

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11

Paper 11 (Open Books)

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

While as in previous sessions most candidates tended to perform better on prose and drama than on poetry, even in the latter section there was less of a tendency to merely rehearse technical terms and more effort to respond directly to the imagery and feeling of the poems. There was, though, a tendency to offer details of a poet's biography at the expense of commenting on the impact of the words of the *poem*. There was evidence of a rather formulaic approach to the study of poetry at times, with candidates writing out a line and then paraphrasing it, but often ignoring other aspects of the poetry in the process.

Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story. For example, in **Question 12** some fairly sound Don Pedros were marred by the misapprehension that he thought Hero was alive and in **Question 42** some candidates ignored the words 'before Ethan catches up with you' and recounted the whole of the conversation between Ethan and Mattie.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.

By contrast, there were a significant number of outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, intelligent engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

Most candidates had a secure grasp of the context of the extract and showed understanding of some of the qualities that made this a dramatic end. Most answers demonstrated an awareness of/response to humour but only stronger answers engaged with language and the ways in which the hectic activity detailed in the stage directions made this an amusing scene, although a surprising number overlooked the contribution of Anita and Giorgio to the overall effect.

Question 2

For many candidates, this question was taken to mean 'Write about some moments where the characters behave ridiculously'; some candidates virtually ignored the word. Others responded to 'aspects of human behaviour' by simply listing moral qualities seen in characters and gave a personal response without engaging with the text. There were a few very good answers which identified some of Ayckbourn's satirical targets and offered persuasive support from the text. A few candidates opted to answer this question based solely on the extract in the passage-based question. (Teachers could assist their candidates by laying greater emphasis on the need for candidates to avoid this pitfall.)

Question 3

There were some delightfully cynical portrayals of Hough and the best answers showed a real relish to get to grips with the villainy of the character.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

There were some successful responses which showed sharp awareness of the different morals of the characters, particularly with regards to single parenthood. Some candidates showed sensitive understanding of Jackie's sorrow set against Margaret's excitement. A key word in the title was obviously 'vividly', and it proved very difficult to address this term without careful focus on details. Some answers simply outlined what happens before and after the scene, with often only a brief paragraph or two on the extract itself, and very rarely more than a slight nod towards the question asked.

Question 5

Few answers showed a real understanding of what was meant by the question, so summaries of the play were offered instead. Both here and in **Question 4** there was often a lengthy 'prepared' introductory paragraph or two about Charlotte Keatley and her feminist views, almost never made relevant to the task.

Question 6

The best answers captured the internal conflict of anger as opposed to love, the loneliness and the feelings of isolation felt by Doris. There was some sharp awareness of the difficulties which they had experienced in their relationship, and some expressed the bitter irony of being left her own piano. There was some genuine appreciation of Doris's likely feelings of shock, grief and at times almost relief that this part of her life was over; her voice was reasonably well managed, though too often she expressed far more love for Jack than the real Doris ever does.

The Crucible

Question 7

The Crucible continued to be a particularly popular text, and candidates showed real engagement with the drama of the incident. There was some misunderstanding about the use of 'shocking' and 'absurd' in the question: often the responses referred to the characters being/feeling shocked about a situation (for instance, Cheever finding the poppet) but most were able to communicate the shocking qualities of the scene; explicit responses to 'absurd' were less common and tended to differentiate good answers, though many commented on the absurdity of the poppet being regarded as evidence. Few really got to grips with the character of Cheever, commenting more generally on the superstition which gripped Salem.

Question 8

This was not a popular option, but several of those who attempted it made a good case for sympathy developing over the course of the action as his remorse grows, and few were totally condemnatory of him. Structured and well developed argument was crucial to success.

Question 9

This was a fairly popular empathic task, and most who attempted it made a reasonable job of assuming Proctor's voice. Many responses captured Proctor's anger and his determination to free Elizabeth, along with his nagging guilt over his affair with Abigail. In some cases, the apprehension about his course of action was overstated and led to predictions about the outcome of the proceedings in court. There were some very convincing voices among the answers, skilfully weaving echoes of the text into the portrayal. Weaker attempts tended to begin with '...if I were...I would say...' and made little attempt to capture the character. Some candidates turned their answers into a direct address to Mary; not only was this twisting the demands of the question, but it led to some inappropriate comments about the adultery of which Mary is presumably unaware. There was some tendency to condemn Mary along with Abigail, almost as if both girls were equally guilty in Elizabeth's imprisonment.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. The best answers stayed focused on the on the subtleties and build up of the dramatic tensions in the early exchanges between Leonato, Claudio and the Friar. Weaker answers gave run-throughs of the scene and explanations of some of the crucial moments, but tended to avoid the difficult passages, spending far too much time on establishing the background rather than focusing firmly on what was set.

Question 11

Candidates who opted for this question often focused more on the two characters than on their relationship, thereby limiting the scope of their answers. The part played by Hero in the gulling of Beatrice and Beatrice's reaction to Hero's shaming at the wedding-that-was-not were fruitful areas for candidates who did attempt to deal with the relationship rather than offering separate character sketches. The word 'memorable' was frequently ignored.

Question 12

There were some strong answers to this question, capturing Don Pedro's voice and his concern that his brother's deceit had caused him to behave dishonourably. Most candidates captured his anger; a number ranged beyond this to show understanding of his relationship with Claudio and his feelings of guilt about his treatment of Hero. Still fewer were the candidates who expressed the embarrassment that he, the Prince, had been so easily fooled. It was surprising that a large number of candidates clearly forgot that, at this stage in the play, Don Pedro still believes that Hero is dead and expressed the intention of apologising to Hero, or relief that now she and Claudio could enjoy a happy future, which rather weakened the authority of the response.

Richard III

Question 13

Candidates who attempted this generally handled capably the three voices of Richard - public, in soliloquy and to the murderers - to demonstrate his entertaining qualities. The 'dramatic' aspect of the question was often handled more implicitly.

Question 14

The question tended to trigger narrative responses which traced the trajectory of Richard's career without engaging fully (or at all, in some cases) with 'dramatically compelling'.

Question 15

Few managed to capture Hastings' character successfully (his optimism or the implicit irony of situation); but, that said, some responses were quite imaginative and showed a basic understanding of character.

Journey's End

Question 16

Responses tended to lack close reference to the passage and were usually very generalised.

Question 17

Few responses to this question were submitted, and tended to be low scoring. Vital for higher marks was focus on the dramatic qualities of the character; not only his personal attributes, but the way in which he is set against the other characters.

Question 18

This was a more popular question and produced some competent responses which captured something of the character, and appropriate thoughts but often did not quite capture the character's voice.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

This was the most popular of all the poetry questions and presented few difficulties in terms of understanding, though only the best answers showed a real engagement with the feeling. The question asked for a direct response ('What do you think makes this sonnet so sad?') and candidates who focused on the last couplet of the sonnet and made it the basis for their reading of the poem as a whole and saw the contrast between it and the rest of the poem tended to answer the question more successfully than those who adopted a somewhat detached line-by-line approach or those who commented on selected images in isolation. Some offered a reading of the poem which consisted only of a list of features (here a caesura, there some alliteration) with little consideration of meaning. Some seemed to have studied the poem thematically with poems about global warming, an approach which seemed to have led to their overlooking the idea of love completely.

Question 20

First Love was marginally a more popular choice than *Marrysong*, and was often explored more relevantly in answers. In answering the question, though in the best answers the poem chosen was addressed with some sensitivity. The extended central metaphor of Scott's poem was often very well understood and explored, though there was a tendency to explain rather than explore, while Clare's imagery was mined more fruitfully to demonstrate vividness.

Question 21

This was not a particularly popular option, and proved difficult for those who chose it. Most responses dealt with the 'meaning' rather than the 'sound' of words. Often the choice of poem was inappropriate. There was a tendency of candidates to mis-identify alliteration on the basis of spelling rather than sound.

Keats, Poems

This text was significantly less popular than *Songs of Ourselves* but in the relatively few answers submitted there were some very detailed and sensitive responses to the poems. There was no doubt of candidates' knowledge, and in most cases there was evident understanding of the poems and of the questions. Lower scoring answers tended to merely describe or paraphrase, and/or to become bogged down in biographical detail at the expense of engagement with the poetry.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

Question 25

This question provided opportunities for candidates to explore Austen's presentation of the two characters' contrasting attitudes to marriage which were well taken in many cases. This question produced some of the best answers seen on the paper as a whole when candidates worked on the language and tone of the opposing arguments. However, a significant minority of candidates chose to write about these attitudes in very general terms, with little or no attention to the extract itself. Others merely identified differences between the characters with no reference to their attitudes to marriage, for example, 'Charlotte is outspoken and Elizabeth is more lively'. Although these answers demonstrated knowledge of the novel as a whole, the knowledge lacked sufficient relevance to the question to score very highly.

Question 26

While there were some very good answers, a number of candidates ignored the phrase 'prejudice about social class'. There was sometimes difficulty with the word 'ridicules' and Examiners treated this sympathetically, but answers which did not respond even implicitly to the satire were disadvantaged since it is so crucial an element of Austen's writing. In view of the evident enjoyment of the novel that lay behind so many answers, it was especially disappointing that lack of relevance had to limit the reward some answers could receive.

Question 27

Some very convincing empathic responses were made here, capturing Wickham's self-interested eye to the main chance. Some candidates seemed to think Wickham was still 'in love' with Elizabeth and tried to convey feelings of heartbreak. Most at least understood his envy of Darcy and sense of his own feelings of being hard-done-by. As in other empathic tasks, weaker answers tended to identify the moment in the novel inaccurately; here a common omission was that Wickham was married to Lydia.

The God Boy

Very few offered questions on this text and for **Question 28** far too few answers were seen to make general comment appropriate.

Question 29

Candidates supported the opposite view from that anticipated, and made little reference, if any, to Sullivan's negative qualities. Little sympathy was shown to his wife.

Question 30

This was a slightly more popular choice. There were some poignant portrayals of Mrs Sullivan, candidates generally had difficulty in pinning down her voice.

Games at Twilight

Question 31

The extract seemed to divide opinion almost equally between those who sympathised more or less completely with the old man and those who saw him as a fairly contemptible attention-seeker whose devoted son was selflessly seeking to prolong his life with a genuine concern for his well-being.

Question 32

This question tended to elicit what appeared to be prepared answers on a chosen theme, the success of which depended on the degree to which the theme could be taken to be an aspect of 'life in India'. In many cases, the theme of needing to work for a living was chosen. Such answers did not always make clear how this was peculiar to life in India.

Question 33

Candidates generally succeeded in capturing Sheila's sense of shame and defeat as she tries to understand what has happened to her husband and her marriage, most realising that she is probably beyond anger at this stage.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Question 34

The very few responses to this task were generally well-handled.

Question 35

Most answers were strongly condemnatory of Troy, with few even acknowledging his attractive and exciting qualities. Interestingly, a number of candidates added to their indictment of his treatment of Bathsheba (and often Fanny) his behaviour towards Boldwood.

Question 36

Boldwood's bewilderment was convincingly captured by many, but a significant minority weakened their answers by assuming that he knew that the Valentine card had been sent by Bathsheba.

When Rain clouds Gather

Question 37

Candidates identified very strongly with the characters in this novel and wrote with engagement about Makhaya and Mma-Millipede. The passage-based task was a popular choice, and candidates were generally able to recognise some of the features of the writing.

Question 38

There was a very wide range of thoughts about the women in the book: some candidates perceived them as downtrodden, promiscuous and subservient. Many of these missed the opportunity to write about the strengths of Paulina, Maria and Mma-Millipede. Others saw the strengths in these women and wrote with insight about the role of women.

Question 39

The empathic question was not quite as popular. Only the best answers showed an understanding of Appleby-Smith's cynical, colonial nature. Weaker answers did not use the first person and there was a tendency to narrative.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Responses here ranged from the straightforward narrative to sensitive and detailed understanding. The most sophisticated embraced the ambiguity of Zeena's character here, clearly aware of her malicious wish to make Mattie suffer, but also perceptive to the concept that she is genuinely hurt by the breaking of the dish. Many candidates understood the metaphor within the dish. Some even wrote about the idea that Zeena's feelings towards her marriage and Ethan were in fact very similar to her attitude to the dish – hidden from view and never intended for use.

Question 41

Relatively few answers were seen, and they tended not to score highly. Clearer focus on the word 'compelling' and therefore a strong personal response was essential to success. A mere character sketch did not fulfil the demands of the question.

Question 42

Some candidates were sensitive to the delicacy and tact of Mattie's nature, showing the reluctance to voice (even to herself) her feelings for Ethan and her sense of obligation to Zeena. Others presented a much less convincing, calculating character, who was clearly searching for ways to escape Zeena in order to enjoy life with Ethan. Relatively little attention was paid to Denis Eady; this ranged from a fairly dismissive attitude to (unconvincing) deep-seated love.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

The tendency was for answers to give an account of the content of the extract (or the story as a whole) without very much close attention to the language. The wording of the question ('build up a sense of mystery') provided a strong hint of a useful approach which was taken by regrettably few candidates. Often candidates simply retold story or explained meaning.

Question 44

All three of the stories proved more or less equally popular, but there was a strong tendency to narration, particularly in treatments of *How It Happened*, with little attention to narrative techniques and frequently little response made to the chosen story's 'ending'.

Question 45

Most candidates were able to capture Maia's apprehensiveness as she embarks on her arranged marriage. Some found it difficult to locate the moment precisely, and dealt with events which happened after her arrival.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12

Paper 11 (Open Books)

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

While as in previous sessions most candidates tended to perform better on prose and drama than on poetry, even in the latter section there was less of a tendency to merely rehearse technical terms and more effort to respond directly to the imagery and feeling of the poems. There was, though, a tendency to offer details of a poet's biography at the expense of commenting on the impact of the words of the *poem*. There was evidence of a rather formulaic approach to the study of poetry at times, with candidates writing out a line and then paraphrasing it, but often ignoring other aspects of the poetry in the process.

Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support; some provided an unduly broad context, tending to succumb to narrative. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.

By contrast, there were some outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, informed and engaged approach to the texts and a high level of engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

There was a very limited take-up of some of the text options on this time zone's paper. Far too few answers were seen on *A Small Family Business*, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, *Richard III*, *Keats*, *The Boy*, *Games at Twilight* and *Ethan Frome* to make general comment appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

The Crucible

Question 7

This question was generally well-handled and candidates responded with a good sense of what made the passage moving and dramatic. Better answers showed sensitivity to the extremes of emotion involved here and found plenty of textual evidence to support their observations. Others simply repeated that it was moving and dramatic at various points but could not define why. The description of Corey's death and its impact on Proctor was often entirely ignored.

Question 8

Candidates generally captured the hysterical madness of Salem quite tellingly, but relatively few were as successful in dealing with the process implied by the word 'descent'. There was a tendency for candidates to make general assertions such as 'they are hypocritical and un-Christian' without fully explaining the effect on events.

