LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (UK)

> **Paper 0476/01**
>
> **Open Books (Set Texts)**

Key messages

The following are important for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, characterisation as appropriate
- well structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Examiners commented very favourably on much of the work that they saw this session. The vast majority of candidates had been very well prepared and are to be commended for their serious approach and their clear enjoyment of the texts they had studied. There were some very sincere and well-argued personal responses. Candidates' different interpretations were engaging and often perceptive, and there were very few 'clone' answers.

There was impressive general knowledge behind many of the scripts, and many could therefore put their answers in context, which supported their understanding of character and theme

Candidates on the whole had a competent or more than competent level of understanding of the texts and this session there was more conscientiousness in answers about addressing the words of the question directly. However, in some cases there was still a tendency to repeat a question's key terms mechanically with little apparent thought as to what they meant. Some candidates would benefit from greater understanding of what is required in questions which use phrases such as ' strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal'; some gave vague and unfocused responses because they did not seem to understand or wish to engage with such phrases.

The passage-based questions were the most popular, as in previous sessions. They are not in any way a 'soft' option, though. Lack of knowledge of the text quickly reveals itself even if specific external reference is not explicitly required, and the writers' method needs to be explored in depth before marks in the higher bands can be awarded. Narrative run-throughs go very little way to meeting the demands of the questions. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the second ('dagger') question on a text and this, approach though not prohibited, was often very limiting.

In poetry responses there was much less 'feature-spotting' ('line X contains a simile, line Y contains two similes...") than there has been in some previous sessions. Many commented on the writer's use of language very effectively, or attempted to, knowing that this was what they were supposed to do, although in weaker answers there was evidence of 'prepared' responses, rather than comments tailored to the question. Sometimes candidates responded to language without going into detail of *how* the effects are created which encourage them to respond as they do. Other responses started with some developed analysis but this then petered out into lists. In each genre and type of question, it is rooting in the language which will enable responses to be convincing. Though it is well understood that candidates like to use technical vocabulary, it counts for nothing it if is not linked to commentary on the effects that are produced.

A significant number of candidates dealt at length with punctuation in discussing drama passages (without any awareness that it is Shakespeare's printers and editors, not Shakespeare, who are generally responsible for it). But comments such as 'Cassius' use of elision makes him very persuasive' and 'The exclamation
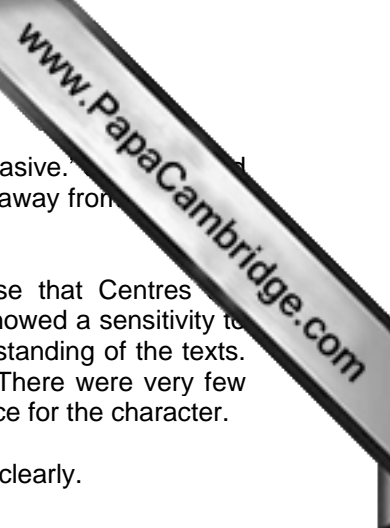
marks after 'O' and 'sham'd' highlight the need for urgency, making Cassius very persuasive.' ... rather stretched, especially if not then supported with more analysis, and tended to get away from ... of drama as drama.

The empathic questions were significantly less popular; in fact, there was a sense that Centres ... increasingly discouraging candidates from attempting them. Those who did try often showed a sensitivity to ... some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in a question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

Candidates are reminded that they should present their work and number their answers clearly.

Section A: Drama

Much Ado About Nothing

Question *1

This question was a very popular choice. Candidates obviously had a liking for Benedick. His change from wit to hero was well charted in considerable detail, with some excellent descriptions of his new attitudes and strength. Candidates understood the puns and language impressively well, and were able to trace subtle insults very effectively. Most found the changes in Benedict admirable, but weaker answers were less successful in identifying where this was indicated in the text. Very good answers showed that our good opinion of Benedick here is due to our contrastingly low opinion of Don Pedro and Claudio. Although most were aware of the context, it was often implicit rather than used to substantiate points.

Question † 2

Overall, this question was perhaps the least well answered of the three on *Much Ado*, the main reason being that there was a tendency to re-tell whole swathes of the text leading up to the end, with little focus on the actual ending itself. Most covered the four lovers and Don John, and also Don Pedro, candidates feeling sorry for him because he had no partner, and feeling that Shakespeare should have written it differently. These candidates also wanted some punishment for Don John on stage, thinking that justice had not been done. Good answers addressed all the strands with some subtlety, tracing their roots back into the play whilst supplying some details from the ending. The best responses showed some balance, expressing reservations about Claudio, for example.

