LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

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

In less successful responses, candidates:

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

General comments

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

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

Textual knowledge

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

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

Focus on the question

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

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

Writers' effects

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

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

Personal response

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

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

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

Question 2

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

Question 3

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

Question 4

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

Question 5

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

Question 6

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

Section B

Question 7

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

Question 8

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

Question 9

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

Question 10

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

Question 11

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

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

Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

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

Question 16

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

Question 17

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

Question 18

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

Question 19

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

Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

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

Question 22

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

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13
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Key messages

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* Devote roughly equal time to both sections of the paper.
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* Use relevant textual references to substantiate their arguments.
* Analyse sensitively and in detail the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

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

General comments

There was much evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where candidates showed insight and individuality in their sustained explorations of poems. Candidates should recognise the need to manage time carefully across this 90-minute paper.

Some candidates began their answers with general introductions that did not address the question and ended their answers by repeating points already made within the main body of the answer. This is an unproductive use of candidates' time. There were a number of rubric infringements in this session and teachers are reminded to carefully explain these rules to candidates.

Textual knowledge

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

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

Focus on the question

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

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

Writers' effects

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

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

Personal response

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

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most responses demonstrated good understanding of this poem and commented on the contrasting emotions and perspectives of the little boy and the father. The strongest responses understood the immaturity of the child and his manipulative actions, and explored the dilemma of the father, explaining his moral choices and showing how this made the poem so powerful. These responses made full use of the language possibilities such as the fairy-tale imagery and the impact of the last line. Many of these responses were able to consider different interpretations about parenthood and punishment and convincingly evaluate their own personal response to the boy. Less successful answers identified effective quotes but did not comment on how these were used for effect. Some did not comment on the fairy-tale references and a few only addressed the boy's feelings and perspectives with no consideration of the father. A few less successful answers took this as an opportunity to write in detail about their views on corporal punishment, at the expense of developing text-based points.

Question 2

Responses to this question reflected candidates' enjoyment of the poem. Most answers showed understanding of the family's poverty. The most successful responses appreciated the change in perspective in how the child and the adult viewed the 'mean' mother who had been struggling to keep things together without burdening her children with the details. These explored the symbolism of the water, not so plentiful then, though cascading now to the 'sybarite' in the present day. Stronger answers also commented on the closing sentiments with the implication that 'plenty' could include family and fun, which could never be restored. Some less successful answers became distracted by poet's appreciation of her siblings or listed literary devices without putting them in context. Because many candidates clearly enjoyed their study of this poem, there was a tendency to offer stanza-by-stanza commentaries rather than select material that focused on the key words 'conveys the speaker's thoughts and feelings.'

Question 3

Although rarely attempted, there were a few successful responses which showed understanding of the central ideas that the speaker was casting off his previous life and attempting to begin a new life. These were able to examine the language with insightful analysis of the voice of the speaker and effectively explore the imagery of violence and murder. Less successful answers understood there was some association with murder or suicide and a few thought that an actual murder had taken place.

Question 4

Of the few who attempted this question, stronger answers looked at the vocabulary and the development of the paradoxes. Less successful answers did not always show understanding of the internal conflicts of the poet and struggled to respond to the language.

Question 5

Many candidates clearly enjoyed writing about this poem and nearly all considered the question, with a variety of responses and opinions – some sympathised with and some condemned the speaker. Some candidates took the view that the speaker was an outcast from society and was a victim of circumstance, meaning that the audience should feel sympathy automatically, without giving sufficient evidence to back up these views. Stronger answers merged the possible plight of the speaker with analysis of structure and language such as the symbolism of the snowman and ice. These explored the lack of moral compass of the speaker but recognised other issues as well in assessing their degree of sympathy. Weaker responses focused for too long on certain areas of the poem without a full exploration. Some were diverted by psychological diagnoses of the speaker's case (broken home and Mrs Thatcher) not given in the poem.

