shopkeeper in 'The Prison' who tries to redeem a young thief, an old woman struggling with age in 'The Bath' and a man struggling with money and relationships in 'Elephant'. Better answers looked at what makes these characters 'ordinary', with reference to common human traits and features with which many readers might empathise, and how they become central to the narratives as the focus of stories, giving them their narrative drive.
- (b) This question was a passage from 'Billennium'. As with all passage questions, those essays which restricted their focus to the content of the passage and recounted the difficult circumstances in which the characters live, did not do well. More successful responses, often very personal in their reactions to the claustrophobic setting, considered the casual way in which Ward's and Rossiter's

dialogue debates the possibility of a further reduction in living space, emphasising their powerlessness, while the passage also provides plenty of facts and figures of population numbers, precise measurements and the changes over time which give a concrete understanding of the special limitations. Alert responses also picked the effects of words such as 'shuffling mob', 'lock', 'paralysed', 'trampled', 'cubicle', 'crammed', 'force their way' and 'pushing in', the preponderance of which communicate the difficulties of living in the cramped city and thus create the world of the story.

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Question Specific Comments

1. **Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems***

- (a) Poems like 'Hawk Roosting', 'Thrushes' and 'Pike' were most popular in answers to this question on cruelty, though some candidates spread the range to include poems such as 'Wind'. Good answers illustrated examples of cruelty using appropriate quotations. Stronger answers went on to use these quotations to explore the poetic methods used by Hughes to communicate his vision and explored the significance of the idea of cruelty by looking at the range in the poetry and discussing the implications of Hughes's view of the natural world.
- (b) While candidates were confident with the content of the poem, comparatively few explored its language, imagery and structure in full detail. Some stronger responses tackled it with confidence, identifying the tone, diction and repetition of 'dead' as ways in which Hughes presents the dead pig in a matter of fact way. Occasionally candidates noted the use of caesurae and end-stopped lines as indicators of the finality of the pig's death and noted the comparisons with inanimate objects like 'a sack of wheat' and 'a doorstep'. Some of the poem's auditory effects were missed, however, and a number of candidates missed the comparative reminiscence of trying to catch the piglet at the fair.

2. **Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems***

- (a) Although some candidates wrote about soldiers at war generally, in most cases the idea of injured soldiers was well understood, with many answers usefully broadening the definition to include mental as well as physical injuries. This invited consideration of a good range of poems, including 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'Disabled', 'Mental Cases' and 'Inspection' among others. The most successful responses explored voice and structure with some confidence, looking at ways in which Owen not only describes such soldiers, but also sometimes gives them voice and elicits readers' responses which might vary from pity to shock and horror.

- (b) In answering the question on 'Storm', some candidates were significantly hampered by mistaking it for a war poem and failing to recognise that it is a poem written before the war and makes no reference to war. Better answers considered ways in which the sonnet develops the speaker's response to a highly significant encounter with the use of elemental imagery through the separated quatrains and sestet. Such answers explored the imagery's indication of the overwhelming beauty of 'His face' and compared this with the ideas of fear and danger associated with the speaker's response, risking men's cries and women hiding 'bleak faces'. In this way many responses appropriately saw the 'Storm' as an extended metaphor for the speaker's intense emotional strife. Some candidates went on to consider the homoerotic context directly, demonstrating an understanding of why the 'beauty' might risk the speaker's 'fall' in society at the time.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Answers focused on a range of poems including Wroth's 'Sonnet 19', 'Why So Pale and Wan', 'Written the Night Before His Execution', 'The Author's Epitaph' appearing frequently in responses. While answers which simply compared the type of grief without exploring 'ways' were not successful, stronger answers went beyond subject matter and were able to discuss perceptively the poets' use of language and form. The choice of two poems which contrast in some way was often helpful to candidates in giving them a structure for their responses, comparing the differences not only in type of grief, but also ways in which it is expressed.
- (b) Spenser's sonnet elicited some sensitive and thoughtful responses. Good answers acknowledged the relationship to be one of mutual love and affection but also carefully considered the two different perspectives offered in the poem. The man's passion and determination was noted in his writing in the sand not once, but twice, and his attitude was contrasted with the woman's sceptical and pragmatic tone in response to her lover's foolish and futile attempts to immortalise her mortal being in this way. Candidates commented on the effect of the direct speech interrupting the action, leading to the man having the last word by claiming to be immortalising her name and their love in his poetry, clinched in the final couplet. Some very good responses teased out these stages very carefully and often recognised a sense of fun or 'banter' in the mock argument between the two, a sign of the love which is in fact 'eternised' in the poem.

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

- (a) Those who chose this option tended to write about Ugwu's loyalty to Odenigbo and Olanna's loyalty to the Biafran people. The most successful responses considered the idea of 'divided loyalties' more carefully, looking at, for example, Olanna divided between Odenigbo, Baby and her work for refugees; Richard divided between Kainene, the Biafran cause and his own ambition; or Ugwu's loyalty to family and the Biafran cause undermined by his actions during the war. Candidates wrote about Adichie's novel with knowledge and enthusiasm. It should be noted, though, that success in answering questions requires careful consideration of the demands of a question and secure selection of appropriate material.
- (b) Most answers demonstrated not only a good knowledge of the passage, but an understanding of its significance within the novel. Less confident responses related the narrative of the meeting between Olanna and Odenigbo's mother, but more successful answers were keenly observant of detail, sometimes considering the importance of the narrative following Ugwu's perspective. Observant candidates noted the contrast between Olanna's 'smiling face' with Mama's refusal to 'hug Olanna back', which creates an ominous note towards the beginning of the passage. A number picked up on the implications of the 'proper' soup before the conflict becomes apparent in Mama's sudden direct challenge to Olanna in 1.21. The contrast between her rising voice and Olanna's silence was noted, and the shocking effect of her call to the neighbours before Olanna's controlled decision to leave. Candidates also found much to say about the last section of the passage where Mama is portrayed gently singing, having achieved her aims. Answers which matched enthusiasm for the text with this kind of detailed observation achieved high marks.

5. *E.M. Forster: A Passage to India*

- (a) Some responses were less successful because they attempted to cover too many characters and therefore developed few strands of the argument in detail. Some of the strongest essays quickly looked at the general picture of the British – the 'Turtons and Burtons' – before examining a small number of specific characters to see how they fitted into this type. Ronny, typifying the colonial view, was often a focus, and usually contrasted with Fielding and Mrs

Moore. It was the answers which clearly discussed not just how these characters are presented, but also considered the effects in Forster's overall presentation of colonial India, which were most successful.

- (b) Discussion of the extract was often given focus by the knowledge of Adela's later withdrawal of her accusation against Aziz. This gave candidates an interesting angle in their analysis of the casual, confident dialogue of the English who assume their superiority throughout. The uncontrolled outbursts of Mahmoud Ali were also subject to careful scrutiny; his long emotionally charged sentences constructed in quite a different way from the speech of the English. Candidates also wrote well on the professional dignity of Mr Das, trying to manage the events of the trial, combined with the implications of Turton's patronising comment that Das is 'not getting much of a show.' The question also gave candidates an opportunity to explore the significance of Mrs Moore to the novel and the trail, which was effective as long as the passage remained the core focus of the answer.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The 'need to escape' was interpreted widely by candidates, giving them a wide choice of stories about which to write. 'The Prison', 'The Bath', 'Sredni Vashtar', 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' and 'Elephant' were all popular choices. Most candidates were able to explore different aspects of escape, both physical and psychological, depending on the choice of stories. The best responses explored ways in which the writers established and then developed the dominant voice in the stories, articulating the differing urges to escape. In this regard, 'The Prison' and 'The Bath' produced particularly sensitive writing from candidates, showing thoughtful understanding of the central characters and their situations.
- (b) As long as candidates had studied this story and read its opening with care, they tended to write well on this passage. However, quite a large number of candidates seemed unfamiliar with the story and confused the two Mrs Grancys. More confident responses noted the importance of the passage as the opening of the story, informing the reader of the death of the second Mrs Grancy at its outset, before the brief information about the first Mrs Grancy in the second paragraph. Strong essays compared the language and imagery used by Wharton to describe the second Mrs Grancy and the effect she has on her husband with that used to describe the relationship with the first Mrs Grancy. The natural metaphors of growth and fruition in the first paragraph are a striking contrast with the 'leaden embrace' of Grancy's first marriage. There were many perceptive answers which, through careful analysis of this imagery and the narrative voice, were able to demonstrate that the warming and restorative effect of Grancy's second wife is not restricted to Grancy himself. They explored how the tone of the passage reveals that the narrator idolises Mrs Grancy too, and that she becomes a beacon for the circle of friends, not just her husband.

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Question Specific Comments

Comments on this paper must be prefaced by the observation that they are based on a very small number of candidates who took this variant. Most answered on the poetry of Wilfred Owen and *Stories of Ourselves*, meaning that several questions were not attempted at all.

1. **Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems***

- (a) There is a wide range of poems which candidates might have chosen to respond to the question on violence in Hughes's poetry. Examiners were looking for a detailed knowledge of appropriate poems with an appreciation of how violence, in varied forms, is presented by Hughes's choices of language, imagery and verse form.
- (b) The candidates who attempted this question showed an awareness of the idea of the calf's innocence and its eventual fate with the butcher. There was less appreciation of Hughes's writing in the poem and ways in which his language develops a view of the calf, its appearance and behaviour. There was little commentary on the sense of life and joy in the poem, which is there despite the ominous reference to 'Butchers' in the eighth stanza.

2. **Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems***

- (a) There were some responses to this question, candidates appreciating Owen's concern and sympathy for the plight of young men exposed to the brutality of warfare. Poems chosen included 'Futility', 'Disabled', 'The Letter' and 'Inspection' among others. With 'Disabled', candidates were able to compare the soldier's previous life and activities with his diminished physical state as described in the poem, whereas with 'The Letter' and 'Inspection', some candidates explored how the direct speech in the poems give the reader a direct link with the voices of such ordinary men experiencing war. Success depended not only on knowledge, but also on a clear focus on 'ways in which' Owen writes.

- (b) Candidates who mistook the poem 'Music' for a war poem and assumed that the moods are responses to warfare gave an obscured reading. The poem explores how music provokes differing moods, before a comparison with the mood created by love. Candidates who read the question and poem carefully recognised this and were able to write about ways in which Owen reflects the different moods by choosing different language and images, with references to particular musical instruments. Few, though, noted the shift in focus to the impact of love which is the climax of the poem.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Disappointment in love offered candidates a wide range of poems to consider in response to this question, including 'When I Was Fair and Young', 'They Flee From Me' and Wroth's 'Sonnet 11'. Disappointment with one's life, with fortune and with loss were also possibilities, though for success candidates would have to consider ways these ideas are treated in the poems, rather than just focusing on the subjects of disappointment.
- (b) Shakespeare's famous sonnet gave candidates ample opportunity to tease out developing imagery through the sonnet form, from its opening question to the remaining lines which answer it.

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

- (a) There are a number of examples of betrayal in the novel, on a personal scale and on a wider political one, which gave candidates many opportunities to explore the idea. They might have looked at the betrayals of relationships in the infidelities of Odenigbo, Olanna and Richard, and thus Olanna's betrayal of Kainene. Odenigbo's betrayal of his revolutionary fervour as he declines into alcoholism could have been a fruitful area, while Ugwu's betrayal of the girl in the bar and his own integrity and ideals could have provided a strong focus. There was also the possibility of looking at political and military betrayals in the lead up to the coup and its aftermath.
- (b) There were a number of responses to this question, where most candidates were appreciative of Adichie's ominous tone created under the optimistic mood of Olanna's return. Ugwu's eager expectation was noted as he 'opened the door before she knocked', as well as Adichie's indication of Olanna's happy refamiliarisation with the house before she realises Mama is still present. Candidates who picked up Adichie's inclusion of small details, such as Odenigbo's failure to relax, his 'papery' lips and Mama's puzzling warmth, did well. Amala's difficulty in communication was also noted, before Adichie's detailed focus on the moment of the passing of the key in II.39-45, almost like a cinematic close up. Some candidates wrote well on the description of Olanna's feelings in the penultimate paragraph and comments on the final line of the passage were well handled when candidates showed their knowledge of the rest of the text and were aware of what has happened between Odenigbo and Amala.

5. **E.M. Forster: *A Passage to India***

- (a) In the few responses, candidates sometimes showed that they had not read the question carefully enough, writing about Forster's presentation of the English, rather than his presentation of Indian attitudes to the English. While there is of course common ground, this is quite a different question and candidates who did not discriminate were less successful. Well focused answers might have looked at Aziz in particular, and his changing views of the English as the novel progresses. The conversation between Aziz's friends and Fielding in Chapter 9 is also a fruitful source of such attitudes, while answers could also have looked at how Adela's and Mrs Moore's openness stimulates different responses from the Indians, considering the Bridge Party and the tea party at Fielding's house. From areas such as these, candidates could also generate an argument about the political dimension of the relationship.
- (b) There were some generalised narrative-based responses to this question on Fielding, which missed the question's focus on the literary methods by which Forster directs the reader's response to the character. Stronger answers showed an understanding of Fielding's role and how this long narrative introduction explains his background and attitudes in a way which presents him as fair-minded, open and honest. In separating Fielding from the other English in India, who see him as 'a disruptive force', Forster is encouraging the reader to take sides and is therefore setting up key loyalties for a reading of the novel.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) There was a wide range of possibilities for this question. Ageing in 'The Bath' was a good focus, or the desire for change in 'Elephant' and 'Sredni Vashtar'. In 'Report in the Threatened City' the narrators try, without success, to effect change, while 'Billennium' creates a nightmarish vision of future urban change.
- (b) This question produced some very good responses. All candidates recognised the situation and the impact of the stranger in the small town. Stronger responses acknowledged the context of the beard competition and looked closely at ways in which Proulx creates the comic situation. Attention was paid to the description of the visitor and particularly the imagery used to indicate the quality of his beard, a 'tsunami' of 'snowy, radiant white'. The reactions of Creel and Amanda were also examined, while some careful and thoughtful answers compared Creel's and the stranger's reactions to each other, with Creel's assumptions about the bike overturned and the stranger's eloquent, educated and confident speech, demonstrating his intellectual and economic superiority. There were perceptive comments on the image Kaups creates for himself compared with the inhabitants of Elk Tooth, with Plato who 'liked to fight' and is habitually 'scratching his crotch'. The most successful answers were those which recognised the dynamics of the passage in this way and were also alert to the humour of the piece.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key messages

- Good answers take into account the dramatic nature of the play and how its action and dialogue might work on a stage
- Candidates need to be sure that evoking big ideas such as a Marxist perspective actually serves a purpose in answering the specific question set
- Good answers to passage-based questions offer a close focus on the detail of the printed text provided.

General comments

Knowledge of what happens in a text was evident in all but the briefest answers. However, some weaker answers showed knowledge without really applying it to the particular requirements of the question asked. If time is limited, it is important that selection of relevant material has priority. A long answer is not necessarily an effective answer. Successful answers select evidence and include it briefly, through direct and precise reference to the text.

Responses showed understanding in a wide variety of ways. An answer does not have to be comprehensive, but it should certainly deal with a writer's craft if it is to score highly. Thus, candidates who focused on matters of form, structure and language did better than those whose entire focus was thematic. The themes only emerge from how they are embodied in the text, and therefore demonstration and analysis of how this works is central to a good answer. Candidates who ask themselves about the 'How' of a text, rather than the 'What' tend to be able to demonstrate their insights more cogently. Those who had learned to unpick the common terms used in questions ('dramatize' or 'with what effects,' for example) often moved speedily into the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Personal response to a literary text could be thought of as simply a demonstration by the learner that he or she has enjoyed reading the play. To score highly, however, a learner needs to shape material in an original way and demonstrate a willingness to support points with specific reference. At the very top end, it was demonstrated through a sustained and always relevant approach to the precise terms of the question.

Although most candidates showed knowledge and understanding of their texts, some did less well when they were unable to create a continuous argument. In a literary subject, it is unlikely that narrative or paraphrase will be useful, so candidates need to be able to put together a strategic view of how they might tackle a question. Thus, to do well with the 'Communication' aspect of the mark scheme, it is important that candidates are carefully tutored in the skills of moving an argument forward, perhaps through a more fluid use of discourse markers. A lack of planning often means that essays circle round rather than moving forward, and this, of course, eats away at time available for new, separate points.

In answering passage-based questions, candidates need to be prepared to discuss form, structure and language in detail, and to have a sense of the 'arc' of a scene's action. A general sense of what is going on could score very few marks: discussions here must be anchored into the detail of the printed extract. A simple going through of the passage, picking out features here and there will not be highly rewarded. It is the effect of these features on the passage as a whole that needs to be analysed.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Responses were usually confident about the relationship between George and Martha and were able to see the structure of the play as a means of revealing change. Simpler responses noted that Martha dominates early on but is then bested by George. Better answers saw that the relationship is never a fixed thing and that even early on, George is not always seen as a victim. Only the best answers were able to really analyse the nature of their relationship at the end of the play and use examples from the text to demonstrate the ambiguity (and possibly desperation) of the play's last scene. Close argument from particular moments worked well; narrative or paraphrase tended to leave responses in the lower bands. A number of responses tried to focus on the American dream and on George and Martha as representative figures. With so much to write about from the play itself, these attempts came over as contrived and not usually relevant to the specific question asked.
- (b) This episode was well known, as was its significance as a turning point in the play. Most responses were able to see some elements of the complexity of what is presented here. Weaker responses sometimes talked about capital letters and punctuation, a hint that the play was thought of as a written rather than a performed piece. George's newly found confidence was usually well discussed, often by setting it against Honey's drunken lack of control. His pacing of the story and his efforts to involve the others often provided interesting discussions. Tracing Martha's gradual awareness of what is going on proved more elusive, however. Less successful answers often gave a summary or a line-by-line commentary, with no strategic view. A number of responses moved quickly away from the passage (and therefore the question) to answer more generally about the play as a whole, a tactical error.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Candidates were always aware of the character of Bottom and his role in creating the humour of the play. However, many restricted themselves to giving a simple account of plot. This meant that they showed an awareness of how Bottom provides a link between the various worlds of the play without noting that he makes a significant contribution to its themes and concerns as well. At times, arguments along these lines began but were not fully developed. Better responses noted that in his clumsy ridiculousness, he provides a gloss on the delicate world of fairies and courtly romance. Some answers moved away from him towards discussion of Puck or of how he is used by Oberon and Titania, and this meant that Bottom sometimes became merely incidental to the response. Responses that looked carefully at his language — in its different manifestations — tended to do best of all.
- (b) All candidates were aware of Helena's obsessive love for Demetrius and of his indifference towards her. Better responses dealt with the language of the extract and with her constant self-deprecation through imagery. A number of answers picked up on the ways in which Helena responds to Demetrius by echoing what he has just said. Those who explored the mythological references realised that there is also a strong thread of self-dramatization going on too. Some responses at the top end discussed Demetrius's interventions in order to emphasize her folly and the excessiveness of her emotions. Some responses sought to link Helena's reactions to patriarchal oppression, a reading which was never really relevant or, more crucially, fully argued.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Responses varied from the largely narrative to the intensely detailed. Most saw that this is the closest that we get to Richard as having a private life, and that even this shows how calculating and evil he is. There was focus on the proposal scene and on Richard's speedy turning aside to tell the audience how this is merely to cement his bid for the throne. Less widely understood was Lady Anne's reaction to Richard and her ultimate acceptance despite what she knows about him.

