

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

<p><b>Paper 0992/12</b> <b>Poetry and Prose</b></p>
---

## Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- Devote roughly equal time to both sections of the paper.
- Sustain a clear focus on the key words of the questions.
- Use relevant textual references to substantiate their arguments.
- Analyse sensitively and in detail the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- Manage time inefficiently across the two questions, sometimes writing an excessively long first answer.
- Work through ‘themes’ candidates have studied regardless of the actual focus of the question.
- Have only a basic grasp of surface meanings.
- Make comments that are overly reliant on assertion rather than close analysis.
- Merely label writers’ techniques without analysing them.

## General comments

There was evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where candidates showed insight and individuality in their sustained explorations of poems. Examiners reported that some candidates wrote excessively long answers to their first question, which led to unfinished or rushed second answers. Candidates should recognise the need to manage time carefully across this 90-minute paper.

Some candidates began their answers with general introductions that did not address the question and ended their answers by repeating points already made within the main body of the answer. This was an unproductive use of candidates’ time; every sentence should contribute to a candidate’s response to the question.

## **Textual knowledge**

The most successful answers showed an extensive knowledge of the text, with candidates integrating concise textual references to support their ideas. In answers to extract questions, these candidates took advantage of the opportunities offered them by having the extract printed in the question paper. They selected relevant detail from the extract to support their ideas; they used the words in their direct quotations to probe critically the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses were often characterised by overly assertive comments with little textual reference. Some quotations were excessively long, with the link between quotation and comment unclear. Sometimes a vague phrase such as ‘This shows...’ followed a lengthy quotation. Again, this session, some candidates offered quotations that were abridged, with an ellipsis used to indicate words that had been omitted; often, however, the omitted words were the very ones integral to supporting the comment made.

## **Focus on the question**

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question. Less successful answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the text but without achieving a clear focus on the question. This was evident in many answers to poetry or extract questions where candidates simply worked through the text in order, often at length and without careful selection of material that would address the question’s key words.

Some candidates began their answers by announcing a list of themes in the text, regardless of the thrust of the question. Candidates should appreciate that questions require their ideas to be tailored to meet the specific focus of the question; questions are not simply prompts for them to unload everything they know about the text.

### **Writers' effects**

The most convincing responses sustained a critical analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. These responses referred in detail to the printed text in poetry and prose extract questions and were able to select relevant material candidates had learned for prose general essay questions. Many candidates had memorised an impressive range of direct quotation which enabled them to explore in detail a writer's effects.

Less successful responses catalogued features such as enjambment, caesura and anaphora without close analysis of precise ways in which writers achieve their effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to rhyme schemes which flowed or did not flow, and which slowed or increased the pace of the writing.

### **Personal response**

The strongest answers explored with perception a wide range of relevant detail from the texts in answering the questions set. Less successful responses offered personal interpretations that were not adequately rooted in the detail of the text, lacking convincing support from the text.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

The more successful responses were able to comment on the different perspectives within the poem whereas the least successful simply saw the content as a man waving whilst in water. Stronger responses saw beyond the man's 'larking' and noted the lack of understanding of his 'waving' for help, commenting on a tragedy that had lasted all his life. The strongest responses explored the repetition of the title, the implications of the repeated words 'too cold' and the words of the dead man compared with the words of the others.

#### **Question 2**

The poet's use of contrast between the free bird and the caged bird was noted in most responses, as was the sense of despair in the caged bird as opposed to the sense of freedom in the free bird. Stronger responses observed that the singing of the caged bird is 'fearful', explaining that the caged bird is a prisoner who longs for freedom. The strongest responses explored the structure of the poem and the contrasting imagery of freedom and restriction. These responses focused on the key word 'moving'. In general, this question attracted too many responses reliant on unsupported assertion.

#### **Question 3**

Most responses commented on the shortness of the time the speaker and his lover had together, on his feelings of being alone and on his grief now she is no longer there. Many candidates explored sensitively his sense of loss and lack of hope for the future. The strongest responses considered the contrast between repetition of 'a little time' and 'long, long years' and the contrasts within each stanza. Less successful responses tended to explain the content of the poem.

#### **Question 4**

Most candidates noted the speaker is bidding her husband a final farewell and the belief that all suffering with cease. Fewer showed a clear understanding of the idea of love resisting Death's power and her wish that her husband rejoice at her death rather than grieve. The most successful responses explored closely the tone of resignation, together with the effects of religious imagery and of rhyme. Less successful responses worked through the poem explaining the content.

### Question 5

There were only a few responses to this question. The best made some attempt to explore how the poem is made memorable through descriptions of autumn in England, use of sensuous imagery and the surreal quality of the images.

### Question 6

Most candidates noted the one-sided nature of a conversation between parents and child reflecting on the latter's childhood. Most answers noted the parents' defensiveness towards the child's accusations which are not made explicit. Many described the parents' stance and words as a form of 'gaslighting', exploring the assertive and dismissive tone and the impact of short sentences, sometimes comprising one word. These responses focused on the key words 'strikingly portray'. Other less convincing responses took the parents' words at face value and offered a literal reading of loving parents talking to their child.

### Section B

### Question 7

Most candidates showed an understanding of the immediate context: Papa found dead at his office desk; Mama's confession of poisoning him; and Kambili's shock. Successful responses considered the different reactions of Jaja and Kambili and the sense of Papa's lingering hold over Kambili. The most successful responses focused on the key word 'powerful', exploring the presentation of Kambili's disbelief and the abruptness of Jaja's confession at this turning point in the novel. Less successful responses explained what is happening in the extract without using direct quotation to explore ways in which Adichie uses language.

### Question 8

Most responses considered at least two different attitudes towards Christianity, with all candidates noting what they regarded as Papa's inflexible brand. Many considered the contrast in the ways Papa and Auntie Ifeoma regard their father. Fewer candidates mentioned Father Amadi. The strongest responses explored ways in which Adichie 'vividly portrays' the disturbing aspects of Papa's strict interpretation of Christianity and the more easy-going attitude shown by Auntie Ifeoma and the impact this has on Kambili and Jaja. Those candidates who had memorised quotations from the novel were better placed to support their ideas and to explore the writer's effects closely. Without quotation, many responses relied on unsupported assertion.

### Question 9

Many candidates worked through the extract explaining what is happening but without showing an understanding of the immediate context: that Mason has arrived from the West Indies and visited his sister Bertha, Rochester's wife, who has attacked him viciously. The strongest responses did mention these details and were better able to explore deeper implications when considering what makes this 'such a powerful moment *in the novel*'. Some of the strongest responses explored the way the rising action is linked to the use of language in *bleeding, wild, feared, torn, bit, and tigress*.

### Question 10

There were relatively few responses to this question. The least successful responses interpreted the ending of the novel too broadly; several answers simply re-told the plot of the whole novel and ended with brief comment on the novel's happy ending. Stronger responses argued that by the end of the novel Jane holds the power in her relationship with Rochester, exploring Jane's tone of confidence and certainty.

### Question 11

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 13

Candidates were generally able to place this scene in the context of the novel and expressed strong admiration for Catherine at this moment. Most noted her change of manner towards Mrs Penniman and commented on how she has developed during her European tour, quoting Catherine's statement that 'I am braver than I was'. Only a few candidates reflected on her misplaced faith in Morris or her undiminished fear of her 'more determined' and 'more terrible' father.

### Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 15

Most candidates wrote with understanding about this key extract from the novel, and most were able to appreciate its significance within Gogol's search for identity. Successful answers identified his move from shyness to confidence, noting that by the end of this moment 'Nikhil' (unlike Gogol) was daring, sociable and charming. Some candidates explored how physical details and body language reveal Gogol's emotions; others noted that Lahiri uses syntax and direct speech to mirror his development, moving from clipped answers to the expansive fluency of his thoughts in the final paragraph. The least successful responses described the content of the extract without an awareness of its position within the overall novel.

### Question 16

Although there were some very sympathetic responses to this question, some got bogged down in simply listing ways in which Ashima resists adapting to American life. A key distinguishing factor was whether candidates considered 'how far' it was true that Ashima longs for the past. Many noted Ashima's initial difficulties in settling into her new life, quoting her despairing statement 'I can not do this' after Gogol's birth, when she acknowledges that she will have to cope with her new life as a mother on her own. The Gangulis' adherence to traditions such as grandparents choosing the baby's name, and the rice ceremony, were also referred to in evidence. More nuanced responses went on to describe Ashima's gradual transition to a new more complex identity, symbolised by her final decision to spend half the year in Calcutta.

### Question 17

There were many strong answers here with candidates finding plenty of material to comment upon. Some identified the heightened emotion throughout, as Pi moved from euphoria to terror and despair. Others argued how Martel's account of Pi's meandering thoughts distracted readers, turning their attention away from the ship and into a false sense of security, as they assume with Pi that 'salvation' is imminent. The most successful responses kept sustained a focus on 'powerfully dramatic', exploring the role played by varied syntax, changing pace and the use of dynamic verbs ('advancing', 'bearing down', 'looming'). Less successful answers gave narrative responses, disregarding the role of the writer.

### Question 18

This question required a confident and accurate knowledge of this section of the novel; there were, however, some responses which showed confusion, as well as some which were mainly narrative. Stronger responses were able to identify the variety of Pi's feelings, including his distress at losing his family, his initial fear at realising Richard Parker is also on the lifeboat and his determination to survive ('I have a fierce will to survive'). In most answers, there needed to be a more secure grasp of textual detail to support points and to explore Martel's use of language.

### Question 19

Most candidates were confidently able to place this extract in context and to appreciate its disturbing quality. Stronger responses commented on Parsons' delusions about himself and the Party and on the shock for the reader of discovering it was Parsons' nightmarish daughter who had denounced him, and the poignant absurdity of Parsons' pride in her for doing so. One candidate noted that Parsons failed to show any curiosity towards Winston or concern for him. Many candidates picked up the expression 'sagged round and round' to describe Winston's thought processes, but noted rather than explored it: others, however, observed that this vividly depicted Winston's ragged mental state. The most successful responses probed in considerable detail ways in which Orwell achieves his effects in this extract.

### Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 21

Many candidates approached this question with enthusiasm, showing understanding of the extract. They were able to identify Sharma's shortcomings; many picked up on Sharma's tendency to 'sigh' as an example of disrespect. Stronger responses acknowledged the way Sharma is presented as a manipulative character, ready to play the victim and gaslight his boss, with careful and relevant references to the text. They looked closely at the dialogue and use of language: 'Sharma sighed', Sharma's use of 'sir'; Sharma 'overwhelmed and defiant'. One candidate observed that Gupta 'slid away' to his office at the beginning, thus creating a contrast with Sharma, who showed no change in behaviour at all. Only a few candidates noted the boss's irony or detected the vein of humour that runs through the story.

### Question 22

Most candidates who chose this question wrote about their admiration for Caroline as a woman who was able to defy contemporary expectations about a woman's role and the restrictions on their freedom. Only a few responses noted the actual details of Caroline's journey, as many candidates favoured a generalised feminist analysis of the story, very often Lacking convincing textual detail for support. By contrast, the most successful responses were able to draw upon an impressive command of detail that enabled them to focus on specific ways in which Laski encourages them to admire Caroline.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 0992/22  
Drama

## Key messages

- The question paper should be read closely and questions to be answered chosen carefully, to avoid changing to another question and wasting valuable examination time.
- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Opening paragraphs should be brief and avoid lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly contextualised the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

## General comments

Candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set text(s). The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*. *The Crucible* was also popular but there were very few responses to *Journey's End* or *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*.

There was some excellent work seen. The most successful candidates showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on themes, characterisation and stagecraft. They demonstrated insight into the ways writers achieved effects, focusing closely on the key terms of the question. Textual knowledge was detailed, and these candidates were able to refer to, and quote from, texts effectively with brief, well-chosen quotations, which were fully analysed to consolidate the point being made. Less successful answers were often those where quotations were few, or too extensive, without being securely linked to the question or idea being expressed. Inert quotation is unlikely to achieve high reward as to achieve this, textual evidence should be evaluated and support the argument being made rather than be proof of mere recall.

An increasing number of candidates did not choose their question wisely and started an answer to one question then crossed it out and started another. Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions to the texts studied carefully and to make an informed choice. This will help to avoid wasting valuable time by changing question mid-examination. Whilst a short plan is also to be encouraged, there were some overly detailed plans, including which quotations to use, which were longer than the actual essay. With 45 minutes to write an essay these are unproductive approaches, and many resulted in some very brief answers.

Many candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot, listing irrelevant social, cultural and historical detail or the techniques the writer had used. This, and the tendency to comment on punctuation including, commas, full stops and exclamation marks resulted in there being little to reward in some answers. Whilst there is something to be said about the tone indicated by the use of exclamation marks, and the use of dashes indicating tense pauses, commenting on them in isolation is meaningless: they need to be explored in context with consideration of their dramatic impact on the stage and not the page.

The performance of some candidates was undermined by the failure to focus on the precise terms of the question. Where the question required candidates to select two 'moments', some candidates wrote about too large a section and even full scenes of the play, or as seen in some less successful answers, across the whole play. The best answers made specific choices with well-selected textual evidence and a sharp focus on the chosen moments.

The most successful answers wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'dramatic', 'revealing' or 'entertaining' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. When planning their response, candidates should highlight the key terms of questions and sustain a link to them throughout.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded: techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. It is unhelpful for candidates to be stating the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language', 'diction', dialogue, 'end-stopping' or 'caesura' to convey ideas.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts.

There were some rubric infringements where some candidates answered on two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based question and one discursive. Time management was good with very few unfinished responses though there were many brief answers seen. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text and to remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of their answer.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) The few candidates who answered this question could identify Ermina's dissatisfaction and used the text to relate to her desire to assimilate with her environment, her feelings about her parent(s) and her desire to establish her own identity unrestricted by her sister and family. Only the best candidates understood that the forbidden music, meeting boys and going to parties were her ways of rebelling. Feelings were often identified but how they were 'dramatically' conveyed proved more difficult and the terms of the question rarely addressed. Consequently, some answers were narrative-paraphrase, and worked through the passage explaining, rather than analysing, the text and how the writer conveyed Ermina's feelings.
- (b) This question was more popular than 1(a). A range of the family's struggles was understood including grief at Sandra's death, poverty, racism, Godfrey's over-reliance on Father Divine and the girls' struggles being forced to follow the latter's teachings. There were some successful comments on the word play of the title, with 'Crump' echoing 'Crumbs', suggesting that the family would continue to suffer in a society dominated by racism and only ever get crumbs from the white society in which they lived. There was also some detail to the girl's hatred of Gerte and the additional struggles the inter-racial marriage caused. However, very few explored the stresses and strains within the family. Weaker answers were narrative in approach with candidates struggling to recall specific textual material.