Question 3

A good sense of malevolence was conveyed in responses to this question, though a few candidates overplayed this. Most answers conveyed resentment and jealousy. The best brought in textual references well. There were interesting motives, including an illicit love for Hero and a desire to bring down Don Pedro. There were some imaginative ideas about an abused childhood, but these were not always linked clearly to the play, and often candidates struggled to find things to say.

Julius Caesar

Question *4

Most candidates showed that they knew the whole play well and demonstrated a good understanding of both characters. Good answers looked in detail at the speech and realised how creatively Cassius kept adapting his approach until he found something which worked on Brutus; some also put the extract in context, and explained why Brutus was particularly vulnerable at this particular moment. Even most of the weaker candidates were able to say that Cassius appealed to Brutus' honour, although not always pointing to a specific example of this; conversely, some noticed the repetition of 'Rome' and 'one man' without being able to explain why it was important. Weaker answers misunderstood Brutus's motivations as envy/ambition rather than Republican ideals. However, many candidates did not see this question as an invitation to explore language, but a requirement simply to list rhetorical strategies involved. Their answers tended to be based on the use of rhetorical questions, similes (Colossus), use of anaphora, subtle hints (few examples were offered), comparisons, and punctuation. When candidates supplied appropriate examples from the text and commented on their language choice, answers were sound, but many penalised themselves by not exploring language, apart from offering a quotation to demonstrate a rhetorical strategy - a pity when there

were such rich pickings. Apt quotations were often left to speak for themselves. Some answ........
long vague paragraphs on pitch of voice or an actor's expression, which did not add a lot to the re.........

Some candidates also seemed to have been taught to show awareness of drama by such comments ....
were staging this play, I'd have Cassius start talking to Brutus from some distance and gradually draw cl.......
and closer.' While it is encouraging that candidates are aware of plays as drama, long vague paragraphs o...
pitch of voice or an actor's expression did not add a lot to the response.

Question †5

Most candidates knew the context of the quotation and were able to utilise it effectively. There were responses on both sides, and most argued effectively with textual evidence. Many answers took Brutus's nobility as a given in the play and adduced multiple quotations to 'prove' it, arguing either 'He must be noble because x y and z all say he is' or 'He must be noble because he worries about doing the right thing all the time', with multiple examples of the latter. Some were unhelpfully sidetracked into discussions of differences between Roman and Elizabethan ideas of honour (especially when it came to Brutus's suicide). Better answers explored what might constitute nobility or honour for Brutus and within his particular context. There were some original and effective points, such as Brutus as a husband and friend. Weaker answers tended to be very black-and-white, sometimes showing some misunderstanding of Brutus as a weak and ambitious fool (even though they usually kept well to the question wording).

Question 6

This proved a good example of where candidates' knowledge of the play as a whole worked well to inform empathic work, with considerable knowledge shown of what had led up to this scene, and good understanding of Caesar's strengths and weaknesses. Calphurnia's fearful voice was clear. There were relatively few answers, but they were well done.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Question *7

The question invited personal response, and candidates were quick to exploit the opportunity. Some of the answers were truly moving themselves, showing empathy with Tennyson's grief and loss. There was much good analysis, especially of the 'dark house' lyric, and *Ring Out*... The depth of understanding in some answers was outstanding, candidates really getting behind the language to recreate the feelings. All recognised the shift in feelings over time.

Question †8

Pathetic fallacy came into its own in answers to this question and even weaker answers demonstrated an understanding of how Tennyson creates atmosphere, and used relevant detail to support their answers. The best answers were exhaustive and impressive.

Question †9

This appealed to all abilities. Weaker candidates could concentrate on the vivid description of Lancelot, and there was plenty to choose from and on which to comment. Some of the commentaries were almost as vivid as the original. All candidates captured the use of colour, gold, sun, black curls, and fire images. Not all candidates got as far as Camelot, which is of course a key point. There were differing arguments on Lancelot's last actions, and some candidates were severely censorious of him, blaming him for knowingly causing the death of the Lady.

Songs of Ourselves

Question *10

Though comparison was not required by the question, some candidates compared the two poems effectively, and produced some lively answers. Some struggled with Byron's feelings, not sure what they were; others who did understand, wrote about the poem with relish. Browning was better understood, and there was some good knowledge on 'measuring' love.

Question †11

Lament was popular. The poem seemed to have a contemporary resonance and to strike a chord with candidates. Many felt strongly about the destruction in the poem, and the best answers analysed the 'ash... of language' image in real and heart-felt depth. Many answers explored all the main images in the poem, from turtle to ashes; and the personal response to the poem was very strong. Many knew why the poem had been written and talked knowledgeably about Clarke's feelings; all answers focused closely on the question. Less accomplished candidates needed to show what the poet's emotions were to secure higher reward in their answers. They sometimes explored imagery from the first part of the text, but the climax at the end was often ignored completely.

