

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11

Paper 11 (Open Books)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text
- ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question
- maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract
- using a well-structured and developed argument
- supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

Another key message is the importance of maintaining focus on the question. Candidates who lost sight of the key theme, or, in passage-based questions, the passage itself, struggled to develop a response sufficient for the higher bands if central ideas or sections of the passage were missed.

Candidates should be reminded that passage-based questions require more than narrative run-throughs. The whole of the extract is important, and it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for discussion. Although there is not necessarily a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it. Prompts such as 'dramatic', 'moving', 'powerful' are specifically intended to draw out a personal response and if they are ignored the answer will not demonstrate the engagement that is crucial for achieving the top Bands, no matter how competent the understanding of situation.

A significant number of candidates tried to apply a formulaic approach to all responses, evidenced by pencilled acronyms/mnemonics they wrote on the answer booklet. While this was a useful memory jogger for some, it could cause a problem, particularly with passage-based questions, when it led to extremely

disjointed answers that ignored what was actually happening in the extract and tried to organize the response mechanically into separate paragraphs on subject, form, language, purpose etc. By contrast, the best answers were those that integrated all these effectively to produce a developed, focused and coherent response.

The poetry drew some very sensitive and engaged responses this session. Candidates generally knew that it was important to focus on language and imagery, not merely to describe or narrate. Some candidates focused on the effect of rhyme and rhythm at the expense of meaning, but generally there were many enthusiastic and engaged answers. In weaker answers there was a tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be overused rather than words which identify effects precisely.

Candidates were usually disadvantaged when they wrote lengthy drafts, often as long as, and identical to, the answer itself.

There were fewer attempts at empathic questions this series, but most who tackled them knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. For success it was, of course, essential to have identified precisely the moment specified in the question.

Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 There is much that could be thought moving here. Candidates referred mainly to Willy's final and deluded dream about Biff, Ben's continuing malign influence to the very end, Linda's ignorance of the real meaning of Willy's utterances, and the way Miller uses stage sound to augment the climax as the characters transform into mourners. Differentiation came from engagement with the writing and the ways in which it moves the audience. This was a popular choice and one which was done very well by most candidates, particularly those who could clearly visualise the complex staging of this scene and were able to communicate its dramatic potential as a result. Generally there was much sympathy for Willy, understanding his failures and illusions. The incident of Willy dancing, unusually happy, was discussed well. Good answers used the stage directions as evidence in their argument to help focus their comments into sharp observations. Similarly the sound effects were utilised, including the gasp, 'sh', scream, and the car. The use of music in the scene was also commented upon widely with most recognising its part in making the tragic climax of the action so powerful. Biff's reaction was commented upon, candidates understanding that there was nothing to be done. There was good general knowledge about few mourners at the funeral. Weaker answers tended to focus on staging and the swift transition from Willy's happiness to his suicide, without tackling the finer detail or demonstrating broader knowledge of the play. They sometimes worked through the extract, getting diverted by writing a paragraph or two on the context and Willy's failure to achieve the American Dream. Most candidates had clearly engaged with this text and it is a credit to them that such a complex play, with its time shifts and flashbacks, was understood so well. There was a good deal of use of the term 'mobile concurrences' but in some cases it was not clear that candidates actually knew what it meant.
- 2 Despite Willy having profoundly dislikeable characteristics he desperately wants to do well by his family with ambitions which are not ignoble, does have moments of profound feeling and insight, and is in a predicament from which there is no escape without a bitter blow to his self-esteem. Some communication of an understanding of this with supporting detail was looked for, with evidence of engagement with the ways in which Miller makes the audience care. The best answers focused on Miller's methods and addressed both 'how' and 'care about'; weaker answers ignored the 'how' and provided a character study of Willy with the occasional comment on why we should sympathise with or pity him – some comments proving more relevant than others. An area that was sometimes not handled well was the concept of the American Dream. It tended to become a catch-all term to explain how Willy had gone wrong in life without close examination of how it specifically applies to him as an individual. Answers lacked conviction as a result, but the candidates who referred to Charley's valedictory speech at the end in this connection tended to demonstrate a more critical understanding of the major themes.
- 3 Linda is most certainly very angry and may be thinking about her sons' appalling behaviour and how they can have acted like this, her own responsibility for their selfishness, the effect it is likely to have

on Willy, and what she will say to the boys when they get home. Crucial to a good answer was the creation of a convincing voice for Linda. Responses generally managed to capture Linda's anger at her sons and her awareness of Willy's deterioration. As always, the best made use of detailed textual echoes; the weaker ones retold the plot, sometimes with direct lifting from the text of what she did say on their return.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 It was helpful to outline briefly the immediate context and the strong but sometimes fraught relationship that has existed between Brutus and Cassius up to this point. The characters of the two men were worthy of consideration. Brutus has always been deferred to by Cassius, and sees himself as a beacon of honourable behaviour. Cassius, the pragmatist and soldier, is deeply hurt that Brutus should think him dishonourable. The strength of their emotions, perhaps the fact that Portia has just died and the pressures of the situation just before the battle were worthy of exploration. Differentiation came from the depth in which candidates explored the power of the language and the dramatic conflict. Excellent knowledge of the text was displayed by many candidates. Most understood the context of this scene, and also the changed relationships within it. Quotation was generally used well. Brutus's feelings of guilt and disillusionment were recognised. There were some sound comments on Brutus's strong language; when two characters are involved in such a bitter row, the way they deliver the lines is just as important as the meaning of what they are saying in terms of the 'dramatic moment' suggested in the question. Better answers commented upon individual exchanges in this manner.
- 5 Answers usually focused on the fickleness of the Roman crowd, highlighted in the first scene when they have forgotten Pompey and are now following Caesar, on their self-interest (Caesar's will), on their readiness to turn to violence and to run out of control, e.g. the murder of Cinna the poet, on how they are despised by the higher classes but consciously manipulated by Caesar and Antony. There were also some well-developed responses with relevant detail and understanding of the crowd's fickle nature. Some strong answers considered how are sometimes used for comic relief, particularly in the early stages of the play, and how they are presented as a mob, not as individuals. By contrast, there were some rather mechanical answers which ran through the attempt to crown Caesar, Brutus and Antony at the funeral, Cinna the poet. There were a few outstanding answers which discussed what the play revealed about history, politics, democracy and the power of the people. The best quoted the crowd, freely pointing out the irony that they are seen as 'senseless' yet they have control.
- 6 Answers focused on Antony's shock and grief at the death of his friend, his feelings towards Brutus and the rest of the conspirators, Brutus's speech, how he can turn things to his advantage and avenge Caesar, and his plans for joining forces with Octavius. Discrimination came from the degree to which the voice was convincing, and the most successful answers conveyed genuine sadness and anger, and also the manipulateness of the character. The better answers in general tended to integrate phrases from the text – not in a purely narrative sense, but to highlight the significance of a key idea, e.g. a reference to specific phrases in Brutus's speech by Antony enabled candidates to really explore his bitterness.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7 This question was generally chosen by those who had the confidence to explore the language in detail and there were some very good answers which showed how the characters of Antonio and Sebastian are revealed through the aggressiveness and violence of their dialogue. The best answers thoroughly engaged with the tension, and with the noise and chaos of the apparently doomed ship. Less successful answers often remarked that the scene showed Prospero's power as a magician, when that is not known at this stage. Better responses took into account the physical business on the stage; recognising, for example, how a sense of chaos could be created by, amongst other things, the various entrances and exits. Most candidates recognised the way Shakespeare used the scene to introduce us to characters and how they might behave in the future.
- 8 This was the most popular question on the play, and the material was well known. The following points came up in most answers: Caliban is brutish and presented as savage, he has apparently attempted to rape Miranda, and his normal mode of discourse is truculent and abusive. He feels a sense of injustice and has a sense of grievance against Prospero, who, he feels, has cheated him of his birthright, and he is capable of a sense of wonder (e.g. 'The isle is full of noises') but lacks discernment. Many answers were very sympathetic, even to the extent of writing off the attempted

rape of Miranda as not really his fault because he has not been taught any better, omitting to mention his plot with Trinculo and Stephano to kill Prospero and seeing him entirely as a victim. The best explored his function in the play and the implications of nature and nurture. To score highly, candidates needed to move beyond a mere character study and to evaluate the different aspects of his character. Most candidates opted for a balanced response, highlighting the character's strengths and weaknesses often with impressive sensitivity. There were some interesting responses referring to aspects of colonialism. However, few took time to really explore the beauty of Caliban's 'island' speech (though some did mention that it was recited during the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games).

- 9 Ariel is about to gain a yearned-for freedom. He is likely to feel a sense of joyous excitement. He may reflect on the events of the past few hours and his own part in them. He may feel gratitude to Prospero at his release, but this may be tempered by a feeling of resentment at his servitude. He may think further back to his plight before Prospero's arrival. There were relatively few responses to this question but those who attempted it made a real effort to capture the voice. Although the voice may be elusive, candidates who were attentive to 'Where the bee sucks' found the song helpful in capturing it.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Most of the responses were appropriately precise. The triviality of Jack's complaints – with the attendant opportunity to comment on the foibles of the upper-classes – was well-understood by most. The absurdity of many of Lady Bracknell's assertions, coupled with her scarcely disguised self-interest, was also well-handled. Perhaps the most impressive answers highlighted the comic value of seeing the dramatic shift of the power relationship between Jack and Lady Bracknell. Reference to their initial encounter was central to this idea and it was taken up in the better responses. There was real enjoyment in many of these responses.
- 11 Gwendolen at times appears to be an obedient and dutiful daughter, but she may also be thought to be at times very like her mother in her determination to have her way and her ruthlessness at getting it, particularly in regard to Jack Worthing. This was successfully commented upon in most cases. Responses were not always well-organised but were quite astute – particularly those which took as their starting point the early remark by Algernon about how a daughter comes to resemble her mother.
- 12 Jack Worthing is a worried man likely to be thinking about his failure to persuade Lady Bracknell of his credentials as a son-in-law, what on earth he is to do about the mystery of his birth and how he is to present the demise of Ernest to all at the Manor House. He might be bemoaning Algernon's lack of trustworthiness in regard to what he has revealed to him about his life. The best answers not only gave evidence of Jack's concerns but also communicated his rising sense of desperation at his situation.

SECTION B: POETRY

- 13 Differentiation came from the extent to which candidates engaged with mood and the way in which it is conveyed. (Part L is full of grief and despair and LXVII is resigned and almost celebratory of Hallam. The words of L convey physical pain caused by the extremity of grief and also a loss of faith and sense of futility. LXVII is much calmer and more mystical. The imagery of L is harsh and physical ('blood creeps', 'nerves prick', 'pangs', 'Time a maniac' etc.), that of LXVII is calmer, associated with rest and peacefulness ('broad water of the west') and light ('silver flame', 'glory on the walls', 'moonlight dies' etc.).) The most successful saw a contrast in the two parts and movement from despair to acceptance. Less successful answers rolled both parts together and did not distinguish between them. There was much less biography in answers than has been the case in previous series, which was a great improvement.
- 14 The key word in this question was 'compelling' and the mystery and suspense of both stories was central to this. We know what happens next in *The Lady of Shalott* but not in *Mariana*, and in both stories there are unanswered questions. Other areas for exploration were the central characters and the extent to which we empathise with them, and the ways in which Tennyson creates a setting for the stories. Differentiation came from the extent to which candidates went beyond re-telling and showed a clear understanding of the writer at work. Understanding was more complete and there was much more personal engagement with these poems than with *In Memoriam*. Particularly impressive in responses to *Mariana* was the recognition of decay, or inertia at least, as conveyed

through the description of her surroundings. Candidates were also able to recognise the power of repeated lines in emphasising her mental stasis and persistent anguish. Particularly impressive in *The Lady of Shalott* was the awareness shown by some of Lancelot's lack of consciousness of the impact he has had upon the lady and the events his appearance has precipitated.

- 15 This was a less popular question than the other Tennyson options, but the poem was generally well known. Success was dependent on the amount of focus given to the word 'movingly'; it was not sufficient merely to describe Ulysses' feelings; the emotional impact of the words and imagery needed close examination and those candidates who showed sensitivity to his recognition that he was approaching the end of his life and recognising his loss of strength (and yet determined to push forward) achieved good marks.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: from Part 4

- 16 Focus here was explicitly on Hopkins's methods and elicited comment on the juxtaposition of words to create contrast and embody 'pied'; the way in which the entire poem is a hymn of praise and the individual details which corroborate this (the opening words, the repetition of 'For', the last line of the poem, for example); the poem's sense of inclusiveness (repetition of 'all', use of 'Whatever'); the use of (frequently alliterated) compound words and the rhythm and rhyme of the poem. Most candidates were able to stay focused on the question and recognised the poet's intentions in writing about nature in this way. Better responses recognised the sense of awe and wonder in the 'voice', illustrating the point by referring to the rhetorical question and the neologisms as well as the use of contrasting words for effect towards the end. One weakness in some answers was the failure to recognise that the landscape Hopkins refers to is man-made, and this aspect – developed in 'trades', 'gear' etc. – was largely overlooked, as if candidates could not make the connection between the work of God and the work of man. Most answers explored the language and imagery very thoroughly but there were some who gave only a general overview and some that focused entirely on the rhythm and rhyme, ignoring the meaning of the poem.
- 17 Candidates usually referred to the following: the general references to people in the first stanza and the details of city life (in particular, the smells) and references to organisation and crowding; the second stanza and its references to spaciousness, neglect and disorder; the contrast between the two and the movement from the general to the more particular ('Where I come from'); and the significance of the last two lines of the poem. Brewster's attitudes and preferences were clearly recognised and discussion of imagery was adequate, but it was rare to find that a candidate had grasped the whole sense of the poem as the final lines (which jar so strongly with what has gone before them) were overlooked in most cases.
- 18 As this was an open-choice question, candidates needed to ensure that their chosen poems contrasted natural and man-made things. They needed to refer in appropriate detail to two poems, demonstrate how their chosen poems contrast the natural and the man-made, offer some evaluation of how these contrasts are made striking, and move beyond giving an account of or listing literary features of two poems. Unsurprisingly, frequently the Brewster poem was chosen along with one of the city planning poems. Having to write about two poems proved challenging for a lot of candidates, and resulted in an 'overview' approach which did not allow for detailed consideration of individual images or lines. The dislike shown in all three poems towards the man-made city environment made it a challenge to highlight their individuality. Some candidates chose to write about one poem which dealt with natural things and one that dealt with man-made. Such an approach was allowable but tended to produce less convincing arguments than by choosing poems where both aspects were covered. *Lines composed on Westminster Bridge* produced some very good work.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19 Lockwood appears as someone who considers himself as a rather superior sort of gentleman, accustomed to be treated as such. His gentlemanly self-regard and composure is instantly and almost humorously destroyed by the dogs. Heathcliff is, like his house, rough and inhospitable and finds it highly amusing that his effete guest should be so discomfited by his dogs doing what they are supposed to. Most candidates who attempted this passage question demonstrated some understanding of Heathcliff and how he is presented; they tended to be less clear on interpreting Lockwood's character and the presentation of *Wuthering Heights* itself, however. These candidates

tended to focus on surface interpretation only; better candidates were able to engage with the implications conveyed through the language.

- 20 Heathcliff is an elemental figure of great strength and imagination in the grip of great passions. He disdains everything to do with polite society, and hence Linton. Linton is an educated and civilised gentleman who is physically timid and fearful of anything which is beyond reason, such as Heathcliff's violent passions. He sets great store by the values of polite society and detests what he sees as the boorishness of Heathcliff. Good answers explored the way in which the two characters are presented in some detail, commenting on the contrasting imagery associated with them even when they are children. Many considered them only from Catherine's point of view and thereby limited themselves to a narrower section range of reference, but generally there were some conscientious attempts to develop ideas.
- 21 Catherine is at this moment likely to be thinking that she is at long last at peace with herself, that both she and Hareton were brutalised by life at Wuthering Heights, and that neither saw the better and gentler qualities of the other. Now she has discovered that love is possible, life with Hareton is a truly delightful prospect. Some understanding of Catherine's situation and feelings in a voice communicating her blissful state of mind was looked for. This question was not as popular as the others, but those who attempted it generally understood the character and what she has been through. A few candidates confused the two Catherines.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22 Nyasha's state is precarious, brought about by her regime of hard study and self-neglect. She perceives herself to be contending against oppressive hierarchies of gender and race. She is a teenage schoolgirl challenging a system which has assimilated her parents and her only confidante is her younger cousin, the narrator. Differentiation came from the extent of response to the power of the descriptive writing throughout the extract, but particularly in the third paragraph where Nyasha's mood moves from frail vulnerability through bitter sarcasm to blazing anger. There was a genuinely personal response to many answers and real engagement with Nyasha's condition. Equally impressive was the way the overwhelming majority of candidates of all abilities dealt with the underlying causes of it. There was some inappropriate use of the word 'colonialism' which left a somewhat naive impression, but the concept itself was well understood and candidates were able to recognise her loss of identity and notion of being caught between two cultures and the demands of each. One danger was that, in explaining a relatively sophisticated theory, some answers moved away from the passage and become more generalised or abstract in nature. 'Deeper implications' were handled better than actual analysis of language in this context.
- 23 Life on the homestead is hard work and the living conditions are squalid. The narrator shows some affection for it, nevertheless; for example for the company of other children and for the river. Nhamo's reluctance to return once he had gone away to school is commented on unfavourably by the narrator, but she herself only visits infrequently after she follows in his footsteps. The rivalry between the narrator and her older brother looms fairly large in the early chapters, and was seen by the very few candidates who attempted this task as colouring our impressions of her early life.
- 24 Lucia's job offers her the prospect of more independence from the men in her life, which she will welcome. She is likely to be grateful to Babamukuru and determined to try to better herself. Although she does not share the views of the younger girls that she has compromised herself, her subsequent comments are rather more equivocal. She does retain some of her feistiness in her comments about Tambudzai's parents' wedding. Some strong answers displayed a mixture of gratitude and pragmatism in an appropriate voice.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25 Arun's whole life has been dominated by examinations and by cramming. His father has perhaps unreasonable expectations and may be thought to be reliving his life through Arun, and will not be deterred from his plans for him. He is being subjected to emotional blackmail by both parents. His physical appearance has been modified by study. Good answers considered Uma's sympathetic viewpoint. Differentiation came from commentary on key words and phrases, e.g. 'manic determination', 'scholarly toil', 'worn down', 'ground down' and 'stricken look'. There was incredibly strong sympathy universally felt for Arun, indicating real engagement with the novel. What stood out was the recognition of his sister's sorrow for her brother in nearly all responses.