Question 6

Most candidates understood the problems with communication, the sense of alienation and the nostalgic remembrance of home. Many candidates made personal interpretations about this poem with varying degrees of supporting text. Stronger answers explored how the speaker invites others to 'imagine' the situation. More successful answers covered all areas of the poem whereas some of the less successful ones got stuck on repeating the same things such as the grim description of the living conditions or the barriers in communication.

Section B

Question 7

Candidates were generally focused on the question and showed knowledge and understanding of the text, especially of the central conflicts. They understood the differences between the two households, such as the relaxed atmosphere, the eating arrangements and approach to worship. Stronger answers linked this knowledge to the question and considered how Kambili and Jaja were surprised by these aspects. Some less successful answers ran out of things to say and tended to be narrative. Less successful answers did not comment on how Adichie used language to convey ideas.

Question 8

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

Candidates generally showed a clear understanding of this moment and were familiar with the novel although the death of Helen Burns seemed to elicit a wide range of responses. Some dealt with the moving scene presented in the novel. Some explored the long-lasting effects of Christianity and morality on Jane throughout the novel. Others accentuated the power of friendship and love which had been absent in Jane's life until then. Stronger responses evaluated how the moment was significant and moving, identifying points from the passage such Helen's selflessness, Jane's naïveté, their relationship, Helen's faith and death. These often commented on wider implications of the moment, explaining how Helen's death had a lasting impact on the development of Jane's character and her maturity. Stronger answers also noted writing features such as the setting, the religious quality of Helen's language and the dialogue. Less successful answers ignored the word, 'moving'. Some did not make as much use of the extract as they could have and wrote more generally about Jane and Helen.

Question 10

There were very few responses to this question. The better ones successfully chose two separate moments and were able to provide detailed examples, references and even quotations. One candidate had excellent recall of the scene with John, and explored in detail the characters and events, with conversations and

descriptions of emotions and appearance. Most responses lacked specific recall, did not select two specific moments or merely narrated the scenes they picked, without any real interpretation.

Question 11

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

Most candidates understood the conflict of Indian and American cultures and were able to make some meaningful comment about the implications of this and the dilemmas faced by the characters. They showed appreciation of the different generational expectations and compromises made by the adults. The best answers were able to clearly bring out the differences between the parents and their children and evaluated the extent to which the parents had adapted (or not) to American culture. Stronger answers were able to comment on writing features such as the references to cultural customs, rites and attitudes, tone, lists and brand name whereas less successful answers missed key inferences and did not comment on authorial choices.

Question 16

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 17

Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the novel and generally found relevant content in the passage to comment on Pi's thoughts and feelings. Stronger answers remained focused on the question and explored feelings such as his boredom, fears, night terror, increasing anxiety and his disorientation in the dark. These responses also commented effectively on aspects of the writing such as the descriptions of the light and dark, the sensual animal sounds and the symbolism of the buzzing flies. Some stronger candidates mentioned the moon and stars linking this to religion and faith and Pi's hope for survival. Less successful responses tracked through the passage with little evaluation or summarised what was happening. Some less successful answers were distracted by parts of the passage, such as the buzzing of the flies and spent too much time on this at the expense of addressing the question.

Question 18

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

Most answers revealed a clear and detailed understanding of the novel and its concerns and many focused on the disturbing nature of the aims of Newspeak, the passion of Syme and Winston's unease in the extract. Best answers appreciated the irony of Syme's eloquence in his description of the destruction of language. Close reading of the extract was well rewarded, vague readings less so, for example a misreading of 'pedant's passion' for 'pendant's passion' and commenting on jewellery. Less successful answers repeatedly made the same point about control or went off a tangent in describing the dangers of totalitarian states, frequently naming them and their rulers, past and present.

Question 20

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

There were only a few responses seen. Overall, they were general and defaulted to re-telling the story. Candidates commented on the characters and the morals but did not explore language or author's intent.