First Love was equally popular, but it attracted some candidates who did not really respond to the feelings, or the poet, and struggled to comment on the language, often calling it 'simple', showing a lack of understanding of images such as the burning and the snow. Many were able to do a mechanical analysis or appreciation of individual images and so forth without relating the pain experienced by the narrator to the over-arching fact that his feelings of love are unrequited

Question †12

Candidates were secure in understanding the general meaning and 'message' of the poem. All understood a sense of loss and recognised the difference between 'then' and 'now', but there were a lot of what might be termed 'run-through' answers. Selected images were quoted, explained and deemed to be powerful laments but there was not much engagement with the shape and sound of the poem. Language points centred round alliteration, line-length and repetition, perhaps a little mechanically, at the expense of meaning and focus on the word 'powerfully'.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question *13

This was by far the most popular of the options on this novel. Candidates focused on the passage and they were able to highlight the sadness and poignancy of the death of Mr Earnshaw. They commented on how the death meant trouble for Heathcliff in foreshadowing his abuse by Hindley. Few mentioned Nelly Dean's part in the extract. In general a closer analysis of language was needed and more comments on the effects of the writer's language choice, though stronger candidates were usually confident in discussing pathetic fallacy and pathos, and some even commented upon the reliability of the account by Nelly Dean. Better answers, however, linked the significance of the scene to the development of the rest of the novel and this contextualisation made for more complete appreciation. In weaker answers, responses to 'moving' tended to be limited to the last (and often misunderstood) exchange between Mr Earnshaw and Cathy, very little was generally made of the children's grief and how they dealt with it. 'Significant' was not often addressed.

Question † 14

This was well done in general. Most recognised both the Victim and Monster in Heathcliff but traced the latter back to his appalling treatment at the hands of Hindley – explaining his evil vengeance, if not excusing it. (A very rare few looked beyond the text to consider the characterisation in terms of gothic literature.) Most recognised a key moment of change when Cathy said she could not marry Heathcliff, and understood how the latter's childhood treatment affected him. There was not much, oddly, on his love for Cathy.

Question 15

There were far too few answers on this empathic task to make general comment appropriate.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question *16

Candidates generally embraced this novel with enthusiasm and knew the text well, using this knowledge as essential background for their answers, especially in relation to the 'holy' man's back story. Many responded to the humour in the extract with exuberance and liveliness. Most answers were detailed and analytical, writing at length about the photographs, the *Times* report, and Sampath in his tree. Better answers stood back a little and tried to find a more critical approach to the sources of humour, e.g. social pretension and cultural misconceptions, and gave convincing evaluations of Desai's writing and effects. Weaker answers found it difficult to explain the humour and fell back on picking out details and simply stating that they are humorous.

Question † 17

Responses to this question tended to be similar to the previous one, for similar reasons. Once again, the better responses showed a real enjoyment and had a rich seam of material to mine. Candidates who could explain the humour in Pinky, referring to her colourful dress sense, the biting of the ear, and the idea of being followed tended to do well. She was seen as a typical teenager, even a little stereotypical. Few answers referred to the end of the novel, when she is trying to choose between suitors.

Question 18

This generated varied responses. Not many candidates were able to capture an appropriate balance between Mr Chawla's mercenary values and his feelings towards Sampath, but most had some sense of the moment's place within the wider context, and a few captured his querulous, self assured, 'busy busy' voice convincingly.

The Great Gatsby

Question *19

This was a very popular question, and often very well answered. Much enjoyment of the text was shown. There was some very successful writing about the language, for example the images of grass, house, and green light. Nick's feelings were covered well and sympathetically. The second half of the extract differentiated well. Most could appreciate the sense of the party being over and the dead atmosphere surrounding Gatsby's house but some were unable to interpret the symbolism towards the end. That severely limited the quality as it is these final paragraphs that relate to the over-arching themes of the novel. As a result, the complete sense of the novel coming to an end was not explained. A few clearly did not know the novel in sufficient detail. Some answers were diverted into more general essays about Nick and his unreliable narration, and so were answering the question rather narrowly. Most candidates were successful in the level of quotation and analysis they used, and the best were able to write with a good focus on the question, assessing the significance of details in view of previous parts of the novel.