- 26 Though it was expected that most candidates would choose to write about the American part of the novel, it was acceptable to consider the preparation and eating of food in India at the wedding banquets etc. and also in the way that some of the women are used almost as kitchen slaves after their weddings. There were very few answers to this question, but those there were usually showed they recognised how Desai contrasts the rich/overindulgent society of the USA with a more restrained Indian society, though both societies make food a central element of family life. Differentiation came through attention to the writing – the gross descriptions of the barbecue and so forth.
- 27 Aruna would be reflecting on Uma's marriage/wedding and all the efforts Mama went to. She would be thinking about the bridegroom, Haresh, and the ceremony, about Uma's letters home and Papa's reactions. Differentiation came from understanding of Aruna's character – pretty, vivacious, cleverer than Uma - and the creation of a convincing voice, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes mocking. Aruna mostly seemed unsympathetic towards her sister, being rather gleeful in many cases. Better answers wove in appropriate details from the text to show reasons for Aruna's opinion.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

- 28 Sampath's journey to work is hell through the chaos of early morning Shahkot, in which crowds from every conceivable occupation are intent on getting to work in the heat. It is made worse for Sampath by having Pinky to put up with and the final obstacle of the wire which every morning he forgets to duck under. Engagement with the ways in which the writing conveys this hellish vision was looked for, and there was some good teenage empathy with Sampath (similar to that which was evident in responses to Arun in *Fasting, Feasting*).
- 29 Mr. Chawla thinks his son to be a grave disappointment. He is lazy, has no ambition and is decidedly odd at times. Sampath thinks his father to be dedicated to making his life unbearable, and trying to make him into something which he cannot and does not want to be: in a word like his father. Response to the humour of the writing was a feature of better answers to this question. Candidates knew where in the novel to go for this question, and most were able to tune in to comedy in the early scenes.
- 30 There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate..

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31 The context is important here, and the understanding that this is a turning point in the novel. Gatsby's pretended unconcern about Nick's invitation of Daisy is completely false; the whole of the past five years has been building to this moment of reunion and all his hopes are centred on it. Candidates commented on Daisy's lack of awareness, Nick's excitement, and Gatsby's nervousness and pretended casualness, and the embarrassment of all three. Differentiation came from the focus on 'vividly', exploration of the language and dialogue, and close reading of the extract. This was the most popular question on the entire paper, and there was a wide range of performance, but in general the focus upon the passage was impressive. There was careful and effective examination of character dynamics, movement and speech, as well as the symbolism of the clock. References to the text were well-chosen and relevant. Though mixed, it was rare to read a very poor response to this question, with most recognising at least some of the ways tension is created and sustained.
- 32 This was another popular choice. Most tried to put both cases forward, but broadening the scope to include Myrtle and Jordan was usually a mistake; though the question does not insist upon it, there was clearly more mileage in focusing solely upon Gatsby's obsession with Daisy. It is the heart of the novel and its symbolism in terms of chasing the unattainable, particularly in the era the novel is set in, provides ample scope in itself to demonstrate a critical understanding of the author's concerns. Candidates considered the early days of the relationship before Gatsby goes off to war, Gatsby's dreams of a reunion with Daisy and his obsession with her, Daisy's character and marriage, and Nick's viewpoint. Balance was not required, but was usually the sign of a good answer. Less successful answers tended to be unclear what was meant by 'self-deception', and often just wrote about 'deception' or deceit in general.
- 33 Jordan might be thinking about the last meeting with Nick and Myrtle's death and its effect on her, Nick's behaviour at the time, and his relationship with Gatsby and with Daisy. Though she never seems to have expectations about Nick there will be a blow to her vanity. Jordan is usually quite jaunty and direct, but at this moment Nick says her voice is 'harsh and dry' rather than 'fresh and

cool'. This was far less popular than the other *Gatsby* questions. The relatively few candidates who attempted it understood the character, and were usually able to convey her pragmatism and her slightly wounded vanity.

Stories of Ourselves

- 34** Successful answers gave at least some brief reference to the predicament that Lord Emsworth finds himself in. Differentiation came from the extent to which the wit and humour of the writing was appreciated: the arrivals of 'rough and knobby physique', the description of Donaldson as a 'Roman Emperor', the reference to the magazines of people who take correspondence courses, and so forth. Some accomplished work conveyed good understanding of how comedy works.
- 35** The key words here were 'memorably' and 'the power that one character has over another'. *The Son's Veto* proved the most popular and successful choice. What distinguished the better responses to this time being taken to try to explore the character of the son himself. The vast majority went into great detail about his mother, but the boy was left a rather faceless symbol of sheer malignancy. There was a vague understanding often that his veto of his mother's dearest desire was to maintain his own social status, but this was not explored. In particular, the hypocrisy of a Christian minister in showing such little charity whilst preaching, no doubt, about love and fellowship makes him an incredibly odious character. There are issues of class and education and obligation. The father's domination of his son in *The Fly in the Ointment* centres on the importance of money. There is the lover's power over the narrator in *The Sandpiper*. The differentiator was the definition of what is meant by power and the way in which candidates went beyond mere narrative of their chosen story to engage with the writing and with the author's purpose.
- 36** There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

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General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

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Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 In general, candidates tackled this question fairly well, though there was often a lack of attention to the dramatic nature of the scene and reluctance to imagine this in performance. Most recognised that Willy's optimism shifts throughout the passage and some were able to show that this was typical of his character through the play. There was little evident engagement with the invitation to make a personal response as this reflects the need to understand the drama.
- 2 Most candidates spent time writing about surface details of the relationship between Bernard and Biff and ignored Happy. Perceptive answers attempted to examine the way the boys were influenced by upbringing and examined Charley and Willy as fathers, tending to focus discussion on Willy and his vision of the American Dream versus Charley and the 'hard-work' approach to success.
- 3 Answers usually attempted to reflect some of the language features evident in the drama. There were plenty of 'kids' and 'oh boys' language tics used, but not necessarily by Willy in the play. Some candidates attempted to explore the psychology of Willy in some depth and this tended to produce a character full of self-loathing and remorse prepared to grovel at the feet of Howard. This did not reflect the deluded Willy of the play, however. Some candidates relied fairly heavily on the passage in Question 1, making reference to Willy's anxiety over bills and his looking forward to the meal with his sons (all this is of course relevant in context but it tended to be overused to the exclusion of other textual reference). Most presented Willy as largely confident, though a few were able to portray his fragile state of mind.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 Differentiation was expected to come from focus on the word 'strikingly', close examination of the words and images of Brutus's speech and of the dynamics of the meeting. Most candidates were able to provide an interpretation of the scene and demonstrate understanding of the concerns of the principal players and of language issues. However, there were problems with responses when candidates chose to interpret the question as an invitation to provide a character study of Brutus and ignore the other conspirators. More successful answers demonstrated an understanding of the contrast between Cassius and Brutus and their contrasting leadership styles. Few explored the word 'striking' in the question. Where the other conspirators were considered the focus was mainly on Cassius and the potential gathering tension amongst the others largely ignored.
- 5 Answers focused mainly on the relationship between Antony and Octavius ignoring Lepidus; an ironic sidelining, as this suggested something about the character of Lepidus which might have enriched responses. Some candidates concentrated almost entirely on Antony and his speech after Caesar's assassination, ignoring the later scenes and the other two members of the triumvirate.
- 6 Most candidates were successful in being able to show Calphurnia's grief and love of Caesar and made reference to her dream and sorrow at being unable to persuade Caesar to stay away from the Senate. Several candidates projected unlikely knowledge of the whole conspiracy on Calphurnia, and made reference to events that happen much later on in the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7 Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the passage and its context within the play. Answers tended to be descriptive and focused on plot and characterisation over close examination of language and ‘powerfully dramatic’.
- 8 Very few candidates answered this question. A few answers were unable to build an argument for either of the portrayals of Gonzalo and changed their opinion half way through their argument. Most demonstrated a reasonably thorough knowledge of the character and play as a whole.
- 9 The candidates who answered this question were generally reasonably successful in producing a convincing voice for Caliban, especially regarding his relationship with Prospero and his fear of future punishment. Few candidates made reference to the events shared with Stephano and Trinculo.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Candidates commented on the surreal circumstances of Jack’s early life, Lady Bracknell’s mounting outrage, her withering amazement at this flouting of all social conventions and Wilde’s ability to produce the most dramatically witty and memorable of lines. Most were able to identify the comedy in the absurdity of the situation and Lady Bracknell’s unreasonable ‘advice’ for Jack to ‘produce’ parents. Some seemed to misread the question, or – more likely – were determined to answer a slightly different question than the one that was asked. As ever, writing about comedy or ‘comic’ material proved challenging for many. Those who misread the question often left this word out completely and just discussed the passage as ‘memorable’. Even here, it is surely the comedy that makes it memorable, but some somehow contrived to sidestep this. More focus was needed on how Wilde uses language and tone to create this sublime comic moment. Very often candidates were determined to write about social commentary on the upper classes, but contented themselves with identifying this without discussing how Wilde made it so comical. Some were aware of the fact that Lady Bracknell’s reference to the French Revolution was comic, but few showed how Wilde made this so.
- 11 Candidates showed some appreciation of the ways in which Wilde consistently turns accepted notions on their head, how he engineers surprises in the plot such as the denouement of the play and how the laughter is generated. With a wide selection of suitable passages to choose from, most candidates were fairly successful in this question. Weaker candidates tended to narrate the episodes instead of exploring Wilde’s writing and the dramatic effectiveness of ‘surprise’.
- 12 Candidates writing as Lady Bracknell were often not writing as Lady Bracknell on the journey the question asks about. However, there were some clearly recognisable monologues offered, and candidates were able to capture the hauteur quite successfully at times.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON: *Selected Poems*

- 13 Good answers focused on the light and energy of the extract. Weaker ones concentrated on the narrative, often with misinterpretations of the Lady’s motivations (she wants to marry him; she has fallen in love etc.) and no reference to how the attractiveness of Lancelot overwhelms common sense. Some candidates seemed confused about what ‘attractiveness’ might entail. Answers were generally approached stanza by stanza, missing some of the imagery that recurs throughout. The weakest answers paraphrased the poem. Several candidates seemed to think that the Lady was named ‘Shalott’ (or ‘Shallot;’) and did not seem to have an understanding of the poem in context. Others relied heavily on background/contextual knowledge, avoiding focus on the question and this specific extract.
- 14 Candidates who answered this question were successful in selecting suitable extracts to illustrate Tennyson’s changing feelings about Hallam’s death and stronger candidates were able to show how images, symbols and other poetic devices could be compared to illustrate this change. . Differentiation came from the extent of the sharpness of focus on *changing* feelings and on ‘vividly’ i.e. the sense of the writer at work.
- 15 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate..

SONGS OF OURSELVES: From Part 4

- 16 This was a very popular question, with plenty of opportunity for engagement with poetic language. Many sound answers referred to aspects such as: the recurrent use of the third person plural pronoun as if to distance the planners from 'us', the syntactical variation of the two first sentences followed by rather longer ones, the contrast between the planners and the sea in lines 7-9, the imagery of cosmetic standardisation in the second stanza, the references to time and history in the later parts of the poem, the imagery of dentistry in particular, the poet's apparent approval of 'flaws', 'blemishes' and 'stain'. Most candidates were reasonably successful in using the language of the poem to show how Cheng either seemed to have an approving or disapproving attitude towards the planners. Weaker candidates demonstrated a general understanding of the poem and poetic effect, but were unable to show how this affected our interpretation of Cheng's *attitude*. A significant number were tripped up by the last stanza, not knowing how to reconcile their understanding of this section with the rest of the poem. There was also a tendency to spend too much time on contextualising the poem. As usual, however, there were candidates who clearly understood the poem but who did not explicitly answer the question, merely implying Cheng's attitude. Occasionally this was clear enough, but at times it was so unclear it was impossible to determine whether the candidate in question had fully understood the poem. Such answers were self-penalising. The best answers made something of the ending of the poem – weaker answers tended to ignore it or made personal responses which were not really secure.
- 17 Many seemed to find it difficult to discuss the relationship between man and nature whilst demonstrating an engagement with poetic language. Most candidates explained the poem stanza by stanza without engaging with the question. The more secure answers referred to the animal behaviour described in the first two stanzas, the similarity of this to the poet's behaviour in lines 9-10 and the effect of the image of the grasshopper, and the significance of the final stanza.
- 18 Few candidates managed to demonstrate what structure had contributed to poetic intention. Where they did write about it the responses tended to be arid descriptions of the way sonnet form worked ('The first part of the poem is the octet ... the second part is... the rhyme scheme is ... it makes the poem flow...') Most ignored the effect of the poem on readers. Many candidates who attempted this question simply hoped to get by writing the words 'sonnet form' over and over again in an attempt to convince the Examiner that they were answering the question. While most candidates seemed aware of the form of a sonnet, few were able to show how this had any bearing on the reader's experience of the poem. A few strong answers on *The Cockroach* considered the form as a vehicle for conveying a reflective and self-reflective quality of the poem's thought, showing how detailed description of the insect's behaviour and the developing speculation about the causes of this behaviour from line 8 onwards subverts the traditional sonnet forms, and considering how the use of caesura in the last four lines sharpens the impact of the final line.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19 Stronger answers focused on the text and the language of the text to demonstrate character understanding. Weaker answers used the passage as a springboard to describe the whole narrative.
- 20 Candidates were able to explain what Nelly Dean contributed to the narrative, but only the strongest explored the challenges of her character: the language she uses; her relationship with characters; her relationship with readers.
- 21 There were some successful empathic assumptions of Edgar Linton facing his death in despair.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22 Differentiation came from the detail in which the language is explored (with comment on such terms as 'piccannin') and from the understanding of viewpoint; the episode is being observed by the narrator as a young child. Most candidates could write with some detail and understanding. There was a good knowledge of themes and events in evidence. Candidates had obviously enjoyed the book and identified with it.

- 23 Candidates found Lucia an interesting character, and in general had been well prepared for discussing her. They usually commented on the way she dominates Takesure at the dare, and her directness and fiery honesty and the way she follows her appetites were seen as admirable by some.
- 24 Candidates who tackled this seemed to enjoy writing from the viewpoint of Nyasha, giving her a clear and opinionated voice. There was evidence of appreciation of her feelings of alienation and isolation.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25 There was evidence of enjoyment and understanding of the text, and answers provided interesting insight into plot and character. This was a long passage and candidates tended to focus on broad themes within the narrative and how they were revealed in the passage, e.g. Uma's bid for spiritual and actual freedom; Aruna's general discontent. They generally did this well and gave evidence of clear understanding, but not necessarily *critical* understanding. There was plenty of language detail to focus on here but this was not pursued by many. Some candidates focused on the second part of the passage (the incident with Uma's near drowning) and concentrated discussion on what the passage revealed about Uma's character, rather than Aruna's visit as a whole. Other candidates produced a character sketch of Aruna and emphasised her desire to 'achieve perfection'.
- 26 This was well handled by many, although there were some answers which worked to a formula, providing 'this is India, this is America' –type responses with no real comparison. More effective answers were able to provide insightful responses to cultural differences often revealing perceptive similarities in aspects of family life. Weaker answers digressed into (personal) discussions about preference for one culture over the other, often making reference to the candidate's own general knowledge that was not always presented in or relevant to the novel.
- 27 Most candidates were able to make a reasonable attempt at a convincing voice for Mrs Patton, showing her genuine affection for Arun and dissatisfaction with her own family life, usually giving her a slightly nervous, hesitant and sometimes sad voice.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

- 28 The extract moves from Sampath's characteristic day dreams, to mounting joy and ecstasy, to the felt need to share this exquisite world with the assembled company by communicating unbridled joy, a joy which, of course, is certainly not shared by the shocked onlookers. Candidates were generally able to identify, through the writing, what made this amusing. There were some interesting responses to this. Some got to grips with language and effects; others merely listed all the 'amusing' things that Sampath, the squealing ladies and Mr D.P.S did. A small number of struggled to see the incident as at all amusing because it was perceived to be a shameful and disrespectful act especially as it took place at a wedding. They found it difficult to detach from this viewpoint to write about Desai's methods.
- 29 Candidates tended to focus on narrative issues here such as Sampath's knowledge about the letters and Mr Chawla's needs to make money. They seemed aware that there was satire in the novel but they struggled to express clearly how Desai was presenting it. There was generally quite a lot of relevant narrative of incident or reference to relevant action, but little or no developed response as to how Desai was using this to make fun of the way people behave towards gurus and holy men. At times the narrative became little more than just this, a self-penalising approach.
- 30 There were some very funny, outraged self-absorbed empathic responses here which revealed good understanding of the aggressive energy of Pinky's character.

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31 Differentiation came from the detail in which the language was examined and the viewpoint considered. Many candidates were able to focus on Fitzgerald's writing and used the passage to provide clear evidence that they understood how he had crafted this character. Some weaker candidates still wanted to provide extensive narrative overview which missed the potential for marks.

- 32 It was expected that answers would consider the narrative voice and the extent to which it is reliable, his relationship with Gatsby and the nature of his relationship with Daisy, his commentary on the people who inhabit Gatsby's world. Candidates needed to define 'honesty' within their own understanding as readers and within the context of the novel to answer the question well. Many chose to focus on surface details of Nick's lifestyle and then 'stick' the notion of honesty on to that without having suggested what the qualities of honesty might be in the first place. To be answered fully, the question requires a personal response as only the reader can really judge Nick's honesty. Many answers tended to describe narrative moments which did not get to the heart of the question.
- 33 Many candidates got narrative details wrong. Some had Daisy knowing who Myrtle was, or had Gatsby driving the car when it hit Myrtle. There was some echo of a voice for Daisy but very few managed to sustain it. Answers to this question tended to err on the side of melodrama, with Daisy seemingly quite hysterical in some answers. Few were successful in demonstrating knowledge of the context of Daisy's thoughts, although most tried to show her conflicting feelings about both Gatsby and Tom. Some referred back to the argument with Tom as a flashback, others focused only on the accident. Apart from Daisy's panic, fear, and speed, the voice was not strong, with some confusion about what she actually feels about Gatsby and how far she is planning her future while driving after the crash, giving Daisy more logic and serious intelligence than she perhaps has.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

- 34 This question gave candidates considerable opportunity to explore language and effect and candidates were generally reasonably successful in accomplishing this, and there was plenty of evidence of strong personal engagement with the extract. A few seemed confused by 'disturbing', interpreting it as 'disrupting' rather than 'troubling'. Some digressed from the passage into a prolonged and unnecessary explanation of the story's post-war-time context.
- 35 Candidates needed to focus on sympathy (which could also extend to empathy) and develop an argument. Vital considerations were the way the mother is bullied by her son and the way in which Sam is despised by the son and fobbed off by the mother. Some candidates assumed that the need for sympathy would be understood from the details of the story alone and merely gave a narrative outline. A number of candidates did not mention Sam in any way. More successful candidates recognised the cumulative effect of Sophy and Sam's tragedy on the reader's sympathy and the strongest answers showed how Hardy's writing prompted a sympathetic response.
- 36 In general, this was the best done of the empathic questions on this paper, with candidates often willing and able to supply small textual details from the story as they recalled the first ball. Leila's voice is quite distinctive and candidates found it reasonably easy to get somewhere near it in their monologues. The best answers were able to offer a range of thoughts, feelings and reactions to the events she had experienced.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13

Paper 13 (Open Books)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text
- ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question
- maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract
- using a well-structured and developed argument
- supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

Another key message is the importance of maintaining focus on the question. Candidates who lost sight of the key theme, or, in passage-based questions, the passage itself, struggled to develop a response sufficient for the higher bands if central ideas or sections of the passage were missed.

Candidates should be reminded that passage-based questions require more than narrative run-throughs. The whole of the extract is important, and it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for discussion. Although there is not necessarily a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it. Prompts such as 'dramatic', 'moving', 'powerful' are specifically intended to draw out a personal response and if they are ignored the answer will not demonstrate the engagement that is crucial for achieving the top Bands, no matter how competent the understanding of situation.

A significant number of candidates tried to apply a formulaic approach to all responses, evidenced by pencilled acronyms/mnemonics they wrote on the answer booklet. While this was a useful memory jogger

for some, it could cause a problem, particularly with passage-based questions, when it led to extremely disjointed answers that ignored what was actually happening in the extract and tried to organize the response mechanically into separate paragraphs on subject, form, language, purpose etc. By contrast, the best answers were those that integrated all these effectively to produce a developed, focused and coherent response.