- (b) All candidates saw that this is a crucial moment in the play and that this is a turning point in Richard's view of himself. Some essays simply went through the passage pointing out how each of the ghosts has been one of Richard's victims. Others were able to see a rank order of ghosts but noted nonetheless that the ghosts tend to address Richard in the same sort of tone, and that one of the significant patterns here is that of repetition. The sleep of the virtuous, and what the ghosts say to Richmond often provided moments of contrast. The best responses observed that the disturbances of the night acted further to disconcert Richard in the battle the following day.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Most responses were able to give an account of the various moments when Chapuys appears in the play. Better answers went on to see how Chapuys presents an alternative, more distant point perspective on the action, as his job is to try and work out how the various pressures in the English court will work themselves out to the political advantage or disadvantage of the King of Spain. There were some very good responses that noted how Chapuys comes from a still Catholic country and is therefore, perhaps, a representative of values that More endorses. Others argued that his religious fervour is merely a front for ambition, thus making him more like Cromwell than More in his ability to adapt. The best answers focused on particular moments.
- (b) Responses were usually very aware of the tensions going on in this scene, and in particular of Norfolk's divided loyalties. Most responses could give a clear account of the scene, though at times there was confusion about where the property case/bribery stood in relation to the present action. Better answers were aware of Cromwell's sly use of language ('a little pressure') and of his careful management of Norfolk, Rich and the Woman. Cromwell's peremptory dismissal ('he has acquired self importance', line 23) of anything that does not serve his purposes was often well captured. The best responses looked closely at gesture as well as language.

Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

Question 5

- (a) All responses showed some understanding of the passage of time in the play. Many drew attention to the significance of Christmas as the time for the action and had a clear understanding of how the three couples in the play are changing, both in their own relationships, and in social standing in relation to the others. The best answers were aware of the nuances of class distinction and in particular of the ways in which the Hopcrofts have moved up in the world. Only the best responses saw, however, that their upward economic mobility has not been accompanied by a change in their attitudes and values or their rather gauche behaviour. Responses that considered particular moments were more highly rewarded than those that simply dealt with generalities of character discussion.
- (b) The mixture of farce and deadly seriousness in this scene was clearly understood by all. Geoffrey's lack of awareness and his patronising ineffectualness were also well captured by most. More could have been made of the stage directions, for they are, after all, the only direct means by which we learn of Eva. The best answers were able to respond to both the painful realities presented and the fact that the scene is also extremely funny. The inability of all the characters to rise above their own self-obsessions, beautifully illustrated through Jane wanting to clean the oven, gave rise to much discussion. Responses that saw the extract in dramatic terms, paying attention to how an audience might respond, tended to do best. Those that resorted to narrative or paraphrase did not move out of the lower bands of the mark scheme.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

Key messages

- Good answers take into account the dramatic nature of the play and how its action and dialogue might work on a stage.
- Candidates need to be sure that evoking big ideas such as a Marxist perspective actually serves a purpose in answering the specific question set.
- Good answers to passage-based questions offer a close focus on the detail of the printed text provided.

General comments

Knowledge of what happens in a text was evident in all but the briefest answers. However, some weaker answers showed knowledge without really applying it to the particular requirements of the question asked. If time is limited, it is important that selection of relevant material has priority. A long answer is not necessarily an effective answer. Successful answers select evidence and include it briefly, through direct and precise reference to the text.

Responses showed understanding in a wide variety of ways. An answer does not have to be comprehensive, but it should certainly deal with a writer's craft if it is to score highly. Thus, candidates who focused on matters of form, structure and language did better than those whose entire focus was thematic. The themes only emerge from how they are embodied in the text, and therefore demonstration and analysis of how this works is central to a good answer. Candidates who ask themselves about the 'How' of a text, rather than the 'What' tend to be able to demonstrate their insights more cogently. Those who had learned to unpick the common terms used in questions ('dramatize' or 'with what effects,' for example) often moved speedily into the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Personal response to a literary text could be thought of as simply a demonstration by the learner that he or she has enjoyed reading the play. To score highly, however, a learner needs to shape material in an original way and demonstrate a willingness to support points with specific reference. At the very top end, it was demonstrated through a sustained and always relevant approach to the precise terms of the question.

Although most candidates showed knowledge and understanding of their texts, some did less well when they were unable to create a continuous argument. In a literary subject, it is unlikely that narrative or paraphrase will be useful, so candidates need to be able to put together a strategic view of how they might tackle a question. Thus, to do well with the 'Communication' aspect of the mark scheme, it is important that candidates are carefully tutored in the skills of moving an argument forward, perhaps through a more fluid use of discourse markers. A lack of planning often means that essays circle round rather than moving forward, and this, of course, eats away at time available for new, separate points.

In answering passage-based questions, candidates need to be prepared to discuss form, structure and language in detail, and to have a sense of the 'arc' of a scene's action. A general sense of what is going on could score very few marks: discussions here must be anchored into the detail of the printed extract. A simple going through of the passage, picking out features here and there will not be highly rewarded. It is the effect of these features on the passage as a whole that needs to be analysed.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) The vast majority of responses simply agreed with the statement that the relationship was sad. More subtle responses were able to see that this marriage has quite a lot of energy and life in it. George and Martha are in it because they like to be at loggerheads with one another, and their mutual contempt is what keeps them feeling alive. Other responses were able to see that external pressures had perhaps brought them to this mutual support. Less successful responses tended merely to give an account of what happens to the two of them during the play.
- (b) Strong responses saw the absolute hatred and contempt that George feels for Nick at this point in the play. The various ways in which George gets under Nick's skin were often well seen and the parallels between them were often clearly outlined. The best answers paid careful attention to language and the various ways in which the two struggle for dominance during the scene. Some responses noted the reference to archery but did not then go on to discuss the pointed way in which George's barbs hit their target and wound Nick at his weakest points. Less successful answers tended to focus on character studies, often failing to relate the two characters through the action of this particular scene.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Responses were usually able to give a list of the various instances of mistaken identity that are present in the text, though there were a few that got very tangled up with the terminology of the question and talked about identity instead, usually by seeing Bottom as having changed identity. Good answers here were able to see how the plot feeds into the themes in order to examine the nature of love as opposed to infatuation. The best responses offered sharp analysis of particular moments.
- (b) Most answers were able to see that the play within the play parallels and mocks much of what has gone before, though of course the mechanicals are not aware of this. Strong answers looked at the various ways in which the words and the action are grossly exaggerated for comic effect. Weaker answers tended to give a running commentary on the scene, noticing some of its features. At all levels, more could have been made of the commentary provided by the nobles in the last eight lines of the extract and of the irony contained in 'This is the silliest stuff I ever heard.' A number of candidates warmed to the various absurdities of the scene, such as the wall joining in and Bottom's inability to stay in character, but found it hard to link this with the precise terms of the question.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) The various ways in which Richard manipulates us as well as the characters in the play provided a rich source for candidates. Some focused on the various ways in which he portrays himself when alone on the stage in order to make the theatre audience co-conspirators with his plotting. Others saw that he carefully places himself as a victim in order to evoke pity in others. The best answers were able to point out that as the action advances, he becomes less engaging. To achieve marks toward the top end, it was important for candidates to identify particular moments and to engage with both the dramatic situation and the language that Richard uses.
- (b) The murder scene proved popular. Candidates were keenly aware that this could all be reported rather than seen, and this led to interesting discussion about its inclusion. Weak answers gave an account of the scene. Stronger responses noted that this moment makes Richard's evil explicit. There was usually discussion of the differences between the murderers, with money and conscience the two poles of opposition. There was often useful discussion about the second murderers worry about 'judgement-day', and this was usually linked to a realisation that the murderers are both proxies for and contrasts with Richard, who feels nothing of the qualms of conscience that at least one of these apparently baser men feels so obviously.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Most responses noted that More's marriage shows what he will lose through his determination to stick to his principles. Unpersuadable by courtiers and friends, his greatest challenge is to maintain his stance in relation to the complete (and sensibly expressed) incomprehension shown by his wife. There were useful discussions of the scene in the tower to back up this view. The best responses placed the marriage in the context of public and private life and were aware of how Bolt chooses to dramatize key moments between More and Alice in order to dramatize the ideas that are being explored and could otherwise be seen as rather abstract.
- (b) Weaker candidates gave an account of the passage and made a few observations about the relationship between Cromwell and Rich. Better responses were able to see that Cromwell is carefully manipulating everything about the scene and that he has worked out precisely how to appeal to Rich's vanity and ambition. There is much detail in the scene that derives from stage directions such as the fact that Rich 'sits,' and 'laughs nervously', each of which demonstrates that he is fully aware of the power that Cromwell has over him. The best responses were eloquent on this as a moment where Rich consciously reaches the point of no return. Remarks about Cromwell's use of euphemism and his gradually pushing of Rich towards extremism showed very good understanding of how the scene works itself out in dramatic terms and allows an audience to modify its view of these characters.

Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

Question 5

- (a) Although it is possible to see Sidney with a degree of sympathy because of his background and his aspirations, most candidates were confident that he is a bully. Evidence for this in his relationship with his wife was easy enough to find, though there were some responses that did not simply accept that his treatment of Jane is quite so one-sided. The best responses were able to see that Sidney, for all his awkwardness and gauche behaviour, is a means of an audience measuring the hypocrisy and patronising snobbish nastiness of others, even though they try to conceal it. The Act 3 moment where the others try to hide from the Hopcrofts often provided a useful moment for analysis of this aspect of the play. In this sense, Sidney is a hero because he keeps fighting a system which will only tolerate him when he is useful to it.
- (b) Responses showed sound awareness of how the men are indulging themselves in rather inappropriate, sexist discussion as a means of trying to bond with each other. More elusive was how this places the men in relation to each other, with Sidney ('a little out of his depth') feeling that he does not quite understand how to play the game and say the appropriate sorts of things. Some responses gave an account of the scene. Better answers were able to locate and analyse the comedy of what is going on here, commenting on the uneasy atmosphere and the jarring end to the exchange where Sidney behaves so completely inappropriately (thinking he has finally got the hang of things), much to the shock of Ronald and Geoffrey.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key messages

- Good answers take into account the dramatic nature of the play and how its action and dialogue might work on a stage.
- Candidates need to be sure that evoking big ideas such as a Marxist perspective actually serves a purpose in answering the specific question set.
- Good answers to passage-based questions offer a close focus on the detail of the printed text provided.

General comments

Knowledge of what happens in a text is evident in all but the briefest and most scanty answers. However, some candidates show knowledge without really applying it to the particular requirements of the question asked. If time is limited, it is important that selection of relevant material has priority. A long answer is not necessarily an effective answer. It is important too that candidates select evidence and include it briefly, through direct and precise reference to the text.

Responses show understanding in a wide variety of ways. An answer does not have to be comprehensive, but it should certainly tussle with a writer's craft if it is to score highly. Thus, a learner who focuses on matters of form, structure and language is likely to do better than one whose entire focus is thematic. The themes only emerge from how they are embodied in the text, and therefore demonstration and analysis of how this works is central. Candidates who ask themselves about the 'How' of a text, rather than the 'What' tend to be able to demonstrate their insights more cogently. Those who have learned to unpick the common terms used in questions ('dramatize' or 'with what effects,' for example) often move speedily into the higher levels of the mark scheme

Personal response to a literary text could be thought of as simply a demonstration by the learner that he or she has enjoyed reading the play. To score highly, however, a learner needs to shape material in an original way and demonstrate a willingness to support points with specific reference. At the very top end, it is demonstrated through a sustained and always relevant approach to the precise terms of the question.

Although most candidates show knowledge and understanding of their texts, some need to be more fully instructed in how to create a continuous argument. In a literary subject, it is unlikely that narrative or paraphrase will be useful, so candidates need to be able to put together a strategic view of how they might tackle a question. Thus, to do well with the 'Communication' aspect of the mark scheme, it is important that candidates are carefully tutored in the skills of moving an argument forward, perhaps through a more fluid use of discourse markers. A lack of planning often means that essays circle round rather than moving forward, and this, of course, eats away at time available for new, separate points.

If candidates are going to respond to **(b)** type questions, they need to be prepared to discuss form, structure and language in great detail, and to have a sense of the 'arc' of a scene's action. A general sense of what is going on is not enough: discussions here must be anchored into the detail of the printed extract. A simple going through of the passage, picking out features here and there will not be highly rewarded. It is the effect of these features on the passage as a whole that needs to be analysed.

Comments on specific questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to give an account of Nick and Honey's role in the play. Better responses saw that the couples are paralleled in the play for purposes of contrast and drama. Other answers noted that George and Martha need an audience for their games in order to really inflict damage on each other. The best responses showed full understanding of the term 'dramatic effects' and anchored arguments in the detail of particular moments, often by talking about the effect that the games have on the younger couple and their relationship.
- (b) Responses to this question varied widely. Some tracked the passage. Others were able to see that Martha's shouted interventions are only part of the story. Throughout, she is the central topic of conversation, and it is clear that this is the moment where George realises that Martha's off-stage revelations will lead to an escalation of the war between them (Line 65: 'O.K., Martha.') George's repetitions (lines 53 and 55) show his obsession too; his talking to her even in her absence takes this further.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Strong answers on this question were able to see that the play makes continued fun of the conventions of romantic love through the farcical and the absurd. These answers also made much of the lovers' (of whatever kind) excessiveness in their vocabulary. Less good responses tended to be more narrative and simply give an account of the various relationships in the play.
- (b) The central contrast of the scene was seen by all candidates. There was discussion of class difference and the breaking of the fourth wall, as the court characters interact with the actors and tease them for their pretensions in staging a tragedy. The best answers were able to see that the action of the play within a play provides a commentary on the wider attitudes and values of the lovers in the play as a whole. Discussions of language in very good answers pointed out that the Athenians adopt prose in this scene, a vivid contrast with their own rather staged and theatrical language elsewhere in the play.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Answers to this question showed a confident grasp of Richmond's ascent and of Richard's decline. This was often most fully evoked through reference to the final 'ghost' scene of the play, or through details of the play's final moments. The best answers were able to contrast Richard's descent with Richmond's increasingly royal behaviour and his ability to evoke the national interest ('England long hath been mad, and scarr'd herself...') in contrast to Richard's Machiavellian self-interest. Weaker answers resorted simply to character study.
- (b) Most candidates were able to give an account of how Richard persuades Lady Anne, both through language and gesture. Better responses were able to contrast the first half of the scene with his immediate contradiction of what has gone before, even to the extent of his instant change of destination immediately after Anne's exit. The extent of Richard's dishonesty was usually acknowledged, his vain gleefulness in executing it proved harder to pin down. Some responses sensibly saw the soliloquy as a continuation of his opening speech in Act 1.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Candidates moved quickly to the Centre of this question and saw that an examination of More's conscience and religious views was central to the discussion. In weaker answers, this was restricted to character study. Stronger responses were able to establish how More's

uncompromising stance comes at great personal cost. The best answers saw the issue in dramatic terms and made close reference to particular moments in the play.

- (b) Responses here showed how More's home life provides a point of contrast for the political aspects of the play and also demonstrates how much More is sacrificing to his principles. More's careful tutoring of Rich was often suitably evoked in order to discuss More's subsequent betrayal. More subtle responses noted the references to Machiavelli and were able to contrast present circumstances with what is to happen in the future. There was also some discussion of how religion is a potent and real presence in More's household.

Alan Ayckbourn: *Absurd Person Singular*

Question 5

- (a) Candidates were able to see that selfishness and self-obsession runs throughout the play. Most responses focused on Sidney Hopcroft's ambitions and his willingness to bully both his wife and his business associates to get what he wants. More sophisticated responses noted that all of the characters are profoundly self-interested and only really react with the world on their own terms. Responses that located the issue in particular dramatic moments did best.
- (b) The Hopcroft's untimely arrival and their insensitiveness to the situation they find themselves in provided much scope for discussion. Their social ineptitude, despite their rise in economic status, also provided grounds for discussion. The best responses were able to characterise the action and analyse the various stops and starts, the discomfort felt by all. Reference to the end of the scene often proved helpful, as it saw the beginnings of Sidney's desire to torment and embarrass the others as beginning here.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51
Shakespeare and other
Pre-Twentieth-Century Texts

Key Messages

- Candidates should be able to place the passage in an option **(b)** question within a precise and focussed context, showing the significance of this passage in terms of what has gone before or is to come.
- Unnecessary biographical information does not advance the argument of an essay. Candidates should ensure such information is used purposefully and focussed on specific aspects of the text itself.

General Comments

Most answers showed sound knowledge of and clear engagement with their chosen texts. There were very few rubric errors in this session and very little unfinished work. The quality of expression was for the most part at least acceptable though there were a few candidates for whom critical terminology and an appropriate register was more of a challenge.

Centres should note that from 2016 June all candidates will have to offer at least one passage/option **(b)** answer. More details are available in the relevant syllabus.

There are two specific issues to mention in this session:

Candidates answering passage questions do need to consider the significance of the overall passage or poem in the context of the wider text studied. A key question is what makes this passage or poem of particular significance in the wider work. To do this it will be necessary to refer to the wider text directly, such as briefly mentioning the preceding action in a play, in terms of what has brought about the situation in front of the audience. This needs to be done relevantly and with discrimination. A summary of the entire work is not necessary to achieve this but some specific reference to the whole text, rooted in the passage or poem given in the question is an essential part of the task in an option **(b)** question.

Some candidates introduced each essay with a detailed biography of the writer and at times of the historical period in which the writer lived. This does not help the answer gain any marks and in fact wastes valuable time which could be better spent on dealing with the main topic of the essay.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 – As You Like It

- (a)** Nearly all answers showed at least a sound knowledge of the text and were able to find relevant examples to discuss. Weaker answers tended to retell the narrative of the cousins, with the shaping to the task determining the success. Better answers focused on the words ‘presentation’ and ‘meaning and effects’. Some answers noticed how the cousins are juxtaposed with the pairs of males especially the Dukes, their fathers, and the future husbands and how their loyalty and friendship was contrasted with the various filial conflicts. More sophisticated answers considered what they revealed about such issues as the role of women in contemporary society, friendship, love, ambivalent relationships, disguise and with awareness of the layers of irony, freedom through disguise (and for some candidates, falsehood), humour and different types of comedy.
- (b)** The best answers gave a precise context, following the failed marriage with Martext. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with better answers noting the ‘methods and concerns’. This included considering themes such as love (at first sight), education, court and

country and the effect of the forest. Others discussed Touchstone's humour or, depending on the reading, aggression and William's playing along with or fear of him. The detail of Touchstone's 'attacks' was not well understood by some candidates – those who could explore his use of language, mockery, and Shakespeare's ironic sending up of the courtly attitudes often did very well. Touchstone's belief he is clever or witty was often noted with the irony much commented of his 'unconscious self-mockery'. Better answers often compared this to the previous dialogue with Corin, noting the same themes but also the different tone. Weaker essays tended to not know the context, with some misunderstanding Touchstone's tone and intentions and thinking William is to marry Audrey.

Question 2 – *Othello*

- (a) Most candidates were able to discuss the importance of 'good name' or reputation in the play as a whole. Weaker candidates tended to retell the events, often focusing on Iago, Desdemona and Cassio and, surprisingly, less often on Othello himself. Better answers noted the irony of Iago saying this – his actions and intentions often contrasted with his words here. More sophisticated answers saw how Shakespeare layered the irony, for example how the often 'honest Iago' is right and his reputation is what enables the action of the play because he is believed by everyone until near the end. Some commented on 'Poor indeed', noting that what Iago gets from destroying Cassio is his job, with some noting that in the end he over-reaches and destroys himself. Weaker answers tended to apply the quote on a character by character basis, with more focused answers discussing how reputation is changed, affected or destroyed.
- (b) Less successful answers tended to have too long an introduction or contextualisation, or conversely ignored key information such as what Cassio is after and why. Better answers explored how the openness of the Desdemona/Cassio discussion is contrasted with the subtle deviousness of Iago's word to Othello. For some candidates, 'Shakespeare makes Iago seem to be having a moral, interior battle about telling Othello when in fact he is but scheming and manipulating as the audience well knows.' With others, suggesting that 'Iago's genius is in pretending to be merely 'thinking aloud', protecting his friend and yet sowing seeds of doubt'. Sophisticated answers focused on the language, with many noting the word 'sneak' and its impact, for example. The ironic layers were often noted and well explored, especially as Cassio is acting under Iago's guidance, which as more analytical answers noted, only Othello doesn't know. Some explored the ignorance of those on stage, such as Cassio as to Iago's role in his dismissal, Emilia in her view of Iago, Desdemona in her understanding of Othello and her, for some, flirtatious manner to Cassio, especially for those who remembered his role as a go-between. Good answers noted the audience, who for some 'watches in horror and dismay as Iago's plot is set in motion' whereas others exploring Iago's role considered 'what is he doing during Desdemona and Othello's dialogue.' Others noted Othello's love for his wife, how the repeated 'sweet' and Desdemona's girlish nature create almost a father/daughter relationship. His short 'not now' for some candidates was as though talking to a child and hints at his being uncomfortable in the situation. Some saw the irony in her 'promises' of what she would do: her eventual death and how her nagging works as later Othello says, 'farewell the tranquil mind,' all, for some, proof of her naivety.