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible***

##### **Question 2**

- (a) This was an extremely popular text and question. Responses to this pivotal scene in the play varied considerably. Most candidates were better on attempting to comment on 'dramatic' than showing their understanding of 'revealing'. There were also those who struggled to differentiate between what was revealing for the characters and for the audience. Weaker responses suggested that it was only at this point that the audience realised Abigail was a liar. The most successful answers understood the significance of Abigail's flight, the drama of Parris's fear, his hesitation and delay in telling Danforth his news, and his materialistic concerns. Danforth's dramatic reaction with his exclamations, repetition, and stage directions, 'alarmed... deeply worried', and his calling Parris 'a brainless man' were explored.

The more successful candidates recognised it as the revelation to the audience that Danforth and Parris sense the downfall of the court, with the dramatic beginnings of the cracking and crumbling of an unjust regime. The deeper implications of Hale's changed views on prosecuting witches in trying to get Rebecca to confess so that she would not be hanged were also explored. The significance of the rebellion in Andover and Danforth and Hathorne's denial were understood. However, Parris's fear for his life was rarely understood with most candidates thinking he was still worrying about his reputation and his 'Thirty-one pounds.' The strongest saw that the audience would be pleased to see the truth coming out and would hope the court gets its comeuppance.

Weaker answers misplaced the context and were confused about Rebecca and Martha thinking they were witches and had confessed. Some felt sympathy for Parris's tears whereas those with greater knowledge and understanding felt that his tears were more for his loss of status and wealth. Some weaker candidates felt that the vanishing of Abigail and Mercy was 'dramatic' because only witches can vanish whereas the more successful responses considered their motives for running away, with some suggesting that it was Abigail who had left the dagger on Parris's doorstep. There were many answers which retold the passage or focused solely on dramatic techniques, for example, punctuation and stage directions, without exploring them in context or demonstrating what was happening at this profoundly dramatic point in the play to shock Parris and Danforth.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question. The most successful answers chose two suitable moments and explored them in detail focusing sharply on the question, the 'power of the belief in witchcraft', rather than narrating their selected moments and asserting this 'demonstrated the belief in witchcraft.' The best answers understood how Abigail manipulates the court's belief in the power of witchcraft to get what she wants as do others: people use it against those they hate or whose property they want. They saw how Salem's belief in witchcraft leads to injustice, to revenge and death.

Most candidates chose the 'yellow bird' moment in court, exploring how Abigail whipped up the girls into hysteria and the effects on the men, and the first scene with Tituba's interrogation and 'confession'. Other popular 'moments' were when either John or Elizabeth was arrested with some close detail to the 'poppet' incident.

Weaker answers were narrative, which, whilst showing some knowledge and understanding of the 'moment' did not fully address the terms of the question. A few candidates seemed to believe that witchcraft was real and had been carried out, for example, it caused the death of Ann Putnam's babies.

## R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 3

- (a) Successful candidates argued it was a dramatically effective opening as it did not open as most audience members might expect a war play to begin; instead, it opens calmly with a cheerful song and with almost mundane, trivial conversation. Some recognised that Sherriff makes the opening dramatically effective by conveying the waiting around with some suggesting that Hardy's 'indefinite humming' reflected the uncertainty of the war and the cyclical nature of trench warfare. Surprisingly, few commented on Hardy's hearing the German preparations for the attack but those who did were able to explore how his speculation made the audience aware that it was expected to happen soon and related this to Osborne's shutting Hardy down. Better answers commented on what was revealed of the two men and how they were characterised. There was rarely understanding of Hardy's relief that Osborne had arrived for the changeover, and not Stanhope, or the sense that Stanhope might not be as friendly towards Hardy. Only the best answers understood the dark humour as a means of coping with death, fear, bombs landing and the imminent attack the men were expecting.

Weaker answers took the situation at face value, ignoring this as the opening to the play and commented on the problems of trench warfare, awful conditions of wearing wet socks, the dirt in the men's tea and not having clean water to drink. These answers summarised the passage with much misreading of the situation and the stage directions: for example, some suggested that the appearance of Osborne suggested he was old and would not be a pleasant character.

- (b) Too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.



**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

**Question 4**

- (a) This was an extremely popular text and question. The passage elicited the entire range of answers, ranging from those showing critical understanding and an analysis of how the scene is entertaining to weaker answers where there was confusion over the plot and letters with some writing about the letter written for Malvolio. There was usually some understanding of how humour was created by the anticipation of the duel, foreshadowing, and dramatic irony usually being identified. Most recognised Sir Toby's ulterior and selfish motive and Sir Andrew's stupidity. The strongest answers engaged fully with the question and analysed how and why the language was amusing.

The most successful answers understood the context and the situational comedy. They knew what Sir Toby and Fabian were doing here and why: how they gull Sir Andrew for their own benefit and amusement. The best answers were fully aware of the ridiculousness of Sir Andrew's pursuit of Olivia and his naivety in falling for Sir Toby's ploys, the trickery, Sir Andrew's gullibility and that Cesario is a woman. They explored the text in detail, commenting on the language, such as the humour in the insult of 'dormouse valour'; others were able to relate 'accost,' to Sir Andrew's earlier misunderstanding with Maria. Some commented on 'manakin' and Sir Andrew being a puppet, often foreshadowing the fight being entertaining since through dramatic irony we know Viola also will be a weak fighter.

Weaker answers misread the moment with much confusion over characters thinking it was Malvolio who was being sent the letter and that 'Marry' was the object of Sir Andrew's desires; often Malvolio instead of Fabian and Sebastian instead of Cesario were used. Many of the weaker answers did not include any textual references from the extract, or copied extensively from the passage, and only mentioned 'entertaining' towards the end of their answers.

- (b) Fewer candidates chose this question but there were many successful answers. This is a 'how far' question and candidates who argued both sides wrote more convincingly than those who argued that Malvolio either did, or did not, deserve sympathy. It allowed stronger candidates to show how well they could demonstrate their knowledge of the play to weigh up the evidence to arrive at a balanced conclusion. This question elicited some strong personal views: some felt that it was immoral to trick him since he was just doing his job, others felt he was to be pitied since he was shamed in front of Olivia, the one he loved. Some thought he was simply arrogant and cruel, and deserved what he got; most that he deserved the first trick but locking him up and convincing him he was mad was a trick too far and he did not deserve that. There were those who felt a genuine sympathy for the character and described his treatment as 'torture' and 'mental cruelty' and that whatever he had done, no-one deserved such treatment.