Question † 20

Daisy is clearly a character who engaged a lot of candidates imaginatively, and divided opinion. Many pointed out that we get only Nick's perspective. Comments were strong and, in the main, based on excellent knowledge and understanding of her own words and actions. Some very thoughtful answers explored the background and culture, for example in relation to the daughter and marrying a wealthy man; a few very good answers argued that Daisy was in fact a victim. On the other hand, '"Daisy is the embodiment of all that is the American Dream." Discuss' seemed to be the question that a significant number of candidates attempted. The material is not impossible to fit to the actual question, but they found it difficult to do so.

Question 21

This was significantly less popular than the essay and passage-based tasks. Some answers tended to be rather excessive in portraying Jordan's regret over the end of the relationship with Nick; others were far too nonchalant. In general there was a lack of detailed knowledge of the character and answers tended to be rather brief.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question *22

Good answers worked well with the extract, picking out appropriate words and imagery on which comment. They showed an understanding of the significance of this event to the lives of African women and to village life. Weaker answers considered aspects of the extract, but did not focus enough on how it makes '"the village community come to life'. There was a sense in some answers that the novel as a whole was not very well known. Though the traditional rituals associated with the marriage were described, many did not point out that this is a very special occasion, and their responses were limited, lacking depth and detail. Few quotations or clear references were used.

Question † 23

Most answers explored Makhaya as a central character, yet needed to focus more on the word 'compelling' in the question. References to the text were scanty and comments were not always grounded in the text.

Question 24

There were very few answers to this question. Necessary for success was a strong sense of the context: that Mma-Millipede would be reflecting that this was an extraordinary time to talk business with Gilbert, who has left his bride just before the feast is to start.

Ethan Frome

Question *25

This text was very popular this session and candidates clearly enjoyed it. Candidates tackling this question, the most popular of the three on the text, generally made detailed use of the extract, selecting and commenting on key detail from the passage; better responses were wide-ranging in scope and able to include apt comments on setting and on pathetic fallacy. Despite their obvious engagement, many candidates did not show *close* understanding of the passage; for example, very few referred to the cause of Ethan's jealousy and the obsessiveness of that emotion. Equally, a lot missed the significance of the tombstone with hardly any drawing attention to the name Endurance. The almost feverish build up of his passion as he reaches the door of the farmhouse was not really reflected in many cases, though empathy for Ethan was much in evidence – candidates clearly liked and sympathised with him. There were many good answers which recreated the tension in the extract and question in their own writing, using similar dramatic techniques to the author.

Question † 26

There was a need to consider the portrayal of Mattie throughout the novel in this question; better answers offered this broad approach, though with selection of precise textual evidence. Some answers, following Mattie's story from before her arrival to a bleak future. Good knowledge of the text was shown, and relevant references to the pickle dish, dinners, the ribbon in the hair, Zeena, and the accident. Better answers found more of substance in the character of Mattie by comparing her to Zeena (particularly through the eyes of Ethan) rather than dwelling on her impoverished background and so forth.

Question 27

There were plausible responses for this empathic task. Candidates acknowledged and portrayed Ethan's vacillation and a need to marry for practical reasons. Pleasingly, most were reminded of Zeena's early 'vigour'. However, once the fear of being alone had been dealt with, lots of candidates found it difficult to move forward from there. Good answers clearly intimated that respect and gratitude were the more positive reasons for the proposal with love or, at least, physical attraction, playing no part.

Stories of Ourselves

Question *28

There was some insight shown into the personality of the narrator and her relationship with her husband a... even the weakest answers conveyed a complex relationship with 'undercurrents'. There was widesprea... misunderstanding of John, however; some thought that he was intentionally locking his wife away, enjoyed power for its own sake, and even caused the Narrator's illness in the first place. There was also, conversely, a belief that everything was usual for the period, women were expected to be neurotic and the Narrator was making a lot of unnecessary fuss. Such readings tended to dominate many answers at the expense of real exploration of the Narrator's personality. They tended not to answer the question "How?". Short sentences, rhetorical questions and exclamations were not commented on. In general, more analysis of the writer's technique was needed.

Question † 29

Some handled the ending of the *The Signalman* very well, though answers on it were perhaps the least successful. *Secrets* generally evoked a sound response. Exploration of *Meteor* varied in success, depending on whether the candidate had appreciated the ironies, or any irony. Weaker responses offered narrative reprises before getting to the point of the question. Better responses engaged with the language in the ending of the stories but quite a few candidates did little more than summarise. Overall, candidates wrote briefly about the texts, giving a sketchy overview. There was very little quotation.

Question 30

Candidates engaged well with this question and responses offered a good sense of guilt and remorse on the part of the narrator. The boy's reflections were lively and many candidates clearly sustained his voice, incorporating details from the text with understanding. Willadean and Mr and Mrs Wills featured strongly.