Question 3 – *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to give a summary of what happens to Elinor, with better answers shaping this to consider her role and characterisation, though often ignoring the guiding quotation. Better answers considered her as a symbol of sense, contrasting her to Marianne, with some exploring why she is wretched and its significance to the plot, as the other woman in Edward's life. More detailed answers considered her role within the family, the irony, for some of Brandon loving Marianne rather than Elinor. Others were less sympathetic, thinking her rather cold and too unemotional, only finally releasing her feelings at the news of Lucy's treachery to Edward.
- (b) Weaker answers often struggled with the context for this passage and tended towards a character by character approach, with nearly all noting the changes in Marianne and Brandon. There were different views of Willoughby's fate and, to a lesser extent of Marianne's. Better answers noted Austen's judgemental tone – for example meting out some punishment to Willoughby, but, for some, less than he deserved for his treatment of Eliza. More sophisticated answers saw evidence of Marianne's bildungsroman and her maturing from over sensibility to understanding the importance of "sense", which leads to true love. As some noted, though Willoughby thinks of her, she apparently forgets him entirely. Others explored Austen's use of free indirect discourse to get

inside Marianne and Willoughby's minds, with a few analysing the mocking, ironic tone in for example 'so late...as 17' and the reference to flannel waistcoats.

Question 4 – *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise more or less relevant examples with some able to refer to both prologue and tale. Others saw the violence as one of Alison's methods of gaining 'maisterie'. For some, power is main theme and rape and physical violence one way of achieving it, but also seen as part of the experience and authority debate. Better answers explored the intellectual bullying of Jankyn and Alison's responses in the prologue, contrasting this with how the verbal violence of the knight in the tale is balanced against the 'gentillesse' debate of the Lady. For some sex was seen as part of the violence – not only the rape in the tale, but Alison's approach to her first three husbands in Prologue, with some seeing this as comedic.
- (b) Weaker answers often offered a broad paraphrase of the passage, often ignoring the 'methods and concerns'. Better answers explored the concerns, such as the treatment of women and some noted that the Queen is judging rape. The act of the knight was seen as worse than anything in the Prologue, though for some the Wife oddly has no comment on this. Many better answers linked this to the Prologue and text of St Jerome and 'painting of the lion'. More sophisticated answers explored the language for example the verbal play on 'thing', sometimes linked to the Prologue's 'small thyng'. Others noted the change in tone/genre in the Tale – as one candidate put it: 'to Arthurian romance and fairy-tale from realistic biography, supported by classical and religious allusion'. Some candidates noted the key theme of 'what women want' which links to the Prologue's concern of what Alison wants! Others discussed the ridiculousness of the task and perhaps the humour that the contemporary audience would feel at such a fruitless search being imposed.

Question 5 – *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened to Tom and Maggie, with more successful answers shaping this to the given quote and task. Better answers considered how Eliot shapes their narratives through the comparisons with Philip, Lucy and Bob. Others noted the differing attitudes to female education in particular and how little advantage Tom obtained from his education. Better answers saw 'education' in a wider sense, noting Bob and Tom and their success in the world of business, with some excellent answers focussing on Eliot's use of language and narrative voice to present her concerns.
- (b) Weaker answers offered a detailed summary with more successful responses focussing on the relationships. Better answers saw how the passage is concerned with money and family, as well as Tom's need to please his father, and his attitude to Maggie (often linked to his view of her and Philip/Stephen). Many saw Maggie as caring and loving and others noted Mrs Tulliver's view of her son and how this linked to the wider text. More sophisticated answers discussed the resilience of the Tullivers. Better answers analysed the use of dialogue and narrative voice to develop excitement and suspense. Some noted Mr Tulliver's awareness – Tom bringing in less money – but his inability to understand, as he assumes it's Tom's profligacy rather than his industry, thus exemplifying why the family has been ruined in the first place.

Question 6 – *The Return of the Native*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened to Clym, with some successfully able to shape this to consider role and characterisation. Better answers saw Clym's return from Paris as the catalyst, but thought the tragedies not his fault as Wildeve and Eustacia being selfish and his mother domineering were much more important. More sophisticated answers noted his self-importance – for example his education plan – and lack of awareness both leading to his own tragic and miserable old age. For many he doesn't understand people – hence the problems. More sophisticated candidates explored Hardy's use of Greek tragedy – fate and mischances – seeing Clym as not the guilty party, but all are simply victims of the Heath. Others thought Clym less so as he never rejected it completely, unlike Eustacia and Wildeve for example.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to not be aware of the context and offered only a broad paraphrase of the passage. Those who knew the context of this as the first meeting for some time and their respective marriages and the intrinsic disappointments in them often explored the relationship

successfully. Others analysed the use of dance and Heath traditions here and elsewhere, often seen as a force or fate to bring them back together, despite resistance on her side. Those who explored the style carefully often did well, with some linking the use of 'fire' and imagery to their previous night meetings. More sophisticated answers saw how Hardy develops the passion and desire of the plot, in counterpoint to the steadfastness of Thomasin and Venn and partly Clym. Hardy, for some, makes us sympathise with if not quite condone the situation and the attraction between them.

Question 7 – Keats Selection

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise more or less relevant poems, with more successful answers shaping this to the given quotation. Better answers considered how Keats saw poetry as an escape from life's realities and how his poetry is immersed in nature and natural things. The poems most often considered were 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'When I have fears...' and 'Bright Star'. More sophisticated candidates saw how often nature brings Keats back to his mortality, death and fears of leaving no poetic heritage or monument. Some answers considered the biographical context – the 'harsh realities' – and how he used poetry and poetic imagination to leave it behind on the 'viewless wings of poesy'. Some compared him to the Graveyard School of poets – for example in 'Ode on Melancholy' where he persuades us a way from embracing melancholy in favour of '(glutting) thy sorrow on a morning rose' and in 'Ode to a Nightingale', noting how others – Philomel and Ruth – have been comforted by the same song, as a symbol of hope in harsh times.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the given poem, with more successful answers able to link this to Keats's concerns and sometimes his methods. Better answers linked this to the wider canon through imagery, especially nature and themes, such as mortality. Some candidates saw how Keats was 'tortured by fears of not fulfilling his poetic destiny' and how this links to similar fears of death and unfulfillment in other poems. Those who discussed style often noted the sonnet form, and discussed the Shakespearean echoes in the language. Some were puzzled by Keats's views here and even the meaning of 'the fair creature' and his attitude to love and fame.

Question 8 – Rossetti Selection

- (a) Most candidates agreed with the proposition, with weaker candidates paraphrasing more or less relevant poems, while more successful answers shaped the response to the question. Better answers explored how Rossetti uses language and imagery to develop her concerns and create the shades of response and meaning. Some candidates thought she always had religious faith but her doubts were over her human relationships or even her own worthiness. Those who explored the detail of her poems, with specific reference to the question, often did very well.
- (b) Candidates generally had at least a sound knowledge of the poem, with weaker answers offering a paraphrase, at times shaped to the task. Better answers explored how the simple story was used as a painful metaphor for loss of virginity or reputation and social standing, depending on the interpretation. Detailed answers used 'Cousin Kate', 'The Convent Threshold' and Maude Clare' as useful comparisons. More sophisticated answers considered poetic methods such as the use of rhythm 'to create bluntness and finality in the negative statement' and 'iambic rhythm replicates the heartbeat, emphasising the feelings of pain and loss', as some candidates expressed it. Others analysed Rossetti's use of alliteration and rhymes, as well as the simple ballad form, with those answers in which effects were considered doing particularly well. For some candidates, unlike other poems on similar theme, there was no triumph for the fallen woman and some noted how the comparisons to other women increase the despair of the 'fallen', unnamed girl.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre-
Twentieth-Century Texts

Key Messages

- Candidates should be able to place the passage in an option **(b)** question with a precise and focussed context, showing the significance of this passage in terms of what has gone before or is to come.
- Unnecessary biographical information does not advance the argument of an essay. Candidates should ensure such information is used purposefully and focussed on specific aspects of the text itself.

General Comments

Most answers showed sound knowledge of and clear engagement with their chosen texts. There were very few rubric errors in this session and very little unfinished work. The quality of expression was for the most part at least acceptable though there were a few candidates for whom critical terminology and an appropriate register was more of a challenge.

Centres should note that from 2016 June all candidates will have to offer at least one passage/option **(b)** answer. More details are available in the relevant syllabus.

There are two specific issues to mention in this session:

Candidates answering passage questions do need to consider the significance of the overall passage or poem in the context of the wider text studied. A key question is what makes this passage or poem of particular significance in the wider work. To do this it will be necessary to refer to the wider text directly, such as briefly mentioning the preceding action in a play, in terms of what has brought about the situation in front of the audience. This needs to be done relevantly and with discrimination. A summary of the entire work is not necessary to achieve this but some specific reference to the whole text, rooted in the passage or poem given in the question is an essential part of the task in an option **(b)** question.

Some candidates introduced each essay with a detailed biography of the writer and at times of the historical period in which the writer lived. This does not help the answer gain any marks and in fact wastes valuable time which could be better spent on dealing with the main topic of the essay.

Question 1 – As You Like It

- (a)** Nearly all candidates had at least a sound knowledge of the text and were able to find relevant examples to discuss. Weaker answers tended to retell relevant parts of the narrative, most often focused on Rosalind and Celia, with some reference to Adam, Orlando and Oliver, with the shaping to the task determining the success. Better answers focused on the words 'presentation' and 'meaning and effects'. Some candidates considered betrayal a key element, especially the brothers contrasting pairs, with the loyalty of Celia and Rosalind, set against the conflict or their fathers. More sophisticated answers developed this into considering how Shakespeare presents his thematic concerns – for example court and country issues or 'the magical influence of the Forest' as one candidate suggested. The unselfishness of Adam and his relationship with Orlando was well contrasted to Jacques' loyalty to Senior, whilst out of favour but not once he is reinstated, with some wondering about Jacques's desire to go to Frederick at the end.
- (b)** Candidates who were able to give a precise context, the first meeting of Rosalind and Orlando in the Forest and her disguise as Ganymede, were in a minority but often did well. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the passage, with better answers noting the 'contributes to your

understanding' in the question. This included the development of such themes as love (at first sight), disguise and deception and the effect of the forest. Better answers saw Rosalind's disguise as a central plot device and put this meeting into the context of the wrestling match. Some answers saw how her disguise created humour (situation/gender/language/tone). Others explored the conflict, with more sophisticated answers noting the irony and how that shaped the audience's response. Most candidates considered the characterisation of Rosalind, via the freedom of disguise, and Orlando, no 'fetters on his tongue' through his ignorance of her disguise. Some thought this all developed a positive audience response to their love match, though others had doubts about the propriety of Rosalind's actions. More analytical answers saw the use of lists – love marks here – with Jacques's seven ages and Touchstone's list of quarrels often helpfully compared. Some good responses wondered if Rosalind shows the marks of love that she misses in Orlando. Others developed the context of the preceding Orlando/Jacques dialogue, as useful in showing how Orlando is overshadowed here by Rosalind, though not by Jacques previously, which was, for some candidates, evidence of him seeing through her disguise very quickly.

Question 2 – *Othello*

- (a) Most candidates were able to discuss the importance of reputation in the play as a whole. Weaker candidates tended to retell the events, often focusing on Iago, Desdemona and Cassio and, surprisingly, less often on Othello himself. Better answers noted the irony of Iago saying this – his actions and intentions often contrasted with his words here. More sophisticated answers saw how Shakespeare layered the irony, for example how the often used 'honest Iago' is right and his reputation is what enables the action of the play because he is believed by everyone until near the end. Some candidates compared Desdemona's and Emilia's attitudes to infidelity, being found out for Emilia the ultimate problem. More sophisticated answers noted how reputation changes depending on the standpoint. As one candidate put it, 'Iago is honest to Othello but not the audience, whereas Desdemona is a whore to Othello, but not to the audience or anyone else in the play.' Othello's reputation was seen as at odds with expectations, especially contemporary, of a Moor but he becomes what is expected through Iago's manipulation. Many saw the relevance of the comment to the main characters wholly or in part. Good essays often noted how Iago's attacks are shaped to each character: Cassio – reputation as soldier ruined by drunkenness and brawling on duty, Desdemona – virtue/innocence ruined by being framed for an affair through the reputation of Venetian women and Othello – calm, unshakeable soldier ruined by being filled with rage and jealousy over something he can't fight.
- (b) A clear focus on the task, the 'audience response' was important for those tackling this question. Less successful answers tended to have too long an introduction or contextualisation, or conversely ignored key information such as what Iago has in fact been doing and saying in the preceding scene. Better answers, focusing on the terms of the task, saw for example how the use of the torch – symbolic darkness/actual night time – creates the right expectations in the audience. Few answers realised that Iago is talking about Brabantio, but many noticed his attempt to stir aggression in Othello and his outrageous dishonesty and how that affects the audience's view of him in the rest of the play. Better answers noted the stage action: the bustle of entrances, lights, weapons, the surprising news of the Duke's searches and for some the military tone, highlighted by the aggression of Brabantio and his group. Sophisticated answers noted how this was all used to reveal Othello's control and command and sang froid. Sensitive analysis led some to note the ambivalence of Cassio's question about the marriage, given his role as the go-between and Iago's failure to answer. Iago and Othello though were nearly always the main focus: 'The audience must see through his act of insincerity, his outrageous hypocrisy,' as one candidate suggested, whilst others noted Othello's view of his worth and how his achievements, his desserts, his birth are all revealed, in contrast with the witchcraft and superstition he reveals over the handkerchief.

Question 3 – *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to give a summary of what happens to Marianne, with better answers shaping this to consider her role and characterisation, though often ignoring the guiding quotation. Better answers considered her as a symbol of sensibility, contrasting her to Elinor. More thoughtful responses saw this as typical of Marianne's opinionated views, some seeing it as ironic given her marriage to Brandon, and Willoughby's leaving her for Miss Grey's fortune. Other answers noted her ambivalent attitudes to Edward and Elinor – his dullness, for example, and yet also his poverty. Her discussion about wealth with Elinor was often cited, as was Mrs Jennings's comment, 'For she is young and he is rich!' More sophisticated answers saw Marianne's shared suffering with Brandon and that both have been wronged by Willoughby as more important than wealth or romance. Good answers also linked the discussion of her role and characterisation to the central motif of sense and sensibility and for some, romance and pragmatism, and an exploration of Austen's underlying question of what leads to true love and happiness. Good answers also linked this discussion to the wider context of the classical/Augustan era ending as a more Romantic sensibility became fashionable with some exploring Austen's attitudes to these changes.
- (b) Weaker answers often struggled with the context for this passage and tended towards a character by character approach, with nearly all noting the differences between Marianne and Elinor, contrasting excitement and emotion with calm seriousness. Elinor's role as 'comforter' and friend, but her own ambivalent position and its effects, were well explored, with more sensitive readings noting Marianne's perspicacity. Others saw evidence of the dualism in both sisters. As one candidate said: 'a relationship never intended to be a simple antithesis'. Others noted Elinor's own heartbreak, seeing her here as trying to protect her sister unsuccessfully from a similar fate with Willoughby. As one candidate put it: 'Elinor though only 19 and 2 years older is adopting the motherly role, in guiding Marianne into social propriety and encouraging emotional restraint.' Marianne's 'hedging' was seen, by some, as sign of her 'sense' in playing down her agitation, though others saw it as her recognition of the wrongness of her position. Marianne's rudeness to Mrs Jennings and even Elinor was seen by some as an effect of her relationship with Willoughby and well linked to her early attitudes to Brandon. More sophisticated answers saw the uneasiness of the sisters as indicative of the corrosive effect of secrets – Willoughby and Edward – on their sisterly relationship. Answers which explored the detail of the effects – Austen's use of narrative voice, dialogue and language for example - and linked that to an exploration of the relationship often did very well.

Question 4 – *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise more or less relevant examples with some able to refer to both prologue and tale. Conflicts discussed included that between men and women, women and women, clash of ideologies, and more subtly within the wife's own accounts. Some answers noted that in the Tale there is a conflict between beauty and virtue. Others saw the conflict as one of Alison's methods of gaining 'maisterie'. For some, power is the main theme and conflicts such as rape and physical violence one way of achieving it, but others also saw it as part of the experience and authority debate. Better answers explored the intellectual bullying of Jankyn and Alison's responses in the prologue, contrasting this with how the verbal violence of the knight in the tale is balanced against the 'gentillesse' debate of the Lady. For some sex was seen as part of the conflict – not only the rape in the tale, but Alison's approach to her marriages with some noting that with the first three husbands – the bad ones – there was no detailed conflict, whereas with husbands four and five there was much more detail of emotional, intellectual, sexual and physical conflict, with some seeing this as deliberately comedic.
- (b) Weaker answers often offered a broad paraphrase of the passage, often ignoring the 'methods and concerns'. Better answers explored the concerns here and the links to the Prologue through concerns of age, ugliness, virginity, honour and faith. Other answers contrasted the wife's placatory tone with Alison's confrontational approach, though some humour in the situation and the links to how Alison is now. More sophisticated answers discussed how this exemplifies the Experience over Authority theme, with the Knight submitting to the Wife's authority. Others explored Alison's and more successfully Chaucer's view of what 'gentillesse' truly is. Those exploring the style noted the Fairy tale quality in the Loathly Lady becoming both fair and true, but for some this also reflected Alison's inner fantasy. Some saw this as symbolic – submission means that the wife become as fair and true as the Lady in the Tale. A few candidates saw the Knight's answer as sarcastic and ironic or perhaps merely world weary; for some Chaucer's way of undermining the Wife's fantasy of 'maisterie leads to perfect marital bliss'.

Question 5 – *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened to Tom and Maggie in particular, with more successful answers shaping this to the task. Better answers considered how Eliot develops her view of education through the characterisation of Philip, Lucy and Bob as well. Better answers considered how the attitudes to the education of Maggie and Tom differed between the Dodsons, Tullivers and Deanes. Some successful approaches explored how Maggie, though sharper, is denied learning, and Tom never appreciates it, though Tom and Bob Jakin were at times well compared as business men and as friends. More sophisticated answers explored Mr Stelling and his attitude to education, exploring its value to Tom, and at times well contrasted with Philip Wakem. Others explored the use of music and how Eliot uses this to differentiate intellectual, artistic and values in her characters. A few subtle answers noted the irony of Mr Tulliver's attitudes to education, in view of his conflict and his defeat by Lawyer Wakem.
- (b) Weaker answers offered a detailed summary or paraphrase of the passage, with more successful responses focussing this on the relationships. Better answers saw how the passage is concerned with family and that both men love Maggie and care for her but in very different ways. This was at times developed by exploring the tone and language, as well as the narrative structuring and voice. Other answers saw how the insults represent the two men's values – Tom is 'stupid' and Philip is 'puny', though some noted Tom's need to honour his father and Philip's declaration of love and passion. Responses which explored the aggressive tone and the presentation of the conflict with Maggie in the middle torn emotionally, often did very well, especially when linked to the novel's wider concerns of duty and emotion.

