

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

General comments

Examiners saw many lively and intelligent responses to texts and questions this session. Good learning was often blended with thoughtful individual interpretation to produce insightful essays. It was clear that many candidates were writing with enjoyment and enthusiasm. In an improvement from some previous sessions, there was less evidence of undirected context in answers. Where candidates did refer to context, particularly with Achebe and Wordsworth, the knowledge was usually used appropriately to illuminate the answer. It should go without saying that candidates should always take careful note of the question set. There were still some answers, though, where it was difficult to recognise which question was being attempted without the question number at the beginning of the essay. In most cases this was because the candidate began with one, or indeed several, general paragraphs of background which were not pertinent to the particular question. No marks are awarded to such paragraphs. While there were examples of detailed analyses of set poems in (b) responses, many of the prose answers lacked a close examination of the language, imagery or structure of the writing and instead gave accounts of the content of the set passage. Such answers never score highly; all (b) questions demand a close reading and analysis of the writing of the selected passage.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were very few answers on Sujata Bhatt's poetry and most answering on this text chose this question. Unfortunately many of these answers were narrative in style and showed limited understanding of the poem's references to political events in India, or the personal connection between the narrator and people in India. Some recognised that in apparently avoiding the subject of massacres in a determination to think and write about other things ('I'll write/ poems about everything else'), the poem cannot in fact avoid the subject of violence ('Now instead of completing this poem/ I'm thinking of Amrit.')

Question 2. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) The topic of personal doubt and anguish allowed candidates quite a free rein in interpretation and subjects ranged from writer's block, the loss of love, death, war and illness among others. The extracts from 'Long Distance' and 'Modern Love' proved fruitful, as did 'The Woodspurge', 'The Man with Night Sweats', 'The Cockroach', 'Away Melancholy' and 'Continuum'. The most successful answers explored language, tone, imagery and their effects, rather than restricting themselves to a discussion of content. Such discussion demands detailed knowledge of the chosen poems and the ability to support the answer with quotation. Weaker answers relied on summary of the content of the poems and thus were unable to develop comments on the poets' treatment of the subject matter.
- (b) 'Morse' was a very popular option and was clearly relished by many candidates who appreciated its narrative, humour and auditory effects. Successful answers demonstrated how the structure creates the setting then develops the story; comments on the 'James Bond-style' opening of 'Tuckett. Bill Tuckett' were frequent. The answers went on to note the preponderance of hard-consonant rhymes and the references to dots and dashes to recreate the aural effect of the Morse code keys which are central to the narrative. Many candidates here were able to discuss poetic techniques and their effects with real confidence. A few answers went further to examine the use Murray makes of puns in his description of the operation and some perceptive answers noted the conflicting moods of the final stanza – celebration of the successful operation tinged with regret at

the passing of Morse code. There were also answers where the candidates showed themselves uncertain of the setting or events and relied on uncertain summary, which suggested that they were approaching the poem as an unseen text rather than as one they had previously studied.

Question 3. William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Since Wordsworth's 'spots of time' are such a central issue, this question was often disappointingly answered. It was apparent that many candidates lacked the detailed textual knowledge needed to produce a high-level answer. There were comparatively few who were able to identify particular moments recalled in the poems and who were able to quote to support their points. Those who were confident with such knowledge wrote well and purposefully, using particularly such poems as 'Tintern Abbey' and 'The Prelude'. Other candidates relied on general knowledge and a simpler understanding of the concept of key moments recollected in tranquillity, but this in some cases did help some candidates to produce a competent answer. There was, however, quite a large number of generalised and unspecific answers.
- (b) 'To the Cuckoo' was by far the more popular choice on Wordsworth. Here a little contextual information might have served candidates well, as several wrote about 'the magnificent song' of the 'beautiful' cuckoo, when the plain brown bird is, in fact, onomatopoeically named after its only call. Successful candidates used knowledge of Wordsworth and pantheism to inform their view of the poem, with a perceptive analysis of content, diction and tone. Some answers showed an appreciation of the subtle shift from the obvious joy of the opening stanzas to the more nostalgic, reflective mood of the later ones, while several expressed well the sense of mystery conveyed by the invisibility of the bird and the spiritual significance of its call.