The best answers were able to select suitable material and quote accurately and gave a vivid description of Malvolio's character, with examples, to show why he was disliked; used some details of each trick to show why he deserved or did not deserve them and evaluated Malvolio at the end of the play, when he refuses to accept Olivia's apology and vows revenge, some arguing that he deserved the trick as he had learned nothing at all.

There were many weaker answers which narrated the plot or wrote a character profile of Malvolio with sweeping generalisations of his hypocrisy and cruelty. Others demonstrated general knowledge of Malvolio's role and actions but did not always use this information to address whether or not he deserved to be tricked. A few candidates did attempt to link their comments to the question in the final paragraph, but this was often a cursory comment stating, 'This makes me feel he deserved to be tricked.'

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

**Question 5**

- (a) This was the most popular choice of text and question this series. There was a wide range of answers to this question from a simple awareness of the situation to a full appreciation of Iago's malevolence and his and Roderigo's shocking revelation to Brabantio. The most successful answers focused on Iago and explored the power of his 'shocking' language and its implications for

character and plot development. Most understood the racist, animalistic imagery, Iago's hypocrisy, and his intentions. Many candidates, however, based much of the response on Brabantio's reaction rather than the audience, which was relevant, but arguably less rich in material. Better answers understood the context and circumstances of this scene, in the street, in the dark with Iago hiding from sight and Brabantio being alarmed by what he hears and how he hears it. These answers showed critical understanding of the dramatic impact of Iago's introduction of Othello as the audience has not met him or Desdemona yet, so this is our first impression of them. Only a few really appreciated how shocking it is for a father to be woken to hear such news of his cherished daughter.

The shocking use of animal imagery was cited and understood by most candidates, although the 'Barbary horse,' 'neighing nephews and coursers' caused some confusion. The use of Roderigo by Iago here was not often examined, although the best answers considered this early glimpse of Iago's capacity for manipulation and deceit shocking.

Weaker answers tended to speculate on Desdemona's behaviour and link that to 'shocking' or they went beyond the passage to discuss how Othello wooed Desdemona or satisfied her father. These were too narrative, retelling or paraphrasing the text. Some did not know why Iago was doing this and spent too long on the attitude of patriarchs in Elizabethan times who treat their daughters as possessions. The weakest answers digressed and wrote about racism in Elizabethan times and in the Venetian state, losing focus on both the question and the passage.

- (b) This was also a popular choice and another 'how far' question, allowing the best candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the text, and some of the more subtle presentations of Emilia, to support a balanced argument. Most said she was a submissive and obedient wife, as was expected at the time. Some debated whether she was more loyal to Desdemona, but most thought she was completely loyal to Iago until the end when she realises how he has tricked Othello. They were all able to explore Emilia and Iago's relationship a little, considering why she took the handkerchief and gave it to him – in order to please him and get something from him in return, for him to be pleasant to her or to show gratitude. She certainly thinks his desire for it is harmless. The better ones recalled the abuse she passively receives at the dock and her comments on infidelity. These answers explored her shock at the end when she discovers how Iago had played Othello, and her bravery in denouncing him and forfeiting her own life. Her repeated 'My husband' evidences her ignorance of his plans and her final defence of Desdemona and refusal to obey Iago were key details.

Less successful answers wrongly claimed that Emilia knew of Iago's plans. Most said that Emilia stole the handkerchief and did not question why he wanted it, making generalised comments that she would do anything for Iago because she loved him so much. This included sharing with Iago the information she had access to, so she was seen as complicit and supportive of him against Desdemona and Othello. A few candidates argued that Emilia was a feminist and lost sight of the question, so these were self-penalising.

The weakest answers relied on the handkerchief and sometimes, Emilia's final revelation of the truth. There was little supporting textual detail offered and they did not really understand Iago's treatment of his wife, nor how she tries to please him by following his instructions without question.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 0992/32  
Drama (Open Text)

## Key messages

- The question paper should be read closely and questions to be answered chosen carefully, to avoid changing to another question and wasting valuable examination time.
- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Opening paragraphs should be brief and avoid lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly contextualised the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

## General comments

Candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set text(s). The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*. *The Crucible* was also popular but there were very few responses to *Journey's End* or *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*.

There was some excellent work seen. The most successful candidates showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on themes, characterisation and stagecraft. They demonstrated insight into the ways writers achieved effects, focusing closely on the key terms of the question. Textual knowledge was detailed, and these candidates were able to refer to, and quote from, texts effectively with brief, well-chosen quotations, which were fully analysed to consolidate the point being made. Less successful answers were often those where quotations were few, or too extensive, without being securely linked to the question or idea being expressed. Inert quotation is unlikely to achieve high reward as to achieve this, textual evidence should be evaluated and support the argument being made rather than be proof of mere recall.

An increasing number of candidates did not choose their question wisely and started an answer to one question then crossed it out and started another. Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions to the texts studied carefully and to make an informed choice. This will help to avoid wasting valuable time by changing question mid-examination. Whilst a short plan is also to be encouraged, there were some overly detailed plans, including which quotations to use, which were longer than the actual essay. With 45 minutes to write an essay these are unproductive approaches, and many resulted in some very brief answers.

Many candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot, listing irrelevant social, cultural and historical detail or the techniques the writer had used. This, and the tendency to comment on punctuation including, commas, full stops and exclamation marks resulted in there being little to reward in some answers. Whilst there is something to be said about the tone indicated by the use of exclamation marks, and the use of dashes indicating tense pauses, commenting on them in isolation is meaningless: they need to be explored in context with consideration of their dramatic impact on the stage and not the page.

The performance of some candidates was undermined by the failure to focus on the precise terms of the question. Where the question required candidates to select two 'moments', some candidates wrote about too large a section and even full scenes of the play, or as seen in some less successful answers, across the whole play. The best answers made specific choices with well-selected textual evidence and a sharp focus on the chosen moments.

The most successful answers wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'dramatic', 'revealing' or 'entertaining' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. When planning their response, candidates should highlight the key terms of questions and sustain a link to them throughout.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded: techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. It is unhelpful for candidates to be stating the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language', 'diction', dialogue, 'end-stopping' or 'caesura' to convey ideas.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts.

Time management was good with very few unfinished responses though there were many brief answers seen. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text and to remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of their answer.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) The few candidates who answered this question could identify Ermina's dissatisfaction and used the text to relate to her desire to assimilate with her environment, her feelings about her parent(s) and her desire to establish her own identity unrestricted by her sister and family. Only the best candidates understood that the forbidden music, meeting boys and going to parties were her ways of rebelling. Feelings were often identified but how they were 'dramatically' conveyed proved more difficult and the terms of the question rarely addressed. Consequently, some answers were narrative-paraphrase, and worked through the passage explaining, rather than analysing, the text and how the writer conveyed Ermina's feelings.
- (b) This question was more popular than 1(a). A range of the family's struggles was understood including grief at Sandra's death, poverty, racism, Godfrey's over-reliance on Father Divine and the girls' struggles being forced to follow the latter's teachings. There were some successful comments on the word play of the title, with 'Crump' echoing 'Crumbs', suggesting that the family would continue to suffer in a society dominated by racism and only ever get crumbs from the white society in which they lived. There was also some detail to the girl's hatred of Gerte and the additional struggles the inter-racial marriage caused. However, very few explored the stresses and strains within the family. Weaker answers were narrative in approach with candidates struggling to recall specific textual material.

