

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/11

Paper 11

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. This was especially true of responses to Miller in the Drama section and Fitzgerald in the prose section.

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.

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 if it 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.' often seemed

rather stretched, especially if not then supported with more analysis, and tended to get away from the idea of drama as drama.

The empathic questions were significantly less popular; in fact, there was a sense that Centres were 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

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

This text was a popular choice – and this was the most popular question on it. Candidates were able to relate the question to the American Dream, citing a great deal of evidence from the text. Stronger responses showed a very clear understanding of Willy's state of mind and the techniques he uses to delude himself, and they used Charley and Linda as a counterbalance to Ben's misleading model for Willy. Weaker responses were less clear about what Willy wants and what he thinks he has, but almost all candidates were able to bring their knowledge of the play as a whole to bear, and they also addressed stage directions. A few were able to address the key words 'dramatically reveal' convincingly, but many took refuge in general platitudes about the American Dream, without textual support and therefore lost focus on the task. Much was made of dashes and exclamation marks, but very often in isolation from how they might actually affect the words the characters speak. The best answers made some response to staging, for example the effectiveness and symbolism of the music, the tension of the umbrella poised over Biff's eye.

Question 2

This was almost as popular as the previous question (though a few tried to answer it just on the basis of the extract in Question 1). Candidates overwhelmingly had sympathy for Biff; as the only one in the family who faces up to reality. Impressive knowledge of his story was shown, from his childhood football, to Boston and then Willy's death, and detailed textual evidence was offered in support of arguments, including his enjoyment of the outdoors, his maths troubles, and his loyalty to Linda. His thefts were perhaps understressed, although the reasons for them were well understood. Willy's attempts at fatherhood were considered exceptionally well in better answers, leading to much sympathy for Biff especially since he ultimately confronts Willy. Weaker answers found it difficult to rise above character sketches or simply alluded to parts of the text and asserted 'This makes Biff sympathetic'. Some also got into unprofitable extended comparisons with Happy.

Question 3

By contrast, there were relatively few answers to this question but some were very well done, chosen by very able candidates, who wrote knowledgeably of Bernard's efforts to be a friend, his childhood, and the differences between himself and Biff now. There was effective use made of the mystery surrounding what happened in Boston. Candidates were able to capture a sense of Bernard's concern well, though there was a tendency in less successful answers to paint him as a conceited and rather severe figure in terms of his attitude towards Willy – out of keeping with the humble, modest character we learn of in the play.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 4

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 5

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 6

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 7

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 answers contained long vague paragraphs on pitch of voice or an actor's expression, which did not add a lot to the response.

Question 8

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 9

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.

Journey's End

Question 10

More successful answers gave very close readings of the passage. Understanding of both characters was often excellent, though Trotter was harder to qualify than Osborne and some candidates misunderstood his use of humour. Close attention was given to stage directions, 'Alice', Osborne's short sentences, and the reasons for them. The relationship between the two men was also explored sensitively, for example differences of class as shown through language and attitudes, and the bonding that went on in the trenches, which included the care taken over Raleigh and Mason. The way both men coped with the news of the raid, and their distractions, was well understood – this is a subtle point in the text and candidates did very well to tease it out. In weaker responses there was a lack of awareness of the context and a need to engage with details from the passage yet further.

Question 11

This was a popular choice and it was generally well answered. Some candidates could have drawn from a wider range of evidence, however. Since Osborne is such an obviously admirable character, candidates were able to engage readily with the question and this lifted responses above character sketches. As a stripling in his mid-40s, he was ubiquitously regarded as being very old. Weaker responses listed his avuncular qualities, usually in relation to his 'looking out for' Stanhope. There were many high-level responses which looked in depth at Osborne's own well-hidden feelings, tracing them through his language until his death. The best left the ending of their essays to Stanhope's comments after Osborne's death. Weaker candidates, ironically, sometimes used the extract set for Question 10 as their main evidence for assertions about Osborne. In a way he suffered the same fate as Brutus, because he was so self-evidently an admirable character that candidates struggled to do more than merely reiterate this with examples, although some did manage a more nuanced account of what we might admire about him in his particular circumstances.

Question 12

Very few candidates opted for this question. Those who did were quite limited in what they wrote, though there was acknowledgement of Stanhope's fastidiousness and concerns over Hardy.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Question 13

There was a significant increase in the number of Centres choosing this text this session. Answers were about equally divided between all three questions on it. All candidates understood Ulysses' desire for travel, and state of mind, although they were not strong on what that meant. All the major images in the poem were quoted, for example the star and arch, with little understanding of what was beyond, or what the images were offering. The commentary was therefore often a little repetitive, focused on the travel. The context of the poem seldom seemed to be known, possibly indicating that some candidates chose this question 'unseen'. There was some misreading, especially the line 'I am become a name', and often an over-emphasis on arrogance and vanity. There was much vehemence regarding the ageism of the 'aged wife'.