Question 9

There were far fewer responses to this task. Most were quite powerful, but some were rather far-fetched even for Abigail: kidnap and elopement would surely have been beyond even her at this juncture. Abigail was often far too obsessed still with Proctor to be giving consideration to her own position.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

As this is a passage-based question, Examiners were looking for considerable reference to and exploration of the text. The reference in the question to Shakespeare should have given a clear indication that the writing was to be taken into account. While weaker answers resorted to telling the story, there were some very good, comprehensive responses showing quite a sophisticated awareness of sources of tension and drama and of the effect of the scene on an audience and on the way in which the play develops.

Question 11

Very few responses to this question were seen. This was a question best answered with a secure sense of appropriate moments. Some candidates stretched the definition of 'moment' to breaking point dealing with entire sub-plots. 'Amusing' too was sometimes treated rather loosely, the second wedding of Hero/Claudio being offered as one example.

Question 12

Relatively few responses were seen to this empathic task, but of these the best demonstrated a sensitive understanding of how Leonato might have felt guilt for his behaviour towards Hero in Act 4 Scene 1. Some candidates ignored everything that had gone before apart from the second wedding.

Journey's End

Question 16

The majority of those who wrote on this text chose the passage-based question. They had no trouble identifying the drama of the situation and the most successful gave a strong personal response to what is moving. As always, the extent to which candidates focused on the details of the passage proved the main differentiator. Some concentrated on defining the differences in the two characters at the expense of looking at their interaction.

Question 17

Those who chose this question responded well, looking at both sides of the question and coming to their own conclusions on the basis of sound textual evidence.

Question 18

Few chose this and those who did often found it difficult to establish a convincing tone for Stanhope.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

The poem was well known and the feelings understood but there was a lack of attention to the language and form in many answers. Success depended on how much attention was given to the word 'memorably'. In the best answers there was a sensitive and developed response to the sounds of words as well as to the ideas expressed.

Question 20

The Voice was the more popular choice here. Most answers demonstrated an attempt to engage with language but sometimes they had difficulty relating to the expression of the idea of how love is 'short-lived'. All too often less successful answers resorted to recounting the story of Hardy's unhappy marriage. Those who chose the Byron poem often found it easier to relate to the terms of the question.

Question 21

This was the least popular of the three questions on *Songs* and very few examples were seen. The briefness of moments chosen often led to extremely brief answers which were little more than paraphrase. This question was looking for detailed exploration of words and their effects, through not only meaning but sound and the other senses and emotion and mood.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

Question 25

This again proved to be a popular text and candidates opting for it tended to go for passage-based task on it. They were able to write a good deal about the relationship of Mr and Mrs Bennet, but often had difficulty in explaining *how* Austen depicts it 'amusingly'. There was a tendency to retell or describe rather than show how Austen uses her skills as a writer and the weakest responses tended to move beyond the extract and in some cases to almost ignore it.

Question 26

There were fewer answers to this question. Success depended on the appropriateness of the responses. There were some rather loose interpretations of the word 'moments'; some candidates considered the significance of the story of the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy, for example.

Question 27

This question was often well done with plenty of relevant detail and most candidates managed to capture something of Lydia's voice. The best caught her vapid optimism and incorrigibility very accurately.

Far From the Madding Crowd

Question 34

There were some very detailed and analytical responses to this extract with sharp focus on the dramatic qualities of the incident. Though the text was not offered by many Centres, it had clearly been enjoyed and found very stimulating.

Question 35

This question produced some thoughtful and well-balanced assessments of the thoughtful and well-balanced Gabriel. Candidates clearly found him a character to whom they could relate.

Question 36

There were some very touching and convincing recreations of Fanny. Though she says little in the novel, her character was well understood and candidates had little difficulty in creating a suitable voice for her.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This produced some well focused and very individual responses, conveying a real sense of personal engagement and enjoyment of Head's description.

Question 38

This was a less popular question but was usually answered well. The better responses supported their answers with thorough detail, the weaker responses were often generalized.

Question 39

Only a very few responses to the empathic task on this novel were seen. There were some fair attempts to establish a voice here.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

Most candidates chose the extract and though there were some careful assessments, the term 'sad' was often not as fully addressed as it might have been. Many seemed to think that John had died in the war and made little connection between the letters and the rest of the extract beyond saying it was all very sad.

Question 44

There were some sensitive and well argued responses pointing out the irony of the aliens' destruction at the end of the story when they have come in peace to a so-called civilized world and in fact represent the values that the humans value.

Question 45

Though candidates did not generally produce particularly distinctive voices, they knew and understood the character well and conveyed her determination not to be ground down by the behaviour of the employees to retain her dignity and set a good example to her son.



LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13

Paper 11 (Open Books)

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

While as in previous sessions most candidates tended to perform better on prose and drama than on poetry, even in the latter section there was less of a tendency to merely rehearse technical terms and more effort to respond directly to the imagery and feeling of the poems. There was, though, a tendency to offer details of a poet's biography at the expense of commenting on the impact of the words of the *poem*. There was evidence of a rather formulaic approach to the study of poetry at times, with candidates writing out a line and then paraphrasing it, but often ignoring other aspects of the poetry in the process.

Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story. For example, in **Question 12** many candidates attributed knowledge to Hero which she did not have at the point in the play given in the task.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.

By contrast, there were some outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, informed and engaged engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

There was a very limited take-up of some of the texts on this time zone's paper. Far too few answers (in some cases none) were seen on *My Mother Said I Never Should*, *Journey's End*, *Keats's Poems*, *Games at Twilight*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *Ethan Frome* to make general comment appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Only **Question 1** on this text, the passage-based option, had more than a very few responses. It was generally dealt with competently, though there was a tendency to re-tell or explain the passage in weaker answers.

The Crucible

Question 7

This question was generally well-handled though many candidates took a fairly narrative approach. There was at least a reasonable understanding of the relative innocence of Proctor and Elizabeth, compared to the suspicion felt by the other characters. Hale was often entirely ignored, whereas those who tracked the shifts in his mood and attitude in response to what the Proctors say were often the most successful. Most candidates were fairly successful in bringing in relevant contextual knowledge and understanding, whilst still focusing on the extract but some found difficulty in focusing closely on the precise extract, dealing with the earlier moments of the scene, and in particular John's inability to remember the commandments, to the exclusion of the extract itself. Generally, however, the question was well done, with most candidates able to identify several relevant points from the passage and many exploring various facets of the characters' motives. Less successful answers tended to become 'bogged down' in detail and to run through the passage trying to identify every point. Some essays were over-long, and points were not carefully selected.

Question 8

Mary Warren's evidence and Elizabeth's lie were the most often chosen moments, although there were others, for example, the point in Act 4 where Proctor signs his confession. This proved particularly fruitful for the most able candidates, who explored the concepts of good and evil in the context of the play; such candidates actively questioned which could be termed the 'good' outcome – Proctor's survival or his moral integrity. Some candidates stretched the definition of 'moment', and in some cases, more than two such moments were offered.

Question 9

There were some excellent responses to this question, which fluently incorporated Miller's adopted Salem dialect into their writing. Besides this, there was a wealth of ideas from which to draw. The most sophisticated answers balanced Proctor's love for Elizabeth and his wish to make amends against his awareness that she was finding forgiveness very difficult. The guilt of his affair was obviously a key factor, but, in order to address the question, it was helpful to refer to the day spent working on the farm, the awareness which Proctor would have at this stage of the town's 'hysteria', Elizabeth's cooking, the flowers. Some less successful answers went beyond the moment to convey his likely thoughts after his conversation with Elizabeth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

Candidates' knowledge of the play was often very good. Many, however, took the opportunity simply to narrate large parts of the play, often virtually all of it, without addressing exactly what was asked. Many saw the humour here, and showed an implicit or explicit awareness of the theatricality, but too often they were unable to describe the effects of the humour.

Question 11

There were very few answers about Borachio. Those who did attempt the question focused almost exclusively on his role in Don John's Hero/Claudio plot.

Question 12

The empathic question was more popular, and fairly well done. There was quite a wide range of possible thoughts and feelings that Hero might have experienced, with many strongly-felt pleas for understanding and sympathy. Although most were able to communicate some of her personality, often they moved quite significantly beyond the exact moment, and allowed her to know things that happen later which she could not possibly know at this point. Her voice was generally quite well managed.

Richard III

Question 13

The extract proved popular although many ignored the Queen's opening; having prepared the ground by explaining what the audience already knows of Richard's villainy, they plunged straight into his announcement of Clarence's death and the irony of his subsequent comments. Better candidates picked up well on the irony of the pardon of Derby's servant and Richard's final shot at the Queen. Some less successful answers focused on Richard exclusively and ignored Derby/Edward's speech. Gloucester's part was generally well understood, as was the irony of Edward's guilt. The more sophisticated candidates focused on the painful irony of small details, such as the opening declaration that this would be thought a 'holy day...hereafter'.

Question 14

Some candidates chose memorable moments, without squarely addressing the term 'amusing'. Some took the valid approach of focusing instead on irony. However, some successful responses analysed the black comedy behind Richard's presence on stage, exploring, for example, his opening speech, his audacity in wooing Anne or his staged refusal of the crown. In the best responses there was some implicit awareness of the character's relationship with the audience, but this was rarely fully articulated.

Question 15

Queen Elizabeth was a popular and generally successful choice for empathic treatment. Many captured her feelings of anger and outrage initially before going on to show her awareness of the various possibilities in the current situation. Some candidates simply expressed hatred of Richard, along with a determination not to let the daughter marry him. More complex responses utilised references to Margaret's curses, the ease with which he had won Anne's hand and the notion of Richard's poison. Most candidates looked forward to the rise of Richmond. There was often a convincing tone of horror at the thought of losing her last child, mixed with a little pragmatic indecision showing detailed knowledge of the text.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

Lindsay's poem (**Question 19**) was addressed by the great majority, with a lot of confident and often very sensitive appreciation of its themes and its writing; many were able to make some thoughtful and apt comments about the poem's language and form. Personal response frequently took the form of anger at man's determination to spread industrial farming methods, and/or the racist destruction of the native Blackfeet and Pawnees. The poet's clear affection for the pre-locomotive wild prairies, and even for the ugly buffaloes, was frequently mentioned, with special note of the curiously emotive and effective verb in line 12. A few candidates expressed pleasure at the spread of the locomotives – otherwise why do they 'sing'? – and several also saw the buffaloes and the Red Indian tribes as waiting their time to gain revenge – 'lying low'. Success of responses tended to vary according to the degree to which candidates addressed their 'feelings as [they] read this poem.' A relatively large number of responses simply offered a linear explanation of the text, whereas some candidates embraced the range of the emotive appeal of the poem, exploring the implications of the 'tossing, blooming perfumed grass' alongside the mournful repetition of 'no more' and 'lying low'.

Question 20

Candidates who chose the Arnold poem tended to be more successful than those who opted for Millay, who were often unable or unwilling to move beyond the personal situation of the poetic voice. Many who chose this found it quite difficult to accurately nail down the meaning of the poem and wrote general comments without support

Question 21

Success here was very dependent on the suitability of the choice of poem. Candidates tended to write about their chosen poem with little or no attempt to deal with the narrative aspect of the question, or to address the term 'compelling'. The idea of 'a story' was stretched beyond reasonable breaking point by many, who appeared simply to relate their favourite poem regardless of the question. Many candidates chose *Full Moon and Little Frieda*. Whilst this was potentially a valid choice, it relates such a brief incident that in many cases it proved difficult to analyse with real attention to the question. However, some very successful responses focused sensitively on the narrative tone of the poem, looking at the traditional ways in which it sets a scene, introduces characters, and shows development. More immediately accessible choices in response to this question, which proved more successfully generally, were *First Love* and *Marrysong*.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

All three questions were attempted in roughly equal measure. Knowledge and enjoyment came across in almost all, and for this text more than any other on the paper candidates really did seem aware that they should answer the question rather than just tell the story. Responses to the passage- and essay-based tasks here were significantly better than those to the empathic task.

Question 25 led to much entertainment and satisfaction as Lady Catherine loses her battle with Elizabeth; irony was rarely tackled well, but satisfaction very frequently.

Question 26 was the most successful of the three Austen tasks, with much more than just character studies being the norm. A good deal of quite unexpected sympathy was shown for Mrs Bennet, given her positively unhelpful husband, the family's financial situation, and the social pressures that she is under.

Question 27

The empathic task generally proved less successful, with Darcy often stepping straight out of some kind of Regency Mills and Boon novelette, and saying romantic and sentimental things that no self-respecting Austen character, male or female, would even dream of, let alone utter.

The God Boy

Question 28

Almost all answers were able to identify key features in the passage that conveyed Jimmy's stress and there were several answers showing deep insight and an emotional response to the writing. Better answers went beyond identifying his various strategies to analyse how and why they showed his state of mind, often incorporating into the response the effect of the narrative voice on the impact of the extract. A distinguishing factor was the extent to which they focused on the word 'vividly'. A fair number of candidates showed some sensitive engagement with the child's voice, drawing on details such as the sharp detail of the memory and the appeal to the sense of touch. Such candidates also showed clear understanding of the way in which emotional pain is converted into physical symptoms. A very useful detail was the description of Jimmy's mother, staring at his father 'in a way that would frighten [him]'; several candidates drew attention to the sense of wrong when a child has such a memory of his mother.

Question 29

There were very variable responses to Molly. The best selected evidence very effectively, commenting on her relatively infrequent appearances and observing the disparity between Jimmy's view of Molly's reactions to her parents' relationship and the true state of her mind though curiously almost no mention was made of the 'suicide' swimming scene. Although almost all responses showed at least a general understanding of Molly's character, the concept of what she contributes to the power of the novel proved a key distinguishing factor. More able candidates wrote more about her role than her character, exploring the ways in which she helps a reader to understand Jimmy's character and in which she provides a more adult, conscious view of the suffering which is presented almost exclusively through a child's mind.

Question 30

This was a popular option, often well handled. All candidates captured the anger felt towards Mr Sullivan, although a few ignored the precise point specified in the novel, making no reference to Mrs Sullivan's fall. More able candidates referred fruitfully to the Sullivans' Catholic faith, expressing the impossibility of escape through divorce. Less convincing were the answers which expressed a very conscious and deliberate plan to kill Mr Sullivan. Whilst it was possible to incorporate murderous thoughts into the response, it was difficult to believe in Mrs Sullivan's cold-blooded plotting.

Stories of Ourselves:

Question 43

Responses to this question showed that candidates knew the whole story well, but very few focused on the ending alone, with many leading up to it with prolonged narration of the whole tale, in one or two cases even ignoring the ending almost entirely; too much time was spent on explaining and justifying the double narrative structure of the tale – very interesting and worthwhile, certainly, but not relevant here. There was also much – often too much – individual criticism of mankind's arrogance and ignorance about the possibility of extra-terrestrial life.

