

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/01
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, and considering particularly the language of the passage
- 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 strongest work demonstrated thorough knowledge of the texts, a commendable freshness of response, and real enjoyment of the books chosen.

The most popular texts offered were *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Macbeth*, *Songs of Ourselves* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Candidates needed to offer at least one extract-based question (marked with an asterisk) and at least one discursive essay question (marked with a dagger symbol), as stated clearly on the cover of the question paper. However, there were a significant number of infringements of this requirement. (This was most usually where candidates did not attempt to answer the discursive (†) questions.) Some candidates answered more than three questions, perhaps thinking that they might pick up a few marks on each; but it is not possible to award marks for more than three answers on this component, and they need to conform with the question-type coverage requirements if they are to be counted.

Although marks are not awarded for the length of an answer, it is very difficult to achieve a worthwhile mark for one that runs to a paragraph and no more. The mark-scheme rewards development, and there were many responses where a candidate clearly understood texts but, having stated a response, failed to develop ideas. This meant that there were many responses which achieved band 6 (*Attempts to communicate a basic personal response to the task*) but did not go any further. One way in which candidates can demonstrate development in a response is by using relevant evidence from the text in support of their comments. There were significant numbers of responses where comments made were credible and sometimes quite subtle, but the lack of supporting evidence meant that they were little more than assertions.

The passage-based questions on prose and drama were the most popular, and most answers to these demonstrated at least some knowledge of the wider text. Detail from the passage is essential to a good answer and the main shortcoming was the lack of direct reference. Narrative or descriptive run-through is not sufficient to get a mark in a higher band. Successful answers will analyse and explore the writer's method, not merely through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation.

The empathic tasks were approached with enthusiasm, and most candidates who chose them made a serious attempt to write 'in character'. They also seemed to have absorbed advice to focus on the moment specified.

There were some pleasing responses to the poetry, particularly to the Billy Collins poems and to *Where Lies the Land?* by Arthur Hugh Clough. The latter drew some very sensitive commentary on imagery and language in the strongest scripts. This syllabus rewards such engagement with language but many candidates seemed unprepared to probe the language of the texts they had studied. Candidates had clearly gained something from Billy Collins in particular, and often made some touching personal responses to 'On Turning Ten' and 'The History Teacher' in particular, but the responses were often anecdotal rather than analytical: 'I remember when I was 10' or 'that reminds me of my favourite teacher' rather than a close consideration of the language of either poem.

Comments on specific questions

SECTION A: DRAMA

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

- 1 This was a very popular question and candidates generally focused well on their feelings. Most candidates were able to identify with Walter at this point in the play and generally expressed disapproval of him at this point. However, there was a strong tendency to deal only with Walter's view about the importance of money or, in a few cases, with his reaction to Ruth's decision, rather than to consider the extract as a whole. It was expected that there might be some pity or sympathy for his increasing sense of frustration/ desperation/ sense of isolation. There was also much to comment on here in the drama of the scene, with many silences as well as the contrast between how Walter and Mama speak.
- 2 The focus here was twofold. Candidates were expected to consider not only how Hansberry presents the different characters of Asagai and George, but also how she makes us understand Beneatha's choice. Even if we do not entirely sympathise with all of Beneatha's attitudes/ comments, we do see both of the men from Beneatha's point of view. We hear about George before we see him: he is clearly successful, rich, he 'looks good', and to begin with she likes him enough to 'go out with him and stuff' but for Beneatha that is not enough. He does not understand her dreams. We can judge him and his 'assimilationist' attitudes for ourselves when we do see him. Asagai represents something completely different for Beneatha: he represents the pure black culture and his nickname for her, Alaiyo, shows how much he understands her. This was probably the most successfully handled discursive question on the paper, and there were a good number of candidates who produced responses showing a clear understanding of why Beneatha made her choice. What was lacking in some responses was a clear engagement with the writing ('*How does Hansberry help you understand?*') which would have lifted many answers into a higher mark band.
- 3 The quality of the answer was determined by the appropriateness of the voice. There is no doubt that Ruth is absolutely furious/disgusted by Walter's giving in to Travis, after she had said no to both requests, both by giving him the money and by saying 'let him go' to the supermarket. Throughout the scene we have seen that Ruth is tired, not just because of her pregnancy but also with everything that living in the apartment means: from the lack of a proper bedroom for Travis, to the shared bathroom and general living conditions. For example, she is angry with Walter's late night which has kept Travis from going to bed at a reasonable time. Candidates explored her thoughts / feelings about the cheque, her obvious love for Travis and her worries about bringing another child into such an existence, and most who attempted the task were able to assume a reasonably suitable voice.