Question 14

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 15

Some of the commentaries were almost as vivid as the original. All candidates captured the use of gold, sun, black curls, and fire images. Not all 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. Weaker answers tended to concentrate on the vivid description of Lancelot.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 16

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 in general there was not much engagement with the shape and sound of the poem. Language points centred round alliteration, line-length and repetition, sometimes a little mechanically, at the expense of meaning and focus on the word 'powerfully'.

Question 17

Lament was popular. The poem seemed to have a contemporary resonance and to strike a chord with most candidates. Many felt strongly about the destruction in the poem, and the best answers analysed the 'ashes 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 18

Though comparison was not required, some candidates compared the two poems effectively, and produced some lively answers. Some, as with the Clare poem in Question 17, 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.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question 19

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 20

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 exactly 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 21

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

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 22

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 23

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 24

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 25

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 26

Daisy is clearly a character who engaged a lot of candidates imaginatively, and divided opinion. Candidates 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 her 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 27

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 28

Good answers worked well with the extract, picking out appropriate words and imagery on which to 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 29

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 30

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 31

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 32

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, however, focused on 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 33

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 34

There was some insight shown into the personality of the narrator and her relationship with her husband and even the weakest answers conveyed a complex relationship with 'undercurrents'. There was widespread 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 35

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 36

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 IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12

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Key messages

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- detailed support by way of well chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

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Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

This text was a popular choice – and this was the most popular of the three questions on it. Responses ranged from the explanatory and superficial to those with very good focus and understanding. Some of the weaker responses gave a line-by-line commentary on Biff and Linda's conversation, showing her love for Willy and confusion at the deterioration of Willy and Biff's relationship. The higher band responses explored Biff's dilemma, understanding how later revelations made sense of his anger about Willy's treatment of Linda, but some candidates mistakenly thought that the audience knows about the Boston incident at this particular point. Some candidates gave the impression that they did not know this text and were using the passage as an unseen: there was much quoting and paraphrasing with no evidence of background knowledge/understanding. Some grasped the ideas of 'moving' and 'sad' and attempted to select the evidence which showed these aspects. The very best were able to show how Biff has lost belief in Willy and how this signals the loss of his ambitions and hopes for the future.

Question 2

This was not a popular question, but those who chose it understood what was required and brought forward all their ideas about the American Dream. They generally selected 'moments' judiciously, the most popular choice being Willy's interview with Howard.

Question 3

Biff's anger, disappointment and disillusionment were well appreciated and this moment, being perhaps the most memorable in the play, was well known. Answers were differentiated by the amount of detail that they included; higher scoring answers went beyond a mere outpouring of emotion to cite the reasons for Biff's turning up in Boston, to reflect on details of his relationship with Willy, and to look to what the future holds, but a significant number of candidates offered much too detailed a plan of action for Biff at this juncture - 'I'm going to give everything up and go west to work on a farm'. The quality of the voice was also a key differentiator. The words 'phony' and 'fake' were much used but the voice had to be consistent in order to score highly.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 4

This question was a very popular choice and elicited a range of responses across the range. There were some engaged answers, although some candidates did just list the jokes. They seemed to find it more difficult to write about how the scene was 'serious' at the same time. Most candidates recognised the nature of the humour, but only higher band responses were able to analyse how the language in the extract worked to create this humour. They generally saw the significance and the seriousness of the scene in the context of the accusation against Hero. The best answers showed an awareness of the effect of Shakespeare's placement of the scene immediately following the intensity of the scene in which Beatrice demands that Benedick should kill Claudio.

Question 5

Candidates needed to produce more than a mere character study here, and reward was given to answers that demonstrated a clear personal response and an attempt to evaluate Don John's behaviour. In general candidates found him intriguing because of his villainy, but often limited their answers to an account of his actions with some attempt to explain his motives.

Question 6

A clear sense of enjoyment was communicated by many answers to this question and there were some impressive assumptions of the character of Beatrice, the best making a good attempt at conveying her wit and integrating echoes of the text very effectively. Generally candidates conveyed convincing banter and feistiness. Her confusion about Benedick's behaviour and reference to their 'merry war of words' was usually understood well, and higher band responses interwove textual detail about this and her views of marriage and indicated her feelings for Benedick. A few candidates were confused as to the timing of this moment and were unclear whether this was between the 'tricks' or after them both; some wrote as if Beatrice had already overheard Ursula and Hero talking and moved ahead to when Benedick has declared his feelings.