Question 44

This question also led to a great deal of whole-story narration, with very few answers actually identifying two moments, or even implicitly doing so by the focus of their approach; suspense was far too often simply asserted, or just assumed, and rarely explained or explored.

Question 45

By contrast, this question was generally quite well done, and although Willadean is a fairly peripheral character in the story her likely feelings of fascination and puzzlement, combined with the incipient stirrings of sexuality, were often quite well captured; she generally understood her father very well, too!

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/02

Coursework

General comments

As in previous sessions, all Centres entering this component will receive a short report on their own submission and administration.

The tasks set or suggested for the assignments were largely very satisfactory, and in the main the texts chosen worked well. There seems to be increased awareness of the importance of questions which both stimulate and allow, and indeed encourage, the fulfilment of all the Syllabus Assessment Objectives. It is worth emphasising that tasks which are totally content-/theme- based do not encourage a candidate to fulfil all those aims. For higher reward, there must be wide evidence in the work that there has been engagement with the text as *literary writing*. Tasks which invite simply, for example, a broad discussion of the environmental issues raised by a pair of poems do not ensure such a response. In a poetry or drama task, instead of asking, say, for a character sketch, one has only to frame a task in something like the following format to stimulate sounder engagement with the Assessment Objectives: *How does Shakespeare /Austen portray in the play/novel?* Candidates also require a focus in order to write well. There were occasional tasks so wide ranging as in effect to invite the candidate to write about anything in a text. This rarely produced work which showed much developed argument.

There was much quality work on display, some of it very impressive indeed. As usual it was clear that teachers had managed to encourage in candidates a realisation of the need to approach their assignments with diligence and seriousness. There was only a little evidence of work where preparation had been rushed and ill considered. The best work exhibited candidates' capacity to research an assignment in depth and then to think with some individuality about the material. In such circumstances the ideas to be found via Internet sources could lead to the most interesting of writing. However this could also be an inhibitor to *personal engagement*. Some work became dangerously dependent on the received wisdom of study materials, sometimes to the extent that the very same phrases were to be found recurring in the writing across a set within a Centre. This meant that assignments communicated little sense of personal response. Very occasionally it had to be wondered whether candidates had really understood the concepts which were being communicated in language manifestly so unlike their own. Of course, it is recognised that it is a difficult balance to strike at times between the encouragement of research and discouraging wholesale parroting of read material, but perhaps at draft stage a rather sterner approach needs to be taken at times to encourage candidates to think independently. Sometimes the problem seemed to lie elsewhere, in that assignments seemed have been rigidly prepared on a class basis so that every piece of work followed the same structure and had the same ideas.

The presentation of the folders was once again excellent in the main this session, and the Moderator's task was as a result made that much more straightforward. In some cases, though, assignments needed more teacher annotation upon them. This is an essential indicator to the external Moderator that the teacher has validated the work as the candidate's own. Also, annotation is a useful guide to the characteristics of the work as perceived by the Centre. An assignment with just an occasional tick in the margin fulfils neither of the above requirements, no matter how neat and clean it may appear.

The teacher summaries on the Candidate Record Card which show how the folder mark has been arrived at in respect to the assessment criteria were likewise often helpful. A few were very brief and very occasionally almost indecipherable. It should be remembered that this is a crucial document relating to the way the internal moderation has been carried out and should be completed with the utmost care in the interests of the candidate.

Overall, though, as has already been made clear, the work was pleasing and reflected considerable credit on both candidates and teachers.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31

Unseen

General comments

There was a strong range of interpretations in response to the questions on this paper. The unseen texts provided plenty of opportunity and challenge for candidates to develop their personal responses to complex situations and ambiguous emotions through engagement with vivid and metaphorically dense writing.

Many answers were marked by sensitivity, originality and thoroughness, and their willingness to open up and share really personal feelings with a reader thousands of miles away. The scripts gave evidence that candidates enjoyed the surprises which this paper can offer and of a freshness of engagement with literature; encouraging that spirit is one of the broader aims of this Cambridge IGCSE syllabus.

Many candidates were able to show imaginative engagement in writing about powerful experiences and emotions likely to be beyond their personal experience. Assessment Objective 4 – ‘to communicate a sensitive and informed personal response’ - was fulfilled in a variety of ways by candidates, despite widely differing literary critical skills and fluency of communication. Discrimination depended more on the extent to which candidates directly addressed Assessment Objectives 2 and 3: exploring texts ‘beyond surface meaning’ and recognising and appreciating ‘the ways in which writers use language, structure, and form to create and shape meanings and effects’. These two Objectives are closely linked: it is through forensic examination of the writer at work, through use of language, metaphor, implication and genre, that a reader is able to see beneath the surface narrative in order to ‘show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes’. The extent to which these Objectives find fulfilment in a script will determine the degree to which the candidate’s response is a literary one, and how far a personal response can truly be described as ‘sensitive’ to the text and ‘informed’ about the power of memorable writing, rather than just the imagined experience.

The ability to form an effective overview of the text and then to structure an answer around its literary development and the ways in which the writer challenges and changes the expectations and emotional responses of the reader was evident in the work of the best answers on this paper. The writers of those appreciated that the more ‘global’ third bullet point was an opportunity for an evaluation of the effect of the whole text as a piece of writing, rather than an opportunity for personal reflection on the subject matter.

There was evidence of year-on-year improvement in candidates’ ability to use the tools of literary criticism accurately and judiciously. Examiners’ Reports and the guidance on the Teacher Support Website have clearly assisted in this welcome development as an aid to well-directed teaching. Candidates were very familiar with the format and requirements of the paper, using both the stem question and the bullet points to focus and shape their responses. Use of time was generally good, except by candidates who effectively wrote their answers out twice. Since there was usually little difference between the ‘fair copy’ and the draft, time would have been better spent in a brief plan and more expanded development of observations and ideas.

Choices were usually well-balanced between poetry and prose, although a small number of whole Centres seemed to favour one genre.

Rubric infringements were rare; a very small number of candidates wrote responses to both questions.

Many candidates might benefit from further guidance in the construction of opening paragraphs to address and explore the terms of the question, rather than repeating them. A good script demonstrates evidence of good planning by having a clear overview and sense of direction from the start, and by making a judicious selection of quotations. This is especially important when writing about prose. While candidates showed impressive understanding of poetic form, extending to the appreciation of rhythm and metre, as well as stanza form and sound effects, they can seem less certain about which analytical tools to use when evaluating a prose text. Sometimes answers drifted towards a narrative paraphrase. Analysis might helpfully be directed towards consideration of genre; paragraphing and narrative development; the balance between narrative, description and dialogue; and syntactical and stylistic variety. The analysis of the latter is also an important Language skill; writers of fiction and non-fiction employ similar techniques to surprise, entertain and disturb their readers. Variety in the length of sentences is the key to the pace and dramatic impact of good prose. Structural principles such as repetition, extended metaphor and symbolism shape the development of a prose passage as much as a poem, as well as providing figurative and emotive richness.

Questions of voice are at the heart of the reader's response to both poetry and prose: 'who is speaking and who are they speaking to?' This can be a difficult area to teach: sometimes lyric poetry is self-evidently autobiographical, sometimes the poet distances herself or himself from and ironises the voice of the speaker, and sometimes there is a little of both. The rubric, as well as the question, should give the candidate help in this connection. When analysing prose, it is just as important to distinguish between writer and narrator, and to work out from whose perspective or point of view narrative events are described, and the extent to which their interior thoughts reflect what is happening in the exterior world of the narrative. Of course, a secure grasp of these distinctions is the mark of an Advanced level candidate, but good IGCSE candidates should be able to begin to grapple with the rhetoric and structure of texts in this way.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Cecil Day Lewis's poem clearly resonated with hundreds of candidates who sat this paper, who were able to identify with the father's complex, ambivalent feelings about parting, even though their personal experience was more likely to be akin to the son's. They showed real engagement with the poet's expression and concerns, as the question asked. Stronger answers paid detailed attention to the ways in which patterns of imagery and description connect the boy's movement with aspects of a natural cycle of growth and change. A few were rather distracted by the mention of football (even thinking that the satellite was a reference to televised football matches). Some thought that the poem might convey several different moments of parting. Most correctly identified the persistence of this one particular memory after eighteen years, and its lingering visual image, as a foreshadowing of future departures and independence. They saw the awkward feelings implicit in the choice of words such as 'wrenched', 'pathos', 'hesitant', 'ordeals', and 'gnaws' to convey the pain the father feels, even if some (quite understandably) saw this as an over-anxious parent projecting insecurities of his own onto his son. Good answers usually saw the vulnerability in the poet's description of the gait of a 'half-fledged' and 'hesitant', 'drifting' figure. They might also have contrasted more celebratory images of a 'sunny day' and a 'first game of football'. Many linked the 'turning leaves' of the first stanza with 'nature's give-and-take' in the third, and the images of a flightless bird set free into a wilderness, or a winged seed drifting in the wind. They saw that the images of finding no path, or 'eddying away' were linked to the idea of a satellite no longer bound to the orbit of its 'parent' planet. It is the mark of good scripts that they do not make observations about imagery (whether they use that word, 'similes' or 'comparisons') in isolation, doggedly working through the poem line by line, but instead synthesise their comments on the effects of figurative language, and perceive patterns in expression.

The third and fourth stanzas were the most difficult and helped to discriminate between stronger and less strong responses. Some simply ignored the difficult image of 'fire one's irresolute clay', although the footnotes gave plenty of help with the literal meaning of the image. The best answers saw that it is probably the poet's own clay which is moulded by the ordeal, rather than his son's. Most appreciated that the poet's mood moves from sadness and fear towards acceptance, and understood the sentiments of the well-known final line rather well.

It was rare to see answers which commented at all on form, or how the rhyme scheme helps the poet to find closure in the final lines of the third and fourth stanzas, although the mimetic effect of the enjambment at the end of line 5 was occasionally noted. Some made sense of the patterns of repetition, the five mentions of 'walking away' and the use of different rhymes for 'away'. A number of answers provided interesting

theological glosses on the implications of sacrifice in line 18 'what God alone could perfectly sacrifice'. Candidates interestingly extended the poem's potential frame of reference, as did those who linked the son's sacrifice with the natural evolutionary process. Good answers also picked up the poet's use of different tenses initially to capture the immediacy of the memory, and then to capture the retrospective nature of reflection and interpretation. These appreciated the ways in which a poet makes meaning through the process of writing, and that a memory is transformed by the literary process.

Question 2

This extract from Carol Shields' *The Stone Diaries* was almost as popular as the poem, and was so rich in descriptive detail that candidates had little difficulty in finding plenty to say.

Many read the bullet points as an invitation to produce a sequential narrative account, instead of encouraging a structured response to the stem question's invitation to consider tension and the writer's creation of an ominous sense of foreboding. There was a tendency to engage in detail with Harold's bizarre and dangerous behaviour, at the expense of considering the ways in which the narrative – in the present tense throughout – recreates Daisy's perspective. The final surprise was appreciated (a few even found it comically macabre or ironic) by most but misunderstood by some. The best evaluated the ways in which it had been prefigured by many details in the writing, such as the appearance of the car and even the name of the Alpine town of Corps, and the death-like figure of the 'hunched-looking porter'. Good answers tended to appreciate the different ways in which a text works when re-read, and incorporated this more developed response from the beginning of their answers.

Candidates found it easy to find a foreshadowing of disaster in Harold's reckless behaviour, and some could not resist moralising on the dangers of alcoholism. Fewer engaged with the disturbing images of Daisy's disenchantment, or how Harold 'almost groans with the pleasure' of hearing her protests, emphasising the irony of his tuneless singing. Many saw the lack of communication in the hotel room between a newly-married wife and 'her young husband, this stranger'. There was often comment on Harold's gulps at the wine bottle, his 'crazy cackling' and the precariousness of his second-floor perch. They less frequently also saw the significance of Daisy's 'apocryphal journal' and the imagination with which she reads patterns in the soiled plaster of the ceiling and the 'shabby, rosy charm' of her shabby surroundings. There is a little more to this than just 'déjà vu'. Good answers commented not only on the explosive force of her allergic sneeze but also on the way in which it seemed to blow away the 'big, fleshy shadow' blocking the sunlight from the window. They commented not only on the messiness of Harold's death, but also the (understandable) perfunctoriness of Daisy's reaction. This was a dark and complex piece of writing, and many candidates were happy to stay closer to its narrative surfaces than to explore its psychological depths: however, these candidates also found plenty to engage them, and delighted in its sharp contrasts of description, characterisation and tone.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32

Unseen

General comments

There was a strong range of interpretations in response to the questions on this paper. The unseen texts provided plenty of opportunity and challenge for candidates to develop their personal responses to complex situations and ambiguous emotions through engagement with vivid and metaphorically dense writing.

Many answers were marked by sensitivity, originality and thoroughness, and their willingness to open up and share really personal feelings with a reader thousands of miles away. The scripts gave evidence that candidates enjoyed the surprises which this paper can offer and of a freshness of engagement with literature; encouraging that spirit is one of the broader aims of this Cambridge IGCSE syllabus.

Many candidates were able to show imaginative engagement in writing about powerful experiences and emotions likely to be beyond their personal experience. Assessment Objective 4 – ‘to communicate a sensitive and informed personal response’ - was fulfilled in a variety of ways by candidates, despite widely differing literary critical skills and fluency of communication. Discrimination depended more on the extent to which candidates directly addressed Assessment Objectives 2 and 3: exploring texts ‘beyond surface meaning’ and recognising and appreciating ‘the ways in which writers use language, structure, and form to create and shape meanings and effects’. These two Objectives are closely linked: it is through forensic examination of the writer at work, through use of language, metaphor, implication and genre, that a reader is able to see beneath the surface narrative in order to ‘show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes’. The extent to which these Objectives find fulfilment in a script will determine the degree to which the candidate’s response is a literary one, and how far a personal response can truly be described as ‘sensitive’ to the text and ‘informed’ about the power of memorable writing, rather than just the imagined experience.

The ability to form an effective overview of the text and then to structure an answer around its literary development and the ways in which the writer challenges and changes the expectations and emotional responses of the reader was evident in the work of the best answers on this paper. The writers of those appreciated that the more ‘global’ third bullet point was an opportunity for an evaluation of the effect of the whole text as a piece of writing, rather than an opportunity for personal reflection on the subject matter.

There was evidence of year-on-year improvement in candidates’ ability to use the tools of literary criticism accurately and judiciously. Examiners’ Reports and the guidance on the Teacher Support Website have clearly assisted in this welcome development as an aid to well-directed teaching. Candidates were very familiar with the format and requirements of the paper, using both the stem question and the bullet points to focus and shape their responses. Use of time was generally good, except by candidates who effectively wrote their answers out twice. Since there was usually little difference between the ‘fair copy’ and the draft, time would have been better spent in a brief plan and more expanded development of observations and ideas.

Choices were usually well-balanced between poetry and prose, although a small number of whole Centres seemed to favour one genre.