Conclusion: Some key messages for candidates

- Answer the question as posed - do not try and force it to fit 'prepared' answers to previous questions. Read the question carefully, looking for the key words and phrases on which to base an answer.
- Take time to plan both ideas and structure in the answer.
- Engage with the detail of extract questions and explore the precise effects created by particular words. (Don't devote an answer to punctuation marks at the expense of writing about *words*.)
- Use brief quotations and always do so as part of analysis, not for decoration. Avoid unhelpful long quotations.
- Pay close attention to the instructions in questions, to words such as 'explore', 'in what ways' and particularly the little word "how". Constant reference to key words from the title in the answer can often encourage relevance and focus.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (UK)

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Key Messages

1. Be aware of all the Assessment Criteria. A little more comment on language, for example on the effects of two or three images, using quotation as supporting evidence, can lift candidates' work into a higher mark band.

2. The amount of recommended planning and reading time is deliberately substantial. This is to encourage closer reading and planning before candidates write. They would benefit, especially in response to poetry, from forming an accurate response to the whole text before beginning to write.

3. In responses to poetry, candidates' work could be improved by more attention to the effect of extended metaphors.

4. In responses to prose, candidates can improve their work by taking a less narrative approach (i.e. *what* happens), giving more consideration to the time-frame of a piece of writing and the point of view which is presented, and then considering the writer's intended effect on the reader (i.e. *how* the writing works). Imagery and descriptive language are as important in prose passages as they are in poetry.

5. Candidates might usefully pay more attention to the way a poem or passage *ends* before they begin writing. Often the ending contains a twist or change of perspective which needs to be understood before a critical response to the text is complete.

General Comments

It was clear that many candidates had been prepared fpor this Paper very well indeed: their answers were well-planned, argued and illustrated and showed individual engagement with the texts and the impression they made. Some strong responses also showed evidence of how widely candidates read in order to prepare for this task, or made illuminating comparisons with their set texts. But most also remembered that marks are gained through clear engagement with the stem question and for detailed critical analysis of the writer's use of language and its effect on the reader, demonstrated through quotation and comment. There was plenty of evidence of planning, focus on the question and extensive exploration of the effects of language choices. Candidates generally find the bullet points useful in planning their responses, although their use is not obligatory. Some weaker candidates make use of the introductory rubric to help them begin their responses: this is a reasonable approach and can help focus but will not of course attract any marks. Likewise, there is no reward for copying out footnotes: these are purely intended to help candidates with vocabulary or detail they my find difficult to understand on a literal level. They are not intended to draw particular attention to those words or phrases, or to indicate that they need special treatment. It certainly is not necessary to copy out or refer to the footnote at the appropriate moment in a candidate's response.

Poetry was the more popular of the two options, but the prose was far from neglected. Some candidates do find it harder to make an analytical response to prose, and there is a tendency to paraphrase the surface narrative, with extensive quotation, instead of looking at viewpoint or the non-literal use of language. Exploring metaphor is just as important in prose as in poetry: indeed Assessment Objective 2 in the syllabus refers to exploring texts 'beyond surface meanings' and this is therefore a key quality in the stronger responses. Extended metaphor also caused some candidates problems in the poetry: some searched for a 'story' instead of exploring and explaining the meaning of the poet's extended use of a single metaphor throughout the poem (indicated by the choice of title).

The two other Assessment Objectives which need particular attention – and in the implied order – in this paper are: AO3 'the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings

and effects' and AO4 'communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to texts'. ... are characterised at their best as the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Skills of ... responses to this paper continue to improve impressively: candidates are more aware that the com... effects is more important than mere quotation and identification of features of language. While Exa... are happy to reward apposite quotation, the best quotation is brief and pointed, while exploration of the e... of a rhetorical device is more highly rewarded than simply indentifying its presence (or absence). Som... candidates spend too long looking speculatively (and often inaccurately) at the possible implications of verse form, lineation or rhyme scheme, when deeper consideration of the non-literal use of imagery might have been a more profitable line of enquiry. In both verse and prose, it is useful to consider point of view and the time frame presented: candidates should ask if there is a particular narrative voice or viewpoint presented (or more than one) and whether the text contains a temporal shift. Flashbacks and considerations of the past are just as likely in prose as in verse: paying accurate attention to the writer's choice of tense might be especially helpful. Personal response should be embedded in an evaluation of the emotional effect of the writer's choices: empathy and sympathy are good ways to explore the ways in which writing can place us in someone else's shoes, or give us a very different perspective from our own (or perhaps that of the writer too). It is a mistake to assume that the views of a character are necessarily shared by the writer, or based on personal experience; (and even if they are, that may not be relevant to their intended effect). Similarly, personal reflections on the subject matter of a text unrelated to the language and effect of the text are not genuinely literary. Texts chosen for this paper often show significant development or change in their final sections, and do not necessarily end in quite the same way they begin. A good answer shows appreciation of the overall direction of the text from the beginning of the candidate's response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This poem, written by the Australian poet and environmentalist Judith Wright, proved a popular choice among candidates, despite its prickly ambiguities. Indeed, Examiners saw a very wide range of different readings of the text and its possible implications, and many genuinely exploratory responses were highly rewarded. The question was a deliberately open one, encouraging candidates to delve for meaning rather than narrowing their possible responses. The poem is deliberately mysterious, even haunting, and puts up its own barrier to over-interpretation, just as the old woman keeps away the rider and others who wish to peer through the hedge. There are no clear answers to the identity of the rider, the events of the woman's past, her reasons for hiding away or the symbolism of the fourth stanza and its relationship to the cycle of life. However, good candidates enjoyed exploring different possibilities, and the best were content to remain in a degree of uncertainty. The setting of the poem could be anywhere, and some appreciated that the woman herself might be equally archetypal.

Candidates differed in the extent to which they felt sympathetic towards the woman: some saw her as a malevolent witch-like figure, a Boo Radley or Baba Yaga; others saw her as enchanted or trapped, albeit by something of her own making, a Sleeping Beauty or Rapunzel. Some compared her to the Lady of Shalott and the rider became an unsuccessful Sir Lancelot, kept at a distance by the barrier thorn. Many found the woman barely human at all: one candidate wrote 'there is a hauntedness to her nature, something ghostly, something insubstantial'. Others took the description of her (by whom?) as a 'mad old girl' rather literally, and tired to analyse her condition. Many candidates seemed happier with the analysis of possible psychological conditions than with looking closely at the poet's use of metaphors drawn from the natural world to explain the woman's condition and her withdrawal from human contact, and yet it is the hedge itself which both tops and tails the poem. She becomes increasingly embedded in the natural world until the hedge and the woman become almost synonymous. As one strong answer put it, 'she is inextricably linked with nature…compared to a tree, her heart driven by the wind, her hands in the earth, surrounded by the hedge she planted – she has turned away from humanity and is screened by the natural world'.

Stronger answers tended to come from candidates who had something interesting to explore about the whole poem from their very first sentence, rather than those who laboured over introductions which repeated the bullet points or who worked systematically through the poem stanza-by-stanza, only beginning to venture an opinion at the very end of their essays. Such answers required some preparation and planning. They usually appreciated that the hedge is used symbolically: the descriptions of thorn and snow throughout the poem and the allusions to the sharpness of the thorns but also the whiteness, beauty and fertility of the 'snow' or blossom suggest that the hedge is an extended metaphor. Such extended metaphors can also subtly shift in meaning from stanza to stanza, just as the hedge's significance changes over time, as it grows more 'wild and high'. It should be clear that Examiners were not looking for any one single interpretation of

what the thornbush represents, or had any clearer idea than is suggested in the poem of w... ...
planted it. However, what was looked for, and found among the stronger responses, was an a...
not only of how it is described but what ideas of isolation, renunciation or devotion to nature at the ...
of humanity which it might represent. So answers which went beyond the descriptive, and explored ...
spirit of AO2 'beyond surface meaning' to suggest possible ideas were highly rewarded.

The poem is also clearly structured into stanzas, using rhyme and half-rhyme. Successful candidates managed the difficult task of addressing the form of the poem explicitly without losing sight of the central thoughts and feelings being expressed. Focus on particular patterns and specific effects was more likely to be rewarded than listing: for example assonance, alliteration, consonance, half-rhyme, enjambment and the curtailed final line all help to establish the enduring symbiosis of woman and hedge in the poem's last two lines: 'the final half-rhyme leaves the uncomfortable feeling that the old woman does not wish to be trapped behind a 'barrier' and the final short line emphasises her separation and isolation', as one candidate put it. Another felt that the uneven lines were 'like shards of glass' and 'linked with the thornbush in denoting the woman's pain'. Good responses saw not only the uneven rhythms of the poem, but also the imagery of the wind turning her grindstone heart and shouting in winter 'Death' as a sinister, even Gothic, representation of the natural world and the process of ageing, seeing the woman as a symbol of entrapment. However, equally valid responses stressed the fecundity of the natural world and suggested that it has a reliability which the human world of the staring and peering rider lacks. These stressed the rebirth of the white bud each spring, and the beauty of the 'bee-hung blossom', although of course the later image also has a sting in its tail.