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible***

##### **Question 2**

- (a) This was an extremely popular text and question. Responses to this pivotal scene in the play varied considerably. Most candidates were better on attempting to comment on 'dramatic' than showing their understanding of 'revealing'. There were also those who struggled to differentiate between what was revealing for the characters and for the audience. Weaker responses suggested that it was only at this point that the audience realised Abigail was a liar. The most successful answers understood the significance of Abigail's flight, the drama of Parris's fear, his hesitation and delay in telling Danforth his news, and his materialistic concerns. Danforth's dramatic reaction with his exclamations, repetition, and stage directions, 'alarmed... deeply worried', and his calling Parris 'a brainless man' were explored.

The more successful candidates recognised it as the revelation to the audience that Danforth and Parris sense the downfall of the court, with the dramatic beginnings of the cracking and crumbling of an unjust regime. The deeper implications of Hale's changed views on prosecuting witches in trying to get Rebecca to confess so that she would not be hanged were also explored. The significance of the rebellion in Andover and Danforth and Hathorne's denial were understood. However, Parris's fear for his life was rarely understood with most candidates thinking he was still worrying about his reputation and his 'Thirty-one pounds.' The strongest saw that the audience would be pleased to see the truth coming out and would hope the court gets its comeuppance.

Weaker answers misplaced the context and were confused about Rebecca and Martha thinking they were witches and had confessed. Some felt sympathy for Parris's tears whereas those with greater knowledge and understanding felt that his tears were more for his loss of status and wealth. Some weaker candidates felt that the vanishing of Abigail and Mercy was 'dramatic' because only witches can vanish whereas the more successful responses considered their motives for running away, with some suggesting that it was Abigail who had left the dagger on Parris's doorstep. There were many answers which retold the passage or focused solely on dramatic techniques, for example, punctuation and stage directions, without exploring them in context or demonstrating what was happening at this profoundly dramatic point in the play to shock Parris and Danforth.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question. The most successful answers chose two suitable moments and explored them in detail focusing sharply on the question, the 'power of the belief in witchcraft', rather than narrating their selected moments and asserting this 'demonstrated the belief in witchcraft.' The best answers understood how Abigail manipulates the court's belief in the power of witchcraft to get what she wants as do others: people use it against those they hate or whose property they want. They saw how Salem's belief in witchcraft leads to injustice, to revenge and death.

Most candidates chose the 'yellow bird' moment in court, exploring how Abigail whipped up the girls into hysteria and the effects on the men, and the first scene with Tituba's interrogation and 'confession'. Other popular 'moments' were when either John or Elizabeth was arrested with some close detail to the 'poppet' incident.

Weaker answers were narrative, which, whilst showing some knowledge and understanding of the 'moment' did not fully address the terms of the question. A few candidates seemed to believe that witchcraft was real and had been carried out, for example, it caused the death of Ann Putnam's babies.

## R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

### Question 3

- (a) Successful candidates argued it was a dramatically effective opening as it did not open as most audience members might expect a war play to begin; instead, it opens calmly with a cheerful song and with almost mundane, trivial conversation. Some recognised that Sherriff makes the opening dramatically effective by conveying the waiting around with some suggesting that Hardy's 'indefinite humming' reflected the uncertainty of the war and the cyclical nature of trench warfare. Surprisingly, few commented on Hardy's hearing the German preparations for the attack but those who did were able to explore how his speculation made the audience aware that it was expected to happen soon and related this to Osborne's shutting Hardy down. Better answers commented on what was revealed of the two men and how they were characterised. There was rarely understanding of Hardy's relief that Osborne had arrived for the changeover, and not Stanhope, or the sense that Stanhope might not be as friendly towards Hardy. Only the best answers understood the dark humour as a means of coping with death, fear, bombs landing and the imminent attack the men were expecting.

Weaker answers took the situation at face value, ignoring this as the opening to the play and commented on the problems of trench warfare, awful conditions of wearing wet socks, the dirt in the men's tea and not having clean water to drink. These answers summarised the passage with much misreading of the situation and the stage directions: for example, some suggested that the appearance of Osborne suggested he was old and would not be a pleasant character.

- (b) Too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

**Question 4**

- (a) This was an extremely popular text and question. The passage elicited the entire range of answers, ranging from those showing critical understanding and an analysis of how the scene is entertaining to weaker answers where there was confusion over the plot and letters with some writing about the letter written for Malvolio. There was usually some understanding of how humour was created by the anticipation of the duel, foreshadowing, and dramatic irony usually being identified. Most recognised Sir Toby's ulterior and selfish motive and Sir Andrew's stupidity. The strongest answers engaged fully with the question and analysed how and why the language was amusing.

The most successful answers understood the context and the situational comedy. They knew what Sir Toby and Fabian were doing here and why: how they gull Sir Andrew for their own benefit and amusement. The best answers were fully aware of the ridiculousness of Sir Andrew's pursuit of Olivia and his naivety in falling for Sir Toby's ploys, the trickery, Sir Andrew's gullibility and that Cesario is a woman. They explored the text in detail, commenting on the language, such as the humour in the insult of 'dormouse valour'; others were able to relate 'accost,' to Sir Andrew's earlier misunderstanding with Maria. Some commented on 'manakin' and Sir Andrew being a puppet, often foreshadowing the fight being entertaining since through dramatic irony we know Viola also will be a weak fighter.

Weaker answers misread the moment with much confusion over characters thinking it was Malvolio who was being sent the letter and that 'Marry' was the object of Sir Andrew's desires; often Malvolio instead of Fabian and Sebastian instead of Cesario were used. Many of the weaker answers did not include any textual references from the extract, or copied extensively from the passage, and only mentioned 'entertaining' towards the end of their answers.

- (b) Fewer candidates chose this question but there were many successful answers. This is a 'how far' question and candidates who argued both sides wrote more convincingly than those who argued that Malvolio either did, or did not, deserve sympathy. It allowed stronger candidates to show how well they could demonstrate their knowledge of the play to weigh up the evidence to arrive at a balanced conclusion. This question elicited some strong personal views: some felt that it was immoral to trick him since he was just doing his job, others felt he was to be pitied since he was shamed in front of Olivia, the one he loved. Some thought he was simply arrogant and cruel, and deserved what he got; most that he deserved the first trick but locking him up and convincing him he was mad was a trick too far and he did not deserve that. There were those who felt a genuine sympathy for the character and described his treatment as 'torture' and 'mental cruelty' and that whatever he had done, no-one deserved such treatment.

The best answers were able to select suitable material and quote accurately and gave a vivid description of Malvolio's character, with examples, to show why he was disliked; used some details of each trick to show why he deserved or did not deserve them and evaluated Malvolio at the end of the play, when he refuses to accept Olivia's apology and vows revenge, some arguing that he deserved the trick as he had learned nothing at all.