Rubric infringements were rare; a very small number of candidates wrote responses to both questions.

Many candidates might benefit from further guidance in the construction of opening paragraphs to address and explore the terms of the question, rather than repeating them. A good script demonstrates evidence of good planning by having a clear overview and sense of direction from the start, and by making a judicious selection of quotations. This is especially important when writing about prose. While candidates showed impressive understanding of poetic form, extending to the appreciation of rhythm and metre, as well as stanza form and sound effects, they can seem less certain about which analytical tools to use when evaluating a prose text. Sometimes answers drifted towards a narrative paraphrase. Analysis might helpfully be directed towards consideration of genre; paragraphing and narrative development; the balance between narrative, description and dialogue; and syntactical and stylistic variety. The analysis of the latter is also an important Language skill; writers of fiction and non-fiction employ similar techniques to surprise, entertain and disturb their readers. Variety in the length of sentences is the key to the pace and dramatic impact of good prose. Structural principles such as repetition, extended metaphor and symbolism shape the development of a prose passage as much as a poem, as well as providing figurative and emotive richness.

Questions of voice are at the heart of the reader's response to both poetry and prose: 'who is speaking and who are they speaking to?' This can be a difficult area to teach: sometimes lyric poetry is self-evidently autobiographical, sometimes the poet distances herself or himself from and ironises the voice of the speaker, and sometimes there is a little of both. The rubric, as well as the question, should give the candidate help in this connection. When analysing prose, it is just as important to distinguish between writer and narrator, and to work out from whose perspective or point of view narrative events are described, and the extent to which their interior thoughts reflect what is happening in the exterior world of the narrative. Of course, a secure grasp of these distinctions is the mark of an Advanced level candidate, but good IGCSE candidates should be able to begin to grapple with the rhetoric and structure of texts in this way.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Vickie Feaver's 'Slow reader' is an ostensibly simple poem. Its narrative is clear, and the language and imagery straightforward. However, implicit are reflections on ways in which words can be 'impassable' obstructions and painful impositions, taming, restraining and holding back a free individual: painful reflections for a mother to make about her attempts to help her son, and even more painful for a poet whose delight is in the colour and rhythm of words. A few very good answers saw these emotions as shaping the poem, although the question encouraged them to look at the poet's own feelings as well as the response of the boy. Most picked up the excited flow of her pride in her son's non-verbal achievements, his humour and his maturity and appreciated the contrast with line 5 'But he is slow to read.' Better answers noted a change of pace and some appreciated that this is the downbeat effect of the six monosyllables. Many appreciated the contrast of her attempt to help him with his 'sighing and shaking his head', as if he had already given up. The similes or comparisons which convey how tough and impenetrable the written language is to him prompted extended and sensible commentary, noting that he found the task unattractive as well as impossible. There was much comment on how he 'toys' with words, playing with them, but not taking them seriously. The bullet points certainly helped candidates to articulate their own analytical responses to the ways in which the poet uses language.

In the second half of the poem, the focus is strongly on the child's delight in freedom and unharnessed expression of his natural identity. Candidates worked hard to see how the images supported this with parallels drawn from nature: the fish back in its native element, or the untamed colt 'shying from the bit'. Candidates used the glosses sensibly to appreciate the literal meaning of the image and then constructed their own metaphorical reading. The best answers also shaped a response to the rhythm of these lines, some finding freedom in the writer's use of enjambment, others noting that the rhythm of individual lines is awkward and halting. Some saw the short lines and tight structure of the poem as reflecting the constricting bonds of learning. However, focused comment on form was rare in responses to this text. Few saw quite how terrified or discouraged the colt or boy really are, or quite why they might put up so much resistance to their containment within the prison house of words. The contrast between these lines and those at the opening of the poem was often noted; there was less frequent appreciation of how much this might convey the poet/mother's own ambivalent feelings, concerned but relenting, reluctant to restrict his freedom. Astute candidates realised that the poet was opening up another dimension by suggestive the negative influence of reading – and perhaps of education generally – in restricting the originality and independence of the boy's thoughts and creativity. Only a very few realised that the force of 'as if' is that the poet is projecting her own thoughts and experience of life onto the boy's responses. These provided a comprehensive response to the

second part of the question. Candidates need to be encouraged to return to the stem question, concluding their answers and ensure they have fully responded to its implications: for marks in the higher bands candidates need to do more than dutifully work their way through the bullet points.

Question 2

This extract from Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* gave candidates plenty of opportunity to comment on description and the generic features of the writing. Many identified the influence of the literary Gothic, and aspects of mystery and horror. Indeed many were quick to identify ghosts, zombies and other supernatural horrors lurking behind the narrator's superficially naïve descriptions. Fewer candidates began their writing by identifying the difference between the writer and the narrator, or how important the innocence of the latter is in confirming the suspicions of the second-time reader that more is going on here than meets the eye. However, most saw how unconvincing Mr Jerome's evasive responses are, and were quick to identify the influence of the supernatural in the actions of the young woman, and even in the behaviour of the children. The unnatural behaviour of the latter received focused comment, and most balanced sympathy and suspicion in their exploration of the appearance of the young woman with the 'wasted face', noting that she is surrounded by language implying concealment and surreptitious behaviour. Good answers noted the panic in Mr Jerome's reactions, and how they begin to disturb the narrator. Strong responses to form as well as content noted the use of ellipses, and short sentences to create an uncertain and unsettling rhythm. The best candidates were content to remain in uncertainty, appreciating that elusiveness and ambiguity are important ingredients in good horror writing.

Although there was a tendency for answers to rely rather too heavily on the bullet points in order to construct a narrative response, most were pleasingly side-tracked by the disturbing nature of the descriptive details, such as silence 'so deep that I heard the pulsation of the blood in the channels of my own ears'. One or two thought the woman with the 'wasted face' was an alcoholic or drug addict, but most were able to pick up a sense of period, and appreciated the generic significance of graveyards, churches and mourning black. More assiduous analysis of syntactical variation might have done more to show how the narrator's growing panic infects the reader, and makes the closing paragraphs deeply ambivalent. Mr Jerome's evasions and attempts at denial and a return to normality are deeply unconvincing, and the alert reader should be sufficiently unsettled to worry for the fate of the narrator. Some candidates need to watch the balance between quotation and commentary when responding to a passage like this. There are so many interesting aspects of the writing that it is tempting to revert to illustration alone, without following up quotation with analytical comment on the cumulative effect of stylistic and generic features on an alert and sensitive reader.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33

Unseen

General comments

There was a strong range of interpretations in response to the questions on this paper. The unseen texts provided plenty of opportunity and challenge for candidates to develop their personal responses to complex situations and ambiguous emotions through engagement with vivid and metaphorically dense writing.

Many answers were marked by sensitivity, originality and thoroughness, and their willingness to open up and share really personal feelings with a reader thousands of miles away. The scripts gave evidence that candidates enjoyed the surprises which this paper can offer and of a freshness of engagement with literature; encouraging that spirit is one of the broader aims of this Cambridge IGCSE syllabus.

Many candidates were able to show imaginative engagement in writing about powerful experiences and emotions likely to be beyond their personal experience. Assessment Objective 4 – ‘to communicate a sensitive and informed personal response’ - was fulfilled in a variety of ways by candidates, despite widely differing literary critical skills and fluency of communication. Discrimination depended more on the extent to which candidates directly addressed Assessment Objectives 2 and 3: exploring texts ‘beyond surface meaning’ and recognising and appreciating ‘the ways in which writers use language, structure, and form to create and shape meanings and effects’. These two Objectives are closely linked: it is through forensic examination of the writer at work, through use of language, metaphor, implication and genre, that a reader is able to see beneath the surface narrative in order to ‘show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes’. The extent to which these Objectives find fulfilment in a script will determine the degree to which the candidate’s response is a literary one, and how far a personal response can truly be described as ‘sensitive’ to the text and ‘informed’ about the power of memorable writing, rather than just the imagined experience.

The ability to form an effective overview of the text and then to structure an answer around its literary development and the ways in which the writer challenges and changes the expectations and emotional responses of the reader was evident in the work of the best answers on this paper. The writers of those appreciated that the more ‘global’ third bullet point was an opportunity for an evaluation of the effect of the whole text as a piece of writing, rather than an opportunity for personal reflection on the subject matter.

There was evidence of year-on-year improvement in candidates’ ability to use the tools of literary criticism accurately and judiciously. Examiners’ Reports and the guidance on the Teacher Support Website have clearly assisted in this welcome development as an aid to well-directed teaching. Candidates were very familiar with the format and requirements of the paper, using both the stem question and the bullet points to focus and shape their responses. Use of time was generally good, except by candidates who effectively wrote their answers out twice. Since there was usually little difference between the ‘fair copy’ and the draft, time would have been better spent in a brief plan and more expanded development of observations and ideas.

Choices were usually well-balanced between poetry and prose, although a small number of whole Centres seemed to favour one genre.

Rubric infringements were rare; a very small number of candidates wrote responses to both questions.

Many candidates might benefit from further guidance in the construction of opening paragraphs to address and explore the terms of the question, rather than repeating them. A good script demonstrates evidence of good planning by having a clear overview and sense of direction from the start, and by making a judicious selection of quotations. This is especially important when writing about prose. While candidates showed impressive understanding of poetic form, extending to the appreciation of rhythm and metre, as well as stanza form and sound effects, they can seem less certain about which analytical tools to use when evaluating a prose text. Sometimes answers drifted towards a narrative paraphrase. Analysis might helpfully be directed towards consideration of genre; paragraphing and narrative development; the balance between narrative, description and dialogue; and syntactical and stylistic variety. The analysis of the latter is also an important Language skill; writers of fiction and non-fiction employ similar techniques to surprise, entertain and disturb their readers. Variety in the length of sentences is the key to the pace and dramatic impact of good prose. Structural principles such as repetition, extended metaphor and symbolism shape the development of a prose passage as much as a poem, as well as providing figurative and emotive richness.

Questions of voice are at the heart of the reader's response to both poetry and prose: 'who is speaking and who are they speaking to?' This can be a difficult area to teach: sometimes lyric poetry is self-evidently autobiographical, sometimes the poet distances herself or himself from and ironises the voice of the speaker, and sometimes there is a little of both. The rubric, as well as the question, should give the candidate help in this connection. When analysing prose, it is just as important to distinguish between writer and narrator, and to work out from whose perspective or point of view narrative events are described, and the extent to which their interior thoughts reflect what is happening in the exterior world of the narrative. Of course, a secure grasp of these distinctions is the mark of an Advanced level candidate, but good IGCSE candidates should be able to begin to grapple with the rhetoric and structure of texts in this way.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

A. E. Housman's 'Is My Team Ploughing' is a poem whose ironies (which become unsettling) needed teasing out. Candidates needed to follow the advice to read the poem twice and very carefully before beginning, although it was entertaining to read the responses of those who made sense of the poem's final stanza and rueful last line in mid-essay and had the self-confidence and honesty to reshape their interpretations as they did so. Good answers appreciated the depth of the poem's irony. There were some who did not pick this up (not least because they read 'my girl' as a reference to the dead man's daughter), but they nevertheless gained marks for their careful exploration of the different voices the poem's dialogue creates for the dead man and his friend. Candidates disagreed about how consoling they found the latter: some found him eager to reassure the dead man that life goes on; others, probably more aptly, found such reassurance very hollow; some became angry at the friend's betrayal, and even saw a degree of malice in his responses and in his words 'Be still, my lad and sleep'. Some good answers brought out the difference between the passivity and stillness of the dead man, with his restless soul, and the constant activity of the world of the living – 'no change' – and the apparent complacency of his friend's tone. Others found a note of guilt in the voice of the latter: one or two plausibly argued that the 'dead man' was really the voice of his uneasy conscience. There were excellent analyses of the different meanings of the word 'lie' and contrasts between the bed the dead man lies in, and where his friend now finds 'cheer'.

Some sense of the dialogue between two very different voices was essential. The different kinds of poetic voice can also be taught through exploration of the ballad form, which this poem imitates. Few candidates commented effectively on rhyme or stanza form, but the ballad is often used to communicate the macabre or supernatural, and often does so through gradual revelation. Most seemed comfortable with the awkward reassurance of the friend's 'Ay's and with the image of ploughing, although some seemed confused by the idea of 'chasing the leather', and could not associate that image with a football. Interesting responses noted not only the irony that the living man is sleeping in the dead man's bed, but also that his answers seemed more lifeless and emotionally empty than the dead man's urgent curiosity. There were many excellent responses to the importance of pattern and repetition of sounds as well as structures in this poem, including answers from those who wanted to read the friend's responses as entirely magnanimous and the dead man as happy to know that he is hearty. Examiners will always positively any interpretation strongly grounded in a sensitive appreciation of possible implications of the way in which language and form are used. However, good answers really needed to give equal weighting to the voices of both the dead man and the friend, just as Housman does, and to consider them each as individuals, as well as shaping a narrative from their dialogue.

Question 2

Kate Chopin's almost complete short story 'The Dream of an Hour' also prompted a very wide variety of answers and presented comparable challenges. While most candidates understood that it is Mrs Mallard and not her husband who is dead at the end of the story, few saw that she is unlikely to have died of 'the joy that kills'. A few found the idea that she could find joy in the death of her husband so implausible and uncomfortable that they decided she had already died much earlier in the story, and that the passage's 'dream sequence' was a confused reflection on the afterlife. The best answers stuck closely to the text, using the bullet points as a guide through its shocks and surprises, and responded sensitively to the pictures conjured up by the descriptions. An appreciation of Louise Mallard's inner perspective and the ways in which she is taken by surprise by the nature and strength of her own feelings was the key to the way the narrative develops, but answers often began to engage through a straightforward contrast between her initial feelings of grief and the 'new spring life outside'. This was an effective opening towards her 'clear and exalted perception' that what she felt most strongly was the abundance of free and independent life which appeared to be before her, without any other 'powerful will bending hers'. A focus on language helped stronger candidates to see how this is prepared for by details like the description of the scene outside her window, the whispered phrase 'free, free, free!', the opening and spreading of her arms and the cadences of 'Spring days and summer days, and all days that would be her own'. An appreciation of the rhythms and syntax of the prose and the ways in which these themselves express liberation and 'feverish triumph' would have helped some candidates to appreciate the unconventionality of Mrs Mallard's sentiments.