Weaker answers were very quick to interpret or to construct a narrative of their own, speculating at length about what might have happened to the woman instead of focusing on the text itself. They tended to miss the ambiguities of speaking voice in the poem. Who calls her 'only the mad old girl', which is really a colloquialism rather than an oxymoron? Once this approached as an open question, the possible answers become more interesting than narrowing down the definition. Has she excluded herself from human contact, or are others too quick to dismiss or label her? The pronouns at the end of the third stanza also raise questions about voice and viewpoint. Stronger candidates were more adventurous in their approaches to the difficult fourth stanza, but even they sometimes were confused about whether wind, woman or thornbush were whetting a branch like a knife. Many picked up the sinister aspects of this image, and of a heart turned to stone, while missing the operation of a natural cycle which also accommodates the shout of 'Life' – although again it may not be literally the woman who is shouting.

Attention to syntax and grammar can help to unlock a complex poetic text. Good answers tended to notice the change from present tense to past in the fifth stanza and to explore what it tells us about the ways in which the woman's life and song have changed. The best answers saw her glance at the sky, and the dazzle of sun and birdsong, and the strongest compared the different images of the wind to meditate on the process of time and change, seeing the progression and development of imagery throughout the poem. As one candidate wrote: 'the last stanza acts as a bridge, a divide between the seen and the unseen, between mortality and mysterious immortality'. The best answers were full of insight derived from sustained engagement with the language and images of the text, and worked from analysis of effects towards interpretation and evaluation of their impact on the reader. They reached a developed understanding of 'the hungry ridge', 'that thorn, that green, that snow' which allowed an appreciation of how human life reflects its environment; as one candidate wrote, 'the hedge represents all our insecurities and if we allow them to grow, they will control us'.

Question 2

The extract from *Nice Work* by the English novelist David Lodge provided candidates with interesting characters and issues: Robyn Penrose and Vic Wilcox are in fact both unwillingly involved in a work shadowing placement scheme and their mutual resentment is part of their hostility here. Candidates clearly found both the drama of their relationship engaging, the portrayal of the factory intriguing and disturbing, and the attitudes to employment and the world of work worth exploring. Examiners saw many highly engaged responses, and candidates had little difficulty in writing at length about the passage. That said, there are a number of ways in which responses to this kind of question could be improved further, and the problems candidates encountered with this passage, while individual, might also allow reflection on ways in which to improve the analysis and evaluation of narrative prose.

The extract provided a good balance of dialogue, description and narrative for analysis. The best candidates kept a good balance between these different elements: they realised that all of these are essential for good prose writing, and that each element reveals a great deal about the emotions of Robyn, the principal character here and hence the focus of the question. Nevertheless, many candidates have always had a

tendency to work systematically though prose passages, treating them simply as narratives a... ...... responses which are little more than paraphrases, however well-illustrated by quotation and com... ... do not always see that it is also important to be selective rather than exhaustive when analysi... ... extract like this one. Candidates who were better prepared had perhaps been guided by pr... ... Examiners' reports, which put an emphasis on the importance of using similar analytical skills when read... prose to those needed for poetry. Both the dynamics of dialogue and the implications of the narrator's choice of imagery and language in the descriptive passages were crucial in establishing tone and mood here, and thus an overall idea of the ways in which the writing is intended to have an effect on the reader.

Narrators are not always reliable guides to what is really happening in a story, and writers using the third person are frequently adopting the point of view of characters who are very different from themselves. Robyn's view of Pringles is not only different from that of Vic Wilcox, but it is probably also very different from David Lodge's: certainly the limitations of her perspective become much more evident later in the novel. It was possible to achieve a high mark in response to this question without realising this, but most of the best candidates saw that Robyn's view of the foundry is coloured both by her reading and by her very limited experience of life. More attention in teaching to the writer's choice of narrative voice and perspective might make candidates more aware of potential irony. They could also experiment with narrative viewpoint in their own writing.

Just as in the poetry, a closer look at tenses and time frame might also have helped candidates to achieve a little more distance and perspective in examining Robyn's feelings. The reference to 'an hour or so later' and the pluperfect 'he had referred to' are the first indications that the conversation between Robyn and Vic at the beginning of the passage happened after the tour of the factory which she then reflects on: 'What *had* she expected?' and 'Robyn had said'. The dialogue and visit to production control at the end of the passage therefore occurred before the visit to the factory floor which has left Robyn so 'confused, battered, exhausted' and uncharacteristically lost for words at the beginning of the extract. This was far from easy to pick up, and again candidates were able to achieve high marks without seeing this, if they made other interesting comment about the writing, but correct appreciation of time frame and the writer's use of flashback does help a reader of narrative prose to see the ways in which description is coloured by memory and by the bias and prejudices of the character who is recalling those experiences, and therefore not to take them at face value. This is another aspect of AO2, reading for meaning which goes beyond the 'surface meanings' and explores at a deeper level. This ability to identify bias and to evaluate its potential effect is one of the valuable ways in which Literature contributes to the secondary curriculum.