Question 22

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

| Paper 2010/22 |
| Drama |

Key messages

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

General comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

> The few candidates who answered this question could identify Ermina's dissatisfaction and used the text to relate to her desire to assimilate with her environment, her feelings about her parent(s) and her desire to establish her own identity unrestricted by her sister and family. Only the best candidates understood that the forbidden music, meeting boys and going to parties were her ways of rebelling. Feelings were often identified but how they were 'dramatically' conveyed proved more difficult and the terms of the question rarely addressed. Consequently, some answers were narrative-paraphrase, and worked through the passage explaining, rather than analysing, the text and how the writer conveyed Ermina's feelings.

Question 2

> This question was more popular than **Question 1**. A range of the family's struggles was understood including grief at Sandra's death, poverty, racism, Godfrey's over-reliance on Father Divine and the girls' struggles being forced to follow the latter's teachings. There were some successful comments on the word play of the title, with 'Crump' echoing 'Crumbs', suggesting that the family would continue to suffer in a society dominated by racism and only ever get crumbs from the white society in which they lived. There was also some detail to the girl's hatred of Gerte and the additional struggles the inter-racial marriage caused. However, very few explored the stresses and strains within the family. Weaker answers were narrative in approach with candidates struggling to recall specific textual material.

ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible*

Question 3

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

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

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

Question 4

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

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

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

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 5

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

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

Question 6

Too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 7

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

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

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

Question 8

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

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

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

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 9

(a) This was the most popular choice of text and question this series. There was a wide range of answers to this question from a simple awareness of the situation to a full appreciation of Iago's malevolence and his and Roderigo's shocking revelation to Brabantio. The most successful answers focused on Iago and explored the power of his 'shocking' language and its implications for character and plot development. Most understood the racist, animalistic imagery, Iago's hypocrisy, and his intentions. Many candidates, however, based much of the response on Brabantio's reaction rather than the audience, which was relevant, but arguably less rich in material. Better answers understood the context and circumstances of this scene, in the street, in the dark with Iago hiding from sight and Brabantio being alarmed by what he hears and how he hears it. These answers showed critical understanding of the dramatic impact of Iago's introduction of Othello as the audience has not met him or Desdemona yet, so this is our first impression of them. Only a few really appreciated how shocking it is for a father to be woken to hear such news of his cherished daughter.

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

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

Question 10

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

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

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

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 2010/23
Drama
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Key messages

- Successful responses included introductions which avoided lengthy plot summaries and discussions of historical context and remained focused on the key words of the question. They also avoided listing techniques to be addressed in the introduction.
- Short, direct quotations from the text were the best method of supporting points. These references should be analysed fully.
- In passage-based questions successful responses contextualised the passage and then explored it fully, considering the effects of language and structure. References should be selected from the whole passage, including the ending.
- Successful discursive responses maintained a tight focus on the question and used precise textual references.
- Less successful responses identified literary terms and punctuation without considering their intended effect on the audience.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

General comments

Overall, there was a sense of engagement with, and enjoyment of, the set texts and some excellent work was seen.

Successful responses showed clear knowledge of the set texts and were able to demonstrate critical understanding, showing insight into characterisation, stagecraft and language. They focused on key words in the question such as 'striking', 'shocking', 'dramatic' or 'entertaining'.

Outlining a brief plan, underlining key words in the question and annotating the passage at the start of the exam time can help to avoid mis-readings and to maintain focus on the question throughout the response.

A sustained awareness that the texts are written to be performed onstage and their impact on the audience was a feature of successful responses. Referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book' demonstrated this awareness. Some weaker responses summarised the plot and wrote detailed outlines of historical context with little or no focus on the question.

Briefly setting the passage in context at the start of the response is essential in helping to show understanding of the structure of the text. Often candidates wasted precious exam time writing lengthy introductions including such information as the religious background of Salem, military strategy in WW1 or lists of the writer's techniques. It is very useful to teach the historical context of the play but focus during the exam should be on key words in the question, what is happening in the passage and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience. Brief well-selected references should be analysed fully.