Candidates were usually disadvantaged when they wrote lengthy drafts, often as long as, and identical to, the answer itself.

There were fewer attempts at empathic questions this series, but most who tackled them knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. For success it was, of course, essential to have identified precisely the moment specified in the question.

Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 This was by far the most popular question on this text. There were some perceptive responses to the dramatic impact of this self-contained flashback. Candidates were well prepared for the topic and had no difficulty with the words 'illusions' and 'reality'. Most explored in some convincing detail Willy's central speech about 'the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead'. The delusions of the Loman father and sons were often effectively contrasted with the young Bernard's more sober grip on reality, a world in which you study and work hard in order to succeed. Stronger responses were able to place this flashback in the context of a present in which Bernard was the one who was successful.
- 2 This was a much less popular question than the passage-based text. The few responses seen were largely character sketches, pointing out the importance of Charley's financial assistance to Willy, and were able to offer a few direct quotations. These responses did not deal adequately with Miller's use of this character as a contrast to Willy, and tended to forget the key words of the question 'dramatic contribution'. There was little evidence to suggest that candidates were responding to a play, intended for performance. Most referred to the 'book'.
- 3 Again, there were very few responses. They captured something of the moment specified in the question (after Willy has left Howard Wagner's office) and Willy's predicament, but the voices for Howard were rarely convincing.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 Focus on 'powerful' and commentary on the emotionalism of Brutus and the ambiguity of Antony's speeches was a key differentiator. Candidates tended to focus on Antony but there was some confusion as to whether he was joining the conspirators or not. Very few answers explored the word choice in this richly emotive passage, though supporting quotations were offered. The 'powerful' element of the question was not well served without exploration of language.
- 5 Some candidates interpreted 'unreasonable' as meaning 'had no reason for doing something.' A few also saw 'vain' in the sense of 'in vain', which skewed their approach. A large majority of candidates dealt with this question solely on the basis of Act 3, or Acts 1-3. Very few saw that Acts 4 and 5 provided useful material. Thus their answers tended to be focused on Brutus's role in the assassination and the 'unjustified murder' of his great friend, which limited their approach. Some did grasp the significance of Cassius's influence, but not of the Brutus-Cassius falling-out in Act 4.
- 6 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7, 8, 9 There were far too few answers on this text to make general comment appropriate.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Many of the responses clearly found this extract, in the words of the question, 'delightfully absurd'. Some simply catalogued the lines they found amusing, often with lengthy quotation. The topsy-turvy nature of Wilde's aphorisms was discussed in better answers, sometimes with a degree of originality. Most had, for example, something worthwhile to say about Gwendolen's 'In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing'. The stronger responses explored convincingly the effects of the stylised language and structure of the extract, and the melodramatic actions indicated in the stage directions. A few responses took matters very literally, without any appreciation of Wilde's sense of the absurd.
- 11 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.
- 12 The majority of candidates tackling this task showed a clear engagement with the humour of the play. Their responses usually gamely attempted the voice of Miss Prism, conveying her surprise at the turn of events towards the end of the play. Most were able to include echoes from the text, alluding to capacious handbags, railway termini and three volume novels. Some explored entertainingly her affections for Dr Chasuble.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Selected Poems*

- 13 There was a general ignorance of the context and hence the significance of tone and mood. Quite a number of answers seem to have been approached as 'unseens'. 'Moving' tended to be a term thrown in randomly but not demonstrated. In better answers, differentiation came from the extent to which candidates focused on the word 'moving' and saw the poignancy of this final section in coming to terms at last with the death of Hallam. Response to the last two-and-a-half lines was important to this.
- 14,15 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 4*

- 16 Some responses attempted a paraphrase of the poem but found difficult the two rhetorical questions at the beginning of the second stanza which take readers to the core of the poem: 'Which language / has not been the oppressor's tongue? / Which language / truly meant to murder someone?' Some candidates understood the poem perfectly but, again, did not fully consider the strongly emotive language shift between stanzas, and the effects of language in the second stanza. The best answers realized that the tone of the poem is crucial and considered the link between the title of the poem and the last few lines.
- 17 In general, those who attempted this question were at least able to deal with the broad outline of the poem, with the speaker awake at night time. Stronger responses embarked on a closer exploration of language relating to the moon and clouds, and the vividness of the descriptions.
- 18 There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19, 20, 21 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22, 23, 24 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25, 26, 27 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

28, 29, 30 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31** This was the most popular question on this text, and many candidates made at least some reasonably developed response to the detail of the extract and to the key word of the question 'disturbing'. Most captured the oppressiveness of the alcohol-filled moment, with Nick unable to get away. Some wrote persuasively about the disturbing nature of the values captured by Fitzgerald here: the adultery, and the shallowness and materialism evident in Myrtle's list: 'A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays...' There were strong personal responses to the extract's one-sentence paragraph in which the most disturbing action, Tom's breaking Myrtle's nose, is described with a shocking abruptness. Some outrage was expressed at the dog being forced to sit in the smoke-filled room.
- 32** Far fewer responses were seen to this than to Question 31, and they were less effective – probably because candidates wanted to write either character sketches of both Gatsby and Nick or a response to an essay that had not been set: Nick as 'unreliable narrator'. Differentiation came from the degree to which the answer went beyond a character sketch of Nick to see him solely from Gatsby's point of view and also the consideration of the narrative voice here and the reliability of Nick's presentation.
- 33** There were some genuine attempts to capture Daisy's voice, and the best answers had her wrapped up in her thoughts which ended mid-sentence at the collision. Some gave Daisy more depth of thought and guilty conscience than most would; no-one suggested that Daisy might not care about the bootlegging, but several picked up that her social status was now at stake. The least convincing responses lacked a detailed grasp of the moment and what had led up to it. Some tried to wrench the moment towards an 'as live' account of Myrtle being knocked over ('Oh my God!') and there was some unhelpfully anachronistic language here ('Gatsby, you scumbag...').

from ***Stories of Ourselves***

- 34** Some dealt well with the detail of this question, offering apt quotations to support points made. For others it seemed to be approached as an 'unseen', as there was confusion as to the identity of the two men in the last paragraph, and even to Randolph's (the father's) relationship with Sophy (his daughter). 'How does Hardy make you feel' provoked some unusual, and very personal replies, but generally indignation and anger predominated. There was some misreading, for example that Randolph was full of remorse in the final paragraph.
- 35** Candidates went beyond narrative to focus on significant detail and explore the language of the stories. In weaker answers, 'significant experience' was not always clearly identified and there was a tendency to a narrative approach, as well as overlooking the question's key word 'memorable'.
- 36** There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/02

Coursework

Key messages

Effective task-setting is vital to success in this component. When framing tasks, teachers should check that the wording allows candidates to meet the relevant assessment criteria.

Teacher annotation of candidate work is an important part of the moderation process, enabling Moderators to see how a centre's marks have been arrived at.

All relevant paperwork, including mark sheets and candidates' individual record cards, should be completed accurately and checked before submission.

General comments

All Moderators commented on the high quality of much of the work they read. Many assignments submitted were a pleasure to read and were testament to the hard work of candidates and their teachers. A wide range of texts was in evidence, the vast majority having a suitable level of demand for IGCSE. It was pleasing, too, to see in many Centres a commendable variety of tasks. It is nowadays rare to see all candidates from the same Centre responding to the same tasks.

There was a very small minority of work that did not meet the syllabus requirements. It is worth pointing out in this regard that the syllabus does not permit the study of texts translated into English. In addition, candidates should write about a minimum of two stories or two poems in poetry or short story assignments. In practice, two stories or poems provide sufficient scope for candidates to demonstrate their skills of sustained critical analysis.

The syllabus makes it clear that the suggested word count of between 600 and 1000 words per assignment is a 'guideline' and, therefore, not mandatory. No penalties are applied for assignments longer than 1000 words. That said, there was evidence of some overly long assignments which lost focus, became repetitive or included extraneous background material. Such writing often detracted from the analytical quality of critical essays. Very long empathic responses tended to revisit key moments from the text, perhaps because candidates felt they had to continue writing in order to reach a certain word limit.

Most Centres gave careful thought to the framing of tasks, but there were still some instances of tasks being set that did not allow candidates to meet all of the assessment criteria. For example, tasks such as 'Who is to blame for Eva Smith's death [or Gatsby's death]?' or 'Is Willy Loman a good man?' do not invite candidates to explore writers' techniques. Even at Band 5, there is an expectation that candidates 'make a little reference to the language'. At Band 2, candidates should 'respond *sensitively* and *in detail* to the way the writer achieves his/her effects'. The tasks above do not enable candidates to fulfil these requirements of the band descriptors. There is, for example, no mention of the writer in these tasks. A more suitable task on the character Willy Loman might be:

To what extent do you think Miller makes Willy Loman a good [OR sympathetic] character? Support your ideas with details from the play.

All teachers within a Centre should discuss the wording of tasks at the start of the course in order to ensure that the tasks are fit for purpose. Centres should refer to the guidance on task-setting found in the 0486 Coursework Training Handbook, which contains examples of good (and bad) tasks. The set texts question papers provide further useful examples of effective task-setting at IGCSE level.

For the majority of Centres there was clear evidence of internal standardisation having taken place. In these Centres, the assignments themselves and the candidate record forms bore evidence of debate among

teachers about the appropriateness of particular marks. It must be stressed that ticking, marginal comments and summative comments (the latter at the end of assignments or on the record card) are an **essential** part of the dialogue between the Centre and the Moderator. Indeed such comments are an important part of the dialogue between teachers within Centres before the coursework is submitted. Ticks should indicate valid, thoughtful, sensitive points made by the candidate. Brief comments should note strengths and weaknesses, drawing at least in part on the wording of the band descriptors. In this way a meaningful dialogue can take place about the award of any particular mark, with all interested parties focusing on the detail of the assessment criteria. By contrast, assignments bearing no teacher annotation or comments unrelated to the assessment criteria (e.g. 'a really enjoyable essay to mark') do not assist the moderation process.

Finally, the majority of Centres are to be congratulated on the robustness of their administration, recognising the central importance to their candidates of the proper completion of forms and the careful transcription of marks from assignments to record cards and mark sheets.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31
Alternative to Coursework (Unseen)

Key Messages

- Clear focus on the question and the bullet points will help to ensure concentration on the writing, prompting a response to individual details and also to the overall impression of the writing.
- Candidates should arrive at some judgements about the overall mood and tone of a text during their initial reading, and before they start writing. This will give their interpretations greater consistency and cohesion. Responses are stronger if candidates have planned them, with a strong idea of how they will end their essays.
- Literal understanding is important, as well as engagement with figurative meaning. Candidates should begin by establishing what is clearly stated, before speculating about possible implied meanings.
- The last line of a poem or final sentence of a prose extract is often the key to a lucid appreciation of the whole text.
- Candidates should be prepared for answering on poetry and prose; their choice between them should depend on the text on the question paper which appeals to them more.

General comments

On the evidence of the majority of scripts, teaching for this component has equipped most candidates with the knowledge and understanding of genre needed to tackle very different styles of writing from exam series to exam series. It has provided most candidates with a robust quotation-and-comment technique allowing them to begin to analyse the writers' craft, and has developed their skills of argument, so that they can present personal responses which are nevertheless firmly grounded in awareness of the question set and the writers' purposes.

Past reports have highlighted the need to plan answers before writing; the advisability of an overview of the whole text in the opening paragraph, and a clear sense of interpretative direction throughout; the vocabulary and tools which could be used to make responses to prose as analytical as those to poetry; and ways of using syntax and structure to make overall sense of poetry. This last piece of advice remains highly relevant: candidates this series could have avoided misinterpretations of lines of poetry if they had been aware that their meaning is explained by reading them within the context of the whole stanza instead of in isolation.

There is scope for Centres to pass on more advice to candidates about the requirements of this paper, and to give some specific guidance on responding to the two genres under exam conditions. The question is given in bold type, and always encourages a personal response and reaction. It also expects candidates to consider the overall impact of the whole text, as well as to explore details of the writing. Candidates should therefore not begin writing until they already have quite a good idea of what they want to say. The best answers were usually about three sides long and had been planned.

It was encouraging to see more candidates choosing prose passages this series.

The bullet points are advisory not compulsory, but they do give candidates relevant help. They help them to focus successively on aspects of the writing, and the writer's choice of detail, and on evaluation of the overall cumulative impact. They also help candidates to read the texts carefully and in sequence, instead of a more random spotting of 'semantic fields' (words taken out of context, in many cases), poetic or narrative devices, or speculative character- or situation-based comment. Of course, some very good candidates find their own way into the text, without needing the lead or steer provided by the bullets, but most discover that they

provide a helpful framework. The final bullet point often allows candidates to consider the way a passage ends, and how this can inform the mood and tone of the whole extract, and the way in which a reader reacts or responds to it.

A good critical response needs to demonstrate overall understanding of the mood and direction of the whole text, which may not be clear from the outset. It is for this reason that we recommend reading the text carefully twice before beginning to plan and write. Weaker responses often show a fuller understanding of a complex text only halfway through the essay, and some candidates can be so unsure about how to interpret a text that they 'hedge' and provide two contradictory interpretations within their response. Examiners who mark this paper are not looking out for misreadings to penalise, but for insights which they can reward. The higher marks are likely to go to interpretations of the texts which show consistency and cohesion, and have a clear argumentative direction, supported by comment on textual details.

Well-integrated and brief quotation tends to illustrate the best responses, when quotation is used as an opportunity to comment on the impact of words or images on the reader, instead of simply allowing paraphrase. Centres with significant numbers of more successful candidates have clearly encouraged their candidates to voice independent arguments, support these with quotation and then comment on how the writer's use of language makes a deep impression on the reader, exploring implied as well as explicit meaning. However, it is important not to detach words and phrases from their context: their sense within the syntax of the sentence they are drawn from remains important. Literary response is not simply about word association. In the case of poetry, it is important to read over line-endings, in order to be sure who a word or phrase refers to, and how its implications are related to its sense within the whole stanza. Similarly in prose responses, a clear understanding of syntax and sentence structure can help to establish not only meaning but also mood, as sentence variation can often determine the reader's response. It helps to work through passages in chronological sequence, as the structure of a text is part of its meaning, which often depends on a process of gradual revelation. The last line of a poem, or the final sentences of a prose passage often help readers to determine the direction of a text, and so to have a clearer understanding of their initial tone. It is easier to find your own way through a map if you are clear about your final destination; similarly, the ambiguities or uncertainties of a piece of writing are easier to disentangle if you know the end point to which they are directing you. If candidates are taught to identify the mood of the final words or last sentence, they may find it easier to clarify the tone of the whole text.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Adrienne Rich's 'Song' expresses a series of ideas, images and emotions which are unusual, especially for teenagers. The success of responses to this question tended to depend on the extent to which candidates could appreciate the tone, and striking independence of both the writing and sentiments expressed. For many candidates, the idea of celebrating being alone or being different seemed to be too alien to contemplate seriously: they often thought the poet must be expressing emotions of sadness or depression, or that the speaker of the poem must be in bad faith. Although the first bullet – 'the ways in which she challenges the idea of loneliness' – should have been a help, some read this as 'the challenges of loneliness' or 'challenges the idea that she could be anything but lonely'. Those who had read and understood the final line of the poem would have appreciated from the outset that the poem is celebrating knowing who you are and having a 'gift', so its overall tone is very different from the depressive or suicidal note that many insisted was dominant. Stronger responses did observe that the poem begins as a conversational dialogue, and that the tone is unconventionally colloquial. While more speculative answers saw this as a sign of schizophrenia, or a symptom of someone so isolated that they only had themselves to talk to, those who could focus more on language and tone were able to detect the note of sarcasm or irony in the speaker's response. This made more sense to those who were able to read the stanza as a whole, and realised that the speaker's declaration of loneliness extended across the line ending and into the extended simile. Many stronger responses included incisive comment on the unusual beauty and surreal clarity of the first image. The plane is lonely but 'level', it has a clear aim, transcends the Rockies and heads for a different element, an airfield not made by men, but in the blue yonder. Thus this was a poem which demanded that candidates read it non-literally, and often in ways which ran counter to their intuitions. Many of the stronger answers thought about the title 'Song' and appreciated that a lyric expresses a single emotional moment, but often in ways which are complex and emotive rather than literal. This poem is a 'Song' and not a 'Lament', so it does not simply express sorrow about loneliness.

Weaker answers seemed unable to separate the lyrical from the literal and tried to construct a narrative. They ignored tenses and modal verbs in the second stanza, and did not appreciate that the road journey of

the second simile is also in the continuous presence and that the 'little towns' are part of a conditional past which the speaker has rejected. These responses often thought that she was thinking about death or loneliness, when it is precisely the loneliness of conventional small town existence which is rejected in this image. Stronger responses noted the distinctive landscape of this stanza as well as the previous one, and appreciated the note of freedom and pioneering spirit of the voyaging speaker. If the journey 'day after day' and 'mile after mile' is a monotonous one, it is a monotony she appears to welcome.

Some of the best responses noticed a parallel between the unconventional sentiments expressed in the poem and its unconventional form and structure, and made interpretative capital out of its freedom from the constraints of rhyme and syntax, never really coming to an end, or even more than a momentary pause. Others noticed that the poem has a series of oppositions – 'lonely and level', 'across the Rockies' to the ocean, 'across country' rather than stopping in towns, from 'dawn's first breath' to 'the last red light of the year', not ice or mud but wood – and appreciated this as part of the speaker's oppositional and challenging character. Some found a lonely beauty in being the 'one awake' and extended the metaphor to see those 'wrapped in sleep' as in a cocoon, unable to experience the heightened perception of the woman in the poem. Others just saw her as mad or sad, unable to connect with others, even in the city. For some candidates the notion of enjoying waking up early to appreciate the 'first breath' of dawn was clearly very surprising.

The last stanza certainly posed the most questions and its ambiguity and complexity allowed most latitude for individual insights and interpretation. However, many weaker responses simply left it out altogether. In an unseen exam, this kind of discriminating element can be very useful. Candidates who want to succeed should be encouraged to see that their answers can be selective (there would not be time to be fully comprehensive) but need to cover the whole text. Perhaps some were too baffled to want to tackle these images. Many saw the rowboat as another symbol of transport or movement, even if it is stuck 'ice-fast' – a compound adjective misunderstood by many. Those who saw the boat as a symbol of suicidal isolation and abandonment were often those who believed the 'semantic field' of coldness was extended from the previous stanza into this one. A closer look at the syntax would show that the poet rejects coldness here in favour of a 'gift for burning'. Many saw this as self-destruction or self-immolation, but it was truer to the tone of the poem to pick up the mood of celebration, and the idea of self-knowledge, allowing the whole poem to be read with a more confident tone and direction, right from its opening. One or two very strong answers heard a note of Promethean defiance in these final lines. The poet actually rejects the hypothetical 'ifs'; as many stronger responses put it, there is a difference between loneliness and being alone, and the poem celebrates the gift of solitary experience, with its freedom from dependence or convention, even the convention of a final full stop. As one candidate wrote, 'even her verse form escapes the clutches of conformity.'