Thus while many candidates were able to explore Robyn's feelings in some depth and detail and to discuss the dynamics of the relationship between Robyn and Vic, often showing a very acute awareness of gender politics and the implications of the ways in which they interrupt one another, fewer were able to put much critical distance between Robyn's feelings and their own, or to see that her point of view might be just as patronising and prejudiced as Vic's. While higher achieving candidates were able to focus on how Lodge conveys the feelings of Robyn to the reader through a clear and undivided focus on the range of methods and techniques he uses, less successful candidates tended to engage with the narrative and the characters too quickly in their answers and often did not get around to exploring the writer's methods. The descriptive paragraph about the factory was (surprisingly) avoided by a significant number of candidates. Mid- and higher-band achieving answers were more likely to comment on the imagery concerning a prison and hell and relate this to both Robyn's naivety and her revised ideas about unemployment. There were plenty of examples of language and imagery to analyse ranging from simple repetition of phrases ('the noise…the dirt') to similes such as 'like a prison', 'like hell' and 'as into a tank of water'. Candidates seemed more reluctant to identify similes as such (let alone spell them correctly) when writing about prose than about verse. However Robyn's visions of hell and damnation accompanied by a demonic soundtrack of unrelenting cacophony give the strongest impressions of her horror and disapproval at seeing how others work. The narrator's voice was noted by the better candidates who were aware of the unsympathetic manner in which Vic was portrayed, some feeling that he was demonised as the presiding figure in this drama of undeserved punishment and retribution.

What differentiated lower and middle responses from top-band answers was a candidate's ability not only to identify these images as examples of Robyn's view of the factory but also to explore them in the context of the passage as a whole and link them to more complex language features. The best responses were able to link terms such as 'demonic cacophony' and 'satanic mills' to recognise a linguistic pattern and even intertextual references. They recognised that Robyn was taking a moral stance in seeing the workers as condemned souls or prisoners, and that her literary background colours her perception: while weaker candidates were confused by the reference to the Industrial Revolution, the more able often picked up the allusion to Blake's 'Jerusalem'. Perhaps after the Olympic opening ceremony, more will understand the
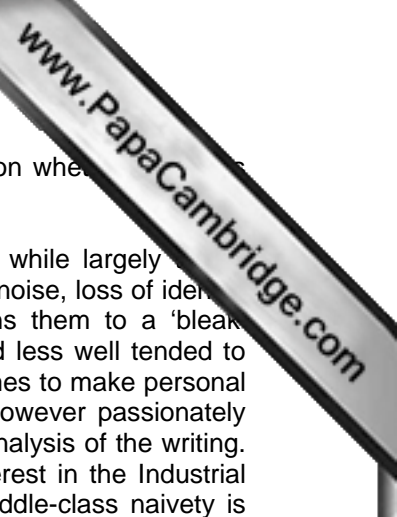
central conceit of industrialisation as a loss of innocence, although they might question whe...
really correct to apply this to modern employment.

However, the majority of candidates wrote well about the language of the passage while largely...
Robyn's views at face value, understanding the ways in which recurring images of dirt, noise, loss of iden...
and chaotic mess suggest ways in which work dehumanises people and condemns them to a 'blea...
existence. Many noticed that 'few smiled' as Robyn went past them. Those who did less well tended to
paraphrase, or lose focus on the ways in which Robyn's feelings are revealed, sometimes to make personal
responses to industrialisation or the role of women in the workplace. Such ideas, however passionately
argued, are hard to reward in what must remain a literary response, grounded in the analysis of the writing.
The best answers saw the irony of a lecturer in English Literature with a special interest in the Industrial
Novel who is 'lost for words' after her first factory visit, and appreciated how her middle-class naivety is
exposed in expecting a Mozart soundtrack to a vision of the factory workshop derived from television
advertising. While many saw Robyn's vulnerability and the ways in which she is shocked (her emotions as
'battered' as the door to the foundry), surrounded by imagery of plunging into a demonic and nightmarish
underworld, a few realised that, that far from being realistic, this language might be deliberately overblown,
and thus her ill-informed prejudices are also exposed.