Question 6 – *The Return of the Native*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened to Clym, with some successfully able to shape this to consider role and characterisation. Better answers considered the impact of this comment coming from Eustacia, exploring whether it was ironic or in fact a moment of honesty. Some successful answers contrasted the impact of his return, and the bustle and excitement of the women in his life, with his sad fate at the end. Others explored the conflict between the love of his mother and Eustacia and the rift it caused between Clym and his mother. Many focused on Clym, Eustacia and Wildeve, exploring how Hardy develops this love triangle and its effect on Clym in particular. Some thought Clym simply naïve and stubborn, though others thought Eustacia was the true villain. More balanced approaches saw the relationship as always doomed because of the situation, especially the Heath. As one candidate put it 'The relationship with Eustacia was short-lived as the very basis of the marriage was built on personal agendas rather than a genuine interest in the partner's desires and dreams.'
- (b) Weaker answers tended to not be aware of the context and offered only a broad paraphrase of the passage. Those who knew the context of this as following the reunion of Wildeve and Eustacia, and Venn's continuing interest in Thomasin, often did well. Most recognised that the 'horse' is Eustacia and Venn's role was much discussed as well as the innocence and intrinsic goodness of Thomasin. Better answers explored the significance to the plot – the rivalry between Venn and Wildeve, for example - and the contrast Hardy creates between the two women. Answers which considered the stylistic elements, such as narrative voice, and related that to the task often did very well.

Question 7 – Keats Selection

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise more or less relevant poems, with more successful answers shaping this to the given quotation. Better answers considered how Keats is immersed in nature and natural things, often exploring 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Sleep and Poetry', and 'Ode to Autumn', to great effect. Those more sophisticated answers which considered stylistic features, such as language and imagery and how Keats uses these to shape his reader's response often did well.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the given poem, with more successful answers able to link this to Keats's concerns and sometimes his methods. Better answers linked this to the wider canon through imagery, especially nature and themes, such as mortality and time, as one candidate put it: 'His obsession with death and desire to achieve artistic greatness and his inability to reach it because of his impending death'. Others explored the paradox of imagination and art and the 'wasting of old time'. 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' was also successfully compared, with some thinking

him more dismal here and having less joy in the art. Those who explored the sonnet form and the Shakespearean connections, through imagery and language, often did very well.

Question 8 – Christina Rossetti Selection

- (a) Most candidates were able to summarise more or less relevant poems, with more successful answers shaping this to the given task. Better answers explored her ‘presentation’ of conflict through her choice of language and imagery, with some sophisticated answers considering the effects of these choices through detailed analysis. Most answers had at least some knowledge of Rossetti’s religious views and the various personal and social conflicts, often of duty and passion that she explores.
- (b) Candidates generally had at least a sound knowledge of the poem, with weaker answers offering a paraphrase, at times shaped to the task. Better answers explored how the simple story was used as a warning of the dangers of loss of virginity or reputation and social standing, depending on the interpretation. Detailed answers used ‘An Apple Gathering’, ‘The Convent Threshold’, ‘Goblin Market’ and ‘Maude Clare’ as useful comparisons. More sophisticated answers considered poetic methods such as the use of rhythm ‘to create bluntness and finality in the negative statements’ and as one candidate expressed it. The themes of female rivalry, male betrayal and motherhood were often discussed. Those answers which developed this discussion by analysing Rossetti’s use of alliteration and rhymes, as well as the simple ballad form often did particularly well. For some candidates, unlike other poems on similar themes, there was a triumph for the fallen woman and some noted how the child was compensation and a form of revenge. Some answers noted the sense of yearning and anguish, as well as the class and gender issues, with a few candidates linking this to the Victorian background generally and Rossetti’s biography, specifically her interest and work with ‘fallen women’.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53
Shakespeare and other
Pre-Twentieth-Century Texts

Key Messages

- Candidates should be able to place the passage in an option **(b)** question with a precise and focused context, showing the significance of this passage in terms of what has gone before or is to come.
- Unnecessary biographical information does not advance the argument of an essay. Candidates should ensure such information is used purposefully and focussed on specific aspects of the text itself.

General Comments

Most answers showed sound knowledge of and clear engagement with their chosen texts. There were very few rubric errors in this session and very little unfinished work. The quality of expression was for the most part at least acceptable though there were a few candidates for whom critical terminology and an appropriate register was more of a challenge.

Centres should note that from 2016 June all candidates will have to offer at least one passage/option **(b)** answer. More details are available in the relevant syllabus.

There are two specific issues to mention in this session:

Candidates answering passage questions do need to consider the significance of the overall passage or poem in the context of the wider text studied. A key question is what makes this passage or poem of particular significance in the wider work. To do this it will be necessary to refer to the wider text directly, such as briefly mentioning the preceding action in a play, in terms of what has brought about the situation in front of the audience. This needs to be done relevantly and with discrimination. A summary of the entire work is not necessary to achieve this but some specific reference to the whole text, rooted in the passage or poem given in the question is an essential part of the task in an option **(b)** question.

Some candidates introduced each essay with a detailed biography of the writer and at times of the historical period in which the writer lived. This does not help the answer gain any marks and in fact wastes valuable time which could be better spent on dealing with the main topic of the essay.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 – *As You Like It*

- (a)** Nearly all candidates had at least a sound knowledge of the text and were able to find relevant examples to discuss. Weaker answers tended to retell the various narratives, focussing on the brothers and the cousins, with the shaping to the task determining the success. Better answers focused on the words ‘with what effects’ and saw how family tensions arose from jealousy but true loyalty will win the day, even if the ending conversion of Duke Frederick is, for some, ‘forced’. More sophisticated answers explored the effect of the Forest and of the commentators, Jacques and Touchstone.
- (b)** Candidates who were able to give a precise context often did well. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with better answers noting the ‘close attention to’ in the question. This included considering themes such as love (at first sight), education, court and country and the effect of the forest. Some answers noted the comic over-exaggerated glimpses of the two lovers, building up to their encounter, especially in the light of their previous meeting – the wrestling match

– and Rosalind's disguise. Some were able to explore the humour of Rosalind's responses, the role of Celia as 'straight man' and how her cool and calm is compared to Rosalind. Others explored the humour of the dialogue between Jacques and Orlando, considering their roles and contrasting Orlando's silence at the wrestling match. More sophisticated responses saw the humour, the irony even, of Rosalind's 'girlishness', revealed despite her manly disguise and seen as part of the build up to the meeting of the lovers. Better answers unpicked the layers of humour here: boy, playing girl, playing boy, but reverting to girlishness. Some noted the absence of debate about revealing who she really is – and wondered why if her disguise is a problem there is no explanation at this stage as to why she retains it.

Question 2 – *Othello*

- (a) Most candidates were able to give examples of honesty and dishonesty in the play as a whole. Weaker candidates tended to retell the events, often focusing on Iago and his dishonesty and malice, often contrasted to Othello and Desdemona's honesty and simple goodness. Many were well supported by apposite quotation with good understanding of dramatic irony and its effects on the audience; 'who', as one candidate put it, 'are repulsed, even horrified, as Iago dupes them all with his predetermined 'net that will enmesh them all' and they all call him 'honest!' Some discussed the role of Emilia, piecing together the evidence to reveal Iago's duplicity and how her honesty will speak out but leads to her death.
- (b) Less successful answers tended to have too long an introduction or contextualisation, or conversely ignored key information such as what 'this tale' actually is. Better answers explored the openness of Desdemona in this her first appearance, some seeing the 'dramatic' nature of this moment with Othello's career and reputation on the line. Many noted Desdemona's simple honesty and her understanding of her duty. Brabantio's reaction was well explored – his acceptance of the 'Moor' but his fate signalled by his closing couplets, with some seeing in this speech a hint of Othello's eventual decline about the 'bruised heart'. The juxtaposition of state affairs and domestic strife was noted and compared to what happens in Cyprus. More sophisticated answers considered that 'most owe obedience' was indicative of the role and plight of women in Venice and Cyprus and from whence for some the tragedy springs; she is a 'gift' indicative of the material attitude to women and to love.

Question 3 – *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to give a summary of relevant events in the novel, with better answers shaping this to consider the different attitudes, though often ignoring the 'presentation'. Better answers saw this as central to the plot, citing such examples as the Dashwoods leaving their home, Fanny and John's attitudes, and Willoughby marrying Miss Grey. Lack of money was also seen as important, for example the choice of Barton Cottage and what it reveals of the characters of the sisters and mother. Marianne and Elinor's discussion was often cited as evidence of money being very important to fortuneless girls. Some considered status – being genteel and middle class – alongside money: not having wealth inevitably reduces status. Lucy's pragmatic approach revealed contrasting opinions; for some she was the villain of the piece, causing pain wherever she went, but for others she was doing what she needed to do to survive in a male world.
- (b) Weaker answers often struggled with the context for this passage and tended towards a paraphrase or a character by character approach. Context was very important and better answers showed good understanding of the confusion of the parties involved, Elinor's 'leading' role, the efforts to be civil and Mrs Dashwood's genuine good heartedness. More developed answers considered methods, such as the dialogue about the weather and its comic effects. Others were able to focus on how Austen reveals Elinor's reactions through free indirect discourse, short sentences, silences and Edward's reactions, all leading to the climax of the revelation of 'Mrs Robert Ferrars', with some responses exploring the significance of that to the novel's eventual denouement.

Question 4 – *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise more or less relevant examples with some able to refer to both prologue and tale. All agreed with Alison's comment and were able to show why, though very few developed this into a wider consideration of Chaucer's methods and concerns

- (b) There were very few answers to this question. Weaker answers offered little more than a broad paraphrase of the passage, but most of these answers ignored the ‘methods and concerns’, not going much beyond an explanation of the situation in the passage. Better answers did explore the concerns, such as the treatment of women and the attitude of the knight, though very few linked this back to the prologue and the various conflicts revealed there. Very few were able to discuss Chaucer’s language and tone, which inevitably limited the success of the responses seen.

Question 5 – *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) Weaker answers offered a summary of more or less relevant material, with more successful answers shaping this to the given quotation and task. However, almost no answers were able to address Eliot’s presentation, with little or no reference to language or narrative techniques for example. Better answers did explore the different attitudes to education, often noting the difference in the way Tom and Maggie are treated, which, for some, was typical of attitudes to women more generally.
- (b) Weaker answers offered a summary of the passage, with more successful responses focussing on its significance. Almost no answers looked at literary features and this was a limiting factor. Some better answers did consider this passage and what it reveals about Maggie and Tom in the context of the wider text and their volatile relationship, though few noticed its dramatic quality or the subtlety of the word ‘Magsie’ for example at this point in the novel.

Question 6 – *The Return of the Native*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened to Clym, with some successfully able to shape this to consider role and characterisation. Better answers saw Eustacia and Mrs Yeobright as the main focus, with some debate as to the main cause of his ‘tragedy’: his blindness, physical and intellectual and emotional, for some more significant. But others thought his misunderstanding of Eustacia’s true motives (and the presence of Wildeve), as well as his troubling argument with his mother, all more important to the novel’s effects. More sophisticated answers noted his self-importance – for example his education plan – and lack of awareness both leading to his own tragic and miserable old age. Some thought he doesn’t understand people generally – hence the problems, though more developed responses linked this to Hardy’s use of Greek tragedy – fate and mischances – seeing Clym as not the guilty party, but suggesting that all are simply victims of the Heath.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to not be aware of the context and offered only a broad paraphrase of the passage. Those who knew the context of this as following Wildeve’s failure to marry Thomasin often explored the relationship successfully. Those who explored the style carefully often did well, with some linking the use of ‘fire’ and imagery to their future night meetings. More sophisticated answers saw how Hardy develops the passion between them and Eustacia’s ‘honest’ intentions, so that Hardy, for some, makes us sympathise with if not quite condone the situation and the attraction between them.

Question 7 – Keats Selection

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise more or less relevant poems, with more successful answers shaping this to the given quotation. Better answers considered how Keats is immersed in nature and natural things, often exploring ‘Ode to a Nightingale’, ‘Sleep and Poetry’, and ‘Ode to Autumn’, to great effect. Those more sophisticated answers which considered stylistic features, such as language and imagery, use of poetic form and the sensuousness of his imagination and how Keats uses these to shape his reader’s response often did well.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the given poem, with more successful answers able to link this to Keats’s concerns and sometimes his methods. Better answers linked this to the wider canon through imagery, especially nature and themes, such as love, mortality and time. Others explored the sense of loss and his need for the warmth of love – winter becoming summer – as well as the biographical context. Some responses saw this as a more hopeful poem, Keats looking forward to better days and happier times. Those who explored the style, such as how the rhyme scheme is used to underscore the constancy of his love or the personification of nature often did very well.

Question 8 – Rossetti Selection

- (a) Candidates were able to summarise more or less relevant poems, with more successful answers shaping this to the given task. Better answers explored her 'presentation' of faith through her choice of language and imagery, with some more sophisticated answers considering the effects of these choices through broad analysis. Most answers had at least some knowledge of Rossetti's religious views and the various personal and social conflicts, often of duty and passion that she explores within the poems.
- (b) Candidates generally had at least a sound knowledge of the poem, with weaker answers offering a paraphrase, at times shaped to the task. Few were able to link this to the wider selection and only a very few better answers considered the style in any detail. Those that did explore language and imagery often did well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61

Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Good answers demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the text and use pertinent quotations to analyse methods and effects.

Good answers on passage-based questions demonstrate skills in practical criticism in order to discuss 'the effects of the writing but also make some relevant, specific references to the wider text in order to discuss how characteristic the extract is of a writer's methods or concerns.

Good answers focus primarily on detailed knowledge and discussion of the texts themselves and refer to critical or biographical material only sparingly.

General comments

Candidates showed positive engagement and enjoyment of the texts including the new ones: Fugard and Lochhead. Those opting for **(a)** questions often demonstrated detailed knowledge and an ability to generate a coherent argument in support of a personal response to the questions. Sometimes they found it harder to discuss methods and effects but essay questions on the prose and play texts were at least competent and often very good indeed. There was a greater tendency in the essay questions on the short stories and poetry to rely on summaries, with very general remarks about Mansfield's use of the stream-of-consciousness and limited appreciation of literary methods and effects. Generally speaking candidates seem to find it easier to structure the essay question than a response to the **(b)** questions. Many used a running commentary approach which at best allowed for a systematic tracking of the development of the ideas or characters and some opportunities to demonstrate an appreciation of particular details of point of view, language and the stage directions in the drama texts. Better answers were able to refer to the wider text to provide a local context, to make points about structure, and discuss the significance of the extracts or of particular details within them. Less assured answers often resorted to paraphrase and received opinions to direct the course of their discussions, spotting occasional features to denote understanding of literary method. Particularly on the short story extract and poetry questions, many seemed to find it very hard to refer to the rest of the story, other stories or other poems in their selections. They also tended to ignore phrases within the questions which directed them to a particular aspect of the wider text such as 'an audience's response to characters here and elsewhere.'

Successful candidates used the key terms in the questions to support their thinking and structure their responses; they demonstrated knowledge and understanding of a variety of 'means' and could not only use critical terminology competently but demonstrated how diverse 'effects' are achieved, using such analysis to support interpretation and argument. Candidates should be advised against writing out overlong quotations. Successful candidates answering both **(a)** and **(b)** questions are those who select significant or interesting phrases and look carefully at the diction and sentence structure to discuss how a writer shapes the response of a reader or audience. Those candidates who did well on the drama texts clearly saw the plays as dramatic spectacles and were equipped with apt critical terminology to discuss register, variations in tone and pace as well as staging effects. Less effective essays gave clear, impressively well-informed summaries of their critical reading on Pinter but paid less attention to the text itself. Although well primed on the Pinter pause and its effects, few were able to explore specific examples.

Contextual material was generally well used in discussions on Roy and Fugard but there was some misunderstanding of Hartley. The opening sentence of the novel has been quoted in the Jewish Chronicle and also in an article on the origins of Jewish people in Britain which not only led some candidates into thinking Hartley was Jewish but prompted the generation of a sub-text in the novel to support this. Candidates who apply their critical reading to the extracts and look for examples to analyse for themselves do well and there were some exciting, appreciative responses to Mansfield, Hartley, Roy and Pinter. The

best scripts, whether they chose (a) or (b) options, focused on the effects of the writing or dramatic techniques using such terms as *narrative point of view*, *stream of consciousness*, *diction*, *tone*, *register*, *lexical field*, *symbolism*, *imagery* and its sound or visual effects, *structure*, *juxtaposition*, different kinds of *irony* and comedy. In discussions on poetry, answers did well when they considered the way language and rhythm – a function of individual word length and sentence structure - contribute to meaning and tone.

There were a few rubric errors with some candidates unfortunately offering only one question, and very occasionally answering both the (a) and (b) questions on two texts. Time did not seem to be an issue but some able writers seemed to find it difficult to generate and develop substantial responses to the question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question allowed candidates to define the ‘fragile nature of human relationships’ and generate an argument which usually ranged through personal issues of love and fidelity to a consideration of relationships within the wider social and political context. Good answers focused on a range of poetic methods and effects in detailed appreciations of such poems as: ‘The More Loving One’, ‘As I walked out...’, ‘Oh what is that sound...?’, ‘Musée des Beaux Arts’ and ‘Refugee Blues’ through which they demonstrated how language and form create variations in tone and feeling. Discussions on Time were made relevant to the question and biographical and contextual details were handled sensitively. Less effective essays were those which attempted to summarise or explain poems or pursued a restricted response to the question using such poems as ‘On first coming down’ and ‘Control of the passes’ as examples of Auden’s need to obscure his homosexuality.
- (b) Good answers placed the poem within the context of the Age of Anxiety and linked it to ‘Now the leaves are falling fast’ or contrasted the elliptical nature of the poem with the more dramatic ‘Refugee Blues’. Others attempted to consider the presentation of the world of imagination with ‘Up there’ or ‘Where are you going..?’ There was some intelligent analysis of imagery and allusion which focused on the idea of the door not being a real defence, the threats of what might be let in and the implications of the word ‘carelessly’. Some were able to compare the tightness of the sonnet form with the fragmentation of the images and commented on the pathos generated by the simplicity of the diction in the final line. Less assured attempts seized on ideas of class, or death and struggled to make sense of the allusions to Alice in Wonderland. The marks of otherwise sound or intelligent commentaries were often compromised by a lack of specific reference to the wider text. Comments on concerns and characteristic methods were often very general and assertive in tone.

Question 2

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca* and *My Children! My Africa!*

- (a) Most candidates pursued the contrast between issues of personal freedom in *Road to Mecca* and political freedom in *My Children! My Africa!* Better answers considered the question of how Fugard ‘dramatises’ these concerns and considered such techniques as use of contrasting characters and attitudes, aspects of dialogue, soliloquies and action, and the staging effects of sound and light at specific points in the plays. They were also able to move confidently between the two texts, comparing the presentation of Mr M. and Elsa as teachers, or Mr M. and Helen as characters who face social pressures to conform in ways which compromise their individual integrity. There was some intelligent insight into the symbolic ironies surrounding the application form for the home and Helen being ‘at the mercy’ of her creations as well as some detailed appreciation of the symbolic significance and dramatic effects of light in *Road to Mecca*. Less effective essays discussed ideas about freedom with more reference to contextual material than to the plays themselves, or offered summaries of the plots or portraits of characters.