There were some strong feminist readings which dated the passage correctly as nineteenth-century and appreciated that Mrs Mallard's marriage had not been a modern partnership. Better answers understood that she has been freed from a form of oppression, even if she 'had loved him – sometimes' although many candidates were reluctant to see that love could ever be a form of repression. Here the advice might be to attend to what the text says, and not to sentimentalise or distort its expression. In fact, the very best candidates saw all the ironies both in the ending of the story and in the idea that even a kind loving husband could make a wife feel stifled and trapped. They also responded to the imagery of an 'elixir of life' and a window open to the vibrant and sensuous spring life outside, and appreciated the many ways in which Mrs Mallard is portrayed as embracing the 'subtle and elusive' thing – her perception of her own freedom – which transforms her, momentarily and ironically, into a 'goddess of Victory'. Even answers which shaped less plausible interpretations of her response at least tried to fit themselves around the language of the passage, while refusing to accept the challenge it presents to conventional or sentimental ideals of marriage and mourning: indeed some felt that Mrs Mallard's 'abandonment' must be an expression of loss. However, there were also many impressive readings based around empowerment, freedom and self-assertion. These candidates fully understood how devastating the story's final twist must be for both Louise and the reader, and appreciated that it is conveyed in the one-paragraph sentence 'But Richards was too late'; again, attention to syntax and prose rhythm highlighted both exaltation and defeat.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41

Set Texts: Closed Books-A

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

While as in previous sessions most candidates tended to perform better on prose and drama than on poetry, even in the latter section there was less of a tendency to merely rehearse technical terms and more effort to respond directly to the imagery and feeling of the poems. There was, though, a tendency to offer details of a poet's biography at the expense of commenting on the impact of the words of the *poem*. There was evidence of a rather formulaic approach to the study of poetry at times, with candidates writing out a line and then paraphrasing it, but often ignoring other aspects of the poetry in the process.

Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story. For example, in **Question 12** some fairly sound Don Pedros were marred by the misapprehension that he thought Hero was alive and in **Question 42** some candidates ignored the words 'before Ethan catches up with you' and recounted the whole of the conversation between Ethan and Mattie.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.

By contrast, there were a significant number of outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, intelligent engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

Most candidates had a secure grasp of the context of the extract and showed understanding of some of the qualities that made this a dramatic end. Most answers demonstrated an awareness of/response to humour but only stronger answers engaged with language and the ways in which the hectic activity detailed in the stage directions made this an amusing scene, although a surprising number overlooked the contribution of Anita and Giorgio to the overall effect.

Question 2

For many candidates, this question was taken to mean 'Write about some moments where the characters behave ridiculously'; some candidates virtually ignored the word. Others responded to 'aspects of human behaviour' by simply listing moral qualities seen in characters and gave a personal response without engaging with the text. There were a few very good answers which identified some of Ayckbourn's satirical targets and offered persuasive support from the text. A few candidates opted to answer this question based solely on the extract in the passage-based question. (Teachers could assist their candidates by laying greater emphasis on the need for candidates to avoid this pitfall.)

Question 3

There were some delightfully cynical portrayals of Hough and the best answers showed a real relish to get to grips with the villainy of the character.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

There were some successful responses which showed sharp awareness of the different morals of the characters, particularly with regards to single parenthood. Some candidates showed sensitive understanding of Jackie's sorrow set against Margaret's excitement. A key word in the title was obviously 'vividly', and it proved very difficult to address this term without careful focus on details. Some answers simply outlined what happens before and after the scene, with often only a brief paragraph or two on the extract itself, and very rarely more than a slight nod towards the question asked.

Question 5

Few answers showed a real understanding of what was meant by the question, so summaries of the play were offered instead. Both here and in **Question 4** there was often a lengthy 'prepared' introductory paragraph or two about Charlotte Keatley and her feminist views, almost never made relevant to the task.

Question 6

The best answers captured the internal conflict of anger as opposed to love, the loneliness and the pain felt by Doris. There was some sharp awareness of the difficulties which they had experienced in their relationship, and some expressed the bitter irony of being left her own piano. There was some genuine appreciation of Doris's likely feelings of shock, grief and at times almost relief that this part of her life was over; her voice was reasonably well managed, though too often she expressed far more love for Jack than the real Doris ever does.

The Crucible

Question 7

The Crucible continued to be a particularly popular text, and candidates showed real engagement with the drama of the incident. There was some misunderstanding about the use of 'shocking' and 'absurd' in the question: often the responses referred to the characters being/feeling shocked about a situation (for instance, Cheever finding the poppet) but most were able to communicate the shocking qualities of the scene; explicit responses to 'absurd' were less common and tended to differentiate good answers, though many commented on the absurdity of the poppet being regarded as evidence. Few really got to grips with the character of Cheever, commenting more generally on the superstition which gripped Salem.

Question 8

This was not a popular option, but several of those who attempted it made a good case for sympathy developing over the course of the action as his remorse grows, and few were totally condemnatory of him. Structured and well developed argument was crucial to success.

Question 9

This was a fairly popular empathic task, and most who attempted it made a reasonable job of assuming Proctor's voice. Many responses captured Proctor's anger and his determination to free Elizabeth, along with his nagging guilt over his affair with Abigail. In some cases, the apprehension about his course of action was overstated and led to predictions about the outcome of the proceedings in court. There were some very convincing voices among the answers, skilfully weaving echoes of the text into the portrayal. Weaker attempts tended to begin with '...if I were...I would say...' and made little attempt to capture the character. Some candidates turned their answers into a direct address to Mary; not only was this twisting the demands of the question, but it led to some inappropriate comments about the adultery of which Mary is presumably unaware. There was some tendency to condemn Mary along with Abigail, almost as if both girls were equally guilty in Elizabeth's imprisonment.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. The best answers stayed focused on the on the subtleties and build up of the dramatic tensions in the early exchanges between Leonato, Claudio and the Friar. Weaker answers gave run-throughs of the scene and explanations of some of the crucial moments, but tended to avoid the difficult passages, spending far too much time on establishing the background rather than focusing firmly on what was set.

Question 11

Candidates who opted for this question often focused more on the two characters than on their relationship, thereby limiting the scope of their answers. The part played by Hero in the gulling of Beatrice and Beatrice's reaction to Hero's shaming at the wedding-that-was-not were fruitful areas for candidates who did attempt to deal with the relationship rather than offering separate character sketches. The word 'memorable' was frequently ignored.

Question 12

There were some strong answers to this question, capturing Don Pedro's voice and his concern that his brother's deceit had caused him to behave dishonourably. Most candidates captured his anger; a number ranged beyond this to show understanding of his relationship with Claudio and his feelings of guilt about his treatment of Hero. Still fewer were the candidates who expressed the embarrassment that he, the Prince, had been so easily fooled. It was surprising that a large number of candidates clearly forgot that, at this stage in the play, Don Pedro still believes that Hero is dead and expressed the intention of apologising to Hero, or relief that now she and Claudio could enjoy a happy future, which rather weakened the authority of the response.

Richard III

Question 13

Candidates who attempted this generally handled capably the three voices of Richard - public, in soliloquy and to the murderers - to demonstrate his entertaining qualities. The 'dramatic' aspect of the question was often handled more implicitly.

Question 14

The question tended to trigger narrative responses which traced the trajectory of Richard's career without engaging fully (or at all, in some cases) with 'dramatically compelling'.

Question 15

Few managed to capture Hastings' character successfully (his optimism or the implicit irony of situation); but, that said, some responses were quite imaginative and showed a basic understanding of character.

Journey's End

Question 16

Responses tended to lack close reference to the passage and were usually very generalised.

Question 17

Few responses to this question were submitted, and tended to be low scoring. Vital for higher marks was focus on the dramatic qualities of the character; not only his personal attributes, but the way in which he is set against the other characters.

Question 18

This was a more popular question and produced some competent responses which captured something of the character, and appropriate thoughts but often did not quite capture the character's voice.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

This was the most popular of all the poetry questions and presented few difficulties in terms of understanding, though only the best answers showed a real engagement with the feeling. The question asked for a direct response ('What do you think makes this sonnet so sad?') and candidates who focused on the last couplet of the sonnet and made it the basis for their reading of the poem as a whole and saw the contrast between it and the rest of the poem tended to answer the question more successfully than those who adopted a somewhat detached line-by-line approach or those who commented on selected images in isolation. Some offered a reading of the poem which consisted only of a list of features (here a caesura, there some alliteration) with little consideration of meaning. Some seemed to have studied the poem thematically with poems about global warming, an approach which seemed to have led to their overlooking the idea of love completely.

Question 20

First Love was marginally a more popular choice than *Marrysong*, and was often explored more relevantly in answers. In answering the question, though in the best answers the poem chosen was addressed with some sensitivity. The extended central metaphor of Scott's poem was often very well understood and explored, though there was a tendency to explain rather than explore, while Clare's imagery was mined more fruitfully to demonstrate vividness.

Question 21

This was not a particularly popular option, and proved difficult for those who chose it. Most responses dealt with the 'meaning' rather than the 'sound' of words. Often the choice of poem was inappropriate. There was a tendency of candidates to mis-identify alliteration on the basis of spelling rather than sound.

Keats, Poems

This text was significantly less popular than *Songs of Ourselves* but in the relatively few answers submitted there were some very detailed and sensitive responses to the poems. There was no doubt of candidates' knowledge, and in most cases there was evident understanding of the poems and of the questions. Lower scoring answers tended to merely describe or paraphrase, and/or to become bogged down in biographical detail at the expense of engagement with the poetry.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

Question 25

This question provided opportunities for candidates to explore Austen's presentation of the two characters' contrasting attitudes to marriage which were well taken in many cases. This question produced some of the best answers seen on the paper as a whole when candidates worked on the language and tone of the opposing arguments. However, a significant minority of candidates chose to write about these attitudes in very general terms, with little or no attention to the extract itself. Others merely identified differences between the characters with no reference to their attitudes to marriage, for example, 'Charlotte is outspoken and Elizabeth is more lively'. Although these answers demonstrated knowledge of the novel as a whole, the knowledge lacked sufficient relevance to the question to score very highly.

Question 26

While there were some very good answers, a number of candidates ignored the phrase 'prejudice about social class'. There was sometimes difficulty with the word 'ridicules' and Examiners treated this sympathetically, but answers which did not respond even implicitly to the satire were disadvantaged since it is so crucial an element of Austen's writing. In view of the evident enjoyment of the novel that lay behind so many answers, it was especially disappointing that lack of relevance had to limit the reward some answers could receive.

Question 27

Some very convincing empathic responses were made here, capturing Wickham's self-interested eye to the main chance. Some candidates seemed to think Wickham was still 'in love' with Elizabeth and tried to convey feelings of heartbreak. Most at least understood his envy of Darcy and sense of his own feelings of being hard-done-by. As in other empathic tasks, weaker answers tended to identify the moment in the novel inaccurately; here a common omission was that Wickham was married to Lydia.

The God Boy

Very few offered questions on this text and for **Question 28** far too few answers were seen to make general comment appropriate.

Question 29

Candidates supported the opposite view from that anticipated, and made little reference, if any, to Sullivan's negative qualities. Little sympathy was shown to his wife.

Question 30

This was a slightly more popular choice. There were some poignant portrayals of Mrs Sullivan, candidates generally had difficulty in pinning down her voice.

Games at Twilight

Question 31

The extract seemed to divide opinion almost equally between those who sympathised more or less completely with the old man and those who saw him as a fairly contemptible attention-seeker whose devoted son was selflessly seeking to prolong his life with a genuine concern for his well-being.

Question 32

This question tended to elicit what appeared to be prepared answers on a chosen theme, the success of which depended on the degree to which the theme could be taken to be an aspect of 'life in India'. In many cases, the theme of needing to work for a living was chosen. Such answers did not always make clear how this was peculiar to life in India.

Question 33

Candidates generally succeeded in capturing Sheila's sense of shame and defeat as she tries to understand what has happened to her husband and her marriage, most realising that she is probably beyond anger at this stage.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Question 34

The very few responses to this task were generally well-handled.

Question 35

Most answers were strongly condemnatory of Troy, with few even acknowledging his attractive and exciting qualities. Interestingly, a number of candidates added to their indictment of his treatment of Bathsheba (and often Fanny) his behaviour towards Boldwood.

Question 36

Boldwood's bewilderment was convincingly captured by many, but a significant minority weakened their answers by assuming that he knew that the Valentine card had been sent by Bathsheba.

When Rain clouds Gather

Question 37

Candidates identified very strongly with the characters in this novel and wrote with engagement about Makhaya and Mma-Millipede. The passage-based task was a popular choice, and candidates were generally able to recognise some of the features of the writing.

Question 38

There was a very wide range of thoughts about the women in the book: some candidates perceived them as downtrodden, promiscuous and subservient. Many of these missed the opportunity to write about the strengths of Paulina, Maria and Mma-Millipede. Others saw the strengths in these women and wrote with insight about the role of women.

Question 39

The empathic question was not quite as popular. Only the best answers showed an understanding of Appleby-Smith's cynical, colonial nature. Weaker answers did not use the first person and there was a tendency to narrative.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Responses here ranged from the straightforward narrative to sensitive and detailed understanding. The most sophisticated embraced the ambiguity of Zeena's character here, clearly aware of her malicious wish to make Mattie suffer, but also perceptive to the concept that she is genuinely hurt by the breaking of the dish. Many candidates understood the metaphor within the dish. Some even wrote about the idea that Zeena's feelings towards her marriage and Ethan were in fact very similar to her attitude to the dish – hidden from view and never intended for use.

Question 41

Relatively few answers were seen, and they tended not to score highly. Clearer focus on the word 'compelling' and therefore a strong personal response was essential to success. A mere character sketch did not fulfil the demands of the question.

Question 42

Some candidates were sensitive to the delicacy and tact of Mattie's nature, showing the reluctance to voice (even to herself) her feelings for Ethan and her sense of obligation to Zeena. Others presented a much less convincing, calculating character, who was clearly searching for ways to escape Zeena in order to enjoy life with Ethan. Relatively little attention was paid to Denis Eady; this ranged from a fairly dismissive attitude to (unconvincing) deep-seated love.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

The tendency was for answers to give an account of the content of the extract (or the story as a whole) without very much close attention to the language. The wording of the question ('build up a sense of mystery') provided a strong hint of a useful approach which was taken by regrettably few candidates. Often candidates simply retold story or explained meaning.

Question 44

All three of the stories proved more or less equally popular, but there was a strong tendency to narration, particularly in treatments of *How It Happened*, with little attention to narrative techniques and frequently little response made to the chosen story's 'ending'.

Question 45

Most candidates were able to capture Maia's apprehensiveness as she embarks on her arranged marriage. Some found it difficult to locate the moment precisely, and dealt with events which happened after her arrival.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42

Set Texts: Closed Books-A

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

While as in previous sessions most candidates tended to perform better on prose and drama than on poetry, even in the latter section there was less of a tendency to merely rehearse technical terms and more effort to respond directly to the imagery and feeling of the poems. There was, though, a tendency to offer details of a poet's biography at the expense of commenting on the impact of the words of the *poem*. There was evidence of a rather formulaic approach to the study of poetry at times, with candidates writing out a line and then paraphrasing it, but often ignoring other aspects of the poetry in the process.

Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support; some provided an unduly broad context, tending to succumb to narrative. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.