There were many weaker answers which narrated the plot or wrote a character profile of Malvolio with sweeping generalisations of his hypocrisy and cruelty. Others demonstrated general knowledge of Malvolio's role and actions but did not always use this information to address whether or not he deserved to be tricked. A few candidates did attempt to link their comments to the question in the final paragraph, but this was often a cursory comment stating, 'This makes me feel he deserved to be tricked.'

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello***

**Question 5**

- (a) This was the most popular choice of text and question this series. There was a wide range of answers to this question from a simple awareness of the situation to a full appreciation of Iago's malevolence and his and Roderigo's shocking revelation to Brabantio. The most successful answers focused on Iago and explored the power of his 'shocking' language and its implications for character and plot development. Most understood the racist, animalistic imagery, Iago's hypocrisy,

and his intentions. Many candidates, however, based much of the response on Brabantio's reaction rather than the audience, which was relevant, but arguably less rich in material. Better answers understood the context and circumstances of this scene, in the street, in the dark with Iago hiding from sight and Brabantio being alarmed by what he hears and how he hears it. These answers showed critical understanding of the dramatic impact of Iago's introduction of Othello as the audience has not met him or Desdemona yet, so this is our first impression of them. Only a few really appreciated how shocking it is for a father to be woken to hear such news of his cherished daughter.

The shocking use of animal imagery was cited and understood by most candidates, although the 'Barbary horse,' 'neighing nephews and coursers' caused some confusion. The use of Roderigo by Iago here was not often examined, although the best answers considered this early glimpse of Iago's capacity for manipulation and deceit shocking.

Weaker answers tended to speculate on Desdemona's behaviour and link that to 'shocking' or they went beyond the passage to discuss how Othello wooed Desdemona or satisfied her father. These were too narrative, retelling or paraphrasing the text. Some did not know why Iago was doing this and spent too long on the attitude of patriarchs in Elizabethan times who treat their daughters as possessions. The weakest answers digressed and wrote about racism in Elizabethan times and in the Venetian state, losing focus on both the question and the passage.

- (b)** This was also a popular choice and another 'how far' question, allowing the best candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the text, and some of the more subtle presentations of Emilia, to support a balanced argument. Most said she was a submissive and obedient wife, as was expected at the time. Some debated whether she was more loyal to Desdemona, but most thought she was completely loyal to Iago until the end when she realises how he has tricked Othello. They were all able to explore Emilia and Iago's relationship a little, considering why she took the handkerchief and gave it to him – in order to please him and get something from him in return, for him to be pleasant to her or to show gratitude. She certainly thinks his desire for it is harmless. The better ones recalled the abuse she passively receives at the dock and her comments on infidelity. These answers explored her shock at the end when she discovers how Iago had played Othello, and her bravery in denouncing him and forfeiting her own life. Her repeated 'My husband' evidences her ignorance of his plans and her final defence of Desdemona and refusal to obey Iago were key details.

Less successful answers wrongly claimed that Emilia knew of Iago's plans. Most said that Emilia stole the handkerchief and did not question why he wanted it, making generalised comments that she would do anything for Iago because she loved him so much. This included sharing with Iago the information she had access to, so she was seen as complicit and supportive of him against Desdemona and Othello. A few candidates argued that Emilia was a feminist and lost sight of the question, so these were self-penalising.

The weakest answers relied on the handkerchief and sometimes, Emilia's final revelation of the truth. There was little supporting textual detail offered and they did not really understand Iago's treatment of his wife, nor how she tries to please him by following his instructions without question.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

**Paper 0992/42**  
**Unseen**

## **Key messages**

- Candidates should make full use of the reading time to ensure they have a secure understanding of the surface narrative of their chosen text.
- Deeper implications are appreciated through exploration of descriptive language and its emotive effect on the reader.
- Listing devices and terminology does not attract marks; candidates need to develop a response to the writer's effects.
- Personal response includes a critical understanding of why the writer wrote the text.
- All the Assessment Objectives for Literature in English are addressed holistically in this paper, and good answers are well-written, concise and make an argued response to the whole text.

## **General comments**

This is a well-established paper and most centres who enter candidates for it clearly have a good understanding of its requirements. The standard is generally high, and often outstanding. Centres and candidates realise that this is an opportunity for candidates to communicate their own understanding of the texts in their own voice. Examiners do not expect a 'standard' response and are very willing to explore texts with candidates and meet them on the interpretative ground they choose.

Examiners see a full range of levels of ability. The best responses are quite outstanding in their maturity and critical sensitivity. Weaker responses usually have their own merits, although there are always a few candidates who struggle with a literal understanding of the texts, misread details or have limited tools for literary analysis. Centres choose to prepare candidates for Unseen texts and are expected to make full use of the resources on the School Support Hub. Past papers in November, March and June across the three variants, and the accompanying Examiner reports, are a valuable resource.

Texts can be short poems or extracts from longer poems, and prose extracts from novels, short stories and literary non-fiction. They are likely to use descriptive language, imagery, voice and viewpoint in creative and emotive ways. Texts can be drawn from any century or culture: they reflect the diversity of Literature in English. They will not be texts in translation but might be creative reworkings of other literatures. The majority of texts are contemporary. In the case of the poetry texts in November 2022, the poems were very contemporary indeed, being creative responses by a range of writers in different parts of the UK to the global pandemic of spring 2020. As this paper encourages personal response to the writing, many candidates enjoyed seeing writers responding imaginatively and in unusual ways to the creative possibilities for reflection brought by the pandemic. All three poems dwelt on positive benefits, for the writers, of the period of isolation. However, candidates always have a choice: they can choose prose passages instead of poetry, and if they find the subject matter or the very subjective nature of poetry uncomfortable, the prose passages in this session all presented strong characterisation alongside vivid description of unusual and extreme, but historic, scenarios.

Knowledge of the text needs to be demonstrated through frequent, brief and illuminating quotation (AO1) in order to show understanding of the surface narrative. Although this strand may appear to be more straightforward, it is essential for success. Candidates need to write about the whole text, and be aware of its development, signalling those shifts in meaning and tone through judicious illustration. Candidates can help themselves by making full use of the 20 minutes suggested for reading the paper, by dividing the text into different sections, to aid paragraph planning, and, before beginning to write, highlighting descriptive details, word choices, images and perhaps sound effects which they particularly want to explore more closely. They should consider how the text develops and note changes in tone or viewpoint between the beginning of the text and its ending. It is surprising to find misunderstandings of meaning or situation which are explained in



the introductory rubric of the text. The short introduction will explain who characters are and as much of the situation as is necessary for basic understanding, while possible confusions of literal meaning are clarified here and in any footnotes.

Understanding of the text needs to be demonstrated, for higher marks, at more than one level of meaning. Literature involves the construction of different layers of meaning; the surface meaning is not the whole story. Understanding comes from the relationship between the writing and the reader: the reader helps to make meaning through an emotive response to the language of the text. Thus, a deeper understanding of the period of isolation in the pandemic was that it gave freedom to nature, gave us new ways to communicate or allowed the isolated or vulnerable to assert their importance in new ways. Experiences of oppression could be seen as creative or exciting if you can share them with others who support you or turn your sense of irony against your oppressors. At the higher levels, the levels descriptors ask for a *critical* understanding of why the writer wrote the text and what they might wish their readers to feel.