- (b) There were some well informed responses which, in terms of the writer's concerns, moved comfortably between the extract and the wider play. However, analysis of dramatic method proved more demanding: discussions hinted some understanding of different ways dramatists present character, or the use of irony and tone but candidates need to make their appreciation of dramatic effects more explicit in their writing. Most were able to sketch in the immediate context of the scene and many pointed out that the debate on gender was a metaphor for a wider political argument on race and that the function of 'riot' joke was not just to develop the interaction between the young people but a way of bringing in the wider social and political picture. The majority of candidates opted for a running commentary approach, with competent responses noting how diction and sentence structure affected tone and revealed relationships. There was some analysis of the way repetition was used to generate Mr M.'s enthusiasm, some comment on the formality of his address to Isabel and the awkwardness between Isabel and Thami following his exit. Some noted the brevity of Thami's replies to Isabel's praise of Mr M. and used this as way into the wider text and a discussion of Thami and Mr M.'s relationship. There was also some recognition of how Fugard makes Isabel into a sympathetic character with some appreciation of her robust response to the joke: 'OK- this afternoon was a riot' but few showed any inclination to pursue Isabel's role. Less effective answers gave thin accounts of the passage, summarised the plot of the play or over-invested in contextual material and the life of Nelson Mandela.

Question 3

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

- (a) Most candidates showed knowledge of the plot, and organised their material into stages of admiration, fascination, bewilderment, anger, betrayal and guilt. There was a tendency to reduce Ted's role to that of surrogate father or a member of the working class with whom Leo felt superior and therefore more comfortable until he felt Marion belonged to Lord Trimmingham. The general weakness was to use narrative summary with inexact references to specific episodes or scenes, such as Leo's feelings on opening the letter, the cricket match, and the two attempts at discussing 'spooning'. In some responses Ted was accused of selfishly destroying Leo's innocence. Better responses considered the steer in the question: 'By what means and with what effects' and focused on the use of the dual narrative perspective of young and elderly Leo, the significance of Zodiac, the homoeroticism of the language used to describe Ted initially and in the gun cleaning scene, and the ambivalence of Leo's feelings: 'I liked Ted Burgess in a reluctant, half-admiring, half-hating way', together with the foreshadowing effect of the description of Ted being like the cut corn. They had enough detail to consider Ted's embarrassment in the conversations on 'spooning' and the way the language in the dialogue, the 'silly/natural' opposition, contributed to a reader's understanding of Leo's frustration and anger. Some also considered how other characters contributed to Leo's view of Ted: the significance to his way of thinking that 'nothing is ever a lady's fault', of Ted being a 'Lady-killer' and Marion saying Ted was 'weak'. Some weak answers wrote at too great length on biographical material and used details from the film to support a restricted reading of the relationship as being a homosexual one, or over-simplified it as being rivals for the love of Marion.
- (b) The best responses offered a balanced approach, combining a detailed critical appreciation of authorial intention and style while commenting on the relationship between the passage and the whole novel. The majority of responses showed genuine interest and excitement in the text, evident in the confident analysis of symbols, narrative voice, and Hartley's use of rhetorical questioning, structure and shifts in tone. There was some sensitive, perceptive engagement with the protagonist, with the most sophisticated exploring the impact of the lexical field belonging to 'the undertaker's art' in the third and fourth paragraphs and the self-dramatisation in Leo's identification with Icarus and bitterness over the 'golden age'. More modest answers tended to take an explanatory approach which tended to restrict analysis of the effects of the writing, but prompted consideration of a range of ideas connecting the extract to the wider text.

Question 4

LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Most answers chose appropriate poems and found some way of linking them into a discussion of how memory is triggered or preserved by objects, or how memories of people or moments allow the poet to move from personal feelings to a wider reflection on human experience. The majority of responses showed a clear basic understanding of the poems through summary with some general remarks on the use of colloquial English, repetition and occasional random specific details like 'Dads in hats' or still life/still life' to cover poetic method. Those who did well, offered sustained analyses of such poems as 'The Choosing' 'For My Grandmother Knitting' focusing on their structure, the way choice of diction generated tone and attitude with particular examples of repetition, and the visual or sound effects of such phrases as 'Her arms are round the full-shaped vase/that is her body' or 'you slit the still-ticking quick silver fish.' There was more sketchy treatment of 'Sorting Through' and 'Some Old Photographs'.
- (b) This poem prompted some enthusiastic responses. Candidates used the contextual links between Rapunzstitskin and the Grimm brothers' stories to inform a reading of the poem as a comic fable on sexual politics. Proficient responses ably commented on method, highlighting the symbolism of the tower where the female spirit is restricted and suppressed and the extent to which both sexes are handicapped by media representations of masculine heroism. They systematically worked through the poem focusing on the many aspects that contribute to the anti-romantic tone looking in detail at the first line: the effect of the ampersand, the universal identification implied in the addition of 'our' to the archaic 'maiden' set against the scorn suggested by the colloquial collocation of 'along comes' and the capitalisation of 'This Prince'. Their essays managed to sustain a detailed level of commentary on the effects of the language: the use of cliché, direct speech, parenthesis and the placing of particular words such as: '(she groaned). He grinned'. Those candidates who were mindful of the need for wider reference, talked knowledgeably about the defeminisation and the vulgarity of the language in 'Everybody's Mother' or went for the contrast in tone in other poems about failed relationships such as 'Obituary' or 'After the Warrant Sale' but many candidates restricted their discussion to the given poem and so remarks on characteristic methods and concerns were often very general and assertive. Some candidates wrote rather tentatively as though in response to an unseen but even among these there were some impressive displays of skills in practical criticism.

Question 5

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

- (a) Most candidates were able to select appropriate stories and attempted to generate an argument by comparing the frustrations and dreams of young women such as Beryl or Matilda in 'The Wind Blows' or using Mansfield's interest in class to contrast the child in 'Woman in the Store', her life and relationship with her mother with that of Laura in 'The Garden Party', or comparing the presentation of Laura with Kezia in 'The Doll's House'. Better answers had enough quotations to demonstrate how Mansfield used the stream-of-consciousness technique to reveal the way characters feel about themselves and their situations. There were some insightful discussions on the effects of Mansfield's use of symbolism such as the hat in 'The Garden Party' and the lamp in 'The Doll's House'. Less assured essays tended to summarise roles and offer descriptive portraits of characters, mentioning aspects of narrative method in a general way.
- (b) Good responses were informed by knowledge of the rest of the story and showed critical appreciation of how the use of the stream of consciousness shaped a reader's response to Mr Peacock. They focused on the way the language and sentence structure created the voice and attitudes of the character, contrasting the negativity in the opening description of his waking and thoughts about his wife with the 'enchanted scenes' of his fantasy. The best responses explored the nuances of tone, appreciating the humorous use of personification in the reactions of the toothglass and bath tap to his singing and the undignified simile of him 'squatting like a frog'. They considered the contribution of the 'thrill of purely artistic satisfaction' to the ironic denial of his vanity and the effect of the switch in point of view to Adrian at the end. Some candidates chose to discuss Mansfield's concerns by considering her views of marriage. Much of this was taken from autobiographical material but some useful links were made to examples of characters in other stories who were unhappy in their marriages such as Linda in 'The Prelude' or the husband in 'A Married Man's Story'. Some also considered the way characters in other stories escape into

fantasy or their inner world. Less assured essays attempted to summarise the passage and deduce aspects of character. A surprising number of responses took the passage at face value and were very sympathetic towards Mr Peacock.

Question 6

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

- (a) Most noted and evidenced through detailed reference to language and action, Goldberg's role as a catalyst for menace and interpreted him as being part of a frightening ideology which enforced conformity. Some very good answers noted the complexity of Goldberg's confident social character – able to flatter Meg and brush off Petey's concerns for Stanley - juxtaposed with McCann's lack of self-assurance and the way the audience's confidence in the character is subverted by the unreliability of his accounts of his identity and past. They discussed the dramatic effect of his explosion at being called Simey, the dramatic effect of his inability to compete 'Because I believe that the world...' and the bizarre nature of his request for McCann to blow into his mouth. Weaker responses offered simplistic interpretations of character and events asserting that Goldberg and McCann were psychologists come to take Stanley back to a mental institution. Some candidates were clearly challenged by the absurdist dramatic context and took refuge in the idea that nobody can really know or understand anything for certain.
- (b) Some of the responses were very good indeed, moving seamlessly between insightful comment on the given scene, the wider text and their critical reading. Most briefly filled in the immediate context but better essays had pertinent quotations such as Goldberg's 'Well Stanny boy, what do you say, eh?' and the horror of Stanley's inarticulate reply to explain the impact on an audience of Stanley's appearance and the irony of 'same old Stan'. Some also mentioned Petey's previous quizzing of Goldberg about Stanley's health to support comments on Petey's role in the passage. It was pointed out that Petey gives voice to the anxieties of the audience and the moment at which Petey breaks and does nothing, is characteristic of a helpless audience watching these events unfold. Most candidates commented on the dramatic effect of withholding information about Monty and picked up the threat to Petey in the invitation to accompany them. Most knew that Pinter had commented on the importance of Petey's line: 'Stan do not let them tell you what to do!' and some intelligently pursued the irony of this as well as its wider implications. Most candidates recognised that the conversation between Petey and Meg mimicked the opening of the play and discussed the significance of this for the relationship between the two. Better essays noted the dramatic effect of the torn up strips of newspaper to remind the audience that things had changed and Petey's use of Goldberg's technique of dissimulation to avoid upsetting Meg. Many candidates were anxious to display their understanding of complex ideas on Pinter's theatre and quoted from Esslin, Malkin and Cohn but sometimes this proved to be a distraction. For example the Malkin view that through dialogue Pinter displays the inadequacy of words and everyday speech prompted lengthy discussions of the dialogue between Meg and Petey in Act 1 and the use of stichomythia, when a more productive discussion could have been had about an audience's response to Meg's version of events at the party.

Less assured essays offered running commentaries which were close to paraphrase and ignored the steer in the question to explore 'an audience's response to character here and elsewhere', or they wrote partial answers focusing on Meg and Petey. They also offered unsupported simplistic theories that Goldberg and McCann are psychologists come to take Stanley to a mental institution, that everyone including Petey and Meg have been in an institution, or that the play is all a figment of Stanley or Petey's imagination.

Question 7

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

- (a) This question allowed candidates to focus on particular characters or on aspects of Indian national identity and culture. Proficient essays generated a thesis: that there are some identities that are given as a function of gender, marital status, caste and race while others are shaped by personality and experience. For example, there were detailed comparisons of the impact of status and attitudes towards Ammu, a woman with 'no Locust stand I' – not even a personal name and Chacko. There were lots of instances of personal insight in these responses, such as that Rahel's jealousy of the attention given to Sohie Mol stems from a racial perspective which Sophie Mol has no control over. Many candidates showed an intelligent understanding of the broader political issues about the effects of colonialism, Anglophilia, and the changes to culture and the environment brought about by development, set against the continuing inhumanity of the caste system and the patriarchy. Good responses supported their discussions with an impressive amount of pertinent quotation. The key discriminator here was the extent to which candidates discussed specific aspects of method: how the non-chronological sequence of events improves the reader's understanding of how identity forms and changes, how the twins are given identities through the repeated use of names and phrases to eventually become 'Quietness' and 'Emptiness' or the use of metaphor: the 'jam/jelly question'. Less assured responses gave detailed but straightforward character portraits or over-invested in more general discussion about caste and communism.
- (b) Some responses chose to explore Roy's concerns about Anglo-Indian culture and made much use of post-colonial criticism. This tended to lead to a more restricted discussion about the changes brought about by development and tourism. Some noted how the attention paid to the Kathakali stories reinforced a temporal sense that the tragedies of the Ipe family were part of a wider epic, but this often led some candidates to attempt to make simplistic links between details in the passage and the wider novel: for example the way the Kathakali man treated his stories like children mimicked the treatment of the twins, or his inability to act as a bus conductor was due to his caste. Some related the back-story of the History House. Stronger responses focused on Roy's narrative method and were able to identify particular literary effects, with the best ones considering the shifts in point of view between the omniscient narrator and the adult Rahel. They noted the story-within-a-story framework, the range of themes, the shifts in tone, and impact of the choice of diction and sentence structure. Some explored the impact of 'he has become unviable. Unfeasible. Condemned goods.' with its echoes of Roy's description of Ammu's death at a 'viable, die-able age.' There were some intelligent, personal explorations of the significance of 'his body *is* his soul', of the issue of authenticity and the effect here of the characteristic use of repeated phrases like 'Regional Flavour' or the broader theme of transgression in smoking the joint and asking pardon of the gods. Less assured readings attempted to paraphrase the passage with very restricted discussion of narrative methods and effects, noting such obvious features as the capitalisation of words or the use of short incomplete sentences, often beginning with conjunctions. Discussion on this was influenced by the mistaken premise that the point of view here was of the young Rahel. It was asserted that Roy was creating language to mimic Rahel's youthful naivety, which did not match the mature reflections on the Kathakali Man's vocation and experience.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62

Twentieth Century Writing

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Good answers on passage-based questions demonstrate skills in practical criticism in order to discuss 'the effects of the writing but also make some relevant, specific references to the wider text in order to discuss how characteristic the extract is of a writer's methods or concerns.

Good answers focus primarily on detailed knowledge and discussion of the texts themselves and refer to critical or biographical material only sparingly.

General comments

Candidates showed positive engagement and enjoyment of the texts including the new ones: Fugard and Lochhead. Those opting for **(a)** questions usually demonstrated detailed knowledge, and attempted to shape it to the task but found it easier to discuss methods than the effects. In the essay questions on the short stories and poetry less assured responses tended to rely on summaries, with very general remarks about Mansfield's use of the stream-of-consciousness and limited appreciation of poetic methods and effects. There were some very good responses to the **(b)** prose and Pinter questions based on sensitive close reading and detailed analysis of methods and effects. Good responses showed an ability to refer to the wider text to provide a local context and make points about structure or the development of character and ideas, while at the same time discussing the issue of characteristic style and concerns. Generally speaking, candidates seem to find it easier to structure the essay question than a response to the **(b)** questions. Many used a running commentary approach which encouraged less assured candidates to resort to paraphrase and received opinions on the writers which might not be applicable to the given extract. They also tended to ignore phrases within the questions which directed them to a particular aspect of the wider text such as 'the audience response to characters here and elsewhere.' Those attempting the poetry **(b)** questions seemed to find it hard to refer to other poems in their selections. Successful candidates used the key terms in the questions to support their thinking and structure their responses; they demonstrated knowledge and understanding of a variety of 'means' and could not only use critical terminology competently but demonstrated how diverse 'effects' are achieved, using such analysis to support interpretation and argument. Some candidates have the useful skill of being able to embed quotations into their own sentences, but without analysis of the language and other effects, this sort of writing only implies a personal response to the writing and amounts to summary. Successful candidates answering both **(a)** and **(b)** questions are those who select significant or interesting phrases and look carefully at the diction and sentence structure to discuss how a writer shapes the response of a reader or audience. Those candidates who did well on the drama texts clearly saw the plays as dramatic spectacles and were equipped with apt critical terminology to discuss register, variations in tone and pace as well as staging effects.

Contextual material was generally well used in discussion on Roy, Mansfield and Fugard but candidates need to be careful of what is available on the Internet. The opening sentence of *The Go Between* has been quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle* and also in an article on the origins of Jewish people in Britain, which not only led some candidates into thinking Hartley was Jewish but prompted the generation of a sub-text in the novel to support this. Candidates who apply their critical reading to the extracts and look for examples to analyse for themselves do well and there were some exciting, appreciative responses to Mansfield, Hartley, Roy and Pinter. However, while most were well primed on the Pinter pause and its effects, few were able to explore specific examples. The best answers, whether they chose **(a)** or **(b)** options, focused on the effects of the writing or dramatic techniques using such terms as *narrative point of view*, *stream of consciousness*, *diction*, *tone*, *register*, *lexical field*, *symbolism*, *imagery* and its sound or visual effects, *structure*, *juxtaposition*,

different kinds of *irony* and *comedy*. In discussions on poetry, candidates do well when they consider the way language and rhythm – a function of individual word length and sentence structure - contribute to meaning and tone.

There were no rubric errors and most candidates produced two substantial essays in the time. Overall, the standard of expressive English was very good or fluent enough to sustain discussion of reasonably complex ideas. At all levels, there was much evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues and those candidates who supported their ideas with aptly chosen quotations, who analysed the language and discussed how the writers shaped their response were able to generate substantial literary essays full of perceptive insights and appreciation.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question allowed candidates to choose from a wide range of poems and generate an argument showing how Auden challenged romantic notions of love and raised doubts about our capacity for empathy and concern for others within the wider social and political context. Some candidates used Auden's view of the poet's task: 'to tell the truth, to disenchant and disintoxicate.' and focused on a range of poetic methods and effects in detailed appreciations of such poems as: 'Lay your sleeping head my love', 'The More Loving One', 'As I walked out', 'Oh what is that sound', or 'The Unknown Citizen' and 'Refugee Blues'. Proficient essays had enough quotation to demonstrate how language and form create variations in tone and feeling. Biographical and contextual material was handled sensitively to inform readings and bring out complexity. Less effective essays were those which attempted to summarise or explain poems, often relying on simplified general statements such as "'Musée des Beaux Arts' is based on an observation he had paralleling what he saw in the world and the painting of Icarus' with little specific detail to expand the discussion to cover poetic methods and effects. The least successful essays were those which focused rather narrowly on Auden's homosexuality using explanations of such poems as 'On first coming down' and 'Control of the passes'.
- (b) There was a high level of personal engagement with what many candidates found to be an accessible social issue. Most were able to give a summary of the ideas in the poem which brought out its structure, contrasting the descriptive nature of different levels of impairment in the first third, moving through the observation on the way the world has changed to the personal feelings about death as a release for a much loved personal friend and inmate. However, the precise comprehension of particular phrases was challenging for many candidates and discussion of poetic methods and effects was often limited. The significant misreading was to take the use of 'elite and 'average' as referring to material wealth. Some were able to embed more straightforward phrases such as 'play the slow movements of easy sonatas' or 'stowed out of conscience as unpopular luggage' into their accounts implying some response to language. A closer consideration of the choice of words would have prompted more explicit appreciation of the effects and raised the performance level to competent. There were however some intelligent close readings which supported ideas about structure and tone. For example some commented on the structural effects of 'All...but each...One tie, though, unites them: all... As of now / we all'. Some commented on the unusual use of language such as the adjectives 'decent' and 'abrupt' used as verbs or explored the implications of the comparison to plants with the distaste generated by the use of parenthesis and the alliteration and line organisation that throws the emphasis onto 'sully'. Most candidates were reluctant to relate the poem to the wider text though some managed a thematic relation to Auden's social concerns or determination to confront reality as in 'First Things First' but few compared methods and effects.

Question 2:

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca* and *My Children! My Africa!*

- (a) Most candidates distinguished between personal freedom, the need to feel true to oneself, and political freedom, moving confidently between the plays to illustrate the issues by focussing on Helen's freedom as an artist to express herself, Mr M.'s view that freedom comes through education and Thami's that it demands political action. The best answers also explored the issue of responsibility – of Mr M.'s denunciation to the police, of Thami's attempt to warn him of his danger and Marius's genuine concern for Helen's physical and spiritual well-being. Some well-informed responses were more akin to commentaries on novels than plays in performance but the best answers integrated discussion of the concerns with some attention to dramatic methods and effects. They considered the roles of particular characters such as Elsa as teacher and friend to Helen, the use of soliloquies and symbolism, the dramatic use of sound effects at specific points in *My Children! My Africa!* and the use of light in *Road to Mecca*. Successful essays had some very apt quotations which allowed some discussion of choice of language: for example Helen's affirmation 'This is my world and I have banished darkness from it'; Mr M's use of the 'dictionary and rock' metaphor and Mr Thami's argument with Mr M.: 'yours were lessons in whispering. There are men who are teaching us to shout.' Less assured responses discussed a narrower range of ideas with more general references to the texts.
- (b) Weaker essays did not show good contextual knowledge of the rest of the play, and misunderstood the significance of the issue of 'trust' in the relationship between Elsa and Helen, so they missed the dramatic irony in Helen's 'I trust you...all the doors are wide open' and opportunities to refer to the wider text about the importance of being 'wide open' and betrayal. Most gave straight forward summaries of the passage with some discussion of Elsa's extra-marital affair without quite getting the complexity of 'waiting for me to tell him to go back to his wife' or the significance of the joke to the issue of responsibility and love for others. A few responses commented on the presentation of Elsa's character, as someone who has her own secrets and sorrows but there was little attempt to analyse her trenchant expressions such as 'He came up with postures of despair that would have made Michael Angelo jealous' or the tone generated by 'ding-dong, wrong-wrong....'