MACBETH

- 4 Comment on the impact of Macduff's speeches with his highly dramatic diction, use of repetition and general sense of panic was expected together with the sound of the bell ringing, which enhances the drama of the moment. The ease with which Lady Macbeth plays her part is significant, as well as the irony of Macduff's refusal to tell the 'gentle lady' what has happened. Macbeth's melodramatic and hyperbolic language serves to demonstrate his artifice. The closer the engagement with the dramatic effect of Shakespeare's words and a justification of what they found to be of significance, the higher was the reward. There were some candidates who knew what was required and entered upon the task with enthusiasm. By contrast, there were many who merely 'told the story' and though showing evidence that they knew the plot, they did not explore the text in the detail required to secure marks in higher bands.

- 5 The key phrase here was ‘dramatically convey’, and therefore more was required than a straightforward narrative account of how the relationship changes over the course of the play. It was expected that candidates would explore how their relationship seems to reverse. For example, at first Lady Macbeth appears to be the dominant partner in the relationship, almost bullying Macbeth into committing Duncan’s murder and confidently instructing him to ‘leave all the rest’ to her, but there is the dramatic/vivid contrast in their reactions after Duncan’s murder; his solo decision to kill Banquo (‘be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck’); her continuing support/ covering for him during the banquet, and how this evolves to the point where her death simply produces the reaction ‘She should have died hereafter.’ Most candidates knew the material and were able to give an overview of the collapse of the relationship, but very few were able to address the key phrase.
- 6 The quality of the answer was determined by the appropriateness of the voice together with evidence of knowledge of the given moment. This comes at the end of Act 4 Scene 3, a long scene set in the English court where Malcolm has been living. After much description of how Scotland ‘weeps and bleeds’ under Macbeth’s tyranny, Malcolm lies (his ‘first false speaking’) to Macduff, in order to test his loyalty and integrity by suggesting there was ‘no bottom to (his) voluptuousness’ and that it would be better for Scotland if Macbeth were to continue to reign. Macduff’s horrified reaction is proof enough for Malcolm of his loyalty (his ‘good truth and honour’). Malcolm’s mood is positive: he believes God is on their side and Macbeth is ‘ripe for shaking’. They will leave the English court and return to save Scotland. Those who made successful attempts at the question used a good deal of this detail. Those whose answers were limited tended to make general assertions of pity for Macduff, but not much more.

OUR TOWN

- 7 Answers tended to come from candidates who were attempting the extract question as an ‘Unseen’. The extract is taken from near the beginning of Act 3. It serves several functions: to highlight the passage of time and the changes or lack of them in the small community of Grover’s Corners, to give a historical context, to stress the eternal values of humanity. The focus in this Act is on death, and also on the way in which humans bequeath their values to following generations, and on the cycle of life and death. There follow some of the most moving parts of the play: the revelation of Emily’s death, for example. Good answers needed to respond to the key words ‘moving’ and ‘significant’. There was no specific requirement to move outside the passage but successful answers were expected to comment on the way in which the atmosphere has changed from that of the marriage scene immediately preceding it.
- 8 There are some extremely strong relationships in the play, but the question required more than just descriptions of these relationships, which have their ups and downs. Better answers made some evaluation of the qualities required to maintain such long relationships (in the first two cases) and of their significance in the general scheme of things. They were also expected to explore the importance of marriage as an institution and in fact to life in general.
- 9 There were few answers to this question. The moment is towards the end of Act Three and follows a conversation between Mrs Gibbs and Emily, to which, of course Dr Gibbs is oblivious. He makes a lonely figure by the grave and he would probably be reflecting on his losses, on his marriage and on Emily’s and on the future, which might look rather bleak. He is a sociable man who has had a central role in the community and he might be thinking philosophically of the passage of time and of how few of his old friends and acquaintances have gone. It was hoped that it would not be too difficult for candidates to create a convincing voice; he comes across as a sensible and pragmatic man, not without humour, in the early scenes of the play.