By contrast, there were some outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, informed and engaged approach to the texts and a high level of engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

There was a very limited take-up of some of the text options on this time zone's paper. Far too few answers were seen on ***A Small Family Business, My Mother Said I Never Should, Richard III, Keats, The Boy, Games at Twilight*** and ***Ethan Frome*** to make general comment appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

The Crucible

Question 7

This question was generally well-handled and candidates responded with a good sense of what made the passage moving and dramatic. Better answers showed sensitivity to the extremes of emotion involved here and found plenty of textual evidence to support their observations. Others simply repeated that it was moving and dramatic at various points but could not define why. The description of Corey's death and its impact on Proctor was often entirely ignored.

Question 8

Candidates generally captured the hysterical madness of Salem quite tellingly, but relatively few were as successful in dealing with the process implied by the word 'descent'. There was a tendency for candidates to make general assertions such as 'they are hypocritical and un-Christian' without fully explaining the effect on events.

Question 9

There were far fewer responses to this task. Most were quite powerful, but some were rather far-fetched even for Abigail: kidnap and elopement would surely have been beyond even her at this juncture. Abigail was often far too obsessed still with Proctor to be giving consideration to her own position.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

As this is a passage-based question, Examiners were looking for considerable reference to and exploration of the text. The reference in the question to Shakespeare should have given a clear indication that the writing was to be taken into account. While weaker answers resorted to telling the story, there were some very good, comprehensive responses showing quite a sophisticated awareness of sources of tension and drama and of the effect of the scene on an audience and on the way in which the play develops.

Question 11

Very few responses to this question were seen. This was a question best answered with a secure sense of appropriate moments. Some candidates stretched the definition of 'moment' to breaking point dealing with entire sub-plots. 'Amusing' too was sometimes treated rather loosely, the second wedding of Hero/Claudio being offered as one example.

Question 12

Relatively few responses were seen to this empathic task, but of these the best demonstrated a good understanding of how Leonato might have felt guilt for his behaviour towards Hero in Act 4 Scene 1. Some candidates ignored everything that had gone before apart from the second wedding.

Journey's End

Question 16

The majority of those who wrote on this text chose the passage-based question. They had no trouble in identifying the drama of the situation and the most successful gave a strong personal response to what is moving. As always, the extent to which candidates focused on the details of the passage proved the main differentiator. Some concentrated on defining the differences in the two characters at the expense of looking at their interaction.

Question 17

Those who chose this question responded well, looking at both sides of the question and coming to their own conclusions on the basis of sound textual evidence.

Question 18

Few chose this and those who did often found it difficult to establish a convincing tone for Stanhope.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

The poem was well known and the feelings understood but there was a lack of attention to the language and form in many answers. Success depended on how much attention was given to the word 'memorably'. In the best answers there was a sensitive and developed response to the sounds of words as well as to the ideas expressed.

Question 20

The Voice was the more popular choice here. Most answers demonstrated an attempt to engage with language but sometimes they had difficulty relating to the expression of the idea of how love is 'short-lived'. All too often less successful answers resorted to recounting the story of Hardy's unhappy marriage. Those who chose the Byron poem often found it easier to relate to the terms of the question.

Question 21

This was the least popular of the three questions on *Songs* and very few examples were seen. The brevity of moments chosen often led to extremely brief answers which were little more than paraphrase. This question was looking for detailed exploration of words and their effects, through not only meaning but sound and the other senses and emotion and mood.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

Question 25

This again proved to be a popular text and candidates opting for it tended to go for passage-based task on... They were able to write a good deal about the relationship of Mr and Mrs Bennet, but often had difficulty in explaining *how* Austen depicts it 'amusingly'. There was a tendency to retell or describe rather than show how Austen uses her skills as a writer and the weakest responses tended to move beyond the extract and in some cases to almost ignore it.

Question 26

There were fewer answers to this question. Success depended on the appropriateness of the choices. There were some rather loose interpretations of the word 'moments'; some candidates considered the whole of the story of the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy, for example.

Question 27

This question was often well done with plenty of relevant detail and most candidates managed to capture something of Lydia's voice. The best caught her vapid optimism and incorrigibility very accurately.

Far From the Madding Crowd

Question 34

There were some very detailed and analytical responses to this extract with sharp focus on the dramatic qualities of the incident. Though the text was not offered by many Centres, it had clearly been enjoyed and found very stimulating.

Question 35

This question produced some thoughtful and well-balanced assessments of the thoughtful and well-balanced Gabriel. Candidates clearly found him a character to whom they could relate.

Question 36

There were some very touching and convincing recreations of Fanny. Though she says little in the novel, her character was well understood and candidates had little difficulty in creating a suitable voice for her.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This produced some well focused and very individual responses, conveying a real sense of personal engagement and enjoyment of Head's description.

Question 38

This was a less popular question but was usually answered well. The better responses supported their answers with thorough detail, the weaker responses were often generalized.

Question 39

Only a very few responses to the empathic task on this novel were seen. There were some fair attempts to establish a voice here.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

Most candidates chose the extract and though there were some careful assessments, the term 'sad' was often not as fully addressed as it might have been. Many seemed to think that John had died in the war and made little connection between the letters and the rest of the extract beyond saying it was all very sad.

Question 44

There were some sensitive and well argued responses pointing out the irony of the aliens' destruction at the end of the story when they have come in peace to a so-called civilized world and in fact represent the values that the humans value.

Question 45

Though candidates did not generally produce particularly distinctive voices, they knew and understood the character well and conveyed her determination not to be ground down by the behaviour of the employer and to retain her dignity and set a good example to her son.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43

Set Texts: Closed Books-A

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

While as in previous sessions most candidates tended to perform better on prose and drama than on poetry, even in the latter section there was less of a tendency to merely rehearse technical terms and more effort to respond directly to the imagery and feeling of the poems. There was, though, a tendency to offer details of a poet's biography at the expense of commenting on the impact of the words of the *poem*. There was evidence of a rather formulaic approach to the study of poetry at times, with candidates writing out a line and then paraphrasing it, but often ignoring other aspects of the poetry in the process.

Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story. For example, in **Question 12** many candidates attributed knowledge to Hero which she did not have at the point in the play given in the task.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.

By contrast, there were some outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, informed and engaged engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

There was a very limited take-up of some of the texts on this time zone's paper. Far too few answers (in some cases none) were seen on *My Mother Said I Never Should*, *Journey's End*, *Keats's Poems*, *Games*, *Twilight*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *Ethan Frome* to make general comment appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Only **Question 1** on this text, the passage-based option, had more than a very few responses. It was generally dealt with competently, though there was a tendency to re-tell or explain the passage in weaker answers.

The Crucible

Question 7

This question was generally well-handled though many candidates took a fairly narrative approach. There was at least a reasonable understanding of the relative innocence of Proctor and Elizabeth, compared to the suspicion felt by the other characters. Hale was often entirely ignored, whereas those who tracked the shifts in his mood and attitude in response to what the Proctors say were often the most successful. Most candidates were fairly successful in bringing in relevant contextual knowledge and understanding, whilst still focusing on the extract but some found difficulty in focusing closely on the precise extract, dealing with the earlier moments of the scene, and in particular John's inability to remember the commandments, to the exclusion of the extract itself. Generally, however, the question was well done, with most candidates able to identify several relevant points from the passage and many exploring various facets of the characters' motives. Less successful answers tended to become 'bogged down' in detail and to run through the passage trying to identify every point. Some essays were over-long, and points were not carefully selected.

Question 8

Mary Warren's evidence and Elizabeth's lie were the most often chosen moments, although there were others, for example, the point in Act 4 where Proctor signs his confession. This proved particularly fruitful for the most able candidates, who explored the concepts of good and evil in the context of the play; such candidates actively questioned which could be termed the 'good' outcome – Proctor's survival or his moral integrity. Some candidates stretched the definition of 'moment', and in some cases, more than two such moments were offered.

Question 9

There were some excellent responses to this question, which fluently incorporated Miller's adopted Salem dialect into their writing. Besides this, there was a wealth of ideas from which to draw. The most sophisticated answers balanced Proctor's love for Elizabeth and his wish to make amends against his awareness that she was finding forgiveness very difficult. The guilt of his affair was obviously a key factor, but, in order to address the question, it was helpful to refer to the day spent working on the farm, the awareness which Proctor would have at this stage of the town's 'hysteria', Elizabeth's cooking, the flowers. Some less successful answers went beyond the moment to convey his likely thoughts after his conversation with Elizabeth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

Candidates' knowledge of the play was often very good. Many, however, took the opportunity simply to narrate large parts of the play, often virtually all of it, without addressing exactly what was asked. Many saw

the humour here, and showed an implicit or explicit awareness of the theatricality, but too often were unable to describe the effects of the humour.

Question 11

There were very few answers about Borachio. Those who did attempt the question focused almost exclusively on his role in Don John's Hero/Claudio plot.

Question 12

The empathic question was more popular, and fairly well done. There was quite a wide range of possible thoughts and feelings that Hero might have experienced, with many strongly-felt pleas for understanding and sympathy. Although most were able to communicate some of her personality, often they moved quite significantly beyond the exact moment, and allowed her to know things that happen later which she could not possibly know at this point. Her voice was generally quite well managed.

Richard III

Question 13

The extract proved popular although many ignored the Queen's opening; having prepared the ground by explaining what the audience already knows of Richard's villainy, they plunged straight into his announcement of Clarence's death and the irony of his subsequent comments. Better candidates picked up well on the irony of the pardon of Derby's servant and Richard's final shot at the Queen. Some less successful answers focused on Richard exclusively and ignored Derby/Edward's speech. Gloucester's part was generally well understood, as was the irony of Edward's guilt. The more sophisticated candidates focused on the painful irony of small details, such as the opening declaration that this would be thought a 'holy day...hereafter'.

Question 14

Some candidates chose memorable moments, without squarely addressing the term 'amusing'. Some took the valid approach of focusing instead on irony. However, some successful responses analysed the black comedy behind Richard's presence on stage, exploring, for example, his opening speech, his audacity in wooing Anne or his staged refusal of the crown. In the best responses there was some implicit awareness of the character's relationship with the audience, but this was rarely fully articulated.

Question 15

Queen Elizabeth was a popular and generally successful choice for empathetic treatment. Many captured her feelings of anger and outrage initially before going on to show her awareness of the various possibilities in the current situation. Some candidates simply expressed hatred of Richard, along with a determination not to let the daughter marry him. More complex responses utilised references to Margaret's curses, the ease with which he had won Anne's hand and the notion of Richard's poison. Most candidates looked forward to the rise of Richmond. There was often a convincing tone of horror at the thought of losing her last child, mixed with a little pragmatic indecision showing detailed knowledge of the text.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

Lindsay's poem (**Question 19**) was addressed by the great majority, with a lot of confident and often very sensitive appreciation of its themes and its writing; many were able to make some thoughtful and apt comments about the poem's language and form. Personal response frequently took the form of anger at man's determination to spread industrial farming methods, and/or the racist destruction of the native Blackfeet and Pawnees. The poet's clear affection for the pre-locomotive wild prairies, and even for the ugly buffaloes, was frequently mentioned, with special note of the curiously emotive and effective verb in line 12. A few candidates expressed pleasure at the spread of the locomotives – otherwise why do they 'sing'? – and several also saw the buffaloes and the Red Indian tribes as waiting their time to gain revenge – 'lying low'. Success of responses tended to vary according to the degree to which candidates addressed their 'feelings

as [they] read this poem.’ A relatively large number of responses simply offered a linear explanation of the text, whereas some candidates embraced the range of the emotive appeal of the poem, exploring the implications of the ‘tossing, blooming perfumed grass’ alongside the mournful repetition of ‘no more’ and ‘lying low’.

Question 20

Candidates who chose the Arnold poem tended to be more successful than those who opted for Millay, who were often unable or unwilling to move beyond the personal situation of the poetic voice. Many who chose this found it quite difficult to accurately nail down the meaning of the poem and wrote general comments without support.

Question 21

Success here was very dependent on the suitability of the choice of poem. Candidates tended to write about their chosen poem with little or no attempt to deal with the narrative aspect of the question, or to address the term ‘compelling’. The idea of ‘a story’ was stretched beyond reasonable breaking point by many, who appeared simply to relate their favourite poem regardless of the question. Many candidates chose *Full Moon and Little Frieda*. Whilst this was potentially a valid choice, it relates such a brief incident that in many cases it proved difficult to analyse with real attention to the question. However, some very successful responses focused sensitively on the narrative tone of the poem, looking at the traditional ways in which it sets a scene, introduces characters, and shows development. More immediately accessible choices in response to this question, which proved more successfully generally, were *First Love* and *Marrysong*.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

All three questions were attempted in roughly equal measure. Knowledge and enjoyment came across in almost all, and for this text more than any other on the paper candidates really did seem aware that they should answer the question rather than just tell the story. Responses to the passage- and essay-based tasks here were significantly better than those to the empathic task.

Question 25 led to much entertainment and satisfaction as Lady Catherine loses her battle with Elizabeth; irony was rarely tackled well, but satisfaction very frequently.

Question 26 was the most successful of the three Austen tasks, with much more than just character studies being the norm. A good deal of quite unexpected sympathy was shown for Mrs Bennet, given her positively unhelpful husband, the family’s financial situation, and the social pressures that she is under.

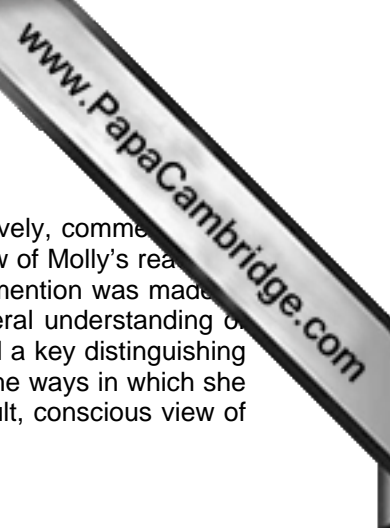
Question 27

The empathic task generally proved less successful, with Darcy often stepping straight out of some kind of Regency Mills and Boon novelette, and saying romantic and sentimental things that no self-respecting Austen character, male or female, would even dream of, let alone utter.

The God Boy

Question 28

Almost all answers were able to identify key features in the passage that conveyed Jimmy’s stress and there were several answers showing deep insight and an emotional response to the writing. Better answers went beyond identifying his various strategies to analyse how and why they showed his state of mind, often incorporating into the response the effect of the narrative voice on the impact of the extract. A distinguishing factor was the extent to which they focused on the word ‘vividly’. A fair number of candidates showed some sensitive engagement with the child’s voice, drawing on details such as the sharp detail of the memory and the appeal to the sense of touch. Such candidates also showed clear understanding of the way in which emotional pain is converted into physical symptoms. A very useful detail was the description of Jimmy’s mother, staring at his father ‘in a way that would frighten [him]’; several candidates drew attention to the sense of wrong when a child has such a memory of his mother.