Question 3

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

- (a) There were some excellent responses revealing genuine engagement with character, narrative methods and effects. There were some extremely knowledgeable, well supported, sensitively tackled discussions of the relationship within the social context explaining the need for secrecy and including references to the couple's behaviour towards each other at the cricket match and concert. Most answers discussed the presentation of the relationship through the eyes of young Leo and good responses discussed the significance of the Zodiac, and the strength of Marion's feelings for Ted that come through Leo's discussion with her about why she and Ted cannot be married, as well as her view of their relationship presented by elderly Leo in the Epilogue. There was some discussion of the extent to which Ted was 'weak', the symbolic use of the deadly nightshade and the dramatic way Ted's suicide is announced. Less assured responses were more plot based, or in discussing Leo's naivety drifted from the focus of the question or restricted the discussion to class issues.
- (b) This was the more popular option and many candidates managed a sustained discussion of the literary effects within the passage as well as being able to move confidently between it and the wider text. Most candidates commented on the way the passage reveals the dual perspective of the young and elderly Leo and focused on phrases such as 'I suspect' and the foreboding in the simplicity of 'But I forgot ... as I forgot many things, the following day.' Many used the details to build up a portrait of Leo, noting the obsession for factual detail and rules. They commented on the presentation of the spell in the scientific experiments. Good responses enjoyed the humorous effects of the self-conscious pride in the details of performance, the volume at which 'And I am thirteen too' should be chanted, solemn regard for safety and the inappropriate instruction to leave the equipment 'clean and workmanlike, remembering that others have to use them after you.' The belladonna's significance was almost always understood and analysed well. Good answers looked closely at the language commenting on how Hartley uses various devices to evoke Leo's emotional and sexual awakening: the personification 'it wanted me... and would have me'; the sensuousness of 'the flower that brushed my eyelids.. the berry that pressed against my lips'; the various sound

effects in the last paragraph and the details which prepare the reader for the final discovery scene. Less proficient answers limited themselves to more obvious effects such as the comparison of the deadly nightshade to 'the lady standing at her doorway'.

Question 4

LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Answers chose appropriate poems such as 'Poem for my Sister', 'For My Grandmother Knitting', 'Everybody's Mother' or 'The New-married Miner' and often displayed excellent recall of them. Better answers considered how Lochhead was presenting the relationships - as the basis for a very personal reflection or point of view, as a memory or presentation of love and some were able to comment on the colloquial language and some obvious aspects of form, such as repetition. The majority of answers however, relied almost wholly on narrative summary which severely restricted consideration of poetic methods and effects.
- (b) Though many candidates gave the impression that they were reading the poem as an unseen, most engaged well with the detail and exercised their skills in practical criticism to tease out meaning and discuss poetic methods and effects. Most developed a coherent argument about innocence and the fear created by confronting maleness. They explored the opposition in the descriptions of the bull and the fragility of the eggs, the 'placidity' of the milk; considered the significance of the hens being 'oblivious' and noted the contrast between the cruelty of the boys towards nature in the final stanza with the persona's protectiveness. There was some productive discussion about the choice of language, the sensuous appeal of the imagery and the dramatic impact of the sentence structure. Many struggled to make sense of the allusion to the 'Black Mass...this antidote and Anti-Christ' but a few not only made sense of it, but were able to comment on Lochhead's delight in word play. Some candidates were able to make thematic links to other poems such as 'For My Sister' or general remarks about use of memories and the colloquial language but some very good responses were limited to the given poem and this therefore restricted the mark awarded.

Question 5

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

- (a) There was some extremely sensitive, empathetic handling of Frau Bechenmacher's frustrated existence alongside Linda and Beryl in 'The Prelude' and some critical appreciation of the way Mansfield exposes male frustration in 'Mr Peacock's Day' and 'A Married Man'. Those who did well created a thesis and chose stories to enable them to make comparisons not just between characters but also between the methods and effects. There was some very insightful discussion about the use of various viewpoints within a story, the use of specific situations such as a wedding, a music lesson or a dinner party, the way language exposes the pretensions of characters such as Beryl and Mr Peacock and various uses of symbolism. Biographical detail and knowledge of societal expectations of the period were woven into the answers without distracting from the discussion of narrative methods and effects. Some candidates offered excellent analyses of their chosen stories but lost focus on the question.
- (b) There was a very high standard of response to this question. Most candidates drew on knowledge of the ending of the story and a detailed and insightful knowledge of the collection to support a full and wide ranging discussion of the extract. The best responses were able to articulate how the choice of language, the physicality in the imagery and repetition in the sentence structure created an understanding of Bertha's mood and personality. They contrasted this with the distance that was generated by more objective description and dialogue in the interview with Nanny. Along with societal expectations, relevant appreciation of Impressionism, Modernism and Freud were woven into sophisticated commentaries. More modest responses showed a sensitive understanding of the character and chose specific phrases and details to show competent appreciation of aspects of Mansfield's methods such as the symbolic significance of throwing off her coat, the significance of the mirror and the irony of her waiting for something 'divine to happen'. Less assured responses relied to a greater extent on a descriptive summary of the character, occasionally focusing on the more obvious aspects of imagery such as the comparison of the body shut 'in a case like a rare, rare fiddle'. They also speculated about the protagonist's sexual identity which was not well-evidenced and over-invested in biographical detail.

Question 6

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

- (a) Responses ranged from character sketches of Goldberg and McCann alongside solid recall of dramatic situations and conflicting moments to answers which grappled with the shifting power dynamics in the relationship as seen by the audience. These discussed McCann's dependence on Goldberg for reassurance about the job, the comic effect of McCann's deference to Goldberg in his attempt to get Stanley to sit down, various dramatic effects of their working in tandem during the interrogation scenes and interesting reflections on the possible political and existential significance of their roles as experienced by the audience. Crucial to this discussion was a detailed knowledge of the scene where Goldberg explodes at being called Simey, fails to complete 'Because I believe that the world...' and asks McCann to blow into his mouth. There was some good insight into the apparent hostility between the two – that it highlights the magnitude of the horrors imposed on Stanley. Less assured answers were often partial: they began confidently with detailed discussion of Goldberg and McCann's arrival but some struggled for detailed material beyond this point and relied upon broad assertions about their roles such as the notion that Goldberg and McCann were psychologists come to take Stanley back to a mental institution or were figments of Stanley's imagination.
- (b) The best responses considered the impact of the scene on the audience in the context of the play as a Comedy of Menace. Stronger answers provided concrete evidence from other areas of the play to inform shifting perspectives on the characters in this scene, in particular the change in perception of Stanley from victim to predator. Most focused on the escalation of menace and the symbolic significance of the glasses and drum, using the wider text to explain the violence towards Meg and Lulu. The best responses noted the tragicomic elements of the scene in the blackout, such as the panic in the dialogue, and compared it to the different stichomythic effects in the interrogation scenes. They also appreciated the visual impact on the audience of the business with the torch illuminating first Goldberg's face and then Stanley bending over Lulu. Modest responses tended to restrict themselves to the passage, often commenting competently on the most obvious dramatic actions and sound effects. A few attempted to apply half-digested ideas about Pinter's use of minimalist dialogue and non sequiturs and asserted that the dialogue, particularly Meg's question was absurd.

Question 7

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This continues to be a popular text, with candidates displaying detailed textual knowledge and strongly felt personal response. Both questions produced answers across the range though candidates had more success with the (b) question.

- (a) This was the less popular choice. The question gave candidates the opportunity to discuss the retrospective, non-chronological narrative structure as well as the characters and the best responses included discussion on the way Roy uses the structure to shape a reader's response to the twins, to understand how they became their adult characters as the memories are revealed. Most candidates had access to detailed textual knowledge though much of it was of the twins as children and often presented in a narrative form. Good responses focused on the way the characters behaved and perceived each other as adults, focusing on such details as the way Rahel viewed Estha with curiosity as a stranger and the significance of Estha seeing resemblances to Ammu in Rahel. They showed some appreciation of the effects of the language used in describing the incest and were able to make well informed and insightful arguments about the author's broader purposes, using the Rahel as a commentator on the changes caused by development. Less assured responses were restricted in terms of the consideration of the narrative methods, tended to rely on narrative summary or focus rather narrowly on the incest.
- (b) This was a very popular question. The opening of the passage encouraged candidates who were working progressively through the passage to focus on the language choices from the outset and this led to a higher standard of answers overall. The strongest answers explored the dual perspective of the young and adult Rahel, enjoying the humour and the poignancy of the children's encounter with Velutha. There was also some excellent discussion of the implications of the family's attitude to Sophie Mol. Most candidates noted the significance and effect of the parallel sentence structure: 'It was about a week after Sophie Mol arrived. A week before she died.' They

commented on the features of the list: the use of the ampersand, brackets, and Roy's use of capitalisation such as 'Real Father' to discuss Roy's characteristic stylistic devices. A few also recognised her use of the repeated phrase - of Sophie Mol loving her 'Real Father' less - which prompted discussion of the 'Love Laws.' Consideration of the imagery in the penultimate paragraph also prompted some to discuss the effects of the structure of the novel in terms of Roy's presentation of events and the effects on characters. More modest answers were not able to sustain such a detailed level of analysis but most were able to pick some specific details for comment and make relevant links to the wider text.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63

Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Good answers demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the text and use pertinent quotations to analyse methods and effects.

Good answers on passage-based questions demonstrate skills in practical criticism in order to discuss 'the effects of the writing but also make some relevant, specific references to the wider text in order to discuss how characteristic the extract is of a writer's methods or concerns.

Good answers focus primarily on detailed knowledge and discussion of the texts themselves and refer to critical or biographical material only sparingly.

General comments

Candidates showed positive engagement and enjoyment of the texts including the new ones: Fugard and Lochhead. Those opting for **(a)** questions often demonstrated detailed knowledge and an ability to generate a coherent argument in support of a personal response to the questions. Sometimes they found it harder to discuss methods and effects but essay questions on the prose and play texts were at least competent and often very good indeed. There was a greater tendency in the essay questions on the short stories and poetry to rely on summaries, with very general remarks about Mansfield's use of the stream-of-consciousness and limited appreciation of literary methods and effects. Generally speaking candidates seem to find it easier to structure the essay question than a response to the **(b)** questions. Many used a running commentary approach which at best allowed for a systematic tracking of the development of the ideas or characters and some opportunities to demonstrate an appreciation of particular details of point of view, language and the stage directions in the drama texts. Better answers were able to refer to the wider text to provide a local context, to make points about structure, and discuss the significance of the extracts or of particular details within them. Less assured answers often resorted to paraphrase and received opinions to direct the course of their discussions, spotting occasional features to denote understanding of literary method. Particularly on the short story extract and poetry questions, many seemed to find it very hard to refer to the rest of the story, other stories or other poems in their selections. They also tended to ignore phrases within the questions which directed them to a particular aspect of the wider text such as 'an audience's response to characters here and elsewhere.'

Successful candidates used the key terms in the questions to support their thinking and structure their responses; they demonstrated knowledge and understanding of a variety of 'means' and could not only use critical terminology competently but demonstrated how diverse 'effects' are achieved, using such analysis to support interpretation and argument. Candidates should be advised against writing out overlong quotations. Successful candidates answering both **(a)** and **(b)** questions are those who select significant or interesting phrases and look carefully at the diction and sentence structure to discuss how a writer shapes the response of a reader or audience. Those candidates who did well on the drama texts clearly saw the plays as dramatic spectacles and were equipped with apt critical terminology to discuss register, variations in tone and pace as well as staging effects. Less effective essays gave clear, impressively well-informed summaries of their critical reading on Pinter but paid less attention to the text itself. Although well primed on the Pinter pause and its effects, few were able to explore specific examples.

Contextual material was generally well used in discussions on Roy and Fugard but there was some misunderstanding of Hartley. The opening sentence of the novel has been quoted in the Jewish Chronicle and also in an article on the origins of Jewish people in Britain which not only led some candidates into thinking Hartley was Jewish but prompted the generation of a sub-text in the novel to support this. Candidates who apply their critical reading to the extracts and look for examples to analyse for themselves do well and there were some exciting, appreciative responses to Mansfield, Hartley, Roy and Pinter. The

best scripts, whether they chose (a) or (b) options, focused on the effects of the writing or dramatic techniques using such terms as *narrative point of view*, *stream of consciousness*, *diction*, *tone*, *register*, *lexical field*, *symbolism*, *imagery* and its sound or visual effects, *structure*, *juxtaposition*, different kinds of *irony* and comedy. In discussions on poetry, answers did well when they considered the way language and rhythm – a function of individual word length and sentence structure - contribute to meaning and tone.

There were a few rubric errors with some candidates unfortunately offering only one question, and very occasionally answering both the (a) and (b) questions on two texts. Time did not seem to be an issue but some able writers seemed to find it difficult to generate and develop substantial responses to the question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question allowed candidates to define the ‘fragile nature of human relationships’ and generate an argument which usually ranged through personal issues of love and fidelity to a consideration of relationships within the wider social and political context. Good answers focused on a range of poetic methods and effects in detailed appreciations of such poems as: ‘The More Loving One’, ‘As I walked out...’, ‘Oh what is that sound...?’, ‘Musée des Beaux Arts’ and ‘Refugee Blues’ through which they demonstrated how language and form create variations in tone and feeling. Discussions on Time were made relevant to the question and biographical and contextual details were handled sensitively. Less effective essays were those which attempted to summarise or explain poems or pursued a restricted response to the question using such poems as ‘On first coming down’ and ‘Control of the passes’ as examples of Auden’s need to obscure his homosexuality.
- (b) Good answers placed the poem within the context of the Age of Anxiety and linked it to ‘Now the leaves are falling fast’ or contrasted the elliptical nature of the poem with the more dramatic ‘Refugee Blues’. Others attempted to consider the presentation of the world of imagination with ‘Up there’ or ‘Where are you going..?’ There was some intelligent analysis of imagery and allusion which focused on the idea of the door not being a real defence, the threats of what might be let in and the implications of the word ‘carelessly’. Some were able to compare the tightness of the sonnet form with the fragmentation of the images and commented on the pathos generated by the simplicity of the diction in the final line. Less assured attempts seized on ideas of class, or death and struggled to make sense of the allusions to Alice in Wonderland. The marks of otherwise sound or intelligent commentaries were often compromised by a lack of specific reference to the wider text. Comments on concerns and characteristic methods were often very general and assertive in tone.

Question 2

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca* and *My Children! My Africa!*

- (a) Most candidates pursued the contrast between issues of personal freedom in *Road to Mecca* and political freedom in *My Children! My Africa!* Better answers considered the question of how Fugard ‘dramatises’ these concerns and considered such techniques as use of contrasting characters and attitudes, aspects of dialogue, soliloquies and action, and the staging effects of sound and light at specific points in the plays. They were also able to move confidently between the two texts, comparing the presentation of Mr M. and Elsa as teachers, or Mr M. and Helen as characters who face social pressures to conform in ways which compromise their individual integrity. There was some intelligent insight into the symbolic ironies surrounding the application form for the home and Helen being ‘at the mercy’ of her creations as well as some detailed appreciation of the symbolic significance and dramatic effects of light in *Road to Mecca*. Less effective essays discussed ideas about freedom with more reference to contextual material than to the plays themselves, or offered summaries of the plots or portraits of characters.

- (b) There were some well informed responses which, in terms of the writer's concerns, moved comfortably between the extract and the wider play. However, analysis of dramatic method proved more demanding: discussions hinted some understanding of different ways dramatists present character, or the use of irony and tone but candidates need to make their appreciation of dramatic effects more explicit in their writing. Most were able to sketch in the immediate context of the scene and many pointed out that the debate on gender was a metaphor for a wider political argument on race and that the function of 'riot' joke was not just to develop the interaction between the young people but a way of bringing in the wider social and political picture. The majority of candidates opted for a running commentary approach, with competent responses noting how diction and sentence structure affected tone and revealed relationships. There was some analysis of the way repetition was used to generate Mr M.'s enthusiasm, some comment on the formality of his address to Isabel and the awkwardness between Isabel and Thami following his exit. Some noted the brevity of Thami's replies to Isabel's praise of Mr M. and used this as way into the wider text and a discussion of Thami and Mr M.'s relationship. There was also some recognition of how Fugard makes Isabel into a sympathetic character with some appreciation of her robust response to the joke: 'OK- this afternoon was a riot' but few showed any inclination to pursue Isabel's role. Less effective answers gave thin accounts of the passage, summarised the plot of the play or over-invested in contextual material and the life of Nelson Mandela.

Question 3

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

- (a) Most candidates showed knowledge of the plot, and organised their material into stages of admiration, fascination, bewilderment, anger, betrayal and guilt. There was a tendency to reduce Ted's role to that of surrogate father or a member of the working class with whom Leo felt superior and therefore more comfortable until he felt Marion belonged to Lord Trimmingham. The general weakness was to use narrative summary with inexact references to specific episodes or scenes, such as Leo's feelings on opening the letter, the cricket match, and the two attempts at discussing 'spooning'. In some responses Ted was accused of selfishly destroying Leo's innocence. Better responses considered the steer in the question: 'By what means and with what effects' and focused on the use of the dual narrative perspective of young and elderly Leo, the significance of Zodiac, the homoeroticism of the language used to describe Ted initially and in the gun cleaning scene, and the ambivalence of Leo's feelings: 'I liked Ted Burgess in a reluctant, half-admiring, half-hating way', together with the foreshadowing effect of the description of Ted being like the cut corn. They had enough detail to consider Ted's embarrassment in the conversations on 'spooning' and the way the language in the dialogue, the 'silly/natural' opposition, contributed to a reader's understanding of Leo's frustration and anger. Some also considered how other characters contributed to Leo's view of Ted: the significance to his way of thinking that 'nothing is ever a lady's fault', of Ted being a 'Lady-killer' and Marion saying Ted was 'weak'. Some weak answers wrote at too great length on biographical material and used details from the film to support a restricted reading of the relationship as being a homosexual one, or over-simplified it as being rivals for the love of Marion.
- (b) The best responses offered a balanced approach, combining a detailed critical appreciation of authorial intention and style while commenting on the relationship between the passage and the whole novel. The majority of responses showed genuine interest and excitement in the text, evident in the confident analysis of symbols, narrative voice, and Hartley's use of rhetorical questioning, structure and shifts in tone. There was some sensitive, perceptive engagement with the protagonist, with the most sophisticated exploring the impact of the lexical field belonging to 'the undertaker's art' in the third and fourth paragraphs and the self-dramatisation in Leo's identification with Icarus and bitterness over the 'golden age'. More modest answers tended to take an explanatory approach which tended to restrict analysis of the effects of the writing, but prompted consideration of a range of ideas connecting the extract to the wider text.