SECTION B: POETRY

from *SAILING ALONE AROUND THE ROOM*

- 10 What candidates found moving was expected to be very variable of course, but stronger candidates noted how the humorous tone of the first stanza – where turning ten is likened to a disease – is modified by the unpleasantness of the effect on the child’s mind/spirit. At the ripe old age of ten he is able to indulge in nostalgia for when he was younger and to feel that this is the point at which he loses his innocence. It was difficult to produce a good answer without exploring the sadness created by ‘the late afternoon light’ and the ‘blue speed drained out of’ the bicycle. The last stanza has the painful contrast between the ‘light’ and shining of the child when he was younger and his awakening

to reality in the very powerful last line. This was a very popular question and most of the candidates who attempted it gave some evidence of a general understanding of the poem. However, many offered a paraphrase, supported by selected quotation, rather than an exploration of the ways in which the language of the poem conveys the boy's feelings. The more sensitive responses offered some exploration of the imagery, though in most cases this should have been much more extensive.

- 11 The key words in this question were 'how' and 'memorable', and answers which merely described or paraphrased did not go very far towards meeting its demands. The history teacher appears somewhat lonely and ineffectual through the account of the lack of insight that his students acquire into the facts that he teaches them. He tries to protect them from the harsher facts, and there is some humour in the fact that the Ice Age becomes the Chilly Age and the Stone Age becomes the Gravel Age. A variety of inferences were drawn for his reasons for doing this. Candidates clearly enjoyed this poem and generally showed a good understanding of it. Some sympathised with the teacher, some thought he was incompetent. The best pointed out the irony that although he thinks he is protecting his students from the more unpleasant facts of life, once they are out in the playground they are resorting to bullying and violence.
- 12 This was a less popular question than the other two Collins options, but there were a few sound and relevant responses. Answers were unlikely to be successful unless they looked very closely at the language and imagery of the poems. Both poems take the apparently mundane and give it a new dimension.

SONGS OF OURSELVES

- 13 Candidates might have referred to some of the following: the form of the poem – two linked 14-line sonnets – and its relationship with the content; the description in the first half of the exhaustion brought about by the speaker's writing ('my life's fever is soaking in night sweat -/ one life, one writing'); the disturbing imagery of the second half ('gray skulled horses', 'my child exploding into dynamite'); his feelings towards his wife ('Dear Heart'). The most successful answers demonstrated a response to the detail of the words and their effects; the least successful struggled to understand what the poem is about.
- 14 There were some good answers to this question and candidates seemed to have enjoyed both the ideas and the form of the poem very much. They referred to the sense of uncertainty in the opening stanza; the joy of life on board ('how pleasant here to pace!'); the sense of fellowship; the excitement of travelling into the unknown; the sailors' attitudes ('Exults to bear and scorns to wish it past'); the effect of the repetition of opening and closing stanzas.
- 15 Candidates might profitably have referred to some of the following (which are not exhaustive): the effects of the varied line and stanza lengths (in *From Song of Myself*); the presentation of the speaker's voice (in *From Song of Myself*); the ways in which Auden conveys intensity of the grief (in *Funeral Blues*); the sustained use of imperative verbs (in *Funeral Blues*); the effects of rhyme (in *Funeral Blues*). However, there were very few responses to this question.

SECTION C: PROSE

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

- 16 Candidates demonstrated knowledge of the context of the extract (Bob Ewell's post-trial spitting/threats) and commented on the contrast between Lee's portrayal of Atticus's peaceful reaction compared with the humour in how she presents the children's fears and suggestions as to how to make him change his mind about carrying a gun. This moment powerfully conveys Atticus's core beliefs as both lawyer and father: His clear explanation to Jem about standing in Bob Ewell's shoes is central to the extract. Some candidates also commented on the dramatic irony of Aunt Alexandra's warning and Atticus's closing comment. Success was very much dependent on focus on the phrase 'powerful moment', and some answers did not go beyond merely saying that the children were worried for Atticus's safety.
- 17 A range of responses was expected. Lee's presentation of Mayella in the trial and her behaviour in response to Atticus's questioning led most candidates to be critical, especially as her responses are central to Tom's being found guilty and lead to his death. However, Lee makes it clear that Mayella is a victim because of her family's Maycomb status – they are 'trash' in most people's eyes. Some candidates felt sorry for her loneliness, for her attempts to try to keep clean/improve the garden, for

her lack of understanding of Atticus's courtesy and for the beatings and worse that she suffers at the hands of her father. Most candidates were able to marshal at least basic points about Mayella and to give some supporting reference for their arguments. The best were able to balance dislike with sympathy.