Julius Caesar

Question 7

This was a popular question. Commentary on the extract tended to focus on Antony's desire for revenge and often adopted a line-by-line approach, with little exploration of the power of the language. Some gave an unnecessary introduction before getting on to focus on the passage itself. Some candidates – but not many – thought Antony was speaking to the masses. Some better answers moved beyond the soliloquy to consider the servant's reaction to the sight of Caesar's body and Antony's final speech. The best answers made close critical examination of the language and showed awareness of Shakespeare's stagecraft in using the servant. Only a small proportion referred to the language in any detail, however, and 'How' was sometimes forgotten. Many candidates, although they chose the passage-based question, hardly quoted at all.

Question 8

The essay on Brutus was generally done very well with some really compelling answers, which were rooted in the text and cited a range of reasons why audiences might sympathise with Brutus. Less successful answers tended to focus on what Brutus does and why, with little sense of the way Shakespeare presents him and hardly a single quotation.

Question 9

Most responses were excellent, although a few offered a 'narrative' rather than 'thoughts' and some gave Caesar all sorts of doubts which were not really in character. Answers usually included some detail but tended to be repetitive about the omens. In the best answers, thorough knowledge of text was used well to support the response and the 'voice' was suitably arrogant, self-obsessed and yet fearful because of Calphurnia's dream.

Journey's End

Question 10

While less popular than the Shakespeare choices in this section, this text had been similarly appreciated and enjoyed by those who had studied it. There were a number of responses to this question, though 'gripping' was sometimes forgotten, candidates being more concerned with the military hierarchy. The stage directions were generally well appreciated.

Question 11

Hibbert got a surprising amount of sympathy from candidates – perhaps seeing the 'human' side to him, not attractive, but realistic. Candidates seemed to think his cowardice was endearing because at least he was honest – he was plain scared, like most people would be in his situation. Not many analysed the Stanhope/Hibbert confrontation fully, particularly the former's more sympathetic stance after his threat to shoot. Hibbert's less attractive qualities were usually ignored.

Question 12

Osborne was well represented with a lot of detail and a convincing voice conveying his generous spirit.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Questions 13, 14, and 15

In the responses to Tennyson, Questions 13 and 15 were more evident, with very few on 14. The language engaged the candidates in both poems, with a range of interpretations of the imagery. Some focused heavily on the sexual implications of the poplar tree as a metaphor for Marianna's frustration. References to the personal context of Tennyson's poetry was often interwoven, reflecting candidates' knowledge of his experiences and relationships, and this was generally used well to develop their response to his language. The best answers were fully engaged with close attention to language and structure; less impressive answers imposed extraneous ideas on the extract without evidence. "How" was sometimes overlooked. The weakest answers used very little detail from the poems and showed a lack of familiarity with them.

Songs of Ourselves

Questions 16, 17 and 18

Songs of Ourselves was the more popular choice for the poetry section, with Questions 16 and 18 being chosen more than 17. There were fewer explanatory/paraphrase essays and almost everyone at least attempted to make some comment on language, however simple. Candidates appeared to enjoy responding to the feelings expressed in the poems for Questions 16 and 18, often exploring the language and particularly the imagery in a thoughtful and sometimes perceptive way. The sonnets and 'Marrysong' were perfectly well understood but for the former (especially *Sonnet 43*) there was sometimes a lot of abstract generalising over love and reading into the poem facets of love that the candidate obviously thought ought to be there. The focus was on meaning and there was insufficient close examination of the words and images and their effects. Not that there were not some very sensitive essays. Answers on *Marrysong* seemed altogether fresher responses. The few who chose Question 17 on the Hughes and Arnold struggled to find any 'mystery' in the night and were reduced to writing a general commentary on the poems so restricting the mark that it was possible to award. A number of candidates strayed away from the question in focusing exclusively on Arnold's attitude to religion and there was some confusion in the interpretation of the Hughes poem. In the case of the Hughes, biographical detail often obscured the effect of the poem.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question 19

Whilst candidates showed good understanding of Heathcliff and his feelings at this point and recognised the significance of the passage in relation to end of the novel, there were few who explored Brontë's writing and its dramatic effects. Many candidates wrote a lengthy preamble, and some gave no more than a cursory glance at the passage itself, choosing to write about what followed instead.

Question 20

There were some sound answers on Joseph, although some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about how he was unsympathetic to other characters rather than how he was portrayed in an unsympathetic way by Brontë. There were some baffled responses to his dialect, seeming to regard it as a ruse he employed to obscure what he was saying.

Question 21

Heathcliff's desire for revenge and his determination to use Linton were well expressed in the empathy task and the best responses effectively interwove his feelings for Catherine alongside his past treatment at the hands of Edgar and Hindley. Most reflected on his lack of real feeling for Linton and simple desire to use him as a pawn. A few candidates gave a level of detail about his future plans which seemed rather unconvincing at this stage in the novel but all seemed to relish writing in role and there was some effective building in of detail. Excellent textual references were interwoven in the best of them.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 22, 23 and 24

Candidates conveyed a lot of enthusiasm for the extract in Question 22, showing engagement with Desai's language and appreciating the contrast between Kulfis here and elsewhere in the novel. There were far too few answers to the other questions for general comment to be appropriate.