Question 4

LIZ LOCHHEAD: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Most answers chose appropriate poems and found some way of linking them into a discussion of how memory is triggered or preserved by objects, or how memories of people or moments allow the poet to move from personal feelings to a wider reflection on human experience. The majority of responses showed a clear basic understanding of the poems through summary with some general remarks on the use of colloquial English, repetition and occasional random specific details like 'Dads in hats' or still life/still life' to cover poetic method. Those who did well, offered sustained analyses of such poems as 'The Choosing' 'For My Grandmother Knitting' focusing on their structure, the way choice of diction generated tone and attitude with particular examples of repetition, and the visual or sound effects of such phrases as 'Her arms are round the full-shaped vase/that is her body' or 'you slit the still-ticking quick silver fish.' There was more sketchy treatment of 'Sorting Through' and 'Some Old Photographs'.
- (b) This poem prompted some enthusiastic responses. Candidates used the contextual links between Rapunzstitskin and the Grimm brothers' stories to inform a reading of the poem as a comic fable on sexual politics. Proficient responses ably commented on method, highlighting the symbolism of the tower where the female spirit is restricted and suppressed and the extent to which both sexes are handicapped by media representations of masculine heroism. They systematically worked through the poem focusing on the many aspects that contribute to the anti-romantic tone looking in detail at the first line: the effect of the ampersand, the universal identification implied in the addition of 'our' to the archaic 'maiden' set against the scorn suggested by the colloquial collocation of 'along comes' and the capitalisation of 'This Prince'. Their essays managed to sustain a detailed level of commentary on the effects of the language: the use of cliché, direct speech, parenthesis and the placing of particular words such as: '(she groaned). He grinned'. Those candidates who were mindful of the need for wider reference, talked knowledgeably about the defeminisation and the vulgarity of the language in 'Everybody's Mother' or went for the contrast in tone in other poems about failed relationships such as 'Obituary' or 'After the Warrant Sale' but many candidates restricted their discussion to the given poem and so remarks on characteristic methods and concerns were often very general and assertive. Some candidates wrote rather tentatively as though in response to an unseen but even among these there were some impressive displays of skills in practical criticism.

Question 5

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

- (a) Most candidates were able to select appropriate stories and attempted to generate an argument by comparing the frustrations and dreams of young women such as Beryl or Matilda in 'The Wind Blows' or using Mansfield's interest in class to contrast the child in 'Woman in the Store', her life and relationship with her mother with that of Laura in 'The Garden Party', or comparing the presentation of Laura with Kezia in 'The Doll's House'. Better answers had enough quotations to demonstrate how Mansfield used the stream-of-consciousness technique to reveal the way characters feel about themselves and their situations. There were some insightful discussions on the effects of Mansfield's use of symbolism such as the hat in 'The Garden Party' and the lamp in 'The Doll's House'. Less assured essays tended to summarise roles and offer descriptive portraits of characters, mentioning aspects of narrative method in a general way.
- (b) Good responses were informed by knowledge of the rest of the story and showed critical appreciation of how the use of the stream of consciousness shaped a reader's response to Mr Peacock. They focused on the way the language and sentence structure created the voice and attitudes of the character, contrasting the negativity in the opening description of his waking and thoughts about his wife with the 'enchanted scenes' of his fantasy. The best responses explored the nuances of tone, appreciating the humorous use of personification in the reactions of the toothglass and bath tap to his singing and the undignified simile of him 'squatting like a frog'. They considered the contribution of the 'thrill of purely artistic satisfaction' to the ironic denial of his vanity and the effect of the switch in point of view to Adrian at the end. Some candidates chose to discuss Mansfield's concerns by considering her views of marriage. Much of this was taken from autobiographical material but some useful links were made to examples of characters in other stories who were unhappy in their marriages such as Linda in 'The Prelude' or the husband in 'A Married Man's Story'. Some also considered the way characters in other stories escape into

fantasy or their inner world. Less assured essays attempted to summarise the passage and deduce aspects of character. A surprising number of responses took the passage at face value and were very sympathetic towards Mr Peacock.

Question 6

HAROLD PINTER: *The Birthday Party*

- (a) Most noted and evidenced through detailed reference to language and action, Goldberg's role as a catalyst for menace and interpreted him as being part of a frightening ideology which enforced conformity. Some very good answers noted the complexity of Goldberg's confident social character – able to flatter Meg and brush off Petey's concerns for Stanley - juxtaposed with McCann's lack of self-assurance and the way the audience's confidence in the character is subverted by the unreliability of his accounts of his identity and past. They discussed the dramatic effect of his explosion at being called Simey, the dramatic effect of his inability to compete 'Because I believe that the world...' and the bizarre nature of his request for McCann to blow into his mouth. Weaker responses offered simplistic interpretations of character and events asserting that Goldberg and McCann were psychologists come to take Stanley back to a mental institution. Some candidates were clearly challenged by the absurdist dramatic context and took refuge in the idea that nobody can really know or understand anything for certain.
- (b) Some of the responses were very good indeed, moving seamlessly between insightful comment on the given scene, the wider text and their critical reading. Most briefly filled in the immediate context but better essays had pertinent quotations such as Goldberg's 'Well Stanny boy, what do you say, eh?' and the horror of Stanley's inarticulate reply to explain the impact on an audience of Stanley's appearance and the irony of 'same old Stan'. Some also mentioned Petey's previous quizzing of Goldberg about Stanley's health to support comments on Petey's role in the passage. It was pointed out that Petey gives voice to the anxieties of the audience and the moment at which Petey breaks and does nothing, is characteristic of a helpless audience watching these events unfold. Most candidates commented on the dramatic effect of withholding information about Monty and picked up the threat to Petey in the invitation to accompany them. Most knew that Pinter had commented on the importance of Petey's line: 'Stan do not let them tell you what to do!' and some intelligently pursued the irony of this as well as its wider implications. Most candidates recognised that the conversation between Petey and Meg mimicked the opening of the play and discussed the significance of this for the relationship between the two. Better essays noted the dramatic effect of the torn up strips of newspaper to remind the audience that things had changed and Petey's use of Goldberg's technique of dissimulation to avoid upsetting Meg. Many candidates were anxious to display their understanding of complex ideas on Pinter's theatre and quoted from Esslin, Malkin and Cohn but sometimes this proved to be a distraction. For example the Malkin view that through dialogue Pinter displays the inadequacy of words and everyday speech prompted lengthy discussions of the dialogue between Meg and Petey in Act 1 and the use of stichomythia, when a more productive discussion could have been had about an audience's response to Meg's version of events at the party.

Less assured essays offered running commentaries which were close to paraphrase and ignored the steer in the question to explore 'an audience's response to character here and elsewhere', or they wrote partial answers focusing on Meg and Petey. They also offered unsupported simplistic theories that Goldberg and McCann are psychologists come to take Stanley to a mental institution, that everyone including Petey and Meg have been in an institution, or that the play is all a figment of Stanley or Petey's imagination.

Question 7

ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

- (a) This question allowed candidates to focus on particular characters or on aspects of Indian national identity and culture. Proficient essays generated a thesis: that there are some identities that are given as a function of gender, marital status, caste and race while others are shaped by personality and experience. For example, there were detailed comparisons of the impact of status and attitudes towards Ammu, a woman with 'no Locust stand I' – not even a personal name and Chacko. There were lots of instances of personal insight in these responses, such as that Rahel's jealousy of the attention given to Sohie Mol stems from a racial perspective which Sophie Mol has no control over. Many candidates showed an intelligent understanding of the broader political issues about the effects of colonialism, Anglophilia, and the changes to culture and the environment brought about by development, set against the continuing inhumanity of the caste system and the patriarchy. Good responses supported their discussions with an impressive amount of pertinent quotation. The key discriminator here was the extent to which candidates discussed specific aspects of method: how the non-chronological sequence of events improves the reader's understanding of how identity forms and changes, how the twins are given identities through the repeated use of names and phrases to eventually become 'Quietness' and 'Emptiness' or the use of metaphor: the 'jam/jelly question'. Less assured responses gave detailed but straightforward character portraits or over-invested in more general discussion about caste and communism.
- (b) Some responses chose to explore Roy's concerns about Anglo-Indian culture and made much use of post-colonial criticism. This tended to lead to a more restricted discussion about the changes brought about by development and tourism. Some noted how the attention paid to the Kathakali stories reinforced a temporal sense that the tragedies of the Ipe family were part of a wider epic, but this often led some candidates to attempt to make simplistic links between details in the passage and the wider novel: for example the way the Kathakali man treated his stories like children mimicked the treatment of the twins, or his inability to act as a bus conductor was due to his caste. Some related the back-story of the History House. Stronger responses focused on Roy's narrative method and were able to identify particular literary effects, with the best ones considering the shifts in point of view between the omniscient narrator and the adult Rahel. They noted the story-within-a-story framework, the range of themes, the shifts in tone, and impact of the choice of diction and sentence structure. Some explored the impact of 'he has become unviable. Unfeasible. Condemned goods.' with its echoes of Roy's description of Ammu's death at a 'viable, die-able age.' There were some intelligent, personal explorations of the significance of 'his body *is* his soul', of the issue of authenticity and the effect here of the characteristic use of repeated phrases like 'Regional Flavour' or the broader theme of transgression in smoking the joint and asking pardon of the gods. Less assured readings attempted to paraphrase the passage with very restricted discussion of narrative methods and effects, noting such obvious features as the capitalisation of words or the use of short incomplete sentences, often beginning with conjunctions. Discussion on this was influenced by the mistaken premise that the point of view here was of the young Rahel. It was asserted that Roy was creating language to mimic Rahel's youthful naivety, which did not match the mature reflections on the Kathakali Man's vocation and experience.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

- **Good answers show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem/passage as whole before starting to write their response.**
- **Candidates should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and how these shape meaning, additionally they do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.**
- **Good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they are not just listed.**
- **Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.**

General Comments

There were some very good responses to all three questions this summer; Examiners spoke well of what they read, and commented on how most candidates kept away from simple narrative or paraphrase, and tried, often very successfully, to explore something at least of the methods used by each writer. There was a good deal of thoughtful personal response to what was written, sometimes – especially perhaps with **Question 1** – rather more speculatively than critically, but whatever was said by candidates nearly always demonstrated a genuine attempt to explore rather than just assert.

All three questions attracted responses in roughly equal numbers, so that there was inevitably, a good deal of discussion of poetic styles and techniques. Examiners were pleased to report that this led to less of the often simplistic listing and defining that have been seen in past years, and to much more confident analysis. Rhyme, rhythm, verse structure, and of course language too, were considered by candidates in how the poets create meaning and are used to shape readers' understanding. Similar close reading was also evident in responses to **Question 3**, though this did occasionally evince some less tightly focused exploration, as many candidates found themselves critical of Denise's personality and fears, rather than of McKenzie's writing – almost as if Denise were a real person instead of a purely fictional creation. This last point is an important one; it is of course possible that a writer is re-creating her or his own personal experiences in what she or he writes, but at least for the purposes of this examination it is important to avoid any such assumptions. What matters most is the analysis of passages or poems in the question paper, not any known or imagined background material or contexts.

There were almost no rubric errors: virtually all candidates wrote complete responses to their two questions, and while a few resorted to notes and bullet-points towards the end there seemed overall to be few timing problems. Examiners did comment, however, on the quite substantial number of candidates whose presentation and handwriting were poor, and which inevitably caused problems in reading and understanding. Examiners are of course very aware of the pressure that candidates are under in this two-hour Paper, and fully appreciate that writing may not always be quite as neat and careful as it could be, but there can be little excuse or reason for some scripts to be very nearly unreadable. This is something that Centres really do need to stress to future candidates; there is no penalty for poor presentation, but if it is so poor as to hinder understanding, then candidates are necessarily and needlessly penalising themselves.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 *Landscape with Figures*

A large number of candidates responded to this poem, and there were some imaginative and often thoughtful ideas about it, but surprisingly few seemed aware of the deliberately artistic nature of the title and of the consequent images that the poet creates; the words “Landscape with Figures” suggest a painting, and a painting that is primarily of a country scene, with figures only incidental to it, and this is certainly how the poem develops – there are just two figures, neither of them apparently moving, and the whole thrust of what Ormsby writes is upon the still, silent and curiously ominous landscape. It is also a view through a bus window, the edges of which act in rather the same way that the edges of a picture frame do. The ominous nature of what the speaker sees is not because it is a war poem, or a poem about some mysterious and inexplicable natural disaster: it is simply about what the poet briefly saw as the bus moved past the farmhouse. The fact that the poet was born in 1947 does not mean that this is a poem about the Second World War, and “the thing” referred to in line 23 is simply the view, not some kind of supernatural monster. It seemed to Examiners that virtually no candidate felt able to explore the poem simply for what it says, but felt a need to see, or imagine, “hidden” ideas that are probably not there at all. For example, the word “haunt” in line 1 became a spur for many candidates to assume that there is something supernatural or ghostly, in the poem, rather than merely saying how the speaker simply cannot forget the picture that the frame of the bus window gave him as it passed by. There is plenty of material in the descriptions of the farm, the hill, the trees, and in the strange quiet that the speaker sees and feels in this brief glimpse; there is no need to make a poem say more than it does; in the words of one Examiner, “*it was interesting to note how few candidates took the poem at face value and saw it in a literal way*”. There were some attempts to explore the form and structure of the poem, but many less confident responses simply outlined what happened, or did not happen, in it.

Question 2 *The Old Lovers* and *The Bean Eaters*

Responses to this pair of poems were in many ways much better, in that candidates were much more fully able to see that in very different ways each poem is about two lovers moving towards the ends of their lives, and how they accept this in very different ways. Rand’s speaker challenges death, and attacks what people may say about love in old age (lines 8-9), in language that is certainly old-fashioned and from a more Romantic, even Gothic, tradition. The speaker, too, is himself one of the lovers, and as many responses pointed out this creates a very personal poem, culminating in the final cry to the world, almost a shout, in lines 18-19, but with a strangely touching and tender conclusion, “a kindly smile” instead of the almost arrogant assertion earlier that “passion is cold”. Most responses commented on the very traditional verse form, with its regular rhythm and rhyme, suggesting perhaps rightly that although written in this way because of its probably nineteenth-century publication, it also reinforces the strong and sturdy determination that the speaker presents.

Brooks’s poem, by contrast, is written in almost free verse – though as many pointed out there is a kind of regularity in the rhyme words – possibly reflecting the far less openly determined or consciously assertive nature of either of the two lovers here. The viewpoint, too, is different: the poem is written by a third party, looking with what Rand might call “a kindly smile” at the two elderly bean eaters, whose life is limited and poor, but clearly in its own way content. The two people have had plenty of experience together, and they recall it now “remembering....”, and for once it was important, as many responses noted, to point to the punctuation here: the ellipsis and repetition on the following line reflects their elderly and perhaps fading memories, but ones that they do recall with “twinklings” of happiness, but at the same time with “twinges”, of both physical and perhaps also mental pain. The verse form is particularly interesting, as several candidates pointed out: the first two stanzas have a kind of simple regularity, which is broken up into what becomes almost prose as the speaker lists and recreates the breaking remnants of their lives at the end – but the final word ties it all together with a strong and quietly determined rhyme.

There are of course many differences, but enough similarities too for comparisons to be made, and almost invariably candidates drew the two poems together with confidence and consistency. Most moved between the two from the start, with relatively few writing separately about each. An interesting comment was made by one Examiner, who said that “*the two poems worked well as a comparison – each poem encouraging a deeper response to the other one*”. There were some good responses, showing much sensitivity, both to old age and to the poets’ skills in presenting this.

Question 3 *Private School*

Presumably because it recreates some of the feelings and fears that many children will have faced at some time in their early School years, this passage attracted plenty of often strongly-felt personal responses. However, many of these were directed at the characters and behaviours of Denise, her mother and even Miss Maude, rather than at how the writer portrays them, and there were a few occasions where narrative began to take over at the expense of critical exploration.

Many candidates commented on the framing of the passage, with “the disgrace” caused by the roaches opening and closing the passage, and on the fact that this disgrace is never clarified (it is, of course, in the rest of the short story), leading to a successful creation of mystery and puzzlement. Many, too, noted the impact of the threefold repetition of “I hate them” in line 2, a repetition reflective of Denise’s deep feelings and of her youth. Several commented on her use of the words “roaches” and “duppies” as further evidence of her childish nature, as is her choice of reading material in the graveyard and at home; virtually every candidate commented on her choice of *Black Beauty*, with its arousal of “the familiar rage” about mistreatment of a horse, and in Denise’s life of herself. What rather fewer candidates said was that while these are features of Denise’s personality they are features created by the writer – Denise is a fictional creation, not a real person; a number of responses seemed to assume that she is real, even suggesting that she is not simply a young child but a foolish one as well, in that no sensible child could really be quite so scared of cockroaches, entirely forgetting, or ignoring, the fact that she is not a real person at all.

There is plenty more material in the passage that is worthy of discussion: the fact that McKenzie creates Denise’s mother as a single parent, clearly worried about something, perhaps her daughter, perhaps something else; she makes Miss Maude a somewhat distant but formidable lady, and draws the family’s home and surroundings as probably poor in financial terms, but arguably rich in social and neighbourly support – Mr Benny is either a nosy or a caring neighbour – and Denise’s mother very clearly cares deeply about her home and her daughter. The narrative is simple and quite powerful, but there is plenty of writing skill to be considered and discussed; some of the best responses were able to consider the ways in which the writer uses the third person narrative, at the same time creating glimpses for the readers into Denise’s own mind and thoughts.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

- **Good answers show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem/passage as whole before starting to write their response.**
- **Candidates should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and how these shape meaning, additionally they do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.**
- **Good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they are not just listed.**
- **Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.**

General Comments

There were some very good responses to all three questions this summer; Examiners spoke well of what they read, and commented on how most candidates kept away from simple narrative or paraphrase, and tried, often very successfully, to explore something at least of the methods used by each writer. There was a good deal of thoughtful personal response to what was written, sometimes – especially perhaps with **Question 1** – rather more speculatively than critically, but whatever was said by candidates nearly always demonstrated a genuine attempt to explore rather than just assert.

All three questions attracted responses in roughly equal numbers, and it was particularly pleasing to read some very thoughtful ideas about the piece of drama in **Question 3**, where many candidates quite rightly discussed the passage as a piece of theatre, considering not just what the characters say but also what they do, and how an audience might react in a theatre. A play, it is important to remember, is not just prose set out in a different way, and Examiners will always look to reward responses which focus at least in part upon dramatic and theatrical qualities of such a passage. There were some very thoughtful and perceptive responses to Southey's poem in **Question 2**, far from finding its dated language and verse-form a hindrance to understanding and appreciation; many candidates seemed to find these qualities surprisingly and positively helpful. There were similarly good responses to **Question 1**, though as almost always happens with strongly portrayed characters in a piece of prose there were some candidates who spent rather more time than they should commenting on what Juggut Singh may have done in the past, and what he now does, than upon how the writer has created this fictional person.

There were almost no rubric errors: virtually all candidates wrote complete responses to their two questions, and while a few resorted to notes and bullet-points towards the end there seemed, overall, to be few timing problems. Examiners did comment, however, on the quite substantial number of candidates whose presentation and handwriting were poor, and which inevitably caused problems in reading and understanding. Examiners are of course very aware of the pressure that candidates are under in this two-hour Paper, and fully appreciate that writing may not always be quite as neat and careful as it could be, but there can be little excuse or reason for some scripts to be very nearly unreadable. This is something that Centres really do need to stress to future candidates; there is no penalty for poor presentation, but if it is so poor as to hinder understanding then candidates are necessarily and needlessly penalising themselves.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 *Train to Pakistan*

A quite lengthy passage, but one that is full of material, and which led to some very thoughtful and often critically perceptive responses; there is plenty of unexplained mystery, and the true character of Juggut Singh is never made entirely clear – why, for example, is he on probation, why does he need a spear to go out at night, why is the goods train a signal, what happened to his father, what are his real feelings about Nooro, and about his mother? There is much to consider here, and the best responses were those that covered all, or at least some of these puzzles. Less confident candidates covered them in narrative terms, while the most confident remained at all times securely aware that the characters and events are not real, and that they are all created by a writer, using them as a means of stirring interest in his readers.