Exploration of the use of techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing was often successful. However, pointing out literary techniques with no exploration of their effects is unlikely to be rewarded. Similarly, referencing punctuation with no consideration of the effects in context is unhelpful in producing a successful response.

Several responses had a tendency to interject with personal stories related to the text but not relevant to the question, 'I had a similar situation where I told a lie to my friends.' Personal engagement with the text is important, but this type of lengthy anecdote distracted from the question and wasted valuable exam time.

Time management was generally good, with very few brief or unfinished responses.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

Too few responses to this question were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 2

Too few responses to this question were seen to make meaningful comment.

ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible*

Question 3

This question focused on a dramatic moment from the beginning of the play, allowing scope for discussion of the growing hysteria surrounding witchcraft and there was much to explore in the stage directions. The passage elicited the full range of responses.

The strongest responses showed good personal engagement with the passage and clearly understood the context, which meant that they were able to show more clearly their understanding of Parris's comments. They started by briefly contextualising the passage and worked methodically through the passage, analysing it in depth. They sustained a critical understanding of the attitudes towards witchcraft, characters' motivations, the conflict between Parris and the Putnams and the rising hysteria in Salem, all related to how the passage is shocking.

Many responses engaged with the shocking nature of the Putnams' eagerness to believe in witchcraft, in contrast to the strict religious society. Reference to stage directions and how they build tension in the scene was generally effective, such as comment on Mrs. Putnam's 'vicious certainty' that witchcraft is real.

Focus on Ann Putnam's desire to apportion blame for her babies' deaths and her excitement about the prospect of witchcraft with matter-of-fact reference to the Devil and of Tituba talking to the dead were features of stronger responses, as was discussion of Parris's prioritising concern for his own reputation over worry about his daughter.

Many less successful responses began by writing lengthy introductions about the society of Salem and/or McCarthyism in 1950s America. There was often no reference to the context (that Parris had caught the girls dancing the night before and had already sent for Hale) and so the extract was treated in isolation which often led to unsubstantiated claims. Many responses did not mention Parris's fear of being thrown out of Salem or the fact that he probably knows the reason for Betty's and Ruth's 'illness.' Some focused almost entirely on Ann Putnam or ignored sections of the extract.

Other less successful responses showed some misunderstanding of the degree of respect afforded to Parris by the community. There was also a lack of engagement with his concern for his own reputation above caring for his child and many responses confused Ruth and Betty. Weaker responses often made reference to stage directions but with little focus on 'shocking' and coverage of the passage was often limited.

Question 4

This question proved successful in engaging candidates effectively and resulted in many perceptive and insightful personal responses, with well-selected textual support.

Most responses presented a balanced view of Elizabeth-understanding that her 'coldness' is a result of her pain at her husband's betrayal but that she shows love for him when she lies in court. Many responses were well-developed and appreciated nuance of character, understanding that Elizabeth is not one-dimensional. They were able to successfully explore her development through the play. Many candidates' personal engagement was strong, and they expressed indignance at the way Elizabeth is treated by John and defended her staunchly.

The best responses looked closely at the text and provided relevant support. They focused on Elizabeth's admission that she must have been cold to have forced John to have an affair, but they also recognised her forgiving and understanding attitude at his death. Perceptive responses picked up on Elizabeth having to remind John about the Commandment of adultery and made careful reference to the stage directions.

Weaker responses misunderstood some quotations, for example about John finding his own justice and some wrote at length about whether John should have been forgiven. A small number of responses thought that Elizabeth is cold throughout the play. Many responses commented on Abigail's description of Elizabeth, which creates an impression of her even before we meet her, but few commented on why Abigail's description may be unreliable.

Surprisingly, many responses did not comment on how Elizabeth goes against her morals to lie in court in an attempt to protect her husband.

RC SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 5

This question focused on a truly 'dramatic' and 'revealing' moment of the play, with the subtleties only being clearly understood by the stronger responses. This passage highlighted that the attack was sending men to a certain death.