- 18 This task should have been fairly straightforward for those with good knowledge of the text. It is a month since Jem (and Scout) last visited Mrs Dubose for Jem to read to her. Having been told of her death and why Atticus would have sent him to read to her, even if he had not decapitated all the camellia bushes, Jem is given the box with the perfect Snow-on-the-Mountain inside. As he throws the box away, his initial reaction is fury towards Mrs Dubose, asking why that the 'old hell-devil' can not leave him alone even after her death. It has taken Atticus's explanation as to why she was the 'bravest person' he ever knew and that courage is not a 'man with a gun in his hand' for him to calm down. It is significant that Jem removes the camellia before throwing the box on the fire. Those who captured his change in attitude and show he understands her bravery and perhaps even admires her were the most successful.

THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING

- 19 Some knowledge of the context of Frankie's obsession with the wedding and her belief that it is going to change her life were essential for pointing the pathos of this extract. Even the bus journey seems wrong – she feels as if she is going in the wrong direction – and the wedding itself which has been anticipated for so long is given just a few lines. It has clearly been traumatic for her: it is referred to as 'the wrecked wedding', though no detail is given, and she has 'thrown herself down in the sizzling dust' and begged the couple to take her with them. Up to this point she has deluded herself that she can be part of their new life. Her grief and anger are very powerful in the last paragraph; she hates everybody, especially herself. It is the end of a dream. Stronger candidates were able to explore the way in which the atmosphere is created and the way in which we are taken into Frankie's feelings.
- 20 Answers to this question were required to go beyond character sketch and to consider Berenice's role in the novel. She is almost a surrogate mother to Frankie and is an intimate part of the household. She offers advice, for example over the dress, and she regales Frankie with stories of her various marriages. Ironically, she is not able to convince Frankie that her expectations of the wedding are inflated, though their conversations are quite adult. It seems an odd relationship and there is the famous episode of the knife-throwing. Frankie seems to oscillate between dependency on her and contempt for her. Whatever responses were offered were accepted, provided that they were supported from the text.
- 21 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

- 22 The extract is taken from *Magpies* in *Queen Mother of the Western Skies*. Though there was no explicit requirement to move outside the extract, were informed by a knowledge of An-mei's problems throughout her life and by knowledge of her mother's various humiliations and eventual suicide. The viewpoint of An-mei as a nine year old makes the passage particularly poignant. She is told horrible things about her mother, but does not understand because there are no visible signs of corruption. She also is focused on her sense of rejection and bewilderment that her mother could have left her behind. Her mother suffers as much as An-mei, as the story of the turtle makes clear. The moral seems to be that you should learn not to reveal you hurt because that gives power to other people.
- 23 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.
- 24 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

THE COLOR PURPLE

- *25 The extract is the final letter, written by Celie. Candidates tended to refer to some of the following: the (perhaps) unexpectedly happy ending – rapprochement extending as far as Albert; the reconciliation of the main characters and the tying of narrative threads; the significance of the

opening address 'Dear God' (having stopped writing to him in an earlier letter); the presentation of Celie's thoughts and feelings in this final letter. Some successful answers explored the detail of the writing in the extract to inform personal judgements about the effectiveness of this happy ending.

- 26 Candidates referred to memorable incidents such as the beating of Harpo and May Agnes; the significance to Sofia's life story of slapping the mayor and her consequent imprisonment; her ultimately indomitable spirit. She is a larger-than-life character, rejecting traditional gender roles. Though there were not many response to this question, there were some very direct and heartfelt comments about her, for example, 'I find her memorable because she is so hard core'.
- 27 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

STORIES OF OURSELVES

- 28 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.
- 29 The ways in which description and dialogue were used to present character in the stories needed more thorough exploration. The ways in which their sons regard their fathers in these two stories was central. The influence of the father on the son 'He taught me three things' is crucial in *The Enemy*. In *The Stoa* the boy's observation of his father's initial search for companionship and his later self-centredness when he realises that Miss McCabe could 'pop off' at any minute are central.
- 30 Some answers referred to the guardian's discovery of the shed and her fateful entrance; the boy's exultant mood at being rid of this busy-body woman; his disdain for the 'loud foolish screaming' of the maid and his probable amusement at the reactions of others. The story offers more than adequate insight into Conrardin's thoughts; key to success was the extent to which a convincing voice for the character was created.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/02

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

Many assignments testified to the hard work of candidates and their teachers. A wide range of texts was in evidence, the vast majority with a suitable level of demand for IGCSE.

Most Centres gave careful thought to the framing of tasks, but there were 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 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 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.

In most 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.

Teachers are reminded that 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.

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.