The writer's techniques may include imagery (different kinds of comparison and visual effect), rhythm (whether through verse or prose syntax), sound effects (including the choice of words) and voice or viewpoint. These techniques are common to both poetry and prose. Both present a mood to the reader through the tone of the writing, which is communicated through the choice of poetic or narrative voice and the viewpoint they adopt, which may be an ironic one, at variance with what we might initially expect. Candidates achieve marks at higher levels through some response to the way the writer uses language, and the more detailed and sensitive the commentary on the effects of the writing on the reader, the higher the mark awarded.

Personal response to the text is not purely subjective. At a higher level, personal response is, as we have seen, guided by the writer's language choices, so it is integral to the candidate's interpretation of the text, and not a separate element that is added at the end. The stem question, in bold, is a 'how' question, encouraging response to techniques, but also invites a personal response to their viewpoint or attitude towards their subject matter. The bullet points that follow, while not compulsory, do guide candidates through different parts of the text, exploring first impressions, developments through language and narrative or tonal shifts, and personal response to the way the end of the text makes us reflect on what we have read.

Good answers have a brief introduction which provides an overview of the text as a whole, showing a candidate has achieved some understanding of the subject matter and its meaning before writing, and a focused conclusion which gives a personal response to the emotional world the writer has created through use of language, form and structure.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

Many candidates took the opportunity to explore family relationships and problems in communicating both before and during the pandemic through 'Home Schooling Week Two, Lie-Ins Increasing', part of a sequence of poems published by the Welsh poet Clare E. Potter during the global pandemic.

This was the more popular of the two questions and most candidates were able to engage with the question and text, showing some personal response to the relationship between mother and child and often drawing from their own experiences of lockdown. Many responses fell within the middle range of marks: stronger answers were those which engaged analytically in close analysis of the poet's language to explore the effects of literary devices in detail, and then achieve a deeper understanding of layers of meaning. Good responses are alert to ambiguity and evaluate different possible meanings rather than closing down interpretation too quickly. Weaker responses tend to stick to a single narrative without looking at how relationships, communication and problems develop and change. More focus on individual language choices would have helped mid-range candidates to achieve the higher levels.

There was a range of response to the mother-child relationship, with many seeing it as intimate and close and others seeing it as violent and dysfunctional. Most attempting the poem appreciated that the mother was stressed and that she had a close bond with her child, emphasised by the choice of the intimate word 'snuggled' to express their contact during lockdown. They appreciated that the child had a history of anger caused by learning difficulties. Some thought that either the mother or child had a physical disability. Middle-range candidates identified a nostalgic tone in the comparison of then and now. Higher-range candidates addressed the metaphor of entangled dreams and ideas ('the last of the night thoughts tangled in my hair'), which they related to lockdown and the pandemic and the diary-style title. Weaker candidates carelessly

assumed lockdown was in the distant past and got confused by the time frame, although the title and first words of the poem are a very strong steer. Middle-range and above took up the references to pregnancy and time to relate the structure of the poem to stages of growth towards a maturity implied by the child's speech and growing size ('your legs are as long as mine now'). There were interesting comments on the internal rhyme of 'door' and 'four', relating it to the later reference to singing into the mother's mouth as a reference to the child's innate musicality and resistance to formal education. This was close to the 'home schooling' spirit of the poem, which emphasises personal relationships over structured learning.

In the second stanza, most understood that this stanza portrayed the past history of the mother-child relationship and noticed the enumeration of different ways to communicate through the active participles ('writing' ... 'singing' ... 'banging'). Some emphasised anger, others subversion or even creativity. Most saw frustration in the volcano metaphor as the child's rage 'erupted' when the right words did not come, or when messages were not understood. Fewer applied this to difficulties in communication more generally, although the poet clearly makes this move by repeating the word 'Now' and refocusing on the immediate problems of communication in a world where most people could only meet virtually. The repetition certainly suggested to candidates that the poet felt the need to adopt a different strategy. The best related 'now' and 'we have to recalibrate, /adjust' to the need for mutuality and compromise during a pandemic. Those in the top levels related 'tune in' and recalibration to the technology of the pandemic, especially social media, and made a link to implicit criticism of electronic communication in the final stanza. Middle band responses and above saw self-deprecation in the mother, while weaker answers speculated that she had been neglectful.

The third stanza was usually the discriminator. Most interpreted the direct speech of the child as a rejection of e-learning. Higher-level answers weighed up the metaphoric implications and responses in the top two bands related the child's question to its growth, the compromise the poet was looking for, triumph in self-discovery and articulate communication. The best saw a parallel between the mother in the first and child in the third stanzas: sleepless, solving a problem. The very best dwelt upon the implications of the daughter leaving the snuggle, and 'warmth of our holding' to make a first step to independence.

Candidates wanted to reflect on the effects of lockdown for themselves, making observations such as 'even the youngest of minds are impacted by the lockdown'. Stronger responses thought about this in relation to the ways in which the child in the poem learns, relating the tangible 'real pages' to the need for human contact and the importance of 'touch' as a form of communication. One candidate felt that 'there has to be a physical connection with both the book and the people involved for there to be successful communication'.

The question and bullet points helped to guide candidates, with most candidates able to consider the child's difficulties in communication and how this is portrayed. Some candidates, noticing the child's progress, felt that 'home schooling was paying off'. The child 'finally achieved the mother's dream of being able to be on the same page'. Generally, candidates sympathized with the child and their frustration, with one candidate describing our minds as 'investigators that yearn to solve or understand the outside world'.

The bullet point about the final lines of the poem led to interesting responses, often distinguishing good answers. Most candidates understood the unexpected nature of the child's final question, with some commenting on its placement at the very end of the poem (creating a 'lingering thought') and the fact that it is the only dialogue used. It's seen as 'a revelation of some sort' or even that 'the child has had an epiphany'. The final lines are, according to one candidate, the child trying to tell the mother that 'there's more to life than bookish knowledge, and more challenges they had to face in the real world'. However, an alternative interpretation was that the question might have been 'a literal rebellion against reading books and learning how to read'.

Stronger candidates recognised that the poem itself was a form of communication and were able to look critically about the way the poet used language to communicate, with comments on the poem's 'introspective tone' and the ability of touch 'to transcend time and communicate emotions'. Examiners commented with pleasure on responses which showed critical appreciation of the musicality of verse, its sensory qualities, and the tone of the speaker.

## Question 2

Just under 40 per cent of candidates chose to write about the prose, which was an extract from *The Noise of Silence*, a novel by Julian Barnes about the life of Dmitri Shostakovich. Candidates seemed to enjoy the question's focus on terror and readily engaged with the context of an oppressive government, with some drawing comparisons to Orwell's *1984*.

Almost all candidates seized upon the composer's boast as a sign of dedication to his craft; the weaker left it at that but middle level appreciated it was a just façade, and a form of performance rather than the reality which the composer admits to himself later in the paragraph. A lot of the weaker candidates thought the composer had actually been tortured, which led to contradictions and confusions: it is better to as clear as possible about the sequence of events before beginning to answer the question. Middle range and stronger scripts discussed the repetitions of 'yes' and the coldness of the plosive alliteration 'business-like bullet to the back of the brain', relating it to terror. Only the best answers discussed narrative point of view and voice and the implied sophistication of the composer's internal thoughts. He clearly views himself and his own thoughts and actions, as well as those around him, with irony and scepticism.