Question 2

This question, on an extract from Ian McEwan's novel *The Comfort of Strangers*, encouraged candidates to focus their attention on the characterisation of Robert, and the way in which he entangles himself in the lives of the tourists Colin and Mary. Most picked up the unwanted physicality of his attentions, his unusual appearance and insistent, domineering nature, and the ways in which he appears to be luring the innocent foreigners deeper into his dark and rather seedy world. Some refused to accept the writer's rather Anglo-Saxon attitudes, or stereotyping of Mediterranean machismo, and felt that Colin and Mary were behaving rather snobbishly in trying to reject his help; they fell for Robert's superficial charm and politeness even more than the young couple, and insisted that he was only trying to improve his English and had directed them towards a place to eat with plenty of local colour. This seemed itself rather naïve, given the many hints by the writer that Robert is not what he seems to be on the surface. He is a 'squat figure' who emerges from the darkness as if summoned, and stands 'blocking their path'. His smile and bonhomie seem as artificial as the 'self-consciously precise' English which he later apologises for, and the synthetic fabrics of his clothing. Why, amidst the animalistic 'pelt' of thick chest hair, does he display an incongruous 'gold imitation razor-blade' and if he is a local and not a tourist why is he carrying a camera? Surely it is difficult to take any of his confident pronouncements at face value?

Good responses went beyond surface meaning and explored the inconsistencies of his appearance and what he tells the couple. They looked in detail at differences between Colin's reaction and that of Mary, and noticed that Colin seems genuinely annoyed and disturbed by Robert, while finding it hard to free himself from his grasp, whereas Mary appears to half-enjoy Robert's slyly flirtatious attentions and hint of innuendo – that 'wink'. Robert treats them differently and that leads to their different responses, which most candidates analysed carefully and with reasonable thoroughness. Many saw elements of the uncanny or supernatural in Robert's physical appearance and 'unremitting' grip and attentions, and were not misled by his semi-apologetic bowing and self-exculpation. Some observed the deeper ironies in his comment on 'a beautiful

language, full of misunderstandings'. They certainly thought he was 'too eager'. Better responses were aware of the writer at work, shaping our response to the characters, and pointing out Colin's weakness, Mary's self-absorbed and enigmatic responses and the hint of the demonic in the portrayal of the tempting Robert.

The best answers were aware of tension between the young couple at the very beginning of the passage, and certainly noticed that Robert has his hand on Colin's shoulder in the final sentence of the extract. He is not going to let his prey escape. Several strong responses noticed the unusual choice of word 'descended' in that last sentence, and suggested that their destination was a potentially hellish underworld. Moreover, it certainly seems to be somewhere Robert thinks of as home territory. Only the better responses seemed to spend enough time on the descriptions of the last two paragraphs, and commented on the 'worn', 'diminutive', 'tottering', 'yellowing', 'cramped and crowded' and therefore labyrinthine nature of the district they have reached. Robert calls it home, and says his wife is in bed: several wondered why Robert is therefore out walking the streets, and noticed that he must have been watching the couple from the beginning.

Above all, this was therefore an exercise in really close reading. Good responses needed to be as alert to description as to dialogue, and have a sense of the narrator's rather prejudicial presence. They had to be prepared to look beyond surface politeness and explore some of the darker depths of implication. They had to follow the writer's hints and suggestions with deductions of their own. This also required some awareness of genre: this was an extract from a novel and not a piece of travel writing, so the hints of devilry can probably be taken rather more seriously, and are not just the figment of Colin's imagination. Instead, some candidates appeared to walk into Robert's trap as easily as Colin and Mary, and wanted to believe he was offering them no more than a good place to eat. The physicality of the language, from Robert's larger-than-life appearance, boisterous attentions and insistence on intimacy to the growing distance and distaste of the cornered couple is disturbing. So is the description of how they find themselves in a dark, dingy and 'shuttered' part of town from which it will not be easy to escape. Robert's laughing collusion with the shopkeeper with his mysterious load of cases is hardly reassuring. Those familiar with the characteristics of the Gothic genre should have noticed elements of the uncanny and larger than life.

The bullet points should have helped candidates to see beyond the surface descriptions and explored the implications of both Robert's appearance and the couple's slightly alarmed reactions. The final bullet point particularly helped them to see the writer at work, creating and sustaining increasing tension throughout the passage, which is only partly resolved when they reach their destination, as that unsettling final sentence makes clear. The doorway may be 'brightly' lit, but the descent is 'steep' and Robert is once again not letting go. If his appearance was something of a joke at first, there seem to be fewer laughs now. As one candidate put it, he is 'the very last person one would wish to encounter in a dark alley.' The tone of the last two paragraphs, as well as the street life they describe, has surely become much darker, and more sensitive responses showed full awareness of the consequent shift in mood, and appreciated the way in which this extract ends on a cliffhanger, as we are unsure what awaits the innocent couple at the bottom of the steep stairs.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Alternative to Coursework (Unseen)

Key Messages

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- Candidates should be prepared for answering on poetry and prose; their choice between them should depend on the text on the question paper which appeals to them more.

General comments

On the evidence of the majority of scripts, teaching for this component has equipped most candidates with the knowledge and understanding of genre needed to tackle very different styles of writing from exam series to exam series. It has provided most candidates with a robust quotation-and-comment technique allowing them to begin to analyse the writers' craft, and has developed their skills of argument, so that they can present personal responses which are nevertheless firmly grounded in awareness of the question set and the writers' purposes.

Past reports have highlighted the need to plan answers before writing; the advisability of an overview of the whole text in the opening paragraph, and a clear sense of interpretative direction throughout; the vocabulary and tools which could be used to make responses to prose as analytical as those to poetry; and ways of using syntax and structure to make overall sense of poetry. This last piece of advice remains highly relevant: candidates this series could have avoided misinterpretations of lines of poetry if they had been aware that their meaning is explained by reading them within the context of the whole stanza instead of in isolation.

There is scope for Centres to pass on more advice to candidates about the requirements of this paper, and to give some specific guidance on responding to the two genres under exam conditions. The question is given in bold type, and always encourages a personal response and reaction. It also expects candidates to consider the overall impact of the whole text, as well as to explore details of the writing. Candidates should therefore not begin writing until they already have quite a good idea of what they want to say. The best answers were usually about three sides long and had been planned.

It was encouraging to see more candidates choosing prose passages this series.

The bullet points are advisory not compulsory, but they do give candidates relevant help. They help them to focus successively on aspects of the writing, and the writer's choice of detail, and on evaluation of the overall cumulative impact. They also help candidates to read the texts carefully and in sequence, instead of a more random spotting of 'semantic fields' (words taken out of context, in many cases), poetic or narrative devices, or speculative character- or situation-based comment. Of course, some very good candidates find their own

way into the text, without needing the lead or steer provided by the bullets, but most discover that they provide a helpful framework. The final bullet point often allows candidates to consider the way a passage ends, and how this can inform the mood and tone of the whole extract, and the way in which a reader reacts or responds to it.

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Well-integrated and brief quotation tends to illustrate the best responses, when quotation is used as an opportunity to comment on the impact of words or images on the reader, instead of simply allowing paraphrase. Centres with significant numbers of more successful candidates have clearly encouraged their candidates to voice independent arguments, support these with quotation and then comment on how the writer's use of language makes a deep impression on the reader, exploring implied as well as explicit meaning. However, it is important not to detach words and phrases from their context: their sense within the syntax of the sentence they are drawn from remains important. Literary response is not simply about word association. In the case of poetry, it is important to read over line-endings, in order to be sure who a word or phrase refers to, and how its implications are related to its sense within the whole stanza. Similarly in prose responses, a clear understanding of syntax and sentence structure can help to establish not only meaning but also mood, as sentence variation can often determine the reader's response. It helps to work through passages in chronological sequence, as the structure of a text is part of its meaning, which often depends on a process of gradual revelation. The last line of a poem, or the final sentences of a prose passage often help readers to determine the direction of a text, and so to have a clearer understanding of their initial tone. It is easier to find your own way through a map if you are clear about your final destination; similarly, the ambiguities or uncertainties of a piece of writing are easier to disentangle if you know the end point to which they are directing you. If candidates are taught to identify the mood of the final words or last sentence, they may find it easier to clarify the tone of the whole text.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Louis MacNeice's 'House on a Cliff' provided plenty of scope for able candidates to explore the sense of mystery which envelops this poem's descriptions of both the precarious house and the wide sea beyond. Even the weaker answers showed evidence of some engagement with aspects of description and showed an interest in the man in the house and his story.

This is a poem which demands a degree of what Keats called 'negative capability'. Reading the question carefully should have told candidates that they will not find an answer to the poem by irritably reaching after fact and certainty. They were more successful when they enjoyed the descriptive and sensuous qualities of the writing without trying too hard to find a narrative, and without an excessive preoccupation with spotting poetic devices or seeking to offload literary terms. Better responses quickly saw that the poem is structured around a set of oppositions between 'indoors' and 'outdoors', between man and nature, and between the 'locked', 'blind' and constricted world of the house and the 'chill' of the vast but empty void which lies beyond. It is a poem which describes living on the very edge of eternity. Many answers would have been improved by a stronger sense of the overall mood and picture painted before beginning to explore the minute detail. The phrases 'powerful atmosphere' and 'sense of mystery' in the question should have given candidates a sense of what to reflect on before beginning to tackle the detail suggested in the bullet points.

Good answers used the first bullet point not just for analysis of how the poet describes 'indoors' and 'outdoors' but also the effect of these images on the reader. Some were too quick to interpret every aspect of description as a metaphor, and not to smell the 'tang' of the oil lamp, see the 'winking signal' (a lighthouse? a ship?) and hear the howl of the wind as real and sensuous elements of a verbal portrait, before exploring them as possible symbols. Those candidates eager to explore symbols and unearth buried narrative were quick to fasten on 'the locked heart and the lost key' only to discover that this is a mystery which the words of the poem do not allow the reader to penetrate fully. Many candidates did find that the bullet points helped them to work chronologically through the poem investigating the impact of rhythm, rhyme, personification, enjambment and imagery. They appreciated the ways in which the poet develops

contrasts, and began to explore the difference between time ticking ever louder and faster within the house, and the way the 'silent moon' governs the 'garrulous tides' and chilling emptiness outside. Detailed consideration of the first bullet point would at least implicitly address the poet's creation of atmosphere. Stronger answers appreciated and constructed their own personal response to the opposition of man and nature, and our tiny concerns and the vast 'waste' beyond. Others, perhaps influenced by 'Report to Wordsworth' or Gillian Clarke's 'Lament' (poems set on a different component), thought the latter was a reflection on pollution and man's destruction of the environment. In this poem it seems more likely that the environment has triumphed over human concerns.

As candidates turned their attention to the man, and his 'locked heart', many wanted to construct a narrative for him of lost love or disappointed hopes. Some worried about why the strong man's 'red blood cools' and thought he was ill or dying, and many contrasted his pain and his strength. There were good ideas about why the house (not a 'home' as one candidate shrewdly pointed out) should be both ancestral blessing and curse, with interesting notions about the burdens of inheritance. The purposeful man's loss of purpose caused more problems: many, not reading the sentence accurately across the line ending, thought he was talking at a cross, rather than at cross purposes to himself. They thought he was praying to the crucified Christ, and contrasted this with the 'empty bowl of heaven' in the previous line. Better answers saw the enjambment and use of caesuras as an indication of broken rhythms as well as broken sleep, and were able to explore the clashes and paradoxes the poet describes without feeling a need to resolve them. Those who spent too long exploring the man's broken heart, possible feelings of guilt, dying delirium or loss of faith or resolve often themselves left too little time for the final, summative bullet point.

While most explored the poem's use of contrasts very effectively through their descriptive responses to house, seas and man, only a few created considered reflections of their own of the overall impact of the poet's description of both the physical world and the claustrophobic tension within the house in order to form an original interpretation. These are the kinds of responses which are rewarded most highly as they meet the marking criteria's demands for 'sustained engagement' and 'insight, sensitivity, individuality and flair'. Very individual responses were elicited to the poem's sources of haunting power and mystery, but only the very best answers, paying attention to the final lines, appreciated that this is a night-time scene, and the description therefore floats between dream (or nightmare?) and reality. Stronger responses were able to link this to the precarious situation implicit in the title.

Question 2

The extract from Lynn Barber's *An Education* proved very popular and gave students who wanted more narrative certainty and stability a more secure basis for their response than MacNeice's edgy and uneasy poem. However, here too not all is what it appears to be on the surface. Observant students noticed that the passage ended with the 'flash of panic' in Simon's eyes, and were therefore aware that it is not just Lynn who has conflicting feelings. Some realised he may not be the ideal husband which her parents imagine him to be.

The question asked for a strong focus on Lynn and her ambivalent feelings, and most noticed that she appears at first to care much more about going to university than the prospect of marriage (as one put it, 'how can you compare eighteen years of education to two years of a relationship?'). Most students who answered this question found the choices that faced her were ones with which they could identify, even though – happily – the majority felt that such a dilemma would not face young women today. Candidates had no difficulty in appreciating the social milieu described, recognising not just Lynn's ambitions and touch of arrogance – 'of course I was going to Oxford' – but also the delight of her parents at the thought of a 'good husband' who was obviously 'serious'. They noticed the difference between Simon's apparent seriousness and Lynn's frivolity, and especially picked up on her 'complete disbelief' and incredulity at her parents' response. Good answers went on to explore why she thinks her father is 'demented' (some took this word rather literally) or how his excitement is communicated through repetition and emphasis ('Why not? *Why not?*') thus evaluating the writer's choices of language and detail. Those who went on to explore the simile describing Lynn's sense of betrayal in terms of a cloistered nun's loss of faith had an especially strong sense of her isolation, sudden maturation and awareness of the outside world and the extent of her loss of faith in what she had believed in up to now.

Following the second bullet point, many wrote thoughtfully and chronologically about the pressure exerted on her by parents, peer group and school. They explored the comic clichés with which her parents spoke about Simon's virtues, and the ways in which he indulges her desire for independence by taking her to see houses. There were good responses to the 'excited and thrilled' responses of her classmates, but perceptive students commented on how this showed how little Lynn's friends really understood her ambitions and motivation.

Some were amused by the idea that the young Lynn ‘enjoyed writing essays’, or that her friends thought early marriage a price well worth paying in order to give up Latin. The stronger responses tended to notice Lynn’s fear of loneliness, as well as her dependency on the approval of her peer group, and explored why she was nevertheless reluctant to return to school after the summer. Some noticed that the excitement of her friends is largely superficial and selfish: they ‘begged’ to be bridesmaids.

The best answers saw that the turning point comes when the Headmistress, Miss R. Garwood Scott, gives her an ultimatum. Some felt that the Headmistress was trying to help her, more observed a touch of malice and the desire for revenge in the way she treated a girl who was a ‘bad influence’. Only the stronger candidates saw the significance of the lie which Lynn tells her friends, when she claims that leaving school was her choice and that the Headmistress tried to persuade her to stay, and only the very best commented on the increasingly tense atmosphere communicated by ever more terse sentence structures. Such tensions begin with the phrase ‘I stared at her’ when Lynn hears Miss Garwood Scott’s ultimatum, but continue in the final paragraph. Candidates who saw this were aware that matters are by no means settled by the end of the extract.

Writing about prose requires awareness that the passage is likely to be an excerpt from a much larger structure, although it will have a reasonably clear narrative and structure of its own. Consideration of genre also helps candidates to appreciate meaning. This passage is not from a novel but an autobiography, so a strong element of realism is intended and the writing is not fictional. Nevertheless, there will still be a strong element of the writer’s craft and manipulation of her material. The writer makes it clear that she is writing retrospectively – ‘This was 1962...’In those days’ – and while she sensitively captures her teenage self’s mixture of arrogance (‘I had wanted him to propose as proof of my power’...‘I never doubted I would get in’), naivety, defiance and vulnerability to pressure, there is also a sense of distance, so the writing is full of subtle analogies and self-analysis which suggest that the young Lynn’s confidence at that moment is an illusion, and the private moment when she ‘cried [her] eyes out’ reveals much more than the bravado of her conversations with others and assertions of independence. The ‘queasy’ feeling at the thought of giving up her ambitions (even though, as one candidate pointed out, it is the ‘sound’ of Oxford rather than what she will study there which appears to motivate her) and the fear of what ‘was going to be the loneliest three months of my life’ point to a much deeper insecurity which undermines the drinks, toasts and celebrations at the end just as much as Simon’s ‘flash of panic’.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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The bullet points are advisory not compulsory, but they do give candidates relevant help. They help them to focus successively on aspects of the writing, and the writer's choice of detail, and on evaluation of the overall cumulative impact. They also help candidates to read the texts carefully and in sequence, instead of a more random spotting of 'semantic fields' (words taken out of context, in many cases), poetic or narrative devices, or speculative character- or situation-based comment. Of course, some very good candidates find their own way into the text, without needing the lead or steer provided by the bullets, but most discover that they

provide a helpful framework. The final bullet point often allows candidates to consider the way a passage ends, and how this can inform the mood and tone of the whole extract, and the way in which a reader reacts or responds to it.

A good critical response needs to demonstrate overall understanding of the mood and direction of the whole text, which may not be clear from the outset. It is for this reason that we recommend reading the text carefully twice before beginning to plan and write. Weaker responses often show a fuller understanding of a complex text only halfway through the essay, and some candidates can be so unsure about how to interpret a text that they 'hedge' and provide two contradictory interpretations within their response. Examiners who mark this paper are not looking out for misreadings to penalise, but for insights which they can reward. The higher marks are likely to go to interpretations of the texts which show consistency and cohesion, and have a clear argumentative direction, supported by comment on textual details.

Well-integrated and brief quotation tends to illustrate the best responses, when quotation is used as an opportunity to comment on the impact of words or images on the reader, instead of simply allowing paraphrase. Centres with significant numbers of more successful candidates have clearly encouraged their candidates to voice independent arguments, support these with quotation and then comment on how the writer's use of language makes a deep impression on the reader, exploring implied as well as explicit meaning. However, it is important not to detach words and phrases from their context: their sense within the syntax of the sentence they are drawn from remains important. Literary response is not simply about word association. In the case of poetry, it is important to read over line-endings, in order to be sure who a word or phrase refers to, and how its implications are related to its sense within the whole stanza. Similarly in prose responses, a clear understanding of syntax and sentence structure can help to establish not only meaning but also mood, as sentence variation can often determine the reader's response. It helps to work through passages in chronological sequence, as the structure of a text is part of its meaning, which often depends on a process of gradual revelation. The last line of a poem, or the final sentences of a prose passage often help readers to determine the direction of a text, and so to have a clearer understanding of their initial tone. It is easier to find your own way through a map if you are clear about your final destination; similarly, the ambiguities or uncertainties of a piece of writing are easier to disentangle if you know the end point to which they are directing you. If candidates are taught to identify the mood of the final words or last sentence, they may find it easier to clarify the tone of the whole text.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The sonnet by South African poet Dennis Lefebure entitled 'Drought' proved a popular and engaging choice for candidates. Few had difficulties in identifying its form and basic surface meaning, and were able to appreciate a form of heat and cloudless sky which is unbearable and hostile to all life. Most were also able to engage with the notion of the sun-god (whether Helios, Apollo or a Southern Hemisphere deity) who is indifferent to the sufferings below him, so the poem's sestet was well understood.