Question 29

There were very variable responses to Molly. The best selected evidence very effectively, commented on her relatively infrequent appearances and observing the disparity between Jimmy's view of Molly's relationship to her parents' relationship and the true state of her mind though curiously almost no mention was made of the 'suicide' swimming scene. Although almost all responses showed at least a general understanding of Molly's character, the concept of what she contributes to the power of the novel proved a key distinguishing factor. More able candidates wrote more about her role than her character, exploring the ways in which she helps a reader to understand Jimmy's character and in which she provides a more adult, conscious view of the suffering which is presented almost exclusively through a child's mind.

Question 30

This was a popular option, often well handled. All candidates captured the anger felt towards Mr Sullivan, although a few ignored the precise point specified in the novel, making no reference to Mrs Sullivan's fall. More able candidates referred fruitfully to the Sullivans' Catholic faith, expressing the impossibility of escape through divorce. Less convincing were the answers which expressed a very conscious and deliberate plan to kill Mr Sullivan. Whilst it was possible to incorporate murderous thoughts into the response, it was difficult to believe in Mrs Sullivan's cold-blooded plotting.

Stories of Ourselves:

Question 43

Responses to this question showed that candidates knew the whole story well, but very few focused on the ending alone, with many leading up to it with prolonged narration of the whole tale, in one or two cases even ignoring the ending almost entirely; too much time was spent on explaining and justifying the double narrative structure of the tale – very interesting and worthwhile, certainly, but not relevant here. There was also much – often too much – individual criticism of mankind's arrogance and ignorance about the possibility of extra-terrestrial life.

Question 44

This question also led to a great deal of whole-story narration, with very few answers actually identifying two moments, or even implicitly doing so by the focus of their approach; suspense was far too often simply asserted, or just assumed, and rarely explained or explored.

Question 45

By contrast, this question was generally quite well done, and although Willadean is a fairly peripheral character in the story her likely feelings of fascination and puzzlement, combined with the incipient stirrings of sexuality, were often quite well captured; she generally understood her father very well, too!

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/51

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

General comments

Centres taking the examination in this session have made an impressive start in preparing candidates for this new single-text component. Candidates showed sound knowledge of the set texts and personal response to characterisation and theme. Many responses were engaged and enthusiastic. They were often well constructed, thorough and sustained with candidates making good use of the time available. There are areas in each type of question, however, where performance could be improved. In answer to passage-based questions, the focus should be on the passage itself and its language in particular. In some cases answers considered the plot and themes of the novel as a whole at the expense of making a detailed analysis of the passage. Close reference to the passage and direct quotation from it is essential for high reward. An awareness of genre, for example reference to stage directions in drama passages, also tends to be the mark of a strong answer. Answers to discursive questions often demonstrated wide-ranging knowledge of the text and an ability to balance an argument. Less successful responses would have been improved by precise textual reference to support the views expressed. Learning and using some key quotations would allow candidates to make their responses more convincing. Supporting points with specific moments from the text is essential for high reward.

There were some knowledgeable and lively answers to empathic questions. These questions were answered very effectively when candidates wrote in the voice of the character and identified the moment in the text carefully. Most responses captured the character's attitudes but some could have improved the credibility of the voice and underpinned the response with textual detail more successfully. The least successful answers tended to be generalised and repetitive. It can be difficult to maintain a credible voice, and concise answers often prove the most convincing. In poetry answers most candidates grasped the meaning of the poems and showed knowledge of Heaney's relationships with the natural world. The strongest answers showed skills of analysis, commenting on the imagery, diction and structure of the poems, with particular emphasis on their effect. Mere recognition of poetic terminology is of little help in writing a successful response. Selection of particularly effective diction, simile and metaphor and a simple comment on why the poet chose to use these would at the very least ensure adequate reward. Personal response to the ideas in the poem was lively and engaged.

The most successful answers really engaged with the question set and paid close attention to its wording. Less successful responses tended to write about broader themes or ideas, which related to the question without having much relevance to its precise requirements.

There were very few rubric infringements or incomplete responses.

Comments on specific questions

Whose Life is it Anyway?

Question 1

The strongest answers to this question understood Ken's situation and the issues involved, made close reference to the passage and analysed the power of the language and the significance of the scene's context. Less successful responses could have been improved by looking closely at elements of the passage such as the Judge's counter arguments to Ken's position or the force of Ken's listing of the bodily functions he is no longer able to perform for himself.

Question 2

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 3

Very few answered this. The best captured Dr Scott's voice realistically and made good reference to parts of the play.

Lord of the Flies

Question 4

There were some extremely impressive responses to this question with strong candidates showing an awareness of both the power of the description and the foreshadowing of Jack's development later in the novel. The best answers balanced attention to the passage with an awareness of this foreshadowing. They commented on the patterns of imagery such as the emphasis on the darkness and militarism surrounding Jack. The irony of the lead chorister being arrogant and aggressive was not lost on the most perceptive candidates. Less successful answers would have been improved by close analysis of the description as well as the dialogue and by using the passage rather than writing at length about what Jack does later on.

Question 5

The best answers to this question looked at the thematic significance of the fire as a symbol of hope, rescue and home. This was combined with an ability to refer closely to the text, such as to the moment when Jack lets the fire go out, with candidates showing how this is a turning point in the novel. Answers also showed how the fire, when left unattended, symbolised the destructive tendencies of mankind. Less successful responses approached the question in a narrative way and they needed to consider the fire's significance (particularly in its role as a signal) in the novel as a whole in much greater detail.

Question 6

There were many very effective renderings of Sam or Eric with candidates grasping their reasons for defecting to Jack's tribe and capturing their fear of Jack and Roger after the death of Piggy. Strong answers were firmly rooted in the moment but also reflected on Sam and Eric's experiences on the island. Their shame at betraying Ralph and willingness to help him as much as possible characterised effective answers. Some responses were written in voices that were far too mature and philosophical for young boys. Less successful answers either struggled to find an appropriate voice or wrote answers that could have reflected the immediate events in the novel prior to this moment, more clearly.

A Raisin in the Sun

Question 7

The strongest answers to this question focused clearly on the differences between Ruth and Walter and showed understanding of Walter's sarcastic, bitter tone at the beginning of the passage contrasting with his cajoling attitude to Ruth at its end. Ruth's disillusion with Walter's moneymaking dreams was also clearly understood. Some candidates would have improved their answers by more secure knowledge of the context or a sharper focus on the terms of the question.

Question 8

Strong answers here gave wide-ranging evidence from the play to support their understanding of Mama's strength and determination. Less successful responses tended to restrict their answers to Mama's plan or desire to own her own house. Her strength of character in dealing with her children needed some comment in order to answer the question fully.

Question 9

Less convincing answers confined themselves to Walter's feelings about the abortion. More perceptive responses saw that this is not Walter's main concern at that moment in the play and incorporated his obsession with becoming wealthy and his confidence that he would achieve his goal. As always, the strongest answers captured the characteristic features of the character's voice.

Death of a Naturalist

Question 10

There were some engaged responses both to the theme and to the power of the language in *Death of a Naturalist*. Strong answers paid close attention to how the poem embodies the end of childhood innocence by comparing the poet's excitement at the beginning of the poem with his horror at the end. The unpleasant and violent imagery was assessed in some detail. Less convincing responses tended to narrate and paraphrase and such answers would have been improved by closer attention to the terms of the question.

Question 11 and Question 12

There were far too few responses to these questions to make general comment appropriate.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 13

This question was answered well when candidates understood the context, commented on how Atticus's speech was constructed and looked at the power of the language. Successful comment varied considerably. Some answers concentrated on Atticus's challenge to Maycomb's prejudices, some on the build up to the climactic ending, others on his reaching out to every member of the court and the jury. Weaker answers tended to be insecure in their knowledge of the content of the speech or merely recounted what Atticus says. There was particular misunderstanding of the section of the speech where Atticus explores the situations in which men are not 'created equal'. The best answers showed awareness of rhetorical devices such as 'the power of three'.

Question 14

This question was generally answered very successfully with candidates responding to the warmth of Calpurnia's character. Good answers were characterised by detailed knowledge of the text. Incidents were cited such as the visit of Walter Cunningham, the mad dog incident and the children's trip to the First Purchase Church. The strongest answers understood how unusual it was that a black woman was held in such high esteem by a white family in the social and historical context of the novel and their answers were informed by such knowledge which was always linked closely to text and question. Less effective responses spoke in general terms about Calpurnia's motherly (hence likeable and trustworthy) qualities without proving this by specific reference to the text.

Question 15

Convincing responses to this question wrote in the voice of a child rather than an adult and hence did not make Jem too pompous. Such responses were also placed firmly at the end of the novel with an awareness of recent events such as the trial and the attack by Bob Ewell. Many answers also ranged widely over earlier incidents in Jem's relationship with his father. Key features were Jem's admiration for Atticus and how this developed considerably with Jem's growing understanding of Atticus's courage in taking on the Robinson case. Less successful answers either concentrated too much on the end of the novel or turned the essay into one on what Atticus had taught Jem rather than the wider focus of the question on how Atticus has brought the children up. Some candidates wrote as Scout rather than Jem.

Nineteen Eighty-four

Question 16

This is a powerful passage and candidates responded to its horror. Success depended on the extent to which candidates could analyse the language of the passage. O'Brien's cruelty was also the subject of much discussion and the strongest responses showed an informed knowledge of context and the novel as a whole.

Question 17

Most candidates chose appropriate moments in the novel to answer this question. The best answers showed clearly how the state was operating in their chosen incident.

Question 18

The most successful Mr Charringtons were imbued with satisfaction at having caught traitors and steeped in party loyalty and ideology. Such answers also demonstrated sound knowledge of Winston's role to Mr Charrington and reflected the entrapment of Winston. There were many impressive responses to the task.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 19

This question produced a wide variety of responses. This is a pivotal moment in the play and candidates who could see this and the drama inherent in almost every moment of the scene were rewarded for their ability to focus on the characteristics of the genre. There was an awareness, in strong answers, of the dramatic irony that only Romeo knows he has married into the Capulet family and that Mercutio's death will have tragic consequences. Such responses also noted the build up to the fight and the change from humour to horror as the scene unfolds. There was a worrying tendency in some answers merely to recount what happens in the scene in a purely narrative way without any reference to the question. There is no reward for knowledge of the plot per se and some candidates do need practice in relating the passage to the question asked about it. It is important that candidates are aware of staging and the likely impact of a scene on an audience. Candidates who showed such awareness of audience performed well.

Question 20

Good answers to this question saw that the Nurse loves Juliet and helps her to marry Romeo despite the feud but also acknowledged that she perpetrates the greatest betrayal in the play. Weaker answers tended to be far too kind to her or to concentrate purely on the early stages of the play. Perceptive candidates did comment on the difficulty of the Nurse's position and how vulnerable she would be to the wrath of the Capulets if her actions had been discovered. Success depended on a strong well-informed personal response or a balanced assessment. As always, the least successful answers lacked detailed textual support for their views.

Question 21

There were some very convincing Lord Capulets. Some candidates read the moment correctly as the one early in the play but allowances were made for those who thought this moment occurred after the death of Tybalt. The strongest responses captured Capulet's family pride, emphasis on wealth and status, rivalry with the Montagues and feeling that, although he wanted his daughter to be happy and cherished, she was his property and would do as he wished. Less convincing answers concentrated almost totally on his preparations for the wedding feast. These were often extremely lively and entertaining but were not as deeply rooted in his character and role in the play. Many candidates found an appropriate voice for him.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/52

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

General comments

Centres taking the examination in this session have made an impressive start in preparing candidates for this new single-text component. Candidates showed sound knowledge of the set texts and personal response to characterisation and theme. Many responses were engaged and enthusiastic. They were often well constructed, thorough and sustained with candidates making good use of the time available. There are areas in each type of question, however, where performance could be improved. In answer to passage-based questions, the focus should be on the passage itself and its language in particular. In some cases answers considered the plot and themes of the novel as a whole at the expense of making a detailed analysis of the passage. Close reference to the passage and direct quotation from it is essential for high reward. An awareness of genre, for example reference to stage directions in drama passages, also tends to be the mark of a strong answer. Answers to discursive questions often demonstrated wide-ranging knowledge of the text and an ability to balance an argument. Less successful responses would have been improved by precise textual reference to support the views expressed. Learning and using some key quotations would allow candidates to make their responses more convincing. Supporting points with specific moments from the text is essential for high reward.

There were some knowledgeable and lively answers to empathic questions. These questions were answered very effectively when candidates wrote in the voice of the character and identified the moment in the text carefully. Most responses captured the character's attitudes but some could have improved the credibility of the voice and underpinned the response with textual detail more successfully. The least successful answers tended to be generalised and repetitive. It can be difficult to maintain a credible voice, and concise answers often prove the most convincing. In poetry answers most candidates grasped the meaning of the poems and showed knowledge of Heaney's relationships with the natural world. The strongest answers showed skills of analysis, commenting on the imagery, diction and structure of the poems, with particular emphasis on their effect. Mere recognition of poetic terminology is of little help in writing a successful response. Selection of particularly effective diction, simile and metaphor and a simple comment on why the poet chose to use these would at the very least ensure adequate reward. Personal response to the ideas in the poem was lively and engaged.

The most successful answers really engaged with the question set and paid close attention to its wording. Less successful responses tended to write about broader themes or ideas, which related to the question without having much relevance to its precise requirements.

There were very few rubric infringements or incomplete responses.

Comments on specific questions

Whose Life is it Anyway?

Question 1

The strongest answers to this question understood Ken's situation and the issues involved, made close reference to the passage and analysed the power of the language and the significance of the scene's context. Less successful responses could have been improved by looking closely at elements of the passage such as the Judge's counter arguments to Ken's position or the force of Ken's listing of the bodily functions he is no longer able to perform for himself.

Question 2

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 3

Very few answered this. The best captured Dr Scott's voice realistically and made good reference to parts of the play.

Lord of the Flies

Question 4

There were some extremely impressive responses to this question with strong candidates showing an awareness of both the power of the description and the foreshadowing of Jack's development later in the novel. The best answers balanced attention to the passage with an awareness of this foreshadowing. They commented on the patterns of imagery such as the emphasis on the darkness and militarism surrounding Jack. The irony of the lead chorister being arrogant and aggressive was not lost on the most perceptive candidates. Less successful answers would have been improved by close analysis of the description as well as the dialogue and by using the passage rather than writing at length about what Jack does later on.

Question 5

The best answers to this question looked at the thematic significance of the fire as a symbol of hope, rescue and home. This was combined with an ability to refer closely to the text, such as to the moment when Jack lets the fire go out, with candidates showing how this is a turning point in the novel. Answers also showed how the fire, when left unattended, symbolised the destructive tendencies of mankind. Less successful responses approached the question in a narrative way and they needed to consider the fire's significance (particularly in its role as a signal) in the novel as a whole in much greater detail.