The opening seven lines elicited plenty of interest; most candidates focused upon the clearly mysterious events here, the best making reference to the words stressing Juggut's need for secrecy – *distant rumble, quietly, tiptoed, crept* – words and ideas that are echoed several times later in the passage, especially in the paragraphs beginning in lines 24 and 35. Several responses noted “the grey forms of a couple of adjutant storks” in line 26, seeing them as metaphors for the authorities who were presumably likely to be searching for Juggut if he was seen outside at night. The suddenly and unexpectedly quiet and beautiful picture of the night sky in lines 30-31 was seen by several candidates as reflective of Juggut's real feelings: he is free from his home and his mother, and by inference free also of the memory of his father's death (probably hanged for murder rather than by suicide), and momentarily at least from his own criminal activities; it also opens the way to the clearly intimate nature of the relationship that he has with Nooro, expanded and developed in the following lines.

There is a mass of material to discuss here and, provided as ever that candidates made it clear that this material is created by the writer, then there were some good responses. Where the characters and events were treated as if real then responses were less critically successful. As must always be the case, high reward was given only to those answers where focus was clearly and unambiguously upon the writing, rather than just upon what is said and what happens.

Question 2 *Among His Books*

This poem attracted a lot of responses, and almost all of them were at least sound, and often very good; some were excellent. The archaic nature of the poet's language and verse form attracted some sensitive and critically alert thoughts, and the poem's central idea of books equalling human friends caused no difficulties for candidates. There were a few responses which spent more time than was needed in outlining the stanza structure, rhythms and rhyme schemes, without making any useful comments on these; some candidates, however, while doing this, made the very valid point that the security and consistency of this structuring is reflective of what the poem's speaker says – his own sense of gratitude and certainty about his books is echoed in the similar certainty of the writing.

Many candidates made useful comments about the uses of alliteration in stanza one: “*m*” in line 4 and “*f*” in line 5: past Reports have frequently said that identifying particular techniques is in itself of little value, unless accompanied by some critical evaluation, and here it was pleasing to see that, there were plenty of interesting reactions – the alliteration draws attention to the words “mighty minds” and “never-failing friends”, at the same time making clear that the two words in each case are linked not just by sound but also by implied meaning. A similar, though contrasting, usage can be seen in the final words of lines 7 and 8, and there are plenty of other instances of word pairing for impact – in lines 9, 15, 16, 17 for example. Many responses also noted the striking impact of the rhyming couplets at the end of each stanza, acting as they do as a kind of summing-up of what has just been said, leading to the climactic conclusion of the last two lines of the whole poem.

Question 3 *The Boy Comes Home*

Rather disappointingly this passage attracted relatively few responses; perhaps candidates felt unsure or insecure about drama, though the good quality of many responses suggests quite clearly that there was no need for such reluctance. The passage is certainly quite long in appearance, but because many of the characters' speeches are short it is not as long and certainly not as complex as it might first appear, and there were some thoughtful and sometimes quite critically sharp discussions.

When responding to an extract from a play it is essential that candidates do acknowledge this fact, and that they make at least some attempt to consider how the playwright has used not just words but also actions;

some awareness too of possible audience reaction is always helpful in showing an appreciation of the different kind of context within which the work may be received. Obviously in an examination such a passage is in most ways no different from a conventional prose passage, but candidates selecting a piece of drama must show a clear sense that it is different, and not all managed this.

In this respect it might be worth making a brief note about the words “reader” and “audience”, which many candidates seem to use indiscriminately; while this is not normally a serious concern or problem, it should be made clear to future candidates that a poem or a piece of prose will almost always be received by a *reader*, while a piece of drama will be experienced by an *audience*.

The three characters in this extract are very clearly defined and differentiated by the dramatist: Uncle James is severe and old-fashioned, while Aunt Emily is much softer and warmer, trying her very best to bridge the gap between her husband and her nephew Philip, both of whom are at best uneasy with the other and at worst almost at loggerheads. The dramatist presents the two older characters first, to establish their relationship with each other, and to introduce their different feelings about Philip before he actually appears, is in itself a useful theatrical device; some of the most confident responses did note the quite striking impact that the dramatist makes by introducing Philip quite late in the extract.

There is little movement or action, but what there is, is important: James twice looking at his watch suggests his impatience, Emily “arranging” her husband in line 30, to ensure that he is as comfortable and relaxed as she can make him; James taking and reading the paper, perhaps as a way of evading or at least delaying his inevitable confrontation with Philip; his yawning and dozing, similarly suggestive of a kind of escapism. There is much more action as well as verbal conflict when Philip does appear – he sits and lights his pipe as if fully at home (which of course he is); he rises and calls to his aunt, then returns to his seat and his pipe, showing a confident determination that he is now a man, no longer “the boy” who left for France four years ago.

There is of course, plenty to examine in the dialogue and most candidates who addressed the extract made good use of the very different characteristics in this sense: James’s rather cold and formal unwillingness to accept that Philip has changed, Emily’s attempt to show how much she cares for both her husband and her nephew, and Philip’s slightly arrogant, but entirely understandable irritation, at being treated like a boy, and his wish to be allowed some cash to live a life of his own after four years away and at war. His opening two speeches (lines 46-53) were surprisingly hardly ever commented on, but are surely of huge relevance in presenting his lively, likeable, slightly cheeky nature, a nature which changes quickly and sharply when his uncle objects to his smoking. A few candidates quite rightly found some aspects of the extract humorous, especially in some of what Philip says, and in how the dramatist uses humour to draw the audience’s sympathies firmly towards Philip rather than his uncle.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73
Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

- Good answers show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem/passage as whole before starting to write their response.
- Candidates should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and how these shape meaning, additionally they do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they are not just listed.
- Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.

General Comments

There were some very good responses to all three questions this summer; Examiners spoke well of what they read, and commented on how most candidates kept away from simple narrative or paraphrase, and tried, often very successfully, to explore something at least of the methods used by each writer. There was a good deal of thoughtful personal response to what was written – especially with **Question 1** – rather more speculatively than critically, but whatever was said by candidates nearly always demonstrated a genuine attempt to explore rather than just assert.

Most responses were to **Questions 1** and **3**, with relatively few to **Question 2**, so that there was inevitably a good deal of discussion of poetic styles and techniques. Examiners were pleased to report that this led to less of the often simplistic listing and defining that have sometimes been seen in past years, but to much more confident attempts to consider how rhyme, rhythm, verse structure, and of course language, were used by the poets to create meaning and to shape the readers' understanding. Similarly, close reading was also evident in response to **Question 2**, though this did occasionally evince some less tightly focused exploration, as many candidates found themselves critical of Dickens's own character and personality rather than to what he describes and how he describes it. There is no doubt of course that he is writing about a real experience, rather than the possibly imagined ones in "Lady Northcote", and the clearly imaginary and metaphorical ones in "The Depths", but the most confident responses did make sure that they considered not just the *facts* presented in the passage, but more importantly the ways in which Dickens portrayed his own thoughts and fears about the storm and its effects on the boat.

There were almost no rubric errors: virtually all candidates wrote complete responses to their two questions, and, while a few resorted to notes and bullet-points towards the end there seemed overall to be few timing problems. Examiners did comment, however, on the quite substantial number of candidates whose presentation and handwriting were poor, and which inevitably caused problems in reading and understanding. Examiners are of course very aware of the pressure that candidates are under in this two-hour Paper, and fully appreciate that writing may not always be quite as neat and careful as it could be, but there can be little excuse or reason for some scripts to be very nearly unreadable. This is something that Centres need to stress to future candidates; there is no penalty for poor presentation, but if it is so poor as to hinder understanding then candidates are necessarily and needlessly penalising themselves.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 *Lady Northcote*

As noted above, this poem attracted a large number of responses, many of which were very perceptive and thoughtful, and few that failed to see and appreciate the central metaphor that McWatt creates – the boat as a woman. As many pointed out, most sailors refer to a boat as “she”, so this is on the surface a simple and easy metaphor, but there is more to it than just conventional nomenclature. The poet seems to be using the boat, *Lady Northcote*, as a way of expressing his own changing and developing views of woman, and indeed of his own sexuality; though this is by no means entirely explicit, and candidates who did not mention this aspect certainly did not lose any credit, while those who did often seemed more aware of the subtle complexities of the poem as a whole.

If it is simply a poem about a boat, the poet begins by making an assumption about how she may have looked when brand new; the comparison between the boat and “a governor’s lady” is suggestive of her polished and glamorous appearance when “they flung champagne” at her launch. Now, when the speaker first sees her, the boat has been through rough times, and is no longer smooth and polished, but has “taken her licks”, become “excitingly abused” and even “drained”; but despite this she could still attract the speaker’s attentions, a speaker who is “a raw teenager out for kicks”. And it may be here that there is the first implicit suggestion of the speaker’s physical sensations – perhaps sexuality – as he looks at this once beautiful and sophisticated “lady”.

The third stanza talks of a storm experienced by the boat, which (or who) not merely survived but found the tempestuous weather and sea, stimulating and enjoyable. Now, back in the present, the boat is “flat and dun”, no longer young and physically appealing, but still attractive to the speaker, who relishes its strength and durability; and again perhaps more explicitly now, he says that at his age he finds “that strong women are the best”.

The final stanza perhaps becomes increasingly explicit in its use of the poem’s overarching metaphor: the boat slips quietly into harbour at dawn, literally so after experiencing the great storm but perhaps metaphorically like a woman after a night of romance and of being “a little naughty”. The final lines see the speaker smiling at his own ideas and at his own adolescent dreams of women, who were all outwardly perfect but inwardly perhaps very different.

There is much to consider, and a variety of interpretations were offered by candidates; most noted its free verse nature (it is not blank verse, which is a very specific and different verse form), and there were some interestingly thoughtful suggestions about how the free and easy-going nature of the boat is echoed in this structure. One Examiner was particularly struck by what he read, and summed his feeling up in this way: *“There were some very good responses to this poem, and many candidates wrote effectively, recognising the poet’s use of the overall metaphor as well as the poetic techniques used ... there is clearly a richness of language in the poem, and it was pleasing to see how many candidates were sensitive to this, and were able to harness their views on it to produce good answers.”*

Question 2 *American Notes*

There were relatively few responses to this passage, perhaps because the two poems (**Question 1** and **Question 3**) looked so much more straightforward and were certainly shorter. This was a pity, because those candidates who did address Dickens’s piece often did so with considerable perception and indeed enjoyment of his portrayal of the stormy seas and their impact on the ship and himself. There is a good deal of humour in the passage, despite its subject-matter, and it is well worth exploring how Dickens manages to make light of his suffering while at the same time making it very clear just how serious he felt the situation to be. There are many such examples of this: the seriousness is well described in lines 6-9, where Dickens vividly portrays the agonies of sea-sickness suffered by three women; immediately afterwards (lines 9-11) he jokes – albeit with more than a touch of black humour – about the way in which the cabin door appears to move from being below him, but almost immediately afterwards appears above him. The closing sentence of this paragraph (lines 12-14) contains a wonderfully vivid image, of the ship’s creaking and cracking “like an enormous fire”, an apparently unsuitable but nonetheless highly effective simile in the context of a storm at sea.

There is plenty that is similar in the long paragraph starting at line 15, in which Dickens draws a number of entertaining but very powerful and striking images, comparing the ship to a dolphin, for example (line 21), then giving the articles and furniture in his cabin a kind of life of their own (lines 20-25), culminating in a quite wonderful accumulation of verbs in lines 34-35, followed by a similar and wonderful anti-climax when the

steward, clearly a man used to such storms, says that what is happening is just “rather a heavy sea”. There is, it seems, no real danger, despite the horror felt by the women, and the extreme discomfort felt by Dickens himself; the final paragraph continues to list the various and many discomforts on the ship, again with a very likeable touch of comedy, when he compares all the dreadful sounds that he hears to “a concert”. The passage ends with an abrupt, short and surely heartfelt sentence: despite all his apparent partial enjoyment, he finally admits that he too is “excessively sea-sick”.

No candidate was of course expected to consider all the points mentioned, or to explore them in critical detail, but there is a great deal in the passage that could be written about, as a number of candidates discovered, often demonstrating sensitive personal response and appreciation.

Question 3 *The Depths*

Unlike the poem in **Question 1**, this is very much traditional in form and language, reflective of course of the period during which it was written. It is a sonnet, despite the numbering which suggests that there are 15 lines instead of the usual 14; line 8, where the *volta* occurs, is split in two in order to make the transition more clearly obvious. If candidates did not mention its sonnet form, or if they said for instance that it looks like to a sonnet, or even that it is just a slightly unusual kind of sonnet, there was no problem. Examiners were all happy to accept and reward all sensible and thoughtful exploration of the poem’s structure, its rhyme pattern and its regular iambic rhythms as echoing the ideas being presented by the poet.

The first line – almost exactly repeated by the last line of the poem – makes the initially slightly banal statement that it is not only hills or mountains that are beautiful, but that as developed in the rest of the poem’s octave there are equally lovely “blossoms” deep in the ocean, with plenty of colour and life. As several responses commented, the use of the word “blossoms” is interesting, as it seems paradoxical and indeed unlikely that such earthly flowering things could exist in “the cold, dark billows of the frowning deep”, a line heavily redolent of dark lifelessness.

Then, when the reader moves beyond line 8, the poem moves beyond literal description in order fully to develop the metaphor that lies at its heart: we can, the speaker says, find a kind of beauty in moments of despair and darkness as well as in times of happiness. Lines 10-13 use strong alliteration to link and emphasise the words “sea of sorrow”, “sullen surface”, “down...to darkness and despair...at the depths”, and in so doing the poet presents a kind of paradox: the words themselves have a strangely beautiful sound and characteristic, unexpectedly alike the beauty and peace that the poet says that we can find at times when everything seems to suggest we should be at our most deeply sad. The flower image returns in line 13, suggesting that there is in fact greater beauty in dark moments than in happiness; the poem ends with an almost exact repetition of its opening, with the addition of the word “Ah!”, implying a sigh of recognition and acceptance. Despite the few responses whose writers seemed to think that the poet was writing about submarines or scuba-diving, there were many who appreciated that she is conveying some general thoughts about the whole of life’s experiences, not simply about the sea and its various beauties.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

Key Messages

Good answers will:

- address their two texts with clear and concise focus upon what the questions are asking;
- explore how the writers create their particular effects, discussing some of the literary techniques used;
- support responses and ideas with brief but apt textual quotations and references;
- make some brief use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments;
- where practicable, write on individually selected and worded questions, to make responses as personal as possible;
- ensure that the work submitted remains within the overall 3000 word limit (*NB from 2016 onwards this total will exclude quotations from all primary and secondary sources*).

General Comments

This was in almost every way a very good session, with coursework from Centres whose candidates had clearly been well prepared for the Syllabus, and who demonstrated always sound and at times excellent knowledge of their two texts, often combined with some very astute critical appreciation of the writing. No rubric infringements were reported, and those very few candidates who exceeded the 3000-word limit invariably penalised themselves by repetition of ideas, or by moving their argument away from the question that was being addressed. Virtually all responses were word-processed – this is not a Syllabus requirement, but it does have the two benefits of allowing more accurate editing, and of making the work more professional in appearance; having said this, it is however important to stress that work that was handwritten was invariably neat and legible, and was in no way at all disadvantaged for not being word-processed.

Texts selected were in almost every case entirely appropriate, and in most cases had been approved by a Cambridge International Examinations adviser before being used; such approval is not compulsory for Centres which already enter candidates for Paper 8, but it is wise to submit proposed texts and questions in advance of beginning work on them. On the rare occasions when a text is not approved – for example if it is already set in another Paper in the 9695 Syllabus, or has been set for previous IGCSE Papers, if it is a work in translation, or if it is considered too slight for A Level study – then an early proposal will allow plenty of time for a re-think and a revised proposal. A list is appended to this Report of some of the texts used this session; it is in no way a “set list”, but it may give some idea of the type and range that candidates studied and wrote successfully about.

A brief word about poems and short stories; where these are used. In each case they must come from a single, published and named collection rather than a “home-made” one. Candidates are expected to have studied a similar number to those in a set-text Paper, and to write in some detail about at least four or five, with briefer reference to a further two or three, so that what they discuss is the text *as a whole*, drawing links and connections between the poems or the stories, rather than discussing just a sequence of discrete and unconnected units. If a Centre is in any doubt about the number of poems to study, or about their suitability, then they should approach Cambridge for advice.

Questions, too, were in most instances entirely appropriate in wording, encouraging candidates to do much more than simply reiterate plots and ideas, and ensuring that they used the kind of critical skills that the Marking Criteria require, and against which work is to be assessed. A common, and always helpful, kind of question was one that proposed a particular view of a text, sometimes provocative, so that candidates were obliged to argue a case either supporting this or opposing it, while forming and developing their own individual responses. This is again not a requirement, but it undoubtedly did lead to some of the most thoughtful and satisfying work, and it could be an approach that teaching staff may wish to consider for future sessions.

Most Centres tended to set the same two texts for all their candidates, and this is perfectly fine; others spread the texts a little more widely, so that confident candidates were able to tackle rather more demanding texts, with less confident ones using more straightforward ones. If all are using the same two, however, it was nearly always the case that there was a range of questions rather than just the same two, and as with the texts themselves this was always a helpful way of enabling all candidates to stretch themselves as far as they were able; it also helped to ensure that what each candidate wrote was independently and individually considered, rather than simply what they had been taught.

Most Centres annotated work fully and helpfully, though there were one or two pieces and indeed one or two whole Centres where it looked as if no teacher had read the work, despite giving it a mark. Annotation is most important, provided that it always relates to the requirements of the Marking Criteria as Moderators can then see how marks have been awarded. Unlike work that is done as part of the normal teaching process, this annotation was most valuable when directed to the Moderator rather than to the candidates. Most Centres also wrote brief – and sometimes not so brief – summative comments on each of the two pieces, and on the cover-sheet as well; this again was very helpful. Double-marking and/or internal moderation had clearly been undertaken in several Centres, and even if there was only a handful of candidates – or even just one – then this was something that was more likely to lead to a secure final mark.

SOME TEXTS THAT WERE USED SUCCESSFULLY:

PROSE

Hard Times
Frankenstein
Regeneration
Atonement

Tess of the d'Urbervilles
Wuthering Heights
Captain Corelli's Mandolin
Brighton Rock
Selected Stories
The Shipping News
The Great Gatsby
Silas Marner
Jane Eyre
The Handmaid's Tale
The Mayor of Casterbridge
The Portrait of Dorian Gray
Dubliners

Charles Dickens

Mary Shelley

Pat Barker

Ian McEwan (*it is worth commenting here that candidates who wrote on the novel as a whole, not just its first section, always scored more highly than those who concentrated upon just the first and possibly last sections*)

Thomas Hardy

Emily Brontë

Louis de Bernieres

Grahame Greene

John Cheever

Annie Proulx

F Scott Fitzgerald

George Eliot

Charlotte Brontë

Margaret Atwood

Thomas Hardy

Oscar Wilde

James Joyce

POETRY

Paradise Lost

Selected Poems
The Miller's Prologue and Tale
Selected Poems
Mean Time
The World's Wife
Selected Poems
Selected Poems
Selected Sonnets

John Milton (*candidates almost invariably used just one Book of this poem, though sometimes making brief reference to another Book – this approach was absolutely fine, as was that of the candidate who used one Book of Wordsworth's poem 'The Prelude'*)

Dylan Thomas

Geoffrey Chaucer

Sylvia Plath

Carol Ann Duffy

Carol Ann Duffy

Philip Larkin

Wilfred Owen

William Shakespeare

DRAMA (*candidates who showed an awareness that plays were to be seen, heard and experienced in a theatre, or on a screen, rather than just read as a book, tended always to write with a more acute and successful critical facility*)

Translations

The Glass Menagerie

A Streetcar Named Desire

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour

The Merchant of Venice

Macbeth

Hamlet

Much Ado About Nothing

The Importance of Being Earnest

Brian Friel

Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams

Tom Stoppard

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

Oscar Wilde