The Great Gatsby

Question 25

Responses to *The Great Gatsby* were more evenly spread over the questions, with the extract being the most popular. Candidates tended to be sympathetic to Daisy, often missing the impact of seeing her from Nick's perspective in the final paragraph. Stronger candidates had plenty to work on and could comment on the ambivalent feelings encouraged by Fitzgerald; less confident ones took Daisy at face value, often misreading Nick's "I suppose she talks, and – eats, and everything" as being said by Daisy as evidence of her indifference to her child. Some candidates ignored the 'at this moment' part of the question and wrote about aspects of Daisy which were not evident from the passage.

Question 26

There was some staunch defence of Jay Gatsby, with sympathy and admiration for his faithful pursuit of Daisy; even when his bootlegging was acknowledged, it was defended by his love. Some candidates failed to mention how his death came about, but recognised his loyalty to Daisy in his acceptance of her guilt regarding the car accident. Reflections on the American Dream were sometimes intrusive but other candidates used this context effectively to justify the way they interpreted the presentation of Gatsby. This was another opportunity to explore ambivalence, and was grasped eagerly by the strongest candidates.

Question 27

In writing in role as Tom, most candidates showed his arrogance and his attitude to Daisy, with the best showing also his feelings for Myrtle and motives in leaving town as well as his attitude to Nick. The best answers displayed convincing awareness of Tom's arrogant carelessness, racism and misogyny. Some less successful answers included references to themes that had been taught, in a way that was inappropriate for the character. For example, candidates had Tom talking about 'The American Dream' and 'old money' in an effort to show how well they knew the book.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 28

The relatively few candidates who answered this tended to deal quite thoroughly with the passage and focused on Mma-Millipede's likeability especially her motherliness and her care and concern for her friends, like Paulina. Better answers explored the point that she was farsighted and keen on progress.

Question 29

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

Question 30

The character of Gilbert was quite well known as was the significance of his first meeting with Makhaya. Though the voice was often not particularly distinctive, the best answers often included some appropriate detail.

Ethan Frome

Question 31

This was the most popular of the three questions on this text and generally the focus on 'dramatic' was good, candidates citing the contrast between Ned and Ruth and Ethan and Mattie, the desperation of the latter pair at their imminent separation. Some made the point that there is almost a role reversal here in that Mattie is taking the initiative in suggesting the suicide pact. Good answers explored the language in some detail, showing the over-heated quality of their speech and behaviour, for example 'she whispered breathlessly', 'flung her arms about him', 'groping' for his lips. Appreciation of the situation was common but awareness of Wharton's hand in creating drama here less so.

Question 32

Strong antipathy to Ethan, who was perceived as weak was evident in some answers but most candidates displayed awareness of the whole book and weighed up responsibilities. The general conclusion seemed to be that Ethan was bad at making decisions and had too strong a moral sense and that circumstances weighed very heavily against him.

Question 33

This was not a popular task but those who attempted it showed a good understanding of the character and usually managed to convey something of Zeena's spitefulness and querulousness. Some were surprisingly sympathetic.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

Most candidates had a good knowledge of *There Will Come Soft Rains* and of this extract and there were some excellent responses to the question, although many answers effectively 'explained' the passage rather than focused on language and effect. In some cases the candidates tended to write more general comments and more focus on the language of the extract and on the word 'how' would have been beneficial. Weaker answers gave a line-by-line explanation of events and feelings, using the text as support, but the stronger ones engaged with some of the imagery and the personification. There was some sensitive appreciation of syntax, image, diction, pace etc. and the message of Bradbury's story was often effectively built into these higher level responses.

Question 35

Impressive knowledge of both stories was evident in the best answers and sympathetic responses to both victims. In both cases nearly all of the candidates focused very well on the aspect of suffering and could illustrate the points which they made with evidence from the respective texts. *The Lemon Orchard* did on balance produce the better answers but candidates using it tended to concentrate on the racism and the events of the story rather than the language. In the best answers there was a real focus on techniques used by La Guma and candidates were able to discuss the subtleties of the story as well as link it to the overall theme of racism and thus 'suffering' in a wider context. Weak answers displayed a lack of basic knowledge of the stories.

Question 36

Candidates generally had a good understanding of the character and situation and were able to capture Mother's voice quite well, displaying awareness of her sense of dignity and self-worth. Answers tended to be discriminated by the amount of detailed knowledge that they revealed since the voice is not a particularly distinctive one.

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.