Many candidates contextualised the passage and some provided a little appropriate historical context. Stronger responses engaged with the dark humour and absurdity of the situation the soldiers are in.

Some responses commented on the restrained emotions of Stanhope and Sergeant-Major and the Sergeant-Major's diffidence in questioning Stanhope. Most responses commented on Stanhope's drinking and offering whisky to Sergeant-Major but saw this as a coping mechanism rather than an act of care.

In weaker responses many introductions were too long, outlining historical details of WW1. There was some misunderstanding that the orders were from Stanhope, rather than him responding to orders from above. There was some lack of engagement with Sergeant-Major's dawning realisation that the soldiers are doomed and with the subtleties of Stanhope's dilemma, his remarks and behaviour. Many responses repeatedly mentioned Stanhope's confidence, failing to engage with the fact that he understands the hopelessness of the situation, but is showing his leadership qualities by trying to bolster the Sergeant-Major's confidence.

Some candidates also missed the almost comedic portrayal of the Sergeant-Major, his repetition of the instructions, his brief answers, but his telling, simple question at the end and Stanhope's equally simple response 'We win the war.' The almost farcical nature of the scene was often not understood and these candidates missed the dark, satirical humour which highlighted the sadness and chaos of the planning in WW1.

Question 6

Candidates seemed to enjoy exploring the full range of opportunities this question made available. They showed empathy with the soldiers and the stresses they are under.

The best responses were quite wide-ranging with relevant textual support and there was some effective focus on the stress of waiting for action in war and of the uncertainty of the soldiers' lives.

Many stronger responses also looked at the stress of the imminent threat of death and of losing one's companions and they engaged with the additional stress put upon Stanhope by Raleigh's arrival in the trenches, causing a clash between his life at home and life at war.

Some responses picked up on the 'earwigs' being analogous to the soldiers but there was sometimes too much discussion of this.

Many responses focused on the soldiers' coping mechanisms rather than outlining particular stresses of life in the trenches, but there was effective discussion of Stanhope's reliance on alcohol, Hibbert's 'neuralgia' and the fact he would rather be shot by Stanhope than die in battle, and Trotter's attempt to gain a sense of control by filling in a circle each hour.

Personal engagement with the question was often strong, and responses expressed sympathy for the soldiers and the lack of value placed on their lives. The word 'heart breaking' was often used to express the tragedy.

The weaker responses did not move beyond the obvious aspects of stress or coping mechanisms, such as Stanhope's drinking. They also thought that it was common to all the soldiers and suggested that every soldier was an alcoholic. These responses made general comments about life in the trenches but lacked detailed textual support and development. Very few responses discussed the stress of the contrast of life in the trenches and memories of home.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 7

The most successful responses briefly contextualised the passage and engaged with Viola's feelings of confusion about the ring and her pity for Olivia, understanding the complications created by her disguise.

There was often a sense of personal connection with and empathy for Viola because we as the audience are aware of her true identity.

These responses showed understanding of Viola's gradual realisation that Olivia has fallen for Cesario, which was then followed by a clear response to her confusion about the implications of this, not only for herself but also for Olivia and Orsino. Only a few responses commented on the use of a long soliloquy to show Viola thinking through the implications of her situation. Many responses also made valid comments about the fickleness of love and the problems of love at first sight.

The idea of the plot being complex came through strongly, with many candidates quoting the last line of the passage.

Less successful responses did not contextualise the passage and did not identify Viola's speech as a soliloquy, believing that Malvolio is still on stage and that Viola is expressing her thoughts to him. Many candidates lost succinct engagement with the passage, drifting into paraphrase. These responses showed a lack of detailed commentary on language and seemed to struggle to engage with much of the language of Viola's soliloquy. Coverage of the passage often lacked thoroughness and there was some misunderstanding of the language. The theme of appearance and reality was often mentioned in passing, with no development or textual support. Few responses understood the subtlety of Viola's lie 'She took the ring of me' and there was often little focus on Malvolio's lines in the passage.