Differentiation between candidates often arose in response to what should have been the more straightforward descriptive images in the octave. Many found it hard to distinguish between the metaphorical and the literal. While almost all saw both heat and soil as personifications in a hostile landscape, and appreciated the notion of air so hot it becomes 'molten' or silence as a deadly and numbing force, many thought the 'islands' of dryness in the river beds were literal islands – taking the description some way from the high veldt – and thought the 'warm scavengers' were vultures waiting for carrion rather than a metaphor for the more subtly sinister force of the wind, heaping up its own 'spoil'. A tendency to read over-literally meant that some missed the poetic invocation of a malevolent natural world. However, the victims, the 'wide-eyed oxen', received plenty of attention, as did the language which describes them huddling and panting. The image of the cattle 'lashing their tails at flies they cannot foil' was commented on far less, and some did not appear to understand the final verb. This was a pity as the line has deeper implications of an evil which it is useless to resist or oppose. Thus straightforward understanding of the descriptions of landscape and animals was easily obtained, but a more subtle appreciation of the ways in which those descriptions work symbolically and engage the emotions of 'what it is like to live' in such a death-haunted climate was more rare, and this is what the question was really asking for.

The poet's portrayal of sun and sky was often very well understood. The words 'blinding' and 'blazing' helped to invoke the idea of a hostile light, making the 'shining steeds' sinister rather than glamorous. Many commented on the 'halting hours' and how long the sun's diurnal journey might seem to those who suffer

under its heat. The fact that the god 'drives' his way was often seen as an indication of his remorseless and inhuman refusal to relent. There was good understanding of the idea that night might give momentary hope at the end of the twelfth line, before the monosyllabic desperation of 'and still no rain'. Thus the cloudless sky became an emblem of impending death, and the stars seemed indifferent rather than beautiful in their unsleeping watch over the veldt, aware of another hot and waterless day to come.

The best responses followed the structure of the poem right through to the final couplet, which was the subject of the third bullet point. They appreciated that this description is as stark and bare as the landscape portrayed earlier in the poem, and they commented on the slow effect of the long vowel sounds: 'all things droop and die'. While the stars are personified, everything else that was living is threatened with death and the heavens seem cruelly indifferent.

While most candidates were able to produce good, well-illustrated, descriptive accounts, more engagement with deeper implications, and the overall mood of the text was important for Band 4 and above, with a strong sense of a hostile, inhuman environment and its ability to make hope, as well as water, evaporate.

Question 2

This passage from Charles Dickens's, *David Copperfield*, proved a highly successful and popular prose option. Candidates enjoyed his larger-than-life caricatures and the exuberance of his use of physical detail and objects to portray characters' emotions – the syntactical difficulties of his prose and elaborate vocabulary did not seem to get in the way of appreciation of sketches of character and situation. Most relished and shared David's youthfully exaggerated view of Miss Murdstone's sinister appearance, mysterious obsessions and baleful influence on the household. Good candidates began to appreciate that this passage is as much about David and the ways in which malice and suspicion change the atmosphere of his family and home as about Miss Murdstone herself, and therefore went beyond a character sketch to explore her 'impact on the household', thus dealing with all aspects of the question.

Many enjoyed the descriptions of her disturbing masculinity as well as her gloomy appearance, and enjoyed the ways in which her unattractiveness is also part of her overbearing and supercilious nature. Weaker candidates sometimes confused metaphor and literal description: they thought she had whiskers, rather than wearing her eyebrows as a kind of substitute. Her mysterious black boxes were a source of much interest, one candidate pointing out the egocentricity of their monogram. Most candidates spotted that everything that surrounded her was metallic, as if she were a machine. Many spotted the repetition of 'hard' or how she seems to be surrounded by the language of the 'jail', which makes it even more alarming when she later takes possession of the keys of the household. Fewer mentioned that the handbag also seems alive, and shuts up 'like a bite'. Only the best candidates looked carefully at the later reappearance of the boxes further into the passage and noticed that they are full of 'fetters and rivets' which form part of Miss Murdstone's adornments.

Dialogue received just as much detailed attention as description among the candidates, and there was pleasing understanding of irony and implied meaning. Many pointed out that David greets her politely, and that it is she who 'wants manner', as she is really a guest in the household which she proceeds to take over. They certainly took offence at the rudeness with which she tells him 'I don't like boys'. Stronger responses noticed that the Gothic elements of her appearance have now been united with feelings of fear and embarrassment which the boy feels towards her, turning her into a figure of 'awe and dread'.

The second bullet point encouraged candidates to look in detail at the way Miss Murdstone treats David's mother as well as the boy, and there was good appreciation of how her 'help' is both patronising and intrusive. Some highlighted the way she puts the store cupboard 'to rights' and makes 'havoc in the old arrangements'; students took offence at this violation of personal space. The conversation the morning after her arrival received detailed analysis, as did the 'kind of peck' she gives David's mother 'which was her nearest approach to a kiss'. Candidates saw this 'peck' as further proof that she is barely human, or that David finds her frightening and aggressive, incapable of real affection. There was shrewd comment on her hypocrisy, as she relieves Clara of her troubles and of all the keys, and the power that she was now able to exert over the household. Fewer commented on how little resistance Clara puts up when described as 'too pretty and thoughtless', or on the significance of the ways in which both Murdstones impose 'firmness' as the guiding principle of the family. Most used the references to 'tyranny' and 'a certain gloomy, arrogant, devil's humour' to round off their personal impressions of the way she has taken over the house and exercised a dark, proud and witch-like influence over the boy, his mother and the servants.

Stronger answers were aware that the exaggeration of the writing also creates humour, and demonstrated a personal response to the ways in which David sees her as more monster than human. They could see elements of fairy tale in her witch-like characterisation and were aware of the writer at work, creating the child's image of this cuckoo in the family nest. The third bullet was a discriminator as it asked for an explicit focus on the way the passage was written and on the boy's view of Miss Murdstone. Stronger responses to this paper always show awareness of the writer's choices of language and detail, implicit awareness of genre, and an exploration of viewpoint and how this influences both narrative and description. Thus the best answers also looked at the combination of exaggerated humour and elements of the gothic in the ways in which Miss Murdstone is 'constantly haunted' by the notion that the servants have secreted a man in a dark cupboard, or is rumoured to sleep with one eye open. Only a few were able to analyse the last idea in a sophisticated way, and see that the young David is confusing metaphor and literal description, and that this is one of the ways in which the writer (or older David as narrator) creates humour.

Neither the passing of time nor the very different culture of a nineteenth-century bourgeois household full of servants make the world of this novel entirely alien, as readers were captivated by the richness of the writing, and the mixture of humour, horror and sentiment. Many students saw it as deeply suspicious that Miss Murdstone gets up early before anyone else awakes, some combining the image of the 'perfect Lark' with the 'peck on the cheek' to add monstrous bird-like properties to her inhuman appearance and behaviour. Some thought her name itself created an impression of darkness and gloom, several calling her Miss Murderstone. They had little difficulty in seeing irony and hypocrisy in her behaviour and manner, sharing the writer's own sharp eye for a phoney.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41
Paper 41 (Closed Books)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text
- ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question
- maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract
- using a well-structured and developed argument
- supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

Another key message is the importance of maintaining focus on the question. Candidates who lost sight of the key theme, or, in passage-based questions, the passage itself, struggled to develop a response sufficient for the higher bands if central ideas or sections of the passage were missed.

Candidates should be reminded that passage-based questions require more than narrative run-throughs. The whole of the extract is important, and it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for discussion. Although there is not necessarily a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it. Prompts such as 'dramatic', 'moving', 'powerful' are specifically intended to draw out a personal response and if they are ignored the answer will not demonstrate the engagement that is crucial for achieving the top Bands, no matter how competent the understanding of situation.

A significant number of candidates tried to apply a formulaic approach to all responses, evidenced by pencilled acronyms/mnemonics they wrote on the answer booklet. While this was a useful memory jogger

for some, it could cause a problem, particularly with passage-based questions, when it led to extremely disjointed answers that ignored what was actually happening in the extract and tried to organize the response mechanically into separate paragraphs on subject, form, language, purpose etc. By contrast, the best answers were those that integrated all these effectively to produce a developed, focused and coherent response.

The poetry drew some very sensitive and engaged responses this session. Candidates generally knew that it was important to focus on language and imagery, not merely to describe or narrate. Some candidates focused on the effect of rhyme and rhythm at the expense of meaning, but generally there were many enthusiastic and engaged answers. In weaker answers there was a tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be overused rather than words which identify effects precisely.

Candidates were usually disadvantaged when they wrote lengthy drafts, often as long as, and identical to, the answer itself.

There were fewer attempts at empathic questions this series, but most who tackled them knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. For success it was, of course, essential to have identified precisely the moment specified in the question.

Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 There is much that could be thought moving here. Candidates referred mainly to Willy's final and deluded dream about Biff, Ben's continuing malign influence to the very end, Linda's ignorance of the real meaning of Willy's utterances, and the way Miller uses stage sound to augment the climax as the characters transform into mourners. Differentiation came from engagement with the writing and the ways in which it moves the audience. This was a popular choice and one which was done very well by most candidates, particularly those who could clearly visualise the complex staging of this scene and were able to communicate its dramatic potential as a result. Generally there was much sympathy for Willy, understanding his failures and illusions. The incident of Willy dancing, unusually happy, was discussed well. Good answers used the stage directions as evidence in their argument to help focus their comments into sharp observations. Similarly the sound effects were utilised, including the gasp, 'sh', scream, and the car. The use of music in the scene was also commented upon widely with most recognising its part in making the tragic climax of the action so powerful. Biff's reaction was commented upon, candidates understanding that there was nothing to be done. There was good general knowledge about few mourners at the funeral. Weaker answers tended to focus on staging and the swift transition from Willy's happiness to his suicide, without tackling the finer detail or demonstrating broader knowledge of the play. They sometimes worked through the extract, getting diverted by writing a paragraph or two on the context and Willy's failure to achieve the American Dream. Most candidates had clearly engaged with this text and it is a credit to them that such a complex play, with its time shifts and flashbacks, was understood so well. There was a good deal of use of the term 'mobile concurrences' but in some cases it was not clear that candidates actually knew what it meant.
- 2 Despite Willy having profoundly dislikeable characteristics he desperately wants to do well by his family with ambitions which are not ignoble, does have moments of profound feeling and insight, and is in a predicament from which there is no escape without a bitter blow to his self-esteem. Some communication of an understanding of this with supporting detail was looked for, with evidence of engagement with the ways in which Miller makes the audience care. The best answers focused on Miller's methods and addressed both 'how' and 'care about'; weaker answers ignored the 'how' and provided a character study of Willy with the occasional comment on why we should sympathise with or pity him – some comments proving more relevant than others. An area that was sometimes not handled well was the concept of the American Dream. It tended to become a catch-all term to explain how Willy had gone wrong in life without close examination of how it specifically applies to him as an individual. Answers lacked conviction as a result, but the candidates who referred to Charley's valedictory speech at the end in this connection tended to demonstrate a more critical understanding of the major themes.

- 3 Linda is most certainly very angry and may be thinking about her sons' appalling behaviour and how they can have acted like this, her own responsibility for their selfishness, the effect it is likely to have on Willy, and what she will say to the boys when they get home. Crucial to a good answer was the creation of a convincing voice for Linda. Responses generally managed to capture Linda's anger at her sons and her awareness of Willy's deterioration. As always, the best made use of detailed textual echoes; the weaker ones retold the plot, sometimes with direct lifting from the text of what she did say on their return.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 It was helpful to outline briefly the immediate context and the strong but sometimes fraught relationship that has existed between Brutus and Cassius up to this point. The characters of the two men were worthy of consideration. Brutus has always been deferred to by Cassius, and sees himself as a beacon of honourable behaviour. Cassius, the pragmatist and soldier, is deeply hurt that Brutus should think him dishonourable. The strength of their emotions, perhaps the fact that Portia has just died and the pressures of the situation just before the battle were worthy of exploration. Differentiation came from the depth in which candidates explored the power of the language and the dramatic conflict. Excellent knowledge of the text was displayed by many candidates. Most understood the context of this scene, and also the changed relationships within it. Quotation was generally used well. Brutus's feelings of guilt and disillusionment were recognised. There were some sound comments on Brutus's strong language; when two characters are involved in such a bitter row, the way they deliver the lines is just as important as the meaning of what they are saying in terms of the 'dramatic moment' suggested in the question. Better answers commented upon individual exchanges in this manner.
- 5 Answers usually focused on the fickleness of the Roman crowd, highlighted in the first scene when they have forgotten Pompey and are now following Caesar, on their self-interest (Caesar's will), on their readiness to turn to violence and to run out of control, e.g. the murder of Cinna the poet, on how they are despised by the higher classes but consciously manipulated by Caesar and Antony. There were also some well-developed responses with relevant detail and understanding of the crowd's fickle nature. Some strong answers considered how are sometimes used for comic relief, particularly in the early stages of the play, and how they are presented as a mob, not as individuals. By contrast, there were some rather mechanical answers which ran through the attempt to crown Caesar, Brutus and Antony at the funeral, Cinna the poet. There were a few outstanding answers which discussed what the play revealed about history, politics, democracy and the power of the people. The best quoted the crowd, freely pointing out the irony that they are seen as 'senseless' yet they have control.
- 6 Answers focused on Antony's shock and grief at the death of his friend, his feelings towards Brutus and the rest of the conspirators, Brutus's speech, how he can turn things to his advantage and avenge Caesar, and his plans for joining forces with Octavius. Discrimination came from the degree to which the voice was convincing, and the most successful answers conveyed genuine sadness and anger, and also the manipulateness of the character. The better answers in general tended to integrate phrases from the text – not in a purely narrative sense, but to highlight the significance of a key idea, e.g. a reference to specific phrases in Brutus's speech by Antony enabled candidates to really explore his bitterness.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7 This question was generally chosen by those who had the confidence to explore the language in detail and there were some very good answers which showed how the characters of Antonio and Sebastian are revealed through the aggressiveness and violence of their dialogue. The best answers thoroughly engaged with the tension, and with the noise and chaos of the apparently doomed ship. Less successful answers often remarked that the scene showed Prospero's power as a magician, when that is not known at this stage. Better responses took into account the physical business on the stage; recognising, for example, how a sense of chaos could be created by, amongst other things, the various entrances and exits. Most candidates recognised the way Shakespeare used the scene to introduce us to characters and how they might behave in the future.
- 8 This was the most popular question on the play, and the material was well known. The following points came up in most answers: Caliban is brutish and presented as savage, he has apparently attempted to rape Miranda, and his normal mode of discourse is truculent and abusive. He feels a sense of injustice and has a sense of grievance against Prospero, who, he feels, has cheated him of

his birthright, and he is capable of a sense of wonder (e.g. 'The isle is full of noises') but lacks discernment. Many answers were very sympathetic, even to the extent of writing off the attempted rape of Miranda as not really his fault because he has not been taught any better, omitting to mention his plot with Trinculo and Stephano to kill Prospero and seeing him entirely as a victim. The best explored his function in the play and the implications of nature and nurture. To score highly, candidates needed to move beyond a mere character study and to evaluate the different aspects of his character. Most candidates opted for a balanced response, highlighting the character's strengths and weaknesses often with impressive sensitivity. There were some interesting responses referring to aspects of colonialism. However, few took time to really explore the beauty of Caliban's 'island' speech (though some did mention that it was recited during the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games).

- 9 Ariel is about to gain a yearned-for freedom. He is likely to feel a sense of joyous excitement. He may reflect on the events of the past few hours and his own part in them. He may feel gratitude to Prospero at his release, but this may be tempered by a feeling of resentment at his servitude. He may think further back to his plight before Prospero's arrival. There were relatively few responses to this question but those who attempted it made a real effort to capture the voice. Although the voice may be elusive, candidates who were attentive to 'Where the bee sucks' found the song helpful in capturing it.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Most of the responses were appropriately precise. The triviality of Jack's complaints – with the attendant opportunity to comment on the foibles of the upper-classes – was well-understood by most. The absurdity of many of Lady Bracknell's assertions, coupled with her scarcely disguised self-interest, was also well-handled. Perhaps the most impressive answers highlighted the comic value of seeing the dramatic shift of the power relationship between Jack and Lady Bracknell. Reference to their initial encounter was central to this idea and it was taken up in the better responses. There was real enjoyment in many of these responses.
- 11 Gwendolen at times appears to be an obedient and dutiful daughter, but she may also be thought to be at times very like her mother in her determination to have her way and her ruthlessness at getting it, particularly in regard to Jack Worthing. This was successfully commented upon in most cases. Responses were not always well-organised but were quite astute – particularly those which took as their starting point the early remark by Algernon about how a daughter comes to resemble her mother.
- 12 Jack Worthing is a worried man likely to be thinking about his failure to persuade Lady Bracknell of his credentials as a son-in-law, what on earth he is to do about the mystery of his birth and how he is to present the demise of Ernest to all at the Manor House. He might be bemoaning Algernon's lack of trustworthiness in regard to what he has revealed to him about his life. The best answers not only gave evidence of Jack's concerns but also communicated his rising sense of desperation at his situation.

SECTION B: POETRY

- 13 Differentiation came from the extent to which candidates engaged with mood and the way in which it is conveyed. (Part L is full of grief and despair and LXVII is resigned and almost celebratory of Hallam. The words of L convey physical pain caused by the extremity of grief and also a loss of faith and sense of futility. LXVII is much calmer and more mystical. The imagery of L is harsh and physical ('blood creeps', 'nerves prick', 'pangs', 'Time a maniac' etc.), that of LXVII is calmer, associated with rest and peacefulness ('broad water of the west') and light ('silver flame', 'glory on the walls', 'moonlight dies' etc.).) The most successful saw a contrast in the two parts and movement from despair to acceptance. Less successful answers rolled both parts together and did not distinguish between them. There was much less biography in answers than has been the case in previous series, which was a great improvement.
- 14 The key word in this question was 'compelling' and the mystery and suspense of both stories was central to this. We know what happens next in *The Lady of Shalott* but not in *Mariana*, and in both stories there are unanswered questions. Other areas for exploration were the central characters and the extent to which we empathise with them, and the ways in which Tennyson creates a setting for the stories. Differentiation came from the extent to which candidates went beyond re-telling and showed a clear understanding of the writer at work. Understanding was more complete and there

was much more personal engagement with these poems than with *In Memoriam*. Particularly impressive in responses to *Mariana* was the recognition of decay, or inertia at least, as conveyed through the description of her surroundings. Candidates were also able to recognise the power of repeated lines in emphasising her mental stasis and persistent anguish. Particularly impressive in *The Lady of Shalott* was the awareness shown by some of Lancelot's lack of consciousness of the impact he has had upon the lady and the events his appearance has precipitated.