The text's abstract reference to 'Power' bewildered weaker candidates, some thinking this was a person or a name. Careful reading of the question and bullet points should have prevented this. Stronger responses considered the fearful implications of personification and anonymity. The complex language in this section mystified many; only the strongest answers appreciated the reference to propaganda ('euphemisms designed either to publicise or conceal those facts') and the Orwellian rewriting of history. There were lots of interesting comments on the two types of composers ('alive and frightened' and 'dead'), the best appreciating the dark humour which they related to the composer's creativity. It undermines the 'foolish' defiance of his earlier boast. Not many commented on the composer's consciousness of growing older and more disillusioned with 'youth's incorruptibility' and 'conviction', but most understood that his music and talent were now 'completely irrelevant', as Power had no interest in art or metaphor.

In response to the second section of the passage, weaker candidates deplored the composer's alcohol dependency, applauded his family warmth and were pleased that he was let off. Stronger responses commented on his light head for drink, his focus on his work, his humour ('the Grape Cure') and resignation. They appreciated a stoic, yet terrified approach to 'perhaps the last two nights of his life'. Many noted the 'dismal, grey' imagery associated with the Big House and the cliffhanging promise of future interviews ('his First Conversation'), which the best related to totalitarian regimes and techniques of terror. The strongest answers commented on the reference to the river ('which would outlast them all') and the curt and contemptuous language and behaviour of the guard, as a personification of 'Power'. The best related the non-appointment to the tactics and smugness of an all-powerful state, or the irony of the disappearance of 'Interrogator Zakrevsky' who might himself be heading for a 'business-like bullet'. Strong candidates noticed that the language of Power was purely factual, avoiding any such references to nature, imagery or irony.

There were some particularly interesting comments on Power's (and the composer's) relationship with the truth: 'The phrase, 'Power knew only facts' suggests that his words of defiance were not a fact and would therefore hold no ground against Power'. Stronger candidates enjoyed writing about the character of Power, often noticing the personification or anonymity of Power. It was seen as 'robot-like and systematic'. One candidate noted the contrast between Power's 'coldly robotic' approach and the composer's work which is 'all about emotions'. Power is described as 'an entity that destroys and disregards all forms of emotions and sticks to the facts, being played the right way'.

Candidates were sometimes perceptive about the composer's art and attitude, offering sympathetic readings to the composer's 'lose-lose situation'. They seemed to understand that 'his artistic integrity had no value when it came to the Russian leaders'. There was a tendency towards narrative summary; however, in stronger responses this was well-supported by careful selection of textual details to show detailed understanding and engagement. The acts of defiance and the vodka were both seen as 'different ways to forget' about Power's threats. One strong candidate saw the vodka cure as an extended metaphor: the composer's weakness – his weakness for vodka – is an advantage, as lying down and being passive is the only way to survive.

The final encounter was read in various ways, with some weaker candidates not wanting to engage with the anticlimax or not fully understanding its implications. Stronger candidates recognised that any relief for the composer was only temporary, with some nice comments about the setting: approaching the Big House was 'like walking into a trap', and 'the dismal 'grey' shows that all colour has drained from the composer's world'. Overall, many candidates understood and seemed to enjoy commenting on how the events in the passage show 'how fear can change a man'.

In response to both texts, candidates clearly relished the opportunity to write about texts relevant to the times they are living through, not just the pandemic but the isolation and uncertainty that have arisen from both this and troubling times in the world at large. They enjoyed engaging with literary texts that raise questions about human values and priorities.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

**Paper 0992/05**  
**Coursework**

## **Key messages**

In successful responses, candidates:

- show a detailed knowledge of the deeper implications of texts
- tailor their answers to a carefully worded task
- integrate relevant, concise references to support ideas
- analyse in detail and sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- have only a basic understanding of surface meaning
- write at excessive length, labouring and repeating points, and lose focus on the task
- make general assertions
- list techniques without close analysis
- offer pre-learned ‘themes’ rather than personal responses to the task.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of coursework of a high standard this session, where candidates showed a personal and evaluative engagement with texts. The strongest assignments showed that candidates had taken the opportunities offered by coursework: close study of their texts, purposeful drafting and editing of their critical analysis, and careful presentation of the final drafts of their assignments.

There were fewer instances of syllabus infringements, for example, where candidates entered assignments dealing with only one poem or short story or with a single discrete extract from a prose or drama text. The syllabus requires that assignments refer to the whole text or, in the case of poems and short stories, at least two poems or short stories.

The most successful assignments sustained a clear focus on a carefully worded task designed to enable candidates to meet the descriptors of the highest levels. Such tasks direct candidates to consider ways in which writers achieve their effects. Tasks which do not do this have the effect of constraining candidates’ performance.

Some responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text, sometimes at exhaustive length, but lacked a clear focus on the task. As has been observed before, this is an unproductive approach common in many poetry assignments where candidates work through the poem offering a line-by-line commentary, without a close focus on the actual task. Centres should remind their candidates that an advantage of the Coursework component is that it encourages skills of editing and redrafting. Candidates should be taught the skill of selecting material carefully in a way that directly addresses the task; every sentence should contribute to the unfolding argument.

As in previous sessions, the most convincing and persuasive essays sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects (Assessment Objective 3), relating their points to the task. By contrast, less successful assignments often commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to their use in the text. This may be a consequence of candidates following an overly rigid framework (such as PEE).

Several centres submitted empathic responses, with most providing the necessary information: the name of the character and the precise moment in the text that the interior monologue takes place. The most successful responses captured a convincingly authentic voice for the chosen character and moment.

### Guidance for teachers

This guidance, which appeared in the June 2022 report, is still relevant for future coursework submissions.

Guidance on task-setting can be found in the Coursework Handbook, which stresses the importance of **(a)** wording tasks that direct candidates explicitly to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects and **(b)** avoiding command words which are insufficient such as 'Describe' and 'Explain'. Teachers within the centre should together discuss the appropriateness of proposed tasks before they are given to candidates. This enables any problems with proposed tasks to be resolved before it is too late.

There follows a reminder of what constitutes both good practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

- Start each assignment with the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment should be clearly stated as this allows the Moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has addressed the task.
- Use focused ticking in the body of the text to indicate valid and thoughtful points, together with concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the levels descriptors.
- Provide a brief explanation on the assignment or cover sheet in cases where marks are changed during internal moderation. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it enables a centre to justify its award of marks.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (e.g. of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality; labelling by assessment objective. Simply putting the supposed relevant AOs in the margin is of very little benefit to any subsequent reader, as it does not reveal the *extent* to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed; instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant levels descriptors.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently. The cover sheet (or individual record card) should be secured by treasury tag or staple which allows easy access to candidate work. Plastic folders are an unwelcome distraction. In well-administered centres care had been taken to:

- include all candidates on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form
- transcribe totals accurately across the various documents.

All centres are advised to include a clerical checking stage in their moderation procedures before submitting their paperwork to Cambridge. This check should be carried out by a different person from the one who completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms and Mark Sheets originally.