Question 6

There were many very effective renderings of Sam or Eric with candidates grasping their reasons for defecting to Jack's tribe and capturing their fear of Jack and Roger after the death of Piggy. Strong answers were firmly rooted in the moment but also reflected on Sam and Eric's experiences on the island. Their shame at betraying Ralph and willingness to help him as much as possible characterised effective answers. Some responses were written in voices that were far too mature and philosophical for young boys. Less successful answers either struggled to find an appropriate voice or wrote answers that could have reflected the immediate events in the novel prior to this moment, more clearly.

A Raisin in the Sun

Question 7

The strongest answers to this question focused clearly on the differences between Ruth and Walter and showed understanding of Walter's sarcastic, bitter tone at the beginning of the passage contrasting with his cajoling attitude to Ruth at its end. Ruth's disillusion with Walter's moneymaking dreams was also clearly understood. Some candidates would have improved their answers by more secure knowledge of the context or a sharper focus on the terms of the question.

Question 8

Strong answers here gave wide-ranging evidence from the play to support their understanding of Mama's strength and determination. Less successful responses tended to restrict their answers to Mama's plan or desire to own her own house. Her strength of character in dealing with her children needed some comment in order to answer the question fully.

Question 9

Less convincing answers confined themselves to Walter's feelings about the abortion. More perceptive responses saw that this is not Walter's main concern at that moment in the play and incorporated his obsession with becoming wealthy and his confidence that he would achieve his goal. As always, the strongest answers captured the characteristic features of the character's voice.

Death of a Naturalist

Question 10

There were some engaged responses both to the theme and to the power of the language in *Death of a Naturalist*. Strong answers paid close attention to how the poem embodies the end of childhood innocence by comparing the poet's excitement at the beginning of the poem with his horror at the end. The unpleasant and violent imagery was assessed in some detail. Less convincing responses tended to narrate and paraphrase and such answers would have been improved by closer attention to the terms of the question.

Question 11 and Question 12

There were far too few responses to these questions to make general comment appropriate.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 13

This question was answered well when candidates understood the context, commented on how Atticus's speech was constructed and looked at the power of the language. Successful comment varied considerably. Some answers concentrated on Atticus's challenge to Maycomb's prejudices, some on the build up to the climactic ending, others on his reaching out to every member of the court and the jury. Weaker answers tended to be insecure in their knowledge of the content of the speech or merely recounted what Atticus says. There was particular misunderstanding of the section of the speech where Atticus explores the situations in which men are not 'created equal'. The best answers showed awareness of rhetorical devices such as 'the power of three'.

Question 14

This question was generally answered very successfully with candidates responding to the warmth of Calpurnia's character. Good answers were characterised by detailed knowledge of the text. Incidents were cited such as the visit of Walter Cunningham, the mad dog incident and the children's trip to the First Purchase Church. The strongest answers understood how unusual it was that a black woman was held in such high esteem by a white family in the social and historical context of the novel and their answers were informed by such knowledge which was always linked closely to text and question. Less effective responses spoke in general terms about Calpurnia's motherly (hence likeable and trustworthy) qualities without proving this by specific reference to the text.

Question 15

Convincing responses to this question wrote in the voice of a child rather than an adult and hence did not make Jem too pompous. Such responses were also placed firmly at the end of the novel with an awareness of recent events such as the trial and the attack by Bob Ewell. Many answers also ranged widely over earlier incidents in Jem's relationship with his father. Key features were Jem's admiration for Atticus and how this developed considerably with Jem's growing understanding of Atticus's courage in taking on the Robinson case. Less successful answers either concentrated too much on the end of the novel or turned the essay into one on what Atticus had taught Jem rather than the wider focus of the question on how Atticus has brought the children up. Some candidates wrote as Scout rather than Jem.

Nineteen Eighty-four

Question 16

This is a powerful passage and candidates responded to its horror. Success depended on the extent to which candidates could analyse the language of the passage. O'Brien's cruelty was also the subject of much discussion and the strongest responses showed an informed knowledge of context and the novel as a whole.

Question 17

Most candidates chose appropriate moments in the novel to answer this question. The best answers showed clearly how the state was operating in their chosen incident.

Question 18

The most successful Mr Charringtons were imbued with satisfaction at having caught traitors and steeped in party loyalty and ideology. Such answers also demonstrated sound knowledge of Winston's role to Mr Charrington and reflected the entrapment of Winston. There were many impressive responses to the task.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 19

This question produced a wide variety of responses. This is a pivotal moment in the play and candidates who could see this and the drama inherent in almost every moment of the scene were rewarded for their ability to focus on the characteristics of the genre. There was an awareness, in strong answers, of the dramatic irony that only Romeo knows he has married into the Capulet family and that Mercutio's death will have tragic consequences. Such responses also noted the build up to the fight and the change from humour to horror as the scene unfolds. There was a worrying tendency in some answers merely to recount what happens in the scene in a purely narrative way without any reference to the question. There is no reward for knowledge of the plot per se and some candidates do need practice in relating the passage to the question asked about it. It is important that candidates are aware of staging and the likely impact of a scene on an audience. Candidates who showed such awareness of audience performed well.

Question 20

Good answers to this question saw that the Nurse loves Juliet and helps her to marry Romeo despite the feud but also acknowledged that she perpetrates the greatest betrayal in the play. Weaker answers tended to be far too kind to her or to concentrate purely on the early stages of the play. Perceptive candidates did comment on the difficulty of the Nurse's position and how vulnerable she would be to the wrath of the Capulets if her actions had been discovered. Success depended on a strong well-informed personal response or a balanced assessment. As always, the least successful answers lacked detailed textual support for their views.

Question 21

There were some very convincing Lord Capulets. Some candidates read the moment correctly as the one early in the play but allowances were made for those who thought this moment occurred after the death of Tybalt. The strongest responses captured Capulet's family pride, emphasis on wealth and status, rivalry with the Montagues and feeling that, although he wanted his daughter to be happy and cherished, she was his property and would do as he wished. Less convincing answers concentrated almost totally on his preparations for the wedding feast. These were often extremely lively and entertaining but were not as deeply rooted in his character and role in the play. Many candidates found an appropriate voice for him.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/53

Set Texts: Closed Books-B

General comments

Centres taking the examination in this session have made an impressive start in preparing candidates for this new single-text component. Candidates showed sound knowledge of the set texts and personal response to characterisation and theme. Many responses were engaged and enthusiastic. They were often well constructed, thorough and sustained with candidates making good use of the time available. There are areas in each type of question, however, where performance could be improved. In answer to passage-based questions, the focus should be on the passage itself and its language in particular. In some cases answers considered the plot and themes of the novel as a whole at the expense of making a detailed analysis of the passage. Close reference to the passage and direct quotation from it is essential for high reward. An awareness of genre, for example reference to stage directions in drama passages, also tends to be the mark of a strong answer. Answers to discursive questions often demonstrated wide-ranging knowledge of the text and an ability to balance an argument. Less successful responses would have been improved by precise textual reference to support the views expressed. Learning and using some key quotations would allow candidates to make their responses more convincing. Supporting points with specific moments from the text is essential for high reward.

There were some knowledgeable and lively answers to empathic questions. These questions were answered very effectively when candidates wrote in the voice of the character and identified the moment in the text carefully. Most responses captured the character's attitudes but some could have improved the credibility of the voice and underpinned the response with textual detail more successfully. The least successful answers tended to be generalised and repetitive. It can be difficult to maintain a credible voice, and concise answers often prove the most convincing. In poetry answers most candidates grasped the meaning of the poems and showed knowledge of Heaney's relationships with the natural world. The strongest answers showed skills of analysis, commenting on the imagery, diction and structure of the poems, with particular emphasis on their effect. Mere recognition of poetic terminology is of little help in writing a successful response. Selection of particularly effective diction, simile and metaphor and a simple comment on why the poet chose to use these would at the very least ensure adequate reward. Personal response to the ideas in the poem was lively and engaged.

The most successful answers really engaged with the question set and paid close attention to its wording. Less successful responses tended to write about broader themes or ideas, which related to the question without having much relevance to its precise requirements.

There were very few rubric infringements or incomplete responses.

Comments on specific questions

Whose Life is it Anyway?

Question 1

The strongest answers displayed a sensitive understanding of Ken's plight and the nature of his humour. They also saw how the passage marks the beginning of his wish to end his life. Less successful answers needed to analyse the passage in greater detail and to consider both its humour and its significance to the play as a whole.

Question 2

Candidates generally coped well with this question giving clear textual support and charting the development of the relationship between Ken and Dr Scott. The most successful answers took up the invitation in the question to respond personally.

Question 3

The most successful answers captured Nurse Sadler's ambivalence and the development there has been in her attitude to Ken as the play progresses. Less successful responses needed to consider Ken's feelings fully, as she undoubtedly would have done, as well as Nurse Sadler's own views on the outcome of the hearing.

Lord of the Flies

Question 4

Successful answers to this question perceived the contrast between the relatively peaceful opening to the passage and the drama of the trapped piglet and Jack's inability to kill it. The incident is dramatic in itself and strong candidates also made a detailed analysis of its significance as the last time in which the taboos of civilisation would apply on the island. The most perceptive responses commented on the dramatic contrast in the three boys' reactions to the 'candle buds' and what this foreshadowed. They also commented on the dramatic power of the language such as the piglet's squealing being 'needle sharp' and Jack's thwarted aggression shown in the 'slashing' and 'slamming' he performs with his knife. Less competent answers tended to ignore Ralph and Simon, to drift into narrative or to write in excessive detail about what Jack does later in the novel, at the expense of looking at what he does in the passage itself. The passage and its language must always be the primary focus.

Question 5

This question was answered effectively when candidates were aware of the conch as a symbol of order and democracy. Good answers tended to range widely through the text and could summon up key quotations on the aura of leadership it gives to Ralph, the beauty and fragility of the shell and its shattering into a thousand pieces towards the end of the novel. Such responses also commented on Piggy's relationship with the conch and the symbolic suitability of it 'dying' with him. Answers were less effective when candidates only considered the discovery of the conch and the first assembly. If candidates could have supported their points by close reference to the text their answers would have been more convincing. Some referred to the novel in only the most general of terms.

Question 6

The best answers to this question captured Ralph's shame and inability to come to terms with what the boys had done to Simon. Many cleverly had Ralph denying any involvement at the start of the essay, then revealing his trauma as the essay progressed. Less convincing voices, in order to convey Ralph's ambivalence, tended to write contradictory comments, which were confusing rather than illuminating.

A Raisin in the Sun

Question 7

This question was answered well when candidates focused on the presentation of Walter and gave their opinion of him. Stronger candidates used good evidence from the passage to show how unrealistic Walter's dreams are and were aware of the (doomed) business transaction that was about to take place. Few candidates commented on the tenderness between Walter and Travis or pointed out that Walter's dreams are not of a fairer society but one where he will have wealth and status.

Question 8

Strong candidates, in answer to this question, could provide good examples from the text for Beneatha's actions, but less effective responses did not develop opinions towards her. Candidates generally appreciated her desire for education, especially her wish to train as a doctor, though the uncertainty of what she is going to do at the end of the play was not considered. Most responses wrote balanced answers

considering both of the prompts in the question, although some seemed to rather arbitrarily pick the other in their conclusion.

Question 9

Most candidates found a credible voice for Ruth and some were very convincing. They appreciated that her 'dream' was of having a house and loving husband rather than pearl necklaces, and that she suffered the strain of putting up with Walter. Strong answers showed her appreciation of Mama and her determination. Ruth's pregnancy and its implications, beyond being glad for the space in the new house, could have featured more strongly. The best answers showed appreciation of the new Walter.

Death of a Naturalist

Question 10

Many candidates wrote well about the excitement in *Blackberry Picking*, giving appropriate quotation and looking at the effects of words such as 'glossy', 'lust', 'thickened wine'. The second part of the question about the child's disappointment was less well handled as if candidates had run out of steam before reaching the second stanza.

Question 11

Candidates who answered this question seemed to really engage with Heaney's fear of rats and his attempts to overcome his feelings in the poem. This led to some lively and fresh answers rooted in Heaney's language.

Question 12

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Question 13

There was a striking range of quality in response to this question. Candidates performed well when they understood the context of the passage: that Mrs Dubose had made derogatory remarks about Atticus, Jem had destroyed her camellias in retaliation and was made to read to her to learn that courage is more than a man with a gun in his hand. With this in mind, they could then explore the power of the revelations about Mrs Dubose along with Jem's initial fury and subsequent acceptance of her gift of forgiveness. This key passage in the novel, however, was not fully understood by some candidates who tended to write essays on growing up or Atticus as a father without much reference to the passage itself. Only the strongest answers commented on the power of the language in the passage such as 'Old hell-devil'...'white, waxy, perfect'. These answers also appreciated the nature of Mrs Dubose's 'addiction' and courage and could also see how this related to the forthcoming trial of Tom Robinson.

Question 14

This question was answered effectively when candidates found their evidence from the novel as a whole and compared the Cunninghams with the Ewells to highlight their significance as a beacon of hope in the novel. In this respect, strong answers mentioned the Cunningham at Tom's trial who kept the jury out for such a long time. Less effective answers needed to be clearer about Mr Cunningham's response to Scout in the lynch mob incident and to give more detailed support from the text.

Question 15

There was a wide range of response to this question. Some candidates reflected the aggression of Mayella's final words in the trial and her anger at the way she felt she had been treated by Atticus. Other candidates looked more closely at her possible inner guilt over her feelings for Tom and her responsibility for his prosecution. Fear of her father featured in most answers. Whatever the approach, a credible voice was necessary for high reward. Many achieved this with consummate skill, though some made her far too educated and articulate. Interest and engagement were features of most answers.

Nineteen Eighty-four

Question 16

Responses to this powerful passage were detailed and analytical. Candidates focused on the text 'terrifying' in the question and on the language of the passage. Strong understanding was shown of what exactly was terrifying about the children's behaviour in the context of the novel as a whole.

Question 17

In answer to this question candidates chose relevant incidents effectively and examined their significance.

Question 18

Answers were effective here when candidates showed sound knowledge of this first meeting with O'Brien and could recreate a credible reaction. Many candidates showed understanding of and engagement with Julia's character.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 19

Better answers to this question responded personally and gave good evidence from the passage to support their feelings about Romeo. Such answers recognized Romeo's desperation and anger and saw him as a victim of fate. The strongest answers saw that his harsh words to Balthazar reflected his need to be left alone rather than his 'violent tendencies' and that the fight with Paris is provoked by Paris's misunderstanding of the situation and Romeo's despair. Less effective answers needed to show understanding of the two aspects of the scene above and to make more use of the passage itself.

Question 20

The most successful answers here concentrated on what made Mercutio "'fascinating' and looked at both the comic and serious aspects of his character. Some candidates concentrated over much on his language without really engaging with what was fascinating about it. Some ignored the significance of his death. Attention to the terms of the question and personal response was required here and mere character sketches could not receive high reward.

Question 21

The strongest answers captured Juliet's despair and feelings about recent events. Some candidates needed to show a greater knowledge of context rather than repeating that Juliet would miss Romeo. Most candidates found an appropriate voice for Juliet.