- 15 This was a less popular question than the other Tennyson options, but the poem was generally well known. Success was dependent on the amount of focus given to the word 'movingly'; it was not sufficient merely to describe Ulysses' feelings; the emotional impact of the words and imagery needed close examination and those candidates who showed sensitivity to his recognition that he was approaching the end of his life and recognising his loss of strength (and yet determined to push forward) achieved good marks.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: from Part 4

- 16 Focus here was explicitly on Hopkins's methods and elicited comment on the juxtaposition of words to create contrast and embody 'pied'; the way in which the entire poem is a hymn of praise and the individual details which corroborate this (the opening words, the repetition of 'For', the last line of the poem, for example); the poem's sense of inclusiveness (repetition of 'all', use of 'Whatever'); the use of (frequently alliterated) compound words and the rhythm and rhyme of the poem. Most candidates were able to stay focused on the question and recognised the poet's intentions in writing about nature in this way. Better responses recognised the sense of awe and wonder in the 'voice', illustrating the point by referring to the rhetorical question and the neologisms as well as the use of contrasting words for effect towards the end. One weakness in some answers was the failure to recognise that the landscape Hopkins refers to is man-made, and this aspect – developed in 'trades', 'gear' etc. – was largely overlooked, as if candidates could not make the connection between the work of God and the work of man. Most answers explored the language and imagery very thoroughly but there were some who gave only a general overview and some that focused entirely on the rhythm and rhyme, ignoring the meaning of the poem.
- 17 Candidates usually referred to the following: the general references to people in the first stanza and the details of city life (in particular, the smells) and references to organisation and crowding; the second stanza and its references to spaciousness, neglect and disorder; the contrast between the two and the movement from the general to the more particular ('Where I come from'); and the significance of the last two lines of the poem. Brewster's attitudes and preferences were clearly recognised and discussion of imagery was adequate, but it was rare to find that a candidate had grasped the whole sense of the poem as the final lines (which jar so strongly with what has gone before them) were overlooked in most cases.
- 18 As this was an open-choice question, candidates needed to ensure that their chosen poems contrasted natural and man-made things. They needed to refer in appropriate detail to two poems, demonstrate how their chosen poems contrast the natural and the man-made, offer some evaluation of how these contrasts are made striking, and move beyond giving an account of or listing literary features of two poems. Unsurprisingly, frequently the Brewster poem was chosen along with one of the city planning poems. Having to write about two poems proved challenging for a lot of candidates, and resulted in an 'overview' approach which did not allow for detailed consideration of individual images or lines. The dislike shown in all three poems towards the man-made city environment made it a challenge to highlight their individuality. Some candidates chose to write about one poem which dealt with natural things and one that dealt with man-made. Such an approach was allowable but tended to produce less convincing arguments than by choosing poems where both aspects were covered. *Lines composed on Westminster Bridge* produced some very good work.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19 Lockwood appears as someone who considers himself as a rather superior sort of gentleman, accustomed to be treated as such. His gentlemanly self-regard and composure is instantly and almost humorously destroyed by the dogs. Heathcliff is, like his house, rough and inhospitable and finds it highly amusing that his effete guest should be so discomfited by his dogs doing what they are supposed to. Most candidates who attempted this passage question demonstrated some

understanding of Heathcliff and how he is presented; they tended to be less clear on interpreting Lockwood's character and the presentation of *Wuthering Heights* itself, however. These candidates tended to focus on surface interpretation only; better candidates were able to engage with the implications conveyed through the language.

- 20 Heathcliff is an elemental figure of great strength and imagination in the grip of great passions. He disdains everything to do with polite society, and hence Linton. Linton is an educated and civilised gentleman who is physically timid and fearful of anything which is beyond reason, such as Heathcliff's violent passions. He sets great store by the values of polite society and detests what he sees as the boorishness of Heathcliff. Good answers explored the way in which the two characters are presented in some detail, commenting on the contrasting imagery associated with them even when they are children. Many considered them only from Catherine's point of view and thereby limited themselves to a narrower section range of reference, but generally there were some conscientious attempts to develop ideas.
- 21 Catherine is at this moment likely to be thinking that she is at long last at peace with herself, that both she and Hareton were brutalised by life at *Wuthering Heights*, and that neither saw the better and gentler qualities of the other. Now she has discovered that love is possible, life with Hareton is a truly delightful prospect. Some understanding of Catherine's situation and feelings in a voice communicating her blissful state of mind was looked for. This question was not as popular as the others, but those who attempted it generally understood the character and what she has been through. A few candidates confused the two Catherines.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22 Nyasha's state is precarious, brought about by her regime of hard study and self-neglect. She perceives herself to be contending against oppressive hierarchies of gender and race. She is a teenage schoolgirl challenging a system which has assimilated her parents and her only confidante is her younger cousin, the narrator. Differentiation came from the extent of response to the power of the descriptive writing throughout the extract, but particularly in the third paragraph where Nyasha's mood moves from frail vulnerability through bitter sarcasm to blazing anger. There was a genuinely personal response to many answers and real engagement with Nyasha's condition. Equally impressive was the way the overwhelming majority of candidates of all abilities dealt with the underlying causes of it. There was some inappropriate use of the word 'colonialism' which left a somewhat naive impression, but the concept itself was well understood and candidates were able to recognise her loss of identity and notion of being caught between two cultures and the demands of each. One danger was that, in explaining a relatively sophisticated theory, some answers moved away from the passage and become more generalised or abstract in nature. 'Deeper implications' were handled better than actual analysis of language in this context.
- 23 Life on the homestead is hard work and the living conditions are squalid. The narrator shows some affection for it, nevertheless; for example for the company of other children and for the river. Nhamo's reluctance to return once he had gone away to school is commented on unfavourably by the narrator, but she herself only visits infrequently after she follows in his footsteps. The rivalry between the narrator and her older brother looms fairly large in the early chapters, and was seen by the very few candidates who attempted this task as colouring our impressions of her early life.
- 24 Lucia's job offers her the prospect of more independence from the men in her life, which she will welcome. She is likely to be grateful to Babamukuru and determined to try to better herself. Although she does not share the views of the younger girls that she has compromised herself, her subsequent comments are rather more equivocal. She does retain some of her feistiness in her comments about Tambudzai's parents' wedding. Some strong answers displayed a mixture of gratitude and pragmatism in an appropriate voice.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25 Arun's whole life has been dominated by examinations and by cramming. His father has perhaps unreasonable expectations and may be thought to be reliving his life through Arun, and will not be deterred from his plans for him. He is being subjected to emotional blackmail by both parents. His physical appearance has been modified by study. Good answers considered Uma's sympathetic viewpoint. Differentiation came from commentary on key words and phrases, e.g. 'manic determination', 'scholarly toil', 'worn down', 'ground down' and 'stricken look'. There was incredibly

strong sympathy universally felt for Arun, indicating real engagement with the novel. What stood out was the recognition of his sister's sorrow for her brother in nearly all responses.

- 26 Though it was expected that most candidates would choose to write about the American part of the novel, it was acceptable to consider the preparation and eating of food in India at the wedding banquets etc. and also in the way that some of the women are used almost as kitchen slaves after their weddings. There were very few answers to this question, but those there were usually showed they recognised how Desai contrasts the rich/overindulgent society of the USA with a more restrained Indian society, though both societies make food a central element of family life. Differentiation came through attention to the writing – the gross descriptions of the barbecue and so forth.
- 27 Aruna would be reflecting on Uma's marriage/wedding and all the efforts Mama went to. She would be thinking about the bridegroom, Haresh, and the ceremony, about Uma's letters home and Papa's reactions. Differentiation came from understanding of Aruna's character – pretty, vivacious, cleverer than Uma - and the creation of a convincing voice, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes mocking. Aruna mostly seemed unsympathetic towards her sister, being rather gleeful in many cases. Better answers wove in appropriate details from the text to show reasons for Aruna's opinion.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

- 28 Sampath's journey to work is hell through the chaos of early morning Shahkot, in which crowds from every conceivable occupation are intent on getting to work in the heat. It is made worse for Sampath by having Pinky to put up with and the final obstacle of the wire which every morning he forgets to duck under. Engagement with the ways in which the writing conveys this hellish vision was looked for, and there was some good teenage empathy with Sampath (similar to that which was evident in responses to Arun in *Fasting, Feasting*).
- 29 Mr. Chawla thinks his son to be a grave disappointment. He is lazy, has no ambition and is decidedly odd at times. Sampath thinks his father to be dedicated to making his life unbearable, and trying to make him into something which he cannot and does not want to be: in a word like his father. Response to the humour of the writing was a feature of better answers to this question. Candidates knew where in the novel to go for this question, and most were able to tune in to comedy in the early scenes.
- 30 There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate..

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31 The context is important here, and the understanding that this is a turning point in the novel. Gatsby's pretended unconcern about Nick's invitation of Daisy is completely false; the whole of the past five years has been building to this moment of reunion and all his hopes are centred on it. Candidates commented on Daisy's lack of awareness, Nick's excitement, and Gatsby's nervousness and pretended casualness, and the embarrassment of all three. Differentiation came from the focus on 'vividly', exploration of the language and dialogue, and close reading of the extract. This was the most popular question on the entire paper, and there was a wide range of performance, but in general the focus upon the passage was impressive. There was careful and effective examination of character dynamics, movement and speech, as well as the symbolism of the clock. References to the text were well-chosen and relevant. Though mixed, it was rare to read a very poor response to this question, with most recognising at least some of the ways tension is created and sustained.
- 32 This was another popular choice. Most tried to put both cases forward, but broadening the scope to include Myrtle and Jordan was usually a mistake; though the question does not insist upon it, there was clearly more mileage in focusing solely upon Gatsby's obsession with Daisy. It is the heart of the novel and its symbolism in terms of chasing the unattainable, particularly in the era the novel is set in, provides ample scope in itself to demonstrate a critical understanding of the author's concerns. Candidates considered the early days of the relationship before Gatsby goes off to war, Gatsby's dreams of a reunion with Daisy and his obsession with her, Daisy's character and marriage, and Nick's viewpoint. Balance was not required, but was usually the sign of a good answer. Less successful answers tended to be unclear what was meant by 'self-deception', and often just wrote about 'deception' or deceit in general.

- 33 Jordan might be thinking about the last meeting with Nick and Myrtle's death and its effect on her, Nick's behaviour at the time, and his relationship with Gatsby and with Daisy. Though she never seems to have expectations about Nick there will be a blow to her vanity. Jordan is usually quite jaunty and direct, but at this moment Nick says her voice is 'harsh and dry' rather than 'fresh and cool'. This was far less popular than the other *Gatsby* questions. The relatively few candidates who attempted it understood the character, and were usually able to convey her pragmatism and her slightly wounded vanity.

Stories of Ourselves

- 34 Successful answers gave at least some brief reference to the predicament that Lord Emsworth finds himself in. Differentiation came from the extent to which the wit and humour of the writing was appreciated: the arrivals of 'rough and knobbly physique', the description of Donaldson as a 'Roman Emperor', the reference to the magazines of people who take correspondence courses, and so forth. Some accomplished work conveyed good understanding of how comedy works.
- 35 The key words here were 'memorably' and 'the power that one character has over another'. *The Son's Veto* proved the most popular and successful choice. What distinguished the better responses to this time being taken to try to explore the character of the son himself. The vast majority went into great detail about his mother, but the boy was left a rather faceless symbol of sheer malignancy. There was a vague understanding often that his veto of his mother's dearest desire was to maintain his own social status, but this was not explored. In particular, the hypocrisy of a Christian minister in showing such little charity whilst preaching, no doubt, about love and fellowship makes him an incredibly odious character. There are issues of class and education and obligation. The father's domination of his son in *The Fly in the Ointment* centre on the importance of money. There is the lover's power over the narrator in *The Sandpiper*. The differentiator was the definition of what is meant by power and the way in which candidates went beyond mere narrative of their chosen story to engage with the writing and with the author's purpose.
- 36 There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42

Paper 42 (Closed Books)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text
- ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question
- maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract
- using a well-structured and developed argument
- supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

Another key message is the importance of maintaining focus on the question. Candidates who lost sight of the key theme, or, in passage-based questions, the passage itself, struggled to develop a response sufficient for the higher bands if central ideas or sections of the passage were missed.

Candidates should be reminded that passage-based questions require more than narrative run-throughs. The whole of the extract is important, and it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for discussion. Although there is not necessarily a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it. Prompts such as 'dramatic', 'moving', 'powerful' are specifically intended to draw out a personal response and if they are ignored the answer will not demonstrate the engagement that is crucial for achieving the top Bands, no matter how competent the understanding of situation.

A significant number of candidates tried to apply a formulaic approach to all responses, evidenced by pencilled acronyms/mnemonics they wrote on the answer booklet. While this was a useful memory jogger

for some, it could cause a problem, particularly with passage-based questions, when it led to extremely disjointed answers that ignored what was actually happening in the extract and tried to organize the response mechanically into separate paragraphs on subject, form, language, purpose etc. By contrast, the best answers were those that integrated all these effectively to produce a developed, focused and coherent response.

Candidates were usually disadvantaged when they wrote lengthy drafts, often as long as, and identical to, the answer itself.

There were fewer attempts at empathic questions this series, but most who tackled them knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. For success it was, of course, essential to have identified precisely the moment specified in the question.

Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 In general, candidates tackled this question fairly well, though there was often a lack of attention to the dramatic nature of the scene and reluctance to imagine this in performance. Most recognised that Willy's optimism shifts throughout the passage and some were able to show that this was typical of his character through the play. There was little evident engagement with the invitation to make a personal response as this reflects the need to understand the drama.
- 2 Most candidates spent time writing about surface details of the relationship between Bernard and Biff and ignored Happy. Perceptive answers attempted to examine the way the boys were influenced by upbringing and examined Charley and Willy as fathers, tending to focus discussion on Willy and his vision of the American Dream versus Charley and the 'hard-work' approach to success.
- 3 Answers usually attempted to reflect some of the language features evident in the drama. There were plenty of 'kids' and 'oh boys' language tics used, but not necessarily by Willy in the play. Some candidates attempted to explore the psychology of Willy in some depth and this tended to produce a character full of self-loathing and remorse prepared to grovel at the feet of Howard. This did not reflect the deluded Willy of the play, however. Some candidates relied fairly heavily on the passage in Question 1, making reference to Willy's anxiety over bills and his looking forward to the meal with his sons (all this is of course relevant in context but it tended to be overused to the exclusion of other textual reference). Most presented Willy as largely confident, though a few were able to portray his fragile state of mind.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 Differentiation was expected to come from focus on the word 'strikingly', close examination of the words and images of Brutus's speech and of the dynamics of the meeting. Most candidates were able to provide an interpretation of the scene and demonstrate understanding of the concerns of the principal players and of language issues. However, there were problems with responses when candidates chose to interpret the question as an invitation to provide a character study of Brutus and ignore the other conspirators. More successful answers demonstrated an understanding of the contrast between Cassius and Brutus and their contrasting leadership styles. Few explored the word 'striking' in the question. Where the other conspirators were considered the focus was mainly on Cassius and the potential gathering tension amongst the others largely ignored.
- 5 Answers focused mainly on the relationship between Antony and Octavius ignoring Lepidus; an ironic sidelining, as this suggested something about the character of Lepidus which might have enriched responses. Some candidates concentrated almost entirely on Antony and his speech after Caesar's assassination, ignoring the later scenes and the other two members of the triumvirate.
- 6 Most candidates were successful in being able to show Calphurnia's grief and love of Caesar and made reference to her dream and sorrow at being unable to persuade Caesar to stay away from the Senate. Several candidates projected unlikely knowledge of the whole conspiracy on Calphurnia, and made reference to events that happen much later on in the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7 Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the passage and its context within the play. Answers tended to be descriptive and focused on plot and characterisation over close examination of language and ‘powerfully dramatic’.
- 8 Very few candidates answered this question. A few answers were unable to build an argument for either of the portrayals of Gonzalo and changed their opinion half way through their argument. Most demonstrated a reasonably thorough knowledge of the character and play as a whole.
- 9 The candidates who answered this question were generally reasonably successful in producing a convincing voice for Caliban, especially regarding his relationship with Prospero and his fear of future punishment. Few candidates made reference to the events shared with Stephano and Trinculo.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Candidates commented on the surreal circumstances of Jack’s early life, Lady Bracknell’s mounting outrage, her withering amazement at this flouting of all social conventions and Wilde’s ability to produce the most dramatically witty and memorable of lines. Most were able to identify the comedy in the absurdity of the situation and Lady Bracknell’s unreasonable ‘advice’ for Jack to ‘produce’ parents. Some seemed to misread the question, or – more likely – were determined to answer a slightly different question than the one that was asked. As ever, writing about comedy or ‘comic’ material proved challenging for many. Those who misread the question often left this word out completely and just discussed the passage as ‘memorable’. Even here, it is surely the comedy that makes it memorable, but some somehow contrived to sidestep this. More focus was needed on how Wilde uses language and tone to create this sublime comic moment. Very often candidates were determined to write about social commentary on the upper classes, but contented themselves with identifying this without discussing how Wilde made it so comical. Some were aware of the fact that Lady Bracknell’s reference to the French Revolution was comic, but few showed how Wilde made this so.
- 11 Candidates showed some appreciation of the ways in which Wilde consistently turns accepted notions on their head, how he engineers surprises in the plot such as the denouement of the play and how the laughter is generated. With a wide selection of suitable passages to choose from, most candidates were fairly successful in this question. Weaker candidates tended to narrate the episodes instead of exploring Wilde’s writing and the dramatic effectiveness of ‘surprise’.
- 12 Candidates writing as Lady Bracknell were often not writing as Lady Bracknell on the journey the question asks about. However, there were some clearly recognisable monologues offered, and candidates were able to capture the hauteur quite successfully at times.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON: *Selected Poems*

- 13 Good answers focused on the light and energy of the extract. Weaker ones concentrated on the narrative, often with misinterpretations of the Lady’s motivations (she wants to marry him; she has fallen in love etc.) and no reference to how the attractiveness of Lancelot overwhelms common sense. Some candidates seemed confused about what ‘attractiveness’ might entail. Answers were generally approached stanza by stanza, missing some of the imagery that recurs throughout. The weakest answers paraphrased the poem. Several candidates seemed to think that the Lady was named ‘Shalott’ (or ‘Shallot;’) and did not seem to have an understanding of the poem in context. Others relied heavily on background/contextual knowledge, avoiding focus on the question and this specific extract.
- 14 Candidates who answered this question were successful in selecting suitable extracts to illustrate Tennyson’s changing feelings about Hallam’s death and stronger candidates were able to show how images, symbols and other poetic devices could be compared to illustrate this change. . Differentiation came from the extent of the sharpness of focus on *changing* feelings and on ‘vividly’ i.e. the sense of the writer at work.

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

SONGS OF OURSELVES: From Part 4

- 16 This was a very popular question, with plenty of opportunity for engagement with poetic language. Many sound answers referred to aspects such as: the recurrent use of the third person plural pronoun as if to distance the planners from 'us', the syntactical variation of the two first sentences followed by rather longer ones, the contrast between the planners and the sea in lines 7-9, the imagery of cosmetic standardisation in the second stanza, the references to time and history in the later parts of the poem, the imagery of dentistry in particular, the poet's apparent approval of 'flaws', 'blemishes' and 'stain'. Most candidates were reasonably successful in using the language of the poem to show how Cheng either seemed to have an approving or disapproving attitude towards the planners. Weaker candidates demonstrated a general understanding of the poem and poetic effect, but were unable to show how this affected our interpretation of Cheng's *attitude*. A significant number were tripped up by the last stanza, not knowing how to reconcile their understanding of this section with the rest of the poem. There was also a tendency to spend too much time on contextualising the poem. As usual, however, there were candidates who clearly understood the poem but who did not explicitly answer the question, merely implying Cheng's attitude. Occasionally this was clear enough, but at times it was so unclear it was impossible to determine whether the candidate in question had fully understood the poem. Such answers were self-penalising. The best answers made something of the ending of the poem – weaker answers tended to ignore it or made personal responses which were not really secure.
- 17 Many seemed to find it difficult to discuss the relationship between man and nature whilst demonstrating an engagement with poetic language. Most candidates explained the poem stanza by stanza without engaging with the question. The more secure answers referred to the animal behaviour described in the first two stanzas, the similarity of this to the poet's behaviour in lines 9-10 and the effect of the image of the grasshopper, and the significance of the final stanza.
- 18 Few candidates managed to demonstrate what structure had contributed to poetic intention. Where they did write about it the responses tended to be arid descriptions of the way sonnet form worked ('The first part of the poem is the octet ... the second part is... the rhyme scheme is ... it makes the poem flow...') Most ignored the effect of the poem on readers. Many candidates who attempted this question simply hoped to get by writing the words 'sonnet form' over and over again in an attempt to convince the Examiner that they were answering the question. While most candidates seemed aware of the form of a sonnet, few were able to show how this had any bearing on the reader's experience of the poem. A few strong answers on *The Cockroach* considered the form as a vehicle for conveying a reflective and self-reflective quality of the poem's thought, showing how detailed description of the insect's behaviour and the developing speculation about the causes of this behaviour from line 8 onwards subverts the traditional sonnet forms, and considering how the use of caesura in the last four lines sharpens the impact of the final line.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19 Stronger answers focused on the text and the language of the text to demonstrate character understanding. Weaker answers used the passage as a springboard to describe the whole narrative.
- 20 Candidates were able to explain what Nelly Dean contributed to the narrative, but only the strongest explored the challenges of her character: the language she uses; her relationship with characters; her relationship with readers.
- 21 There were some successful empathic assumptions of Edgar Linton facing his death in despair.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22 Differentiation came from the detail in which the language is explored (with comment on such terms as 'piccannin') and from the understanding of viewpoint; the episode is being observed by the narrator as a young child. Most candidates could write with some detail and understanding. There

was a good knowledge of themes and events in evidence. Candidates had obviously enjoyed the book and identified with it.