Question 8

This question allowed candidates to share their enthusiasm and enjoyment of the text, but sadly there was a shortage of strong responses to this question, with candidates struggling to identify two discrete moments or to pinpoint exactly why they were entertaining.

The best responses selected two clearly identifiable moments, described what happened and explained what made them entertaining, with reference to the action and clear focus on the language.

The majority of candidates chose to discuss the prank played on Malvolio as one of their 'moments', with some comment on Malvolio deserving a trick played on him due to his haughty manner. There was engagement with the character and some textual support.

Another popular 'moment' was the 'fight' between Sir Andrew and Cesario. The slapstick nature of the scene was enjoyed but there was often a lack of textual support.

Some candidates made effective responses to Orsino's introduction, with textual support often limited to the 'If music be the food of love' quotation.

Many responses chose to discuss the humour of Sebastian fighting back when he is mistaken for Cesario by Sir Andrew, and Olivia stopping the fight

Weaker responses used little to no textual support from the chosen moments and tended to generalise when discussing the entertaining elements, leading to much paraphrase and narrative. The 'moments' themselves often stretched to whole scenes or across the whole play and there was a lack of sharp focus on specific events or language. Very few of these responses were well-developed and for many, understanding remained at a surface level. The moment of Malvolio being tricked was often chosen as a moment but rarely supported with textual detail and many responses mentioned the theme of appearance vs reality but lacked support and development of this area.

Some weaker responses used the passage from **Question 4a** to answer this question, despite the instruction on the question paper to avoid doing this.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 9

Successful responses identified the context and engaged with the intensity of Emilia's shock and anger at Desdemona's death and her challenge to Othello which reveals Iago's plot. They understood Desdemona's love for Othello and the loyalty shown in her attempt to protect him by denying that he killed her.

These responses engaged with the language of the characters; they recognised the juxtaposition of good and evil and the references to the racial overtones. There was focus on and understanding of the imagery of heaven and hell, with much comment on the 'angel/devil' contrast describing Desdemona and Othello. The strongest responses recognised the significance of Emilia's repeated 'My husband' in that it shows a growing realisation of her husband's plotting.

Most responses commented on Othello's use of 'whore' in contrast to Desdemona's innocence.

In weaker responses some candidates surprisingly seemed to have considered Desdemona's death too obvious to address and discussion of this was limited. Candidates often drifted from the task and passage and explored context in too much detail. Hence there was a great deal of irrelevant and general comment about men and women's roles in Elizabethan society. Analysis of the language of the passage was often lacking, e.g. black and white imagery. They made little or no reference to Desdemona's dialogue in the passage. There was some confusion between 'tense' and 'intense' in the question wording and many responses incorrectly interpreted the word 'Moor' as a racist term. Some responses dealt only with the first half of the extract and again, there was too much general, undeveloped comment on the theme of appearance vs reality.

Question 10

The most successful responses were able to focus on Desdemona's honesty and innocence and to express a sense of personal indignance as well as sympathy at how she becomes a victim of Iago's scheming. They explored the language of Heaven used to describe her qualities and understood her naivety and the lack of communication in her relationship with Othello, the more astute recognising the unwitting part played by Emilia in the handkerchief episode.

Stronger responses also expressed frustration that Desdemona does not defend herself against Othello's accusations and disbelief that she can be so selfless in her love.

Weaker responses struggled to engage with this question, tending to discuss Iago's plot and his manipulation of Othello rather than focussing in detail on Desdemona. These responses showed little engagement with the true horror of Desdemona's death, or even overlooked her death altogether, maybe thinking it too obvious to comment on. They also lacked engagement with the extent of her love for Othello or her innocence. These less successful responses struggled to recall specific textual material. Many responses digressed and wrote at length about the role of women in Venetian society but with little focus on the question.

Other weaker responses did not go beyond the obvious about how Desdemona is a victim of Iago's scheming. A small number of candidates used the extract from **Question 5a** as a way of showing sympathy, thereby not focusing on the complete text and limiting the scope of the response.