- 23 Candidates found Lucia an interesting character, and in general had been well prepared for discussing her. They usually commented on the way she dominates Takesure at the dare, and her directness and fiery honesty and the way she follows her appetites were seen as admirable by some.
- 24 Candidates who tackled this seemed to enjoy writing from the viewpoint of Nyasha, giving her a clear and opinionated voice. There was evidence of appreciation of her feelings of alienation and isolation.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25 There was evidence of enjoyment and understanding of the text, and answers provided interesting insight into plot and character. This was a long passage and candidates tended to focus on broad themes within the narrative and how they were revealed in the passage, e.g. Uma's bid for spiritual and actual freedom; Aruna's general discontent. They generally did this well and gave evidence of clear understanding, but not necessarily *critical* understanding. There was plenty of language detail to focus on here but this was not pursued by many. Some candidates focused on the second part of the passage (the incident with Uma's near drowning) and concentrated discussion on what the passage revealed about Uma's character, rather than Aruna's visit as a whole. Other candidates produced a character sketch of Aruna and emphasised her desire to 'achieve perfection'.
- 26 This was well handled by many, although there were some answers which worked to a formula, providing 'this is India, this is America' –type responses with no real comparison. More effective answers were able to provide insightful responses to cultural differences often revealing perceptive similarities in aspects of family life. Weaker answers digressed into (personal) discussions about preference for one culture over the other, often making reference to the candidate's own general knowledge that was not always presented in or relevant to the novel.
- 27 Most candidates were able to make a reasonable attempt at a convincing voice for Mrs Patton, showing her genuine affection for Arun and dissatisfaction with her own family life, usually giving her a slightly nervous, hesitant and sometimes sad voice.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

- 28 The extract moves from Sampath's characteristic day dreams, to mounting joy and ecstasy, to the felt need to share this exquisite world with the assembled company by communicating unbridled joy, a joy which, of course, is certainly not shared by the shocked onlookers. Candidates were generally able to identify, through the writing, what made this amusing. There were some interesting responses to this. Some got to grips with language and effects; others merely listed all the 'amusing' things that Sampath, the squealing ladies and Mr D.P.S did. A small number of struggled to see the incident as at all amusing because it was perceived to be a shameful and disrespectful act especially as it took place at a wedding. They found it difficult to detach from this viewpoint to write about Desai's methods.
- 29 Candidates tended to focus on narrative issues here such as Sampath's knowledge about the letters and Mr Chawla's needs to make money. They seemed aware that there was satire in the novel but they struggled to express clearly how Desai was presenting it. There was generally quite a lot of relevant narrative of incident or reference to relevant action, but little or no developed response as to how Desai was using this to make fun of the way people behave towards gurus and holy men. At times the narrative became little more than just this, a self-penalising approach.
- 30 There were some very funny, outraged self-absorbed empathic responses here which revealed good understanding of the aggressive energy of Pinky's character.

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31 Differentiation came from the detail in which the language was examined and the viewpoint considered. Many candidates were able to focus on Fitzgerald's writing and used the passage to provide clear evidence that they understood how he had crafted this character. Some weaker candidates still wanted to provide extensive narrative overview which missed the potential for marks.

- 32** It was expected that answers would consider the narrative voice and the extent to which it is reliable, his relationship with Gatsby and the nature of his relationship with Daisy, his commentary on the people who inhabit Gatsby's world. Candidates needed to define 'honesty' within their own understanding as readers and within the context of the novel to answer the question well. Many chose to focus on surface details of Nick's lifestyle and then 'stick' the notion of honesty on to that without having suggested what the qualities of honesty might be in the first place. To be answered fully, the question requires a personal response as only the reader can really judge Nick's honesty. Many answers tended to describe narrative moments which did not get to the heart of the question.
- 33** Many candidates got narrative details wrong. Some had Daisy knowing who Myrtle was, or had Gatsby driving the car when it hit Myrtle. There was some echo of a voice for Daisy but very few managed to sustain it. Answers to this question tended to err on the side of melodrama, with Daisy seemingly quite hysterical in some answers. Few were successful in demonstrating knowledge of the context of Daisy's thoughts, although most tried to show her conflicting feelings about both Gatsby and Tom. Some referred back to the argument with Tom as a flashback, others focused only on the accident. Apart from Daisy's panic, fear, and speed, the voice was not strong, with some confusion about what she actually feels about Gatsby and how far she is planning her future while driving after the crash, giving Daisy more logic and serious intelligence than she perhaps has.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

- 34** This question gave candidates considerable opportunity to explore language and effect and candidates were generally reasonably successful in accomplishing this, and there was plenty of evidence of strong personal engagement with the extract. A few seemed confused by 'disturbing', interpreting it as 'disrupting' rather than 'troubling'. Some digressed from the passage into a prolonged and unnecessary explanation of the story's post-war-time context.
- 35** Candidates needed to focus on sympathy (which could also extend to empathy) and develop an argument. Vital considerations were the way the mother is bullied by her son and the way in which Sam is despised by the son and fobbed off by the mother. Some candidates assumed that the need for sympathy would be understood from the details of the story alone and merely gave a narrative outline. A number of candidates did not mention Sam in any way. More successful candidates recognised the cumulative effect of Sophy and Sam's tragedy on the reader's sympathy and the strongest answers showed how Hardy's writing prompted a sympathetic response.
- 36** In general, this was the best done of the empathic questions on this paper, with candidates often willing and able to supply small textual details from the story as they recalled the first ball. Leila's voice is quite distinctive and candidates found it reasonably easy to get somewhere near it in their monologues. The best answers were able to offer a range of thoughts, feelings and reactions to the events she had experienced.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43

Paper 43 (Closed Books)

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text
- ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question
- maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract
- using a well-structured and developed argument
- supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

Another key message is the importance of maintaining focus on the question. Candidates who lost sight of the key theme, or, in passage-based questions, the passage itself, struggled to develop a response sufficient for the higher bands if central ideas or sections of the passage were missed.

Candidates should be reminded that passage-based questions require more than narrative run-throughs. The whole of the extract is important, and it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for discussion. Although there is not necessarily a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it. Prompts such as 'dramatic', 'moving', 'powerful' are specifically intended to draw out a personal response and if they are ignored the answer will not demonstrate the engagement that is crucial for achieving the top Bands, no matter how competent the understanding of situation.

A significant number of candidates tried to apply a formulaic approach to all responses, evidenced by pencilled acronyms/mnemonics they wrote on the answer booklet. While this was a useful memory jogger for some, it could cause a problem, particularly with passage-based questions, when it led to extremely

disjointed answers that ignored what was actually happening in the extract and tried to organize the response mechanically into separate paragraphs on subject, form, language, purpose etc. By contrast, the best answers were those that integrated all these effectively to produce a developed, focused and coherent response.

Candidates were usually disadvantaged when they wrote lengthy drafts, often as long as, and identical to, the answer itself.

There were fewer attempts at empathic questions this series, but most who tackled them knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. For success it was, of course, essential to have identified precisely the moment specified in the question.

Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 This was by far the most popular question on this text. There were some perceptive responses to the dramatic impact of this self-contained flashback. Candidates were well prepared for the topic and had no difficulty with the words 'illusions' and 'reality'. Most explored in some convincing detail Willy's central speech about 'the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead'. The delusions of the Loman father and sons were often effectively contrasted with the young Bernard's more sober grip on reality, a world in which you study and work hard in order to succeed. Stronger responses were able to place this flashback in the context of a present in which Bernard was the one who was successful.
- 2 This was a much less popular question than the passage-based text. The few responses seen were largely character sketches, pointing out the importance of Charley's financial assistance to Willy, and were able to offer a few direct quotations. These responses did not deal adequately with Miller's use of this character as a contrast to Willy, and tended to forget the key words of the question 'dramatic contribution'. There was little evidence to suggest that candidates were responding to a play, intended for performance. Most referred to the 'book'.
- 3 Again, there were very few responses. They captured something of the moment specified in the question (after Willy has left Howard Wagner's office) and Willy's predicament, but the voices for Howard were rarely convincing.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 Focus on 'powerful' and commentary on the emotionalism of Brutus and the ambiguity of Antony's speeches was a key differentiator. Candidates tended to focus on Antony but there was some confusion as to whether he was joining the conspirators or not. Very few answers explored the word choice in this richly emotive passage, though supporting quotations were offered. The 'powerful' element of the question was not well served without exploration of language.
- 5 Some candidates interpreted 'unreasonable' as meaning 'had no reason for doing something.' A few also saw 'vain' in the sense of 'in vain', which skewed their approach. A large majority of candidates dealt with this question solely on the basis of Act 3, or Acts 1-3. Very few saw that Acts 4 and 5 provided useful material. Thus their answers tended to be focused on Brutus's role in the assassination and the 'unjustified murder' of his great friend, which limited their approach. Some did grasp the significance of Cassius's influence, but not of the Brutus-Cassius falling-out in Act 4.
- 6 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7, 8, 9 There were far too few answers on this text to make general comment appropriate.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Many of the responses clearly found this extract, in the words of the question, 'delightfully absurd'. Some simply catalogued the lines they found amusing, often with lengthy quotation. The topsy-turvy nature of Wilde's aphorisms was discussed in better answers, sometimes with a degree of originality. Most had, for example, something worthwhile to say about Gwendolen's 'In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing'. The stronger responses explored convincingly the effects of the stylised language and structure of the extract, and the melodramatic actions indicated in the stage directions. A few responses took matters very literally, without any appreciation of Wilde's sense of the absurd.
- 11 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.
- 12 The majority of candidates tackling this task showed a clear engagement with the humour of the play. Their responses usually gamely attempted the voice of Miss Prism, conveying her surprise at the turn of events towards the end of the play. Most were able to include echoes from the text, alluding to capacious handbags, railway termini and three volume novels. Some explored entertainingly her affections for Dr Chasuble.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Selected Poems*

- 13 There was a general ignorance of the context and hence the significance of tone and mood. Quite a number of answers seem to have been approached as 'unseens'. 'Moving' tended to be a term thrown in randomly but not demonstrated. In better answers, differentiation came from the extent to which candidates focused on the word 'moving' and saw the poignancy of this final section in coming to terms at last with the death of Hallam. Response to the last two-and-a-half lines was important to this.
- 14,15 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 4*

- 16 Some responses attempted a paraphrase of the poem but found difficult the two rhetorical questions at the beginning of the second stanza which take readers to the core of the poem: 'Which language / has not been the oppressor's tongue? / Which language / truly meant to murder someone?' Some candidates understood the poem perfectly but, again, did not fully consider the strongly emotive language shift between stanzas, and the effects of language in the second stanza. The best answers realized that the tone of the poem is crucial and considered the link between the title of the poem and the last few lines.
- 17 In general, those who attempted this question were at least able to deal with the broad outline of the poem, with the speaker awake at night time. Stronger responses embarked on a closer exploration of language relating to the moon and clouds, and the vividness of the descriptions.
- 18 There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19, 20, 21 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22, 23, 24 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25, 26, 27 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

28, 29, 30 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31** This was the most popular question on this text, and many candidates made at least some reasonably developed response to the detail of the extract and to the key word of the question 'disturbing'. Most captured the oppressiveness of the alcohol-filled moment, with Nick unable to get away. Some wrote persuasively about the disturbing nature of the values captured by Fitzgerald here: the adultery, and the shallowness and materialism evident in Myrtle's list: 'A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays...' There were strong personal responses to the extract's one-sentence paragraph in which the most disturbing action, Tom's breaking Myrtle's nose, is described with a shocking abruptness. Some outrage was expressed at the dog being forced to sit in the smoke-filled room.
- 32** Far fewer responses were seen to this than to Question 31, and they were less effective – probably because candidates wanted to write either character sketches of both Gatsby and Nick or a response to an essay that had not been set: Nick as 'unreliable narrator'. Differentiation came from the degree to which the answer went beyond a character sketch of Nick to see him solely from Gatsby's point of view and also the consideration of the narrative voice here and the reliability of Nick's presentation.
- 33** There were some genuine attempts to capture Daisy's voice, and the best answers had her wrapped up in her thoughts which ended mid-sentence at the collision. Some gave Daisy more depth of thought and guilty conscience than most would; no-one suggested that Daisy might not care about the bootlegging, but several picked up that her social status was now at stake. The least convincing responses lacked a detailed grasp of the moment and what had led up to it. Some tried to wrench the moment towards an 'as live' account of Myrtle being knocked over ('Oh my God!') and there was some unhelpfully anachronistic language here ('Gatsby, you scumbag...').

from ***Stories of Ourselves***

- 34** Some dealt well with the detail of this question, offering apt quotations to support points made. For others it seemed to be approached as an 'unseen', as there was confusion as to the identity of the two men in the last paragraph, and even to Randolph's (the father's) relationship with Sophy (his daughter). 'How does Hardy make you feel' provoked some unusual, and very personal replies, but generally indignation and anger predominated. There was some misreading, for example that Randolph was full of remorse in the final paragraph.
- 35** Candidates went beyond narrative to focus on significant detail and explore the language of the stories. In weaker answers, 'significant experience' was not always clearly identified and there was a tendency to a narrative approach, as well as overlooking the question's key word 'memorable'.
- 36** There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/51

Paper 51 (Closed Books - B)

Key Messages

- Answers to passage-based questions would benefit from greater reference to the passage, especially in the form of direct quotation. The use of line reference in place of this should be discouraged.
- In answer to Shakespeare passage-based questions, in particular, candidates should avoid narrative responses and putting the passage in context at great length.
- There were strong answers to discursive questions this session, especially from candidates who used wide ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of the text as well as producing a convincing “voice” for the character.
- Candidates should focus on the question set, rather than reproducing an essay they had previously written during the course.
- The strongest answers to poetry questions were clearly rooted in the language of the poems and used extensive quotation.

General Comments

In answering the passage-based questions, an ability to explore the passage in some detail and to comment on the writer’s use of language is the key to high marks. Some candidates are penalising themselves by referring to 3 or 4 lines of text without quotation. The Examiner, therefore, cannot know to which precise detail of the text they are referring. Responses to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in particular, suffered from a tendency to narrate events before and after the extract with little comment on the extract itself. At times candidates confused Hermia with Helena and Demetrius with Lysander. There is deliberate chaos and confusion in the play, of course, but this is essential knowledge that candidates just have to learn. Candidates would continue to benefit from an awareness of what is happening on stage in response to drama texts. Visual effects such as movement, interruptions, entrances and exits, offstage noises or music could be referred to more consistently.

Work on poetry continues to improve but there is also evidence of insecure knowledge. Some candidates refer to lines as stanzas and vice versa. Candidates almost universally chose to write about the poem printed on the paper, whereas they might have been more successful choosing one of the other questions. Candidates who had detailed knowledge of the whole selection, and had really learned the poems thoroughly, reaped the benefits in this session.

There were many strong discursive responses to all texts this session. Answers were well evidenced, well-balanced and showed strong personal response.

Responses to empathic questions were strong, with many candidates showing a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing, with some especially convincing Titianias. Less successful responses showed limited awareness of the moment, though these were relatively few.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses, though some answers went little beyond narrative.

Comments on Specific Questions

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Question 1

The closer the responses linked the events of Maya's graduation in the passage to the writing, as opposed to asserting an emotion of excitement, the higher the reward. There were some perceptive observations on Angelou's use of adjectives, declaratives, figurative language and references to time. One good answer saw Maya's own young life with all of its future promise reflected in the image of the sunlight being "itself still young". There were some misconceptions about the role of the preacher and Maya's response to Bailey's gift.

Question 2

The strongest answers noted the intensity of the relationship between Bailey and his mother, and referred widely throughout the text. Candidates mentioned for example: Kay Francis; Bailey's relationship with the white prostitute; Vivian throwing him out but finding him a job on the railroad. Astute answers appreciated the contrast between Maya's and Bailey's relationship with Vivian but some focused overly on Maya and not on the question set. Some answers would have been improved by looking beyond the opening sections of the autobiography.

Question 3

The best responses conveyed Mrs Flowers' "aristocratic" calm, measured tones and made much use of narrative detail from the text, such as the cookies and lemonade and the reading *from A Tale of Two Cities*. Candidates made up their own mind as to how much Mrs Flowers knew about Maya's muteness. Those who struck a note of sympathetic concern for Maya's welfare were the most convincing.

Carol Ann Duffy: *Selected Poems*

Question 4

The most effective responses selected the images of "prayer" and responded to their surprising and striking nature, probing the connection between the image and the spiritual experience. Other answers would have been improved by greater understanding of what constitutes "prayer" in the poem. Perceptive responses explored the rich vein of contrast and the ritualistic effect of the Shipping Forecast.

Question 5

There were strong answers from those who had learned quotations, moved beyond pathos and probed Duffy's language. Some sophisticated responses went beyond the dolphins' obvious distress at captivity to more philosophical observations.

Question 6

A focus on the term "powerfully" in the question featured in successful answers. These responses selected images such as the moon wrapped in brown paper, the layering/undressing of the onion and the scent clinging to the knife. Insightful responses explored the contrasting notions of conventional versus idiosyncratic symbols of love in the poem.

The Siege

Many Centres have taken up this new text and candidates have responded to its strong themes and characterisation.

Question 7

There was detailed engagement with how Dunmore makes the moment so shocking. One candidate commented on the "killing off" of a character we have just come to know, others explored the point of view in the passage effectively. Close attention to the language was not universal and the descriptions of Katya's corpse, her delicate fingers and Anna's observation that she should have been trying on a new dress were

often missed. Some candidates blamed Katya for “not listening”, seeing the accident as her own responsibility. The most successful answers showed an implicit awareness of context and clear understanding of why the work on the Luga Line had to continue.

Question 8

This question was usually answered competently and often very well indeed. The best answers were balanced in their view, provided precise and detailed reference to the text and referred to the structure of the novel. Few candidates were censorious about Marina’s affair with Mikhail, seeing her love as unrequited. Most candidates observed how Dunmore makes us more sympathetic towards Marina as the novel continues. Some answers would have been improved by a stronger element of evaluation rather than a purely narrative approach.

Question 9

Candidates produced a convincing voice for Mikhail when they portrayed him as quite despairing, wanting to be with Vera and still bitter about not being published, although shocked, to a degree, out of his apathy by Marina’s words. Many gave him a sense of guilt at being so useless while Anna worked so hard.

Brave New World

Question 10

This question was answered well when candidates looked at Bernard and Lenina’s contrasting feelings and the ways in which they are presented. Too often candidates used this question as a peg on which to hang an essay about conditioning or dystopias, rather than examining the language of the extract to answer the question set.

Question 11

Many answers effectively explored Huxley’s distinction between the two obvious rebels Helmholtz and Bernard, and then showed how Helmholtz responded to the other intellectual challenges that arise in the novel: Shakespeare, John and the remote island experiment. There was a sound awareness of his role in the novel and many engaged personal responses.

Question 12

The most convincing answers exploited the clash of cultures between the reservation and the brave new world, and the emotional and psychological fallout of this clash. Some Lindas had surprisingly little to say about John and some went little beyond her physical pain.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Question 13

The most successful answers to this question balanced “entertaining” and “significant”, explored the passage in some detail and responded to its structure and language. Most saw that Demetrius’s treatment of Helena (especially his threat to her virginity) is despicable, but also that her infatuation has comic potential. There are entertaining extremes of feeling, contrasting reactions and role reversals in the scene, but only the strongest candidates examined these in any detail. Strong candidates also knew that it was Oberon who overheard this conversation not Puck. Too often “significance” was interpreted as a cue to outline the rest of the plot of the play. Whilst knowledge of context is required, the focus must always be on the details of the passage and candidates should be encouraged to acquire a detailed understanding of the text.

Question 14

This was a popular question and candidates clearly engaged with Puck’s characterisation. Some answers concentrated only on what he does in the play. Stronger responses explored his detachment from the human world, his mischievous behaviour and its plot significance, his language and his relationship with the audience. Surprisingly some answers missed the entertainment value of his transforming Bottom into an ass and, conversely, some answers only looked at this and his mistake over the love potion.

Question 15

The strongest responses here were often measured and controlled rather than merely outraged and disgusted. More successful answers were aware that Titania has already surrendered the changeling boy and that she (apparently) forgives Oberon. They gave her an air of haughtiness and regality along with her speculation as to the origins of the “mishap”. The dream theme was explored by many and there were some outstanding, sophisticated and subtle responses.

Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)

Questions 16

This was a popular choice and successful responses explored the use of paradox, antithesis and repetition to engage with the moving nature of the poem. Many answers would have been improved by giving more emphasis to Tichbourne’s moving expression, rather than to the sad nature of his situation. Some candidates saw him as accepting of his fate whereas others more convincingly explored his sadness and regret.

There were far too few answers to **Questions 17 and 18** to make general comment appropriate.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

Strong candidates here showed awareness of the context of this scene and that the audience, at this stage, are not fully aware of the reasons for the conflict between Maggie and Brick. They combined this with their knowledge of the play as a whole to show the nature of the tension here. As well as looking closely at the content and tone of the dialogue, they paid attention to the effects of the offstage music, Maggie’s closing the drapes and slamming the door, and the “lion tamer” episode at the end of the passage. Some candidates thought that Brick was attacking Maggie here rather than fending her off, and few responded to the change of tone at the end of the scene. Many answers would have been improved by secure knowledge of the context of the scene and the reasons behind the tension and by relying less on comment on punctuation. Those who kept the word “dramatically” clearly in view fared best.

Question 20

There were many very strong responses to Mae, “the monster of fertility”, showing excellent textual knowledge and an ability to evaluate. Many wrote perceptively about her role in the play. Some were remarkably sympathetic and perhaps no-one fully engaged with the full “horror” of Williams’ portrayal of her.

Question 21

Most candidates could reproduce Brick’s voice competently, though there was some over-reliance on the repetition of “mendacity”. The strongest answers showed awareness of the moment and concentrated on the fact that he had just told Big Daddy the truth. Some answers were more of a general reflection on everything Brick might have been thinking during the play as a whole. Some made him care too much about the inheritance, which is hardly in character. Many more convincingly had him reaching for a drink and waiting for “the click....”

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/52
Paper 52 (Closed Books - B)

Key Messages

- Answers to passage-based questions would benefit from greater reference to the passage, especially in the form of direct quotation. The use of line reference in place of this should be discouraged.
- In answer to Shakespeare passage-based questions, in particular, candidates should avoid narrative responses and putting the passage in context at great length.
- There were strong answers to discursive questions this session, especially from candidates who used wide ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of the text as well as producing a convincing “voice” for the character.
- Candidates should focus on the question set, rather than reproducing an essay they had previously written during the course.
- The strongest answers to poetry questions were clearly rooted in the language of the poems and used extensive quotation.

General Comments

In answer to the passage-based questions an ability to explore the passage in some detail and to comment on the writer’s use of language is the key to high marks. Some candidates are penalising themselves by referring to 3 or 4 lines of text without exact quotation. The Examiner, therefore, cannot know to which precise detail of the text they are referring. Some responses to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in particular, suffered from a tendency to narrate events before and after the extract with insufficient focus on the comedy in the extract itself. At times candidates confused Hermia with Helena and Demetrius with Lysander. There is deliberate chaos and confusion in the play, of course, but this is essential knowledge that candidates just have to learn.

Candidates would continue to benefit from an awareness of what is happening on stage in response to drama texts. Visual effects such as movement, interruptions, entrances and exits, offstage noises or music could be referred to more consistently.

Work on poetry continues to improve but there is also evidence of insecure knowledge. Some candidates refer to lines as stanzas and vice versa. Candidates often chose to write about the poem printed on the paper, whereas they might have been more successful choosing one of the other questions. Candidates who had detailed knowledge of the whole selection, and had really learned the poems thoroughly, reaped the benefits in this session.

There were many strong discursive responses to all texts. Answers were well evidenced, well-balanced and showed strong personal response.

Responses to empathic questions were strong, with many candidates showing a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing, with some especially impressive Hermias. Less successful responses showed limited awareness of the moment, though these were relatively few.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses, though some answers went little beyond narrative.

Comments on Specific Questions

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Question 1

This question was answered successfully when candidates went beyond identifying and listing the bond between Maya and Bailey to provide relevant detail of context, and of use of language and its effects. Often effective comment on the significance of Bailey as Maya's "Kingdom Come" proved to be a discriminator. Several answers gave too much extraneous background material.

Question 2

Successful answers showed a balanced and evaluative view of Vivian Baxter, and gave specific detail from the text to support their view. The best answers ranged widely throughout the text. Whereas most candidates were willing to accept Maya's generally admiring portrayal of her mother, perceptive responses commented on her "abandonment" of her children and her insalubrious associates. Many mentioned her leaving Maya alone with Mr Freeman but few looked at his murder in any detail.

Question 3

There were some convincing voices for Uncle Willie, though some were over-politicised. The main misconceptions here were that the "boys" did arrive that night, and that they were singling him out personally rather than aiming their "revenge" at any member of the black community. The best answers captured his sense of injustice, his fatalism and religious belief, and also had him bewailing his uncomfortable night.

Carol Ann Duffy: *Selected Poems*

Question 4

Answers to this question would have been improved by greater overview and concentration on the poet's emotions. Candidates could select particular images such as the writing on the hand, but there was less of a holistic view of the relationship between the past and the present in the poem.

Question 5

Candidates were able to explain the lost hour and often selected "rain...bleak...darkening" to comment on the sad setting of the poem. Some commented on the "shortened days" being a reference to death but answers tended to lack a developed overview.

Question 6

Responses to *In Mrs Tilscher's Class* tended to be stronger than those to *The Good Teachers*. Candidates could comment on the pleasant images in the former poem and the portrayal of children becoming adolescent, whereas in response to the latter, they referred less closely to the positive portrayal of the teachers.

The Siege

Question 7

Many candidates made a clear link between the literary features used in this passage and their effects. The focus on the passage and its language here was stronger than in other texts. Thus there was an engagement with the threatening and ominous atmosphere of the passage. Less successful answers were not secure on context, seemingly unaware that the German army was on its way and that Anna was destroying food she could not carry to prevent them eating it. Some thought the threat was from the KGB.

Question 8

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

Question 9

This question produced some strong responses, with Evgenia's fondness for Anna apparent. Some answers could have focused more clearly on the buying of the burzhuika and others moved too far outside the moment.

Brave New World

Question 10

Answers to this question were generally very competent, with candidates recognising Bernard's and John's "aloneness" and the reasons for this. The strongest answers developed the differences between them in terms of background and "conditioning", and showed awareness of Bernard's ulterior motive in taking John home to London. Some saw John as being as equally devious as Bernard, rather than innocently excited at what he assumes is a genuine invitation.

Question 11

The most popular choices here were the soma throwing episode and the aftermath of John and Lenina's visit to the Feelies. The question was answered well when candidates had a clear idea of what was amusing in both the situation and the writing, and were aware of Huxley's purpose.

Question 12

The best answers here showed good knowledge of the moment and understood the issues playing out between John and Lenina. Voices were generally competent.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 13

There was a great variety of response to this question. Most candidates responded really well to the humour, commenting on the contrasts of status and the "beauty and the beast" nature of this encounter. The dramatic ironies were explored in some detail along with explicit comment on the contrast in language. Bottom's foolish character malapropisms and attempts at being courtly (and getting this wrong) featured in good answers. Most candidates also found amusement in his unwitting references to being an ass and desiring animal fodder. Less successful answers did not venture much beyond the basic narrative of the scene and tended to repeat the facts of Bottom's transformation.

Question 14

Most candidates sympathised with Helena's plight; from the pangs of unrequited love to an excess of suitors. Strong answers pinpointed her use of language to convey the degree of her suffering. Less successful ones could only refer to the play in a very general way. Answers were a little one sided, the only criticism of her being her betrayal of information to Demetrius. Few commented on the abjectness of her devotion or referred to the quarrel with Hermia where she makes a few catty remarks. The best answers ranged widely and confidently through the play.

Question 15

The liveliest Hermias were still spoiling for a fight, lamented the loss of a childhood friend, and remained indignant about Helena's references to her height. Close textual echoes of the quarrel featured in the best responses. Some were rather flat, or confused Hermia with Helena.

Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)

Question 16

This was a popular choice, and answered well when candidates responded to the personification and symbolism of the seasons and looked at the language. Some made too much of the personification, comparing the seasons here to modern individuals. Many seemed unaware of the agricultural preoccupations in the poem. There were misconceptions such as Summer having to hunt rather than this being a leisure pursuit, and that Autumn was suffering from the pangs of hunger rather than banishing it by his store of plenty. There was attention to the symbolic use of colour but surprisingly less focus on the use of alliteration, sibilance and imagery which contribute to the vividness of the portrayal.

Questions 17 and Question 18

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

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

This question was answered well when candidates showed secure knowledge of the context, hence understanding why Brick wants to leave as he cannot bear Big Daddy being lied to about his recovery. Many ignored Big Daddy's opening speech and the reasons for his anger at Brick, who he thinks is indifferent to the "good news". Some candidates wrote about the rest of this scene, or the rest of the play, rather than the extract itself. There was more confidence in Big Daddy's probing into Brick's drinking but that features more fully later on. The best answers noted the effect of Big Mama's interruption, and the drama and symbolism of Big Daddy kicking away Brick's crutch.

Question 20

This was generally answered well, with a balanced evaluation and specific textual references. Candidates were mainly in sympathy with Big Mama; citing her love for Big Daddy, who does not deserve it, and her routing of Mae and Gooper at the end of the play.

Question 21

This was answered well, with candidates capturing Gooper's down-trodden air as he obeys his father. These responses also captured his sense of unfairness, self pity, belief in his wife and in his own superiority over Brick. Concerns about the inheritance featured strongly.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/53

Paper 53 (Closed Books - B)

Key Messages

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- In answer to Shakespeare passage-based questions, in particular, candidates should avoid narrative responses and putting the passage in context at great length.
- There were strong answers to discursive questions this session, especially from candidates who used wide ranging supporting details from the text and offered direct quotations from it.
- The most effective answers to empathic questions showed knowledge of the text as well as producing a convincing “voice” for the character.
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General Comments

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Responses to empathic questions were strong, with many candidates showing a sophisticated awareness of their chosen character and of the context of the question. Voices were often very convincing, with some especially convincing Titianias. Less successful responses showed limited awareness of the moment, though these were relatively few.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses, though some answers went little beyond narrative.

Comments on Specific Questions

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Question 1

The closer the responses linked the events of Maya's graduation in the passage to the writing, as opposed to asserting an emotion of excitement, the higher the reward. There were some perceptive observations on Angelou's use of adjectives, declaratives, figurative language and references to time. One good answer saw Maya's own young life with all of its future promise reflected in the image of the sunlight being "itself still young". There were some misconceptions about the role of the preacher and Maya's response to Bailey's gift.

Question 2

The strongest answers noted the intensity of the relationship between Bailey and his mother, and referred widely throughout the text. Candidates mentioned for example: Kay Francis; Bailey's relationship with the white prostitute; Vivian throwing him out but finding him a job on the railroad. Astute answers appreciated the contrast between Maya's and Bailey's relationship with Vivian but some focused overly on Maya and not on the question set. Some answers would have been improved by looking beyond the opening sections of the autobiography.

Question 3

The best responses conveyed Mrs Flowers' "aristocratic" calm, measured tones and made much use of narrative detail from the text, such as the cookies and lemonade and the reading *from A Tale of Two Cities*. Candidates made up their own mind as to how much Mrs Flowers knew about Maya's muteness. Those who struck a note of sympathetic concern for Maya's welfare were the most convincing.

Carol Ann Duffy: *Selected Poems*

Question 4

The most effective responses selected the images of "prayer" and responded to their surprising and striking nature, probing the connection between the image and the spiritual experience. Other answers would have been improved by greater understanding of what constitutes "prayer" in the poem. Perceptive responses explored the rich vein of contrast and the ritualistic effect of the Shipping Forecast.

Question 5

There were strong answers from those who had learned quotations, moved beyond pathos and probed Duffy's language. Some sophisticated responses went beyond the dolphins' obvious distress at captivity to more philosophical observations.

Question 6

A focus on the term "powerfully" in the question featured in successful answers. These responses selected images such as the moon wrapped in brown paper, the layering/undressing of the onion and the scent clinging to the knife. Insightful responses explored the contrasting notions of conventional versus idiosyncratic symbols of love in the poem.

The Siege

Many Centres have taken up this new text and candidates have responded to its strong themes and characterisation.

Question 7

There was detailed engagement with how Dunmore makes the moment so shocking. One candidate commented on the "killing off" of a character we have just come to know, others explored the point of view in the passage effectively. Close attention to the language was not universal and the descriptions of Katya's corpse, her delicate fingers and Anna's observation that she should have been trying on a new dress were

often missed. Some candidates blamed Katya for “not listening”, seeing the accident as her own responsibility. The most successful answers showed an implicit awareness of context and clear understanding of why the work on the Luga Line had to continue.

Question 8

This question was usually answered competently and often very well indeed. The best answers were balanced in their view, provided precise and detailed reference to the text and referred to the structure of the novel. Few candidates were censorious about Marina’s affair with Mikhail, seeing her love as unrequited. Most candidates observed how Dunmore makes us more sympathetic towards Marina as the novel continues. Some answers would have been improved by a stronger element of evaluation rather than a purely narrative approach.

Question 9

Candidates produced a convincing voice for Mikhail when they portrayed him as quite despairing, wanting to be with Vera and still bitter about not being published, although shocked, to a degree, out of his apathy by Marina’s words. Many gave him a sense of guilt at being so useless while Anna worked so hard.

Brave New World

Question 10

This question was answered well when candidates looked at Bernard and Lenina’s contrasting feelings and the ways in which they are presented. Too often candidates used this question as a peg on which to hang an essay about conditioning or dystopias, rather than examining the language of the extract to answer the question set.

Question 11

Many answers effectively explored Huxley’s distinction between the two obvious rebels Helmholtz and Bernard, and then showed how Helmholtz responded to the other intellectual challenges that arise in the novel: Shakespeare, John and the remote island experiment. There was a sound awareness of his role in the novel and many engaged personal responses.

Question 12

The most convincing answers exploited the clash of cultures between the reservation and the brave new world, and the emotional and psychological fallout of this clash. Some Lindas had surprisingly little to say about John and some went little beyond her physical pain.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Question 13

The most successful answers to this question balanced “entertaining” and “significant”, explored the passage in some detail and responded to its structure and language. Most saw that Demetrius’s treatment of Helena (especially his threat to her virginity) is despicable, but also that her infatuation has comic potential. There are entertaining extremes of feeling, contrasting reactions and role reversals in the scene, but only the strongest candidates examined these in any detail. Strong candidates also knew that it was Oberon who overheard this conversation not Puck. Too often “significance” was interpreted as a cue to outline the rest of the plot of the play. Whilst knowledge of context is required, the focus must always be on the details of the passage and candidates should be encouraged to acquire a detailed understanding of the text.

Question 14

This was a popular question and candidates clearly engaged with Puck’s characterisation. Some answers concentrated only on what he does in the play. Stronger responses explored his detachment from the human world, his mischievous behaviour and its plot significance, his language and his relationship with the audience. Surprisingly some answers missed the entertainment value of his transforming Bottom into an ass and, conversely, some answers only looked at this and his mistake over the love potion.

Question 15

The strongest responses here were often measured and controlled rather than merely outraged and disgusted. More successful answers were aware that Titania has already surrendered the changeling boy and that she (apparently) forgives Oberon. They gave her an air of haughtiness and regality along with her speculation as to the origins of the “mishap”. The dream theme was explored by many and there were some outstanding, sophisticated and subtle responses.

Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)

Questions 16

This was a popular choice and successful responses explored the use of paradox, antithesis and repetition to engage with the moving nature of the poem. Many answers would have been improved by giving more emphasis to Tichbourne’s moving expression, rather than to the sad nature of his situation. Some candidates saw him as accepting of his fate whereas others more convincingly explored his sadness and regret.

There were far too few answers to **Questions 17 and 18** to make general comment appropriate.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19

Strong candidates here showed awareness of the context of this scene and that the audience, at this stage, are not fully aware of the reasons for the conflict between Maggie and Brick. They combined this with their knowledge of the play as a whole to show the nature of the tension here. As well as looking closely at the content and tone of the dialogue, they paid attention to the effects of the offstage music, Maggie’s closing the drapes and slamming the door, and the “lion tamer” episode at the end of the passage. Some candidates thought that Brick was attacking Maggie here rather than fending her off, and few responded to the change of tone at the end of the scene. Many answers would have been improved by secure knowledge of the context of the scene and the reasons behind the tension and by relying less on comment on punctuation. Those who kept the word “dramatically” clearly in view fared best.

Question 20

There were many very strong responses to Mae, “the monster of fertility”, showing excellent textual knowledge and an ability to evaluate. Many wrote perceptively about her role in the play. Some were remarkably sympathetic and perhaps no-one fully engaged with the full “horror” of Williams’ portrayal of her.

Question 21

Most candidates could reproduce Brick’s voice competently, though there was some over-reliance on the repetition of “mendacity”. The strongest answers showed awareness of the moment and concentrated on the fact that he had just told Big Daddy the truth. Some answers were more of a general reflection on everything Brick might have been thinking during the play as a whole. Some made him care too much about the inheritance, which is hardly in character. Many more convincingly had him reaching for a drink and waiting for “the click....”