Question 4. Achebe: *Anthills of the Savannah*

- (a) This was a popular question and candidates showed solid knowledge of the major relationships in the novel, with those between Sam, Chris and Ikem the most often discussed, alongside Beatrice. Stronger answers considered not only these examples of disintegrating relationships, but also those relationships which are actually strengthened by political events, such as that between Beatrice and Elewa, and Chris and his fellow travellers to Abazon. Some considered the hopeful ending of the novel carefully, suggesting that Elewa and Beatrice are presented as a sign that politics can bring people together for the common good. While weaker answers were limited to a listing of the relationships in a narrative fashion, they usually showed some knowledge of the novel.
- (b) There were some strong responses to this question. Some candidates compared Beatrice favourably with Sam, considering her modesty, frankness, lack of ambition, and desire to help, while looking at her role as one of the novel's narrators. However, many candidates wrote with confidence about Beatrice without paying sufficient regard to the question, which asked for close comment on the passage. Such candidates demonstrated good textual knowledge and knew much about the character of Beatrice, but their answers became general essays on character rather than an analytical consideration of the language and tone of the passage itself. They missed opportunities to examine the way Beatrice narrates here and ways her character is revealed by the modes of her narration.

Question 5. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Candidates recognised that Helen Burns is a minor, but important character who influences Jane Eyre at Lowood. They were able to show that she is a friend, a guide and a role-model to Jane. More successful candidates went beyond this, considering the role of books, education and religious faith and the influence Helen continues to have on Jane beyond the Lowood part of the novel. Some candidates considered different kinds of religion portrayed in the novel through Helen Burns, Mr Brocklehurst and St John Rivers, with Helen representing true Christianity and teaching Jane valuable lessons which she would apply later in the novel, for example when forgiving Rochester his deceit. These answers which considered Helen's role in the structure of the novel, rather than just her character, were markedly more successful.
- (b) This was a popular and fruitful question. While less confident candidates relied on narrative paraphrase with some comment on the characters, some looked very carefully at the writing, its dark gothic setting and ways it reveals the two characters. Some candidates detected the subtle shifts in attitude between the two characters apparent in the description and the dialogue, and the hints of a future relationship. Some pointed out the irony of Rochester's rejection of Jane's

assistance in contrast to his total dependence on her at the end of the novel. This was a question where most candidates answered the question about the reader's first impression very clearly, often comparing it with later impressions gained by the reader as the novel develops.

Question 6. Katherine Mansfield: *The Garden Party and Other Stories*

- (a) A very popular question, this gave candidates clear opportunities to marshal their knowledge of stories and characters. *The Woman at the Store*, *Frau Brechenmacher* and *The Little Governess* were the most frequently cited stories, but *A Married Man's Story* and *Her First Ball* also featured frequently. From this range of stories it is clear that candidates interpreted the oppression of women in a variety of ways and some good answers made comparisons between these different forms of oppression. While many candidates subscribed to Millie's 'Men is all beasts' view, more alert answers showed an awareness that Mansfield often suggests that women bring oppression upon themselves by naïvety or acquiescence.
- (b) Many candidates wrote successfully on the interior monologue of this passage, picking up on the details of language and structure to support an exploration of the narrator's character as well as focusing successfully on the question. Some candidates successfully ranged beyond the passage, showing knowledge of both the story and the short stories as a whole, exploring how this is, in many ways, an uncharacteristic passage in Mansfield's work. Often candidates picked up subtle details in the writing which indicate the husband's separation from his family, and the dream sequence was particularly fruitful.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
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General comments

Examiners saw many lively and intelligent responses to texts and questions this session. Good learning was often blended with thoughtful individual interpretation to produce insightful essays. It was clear that many candidates were writing with enjoyment and enthusiasm. In an improvement from some previous sessions, there was less evidence of undirected context in answers. Where candidates did refer to context, particularly with Achebe and Wordsworth, the knowledge was usually used appropriately to illuminate the answer. It should go without saying that candidates should always take careful note of the question set. There were still some answers, though, where it was difficult to recognise which question was being attempted without the question number at the beginning of the essay. In most cases this was because the candidate began with one, or indeed several, general paragraphs of background which were not pertinent to the particular question. No marks are awarded to such paragraphs. While there were examples of detailed analyses of set poems in (b) responses, many of the prose answers lacked a close examination of the language, imagery or structure of the writing and instead gave accounts of the content of the set passage. Such answers never score highly; all (b) questions demand a close reading and analysis of the writing of the selected passage.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) There were very few answers, but those candidates who attempted this question chose to discuss appropriate poems from different perspectives, such as 'Angels' Wings', 'The Stare' and 'Genealogy'. The most successful candidates showed the ability to create a fluent argument about spontaneity, the innocence and naivety of children and Bhatt's interest in language.
- (b) Candidates found the meaning of 'Swami Anand' accessible and were able to comment on the mentoring role that the Swami plays. However, those answers which did not develop beyond narrative commentary, explaining what happens in the poem, did not score highly. Better answers were able to contrast the inexperience of the poet and the patience of the Swami, who takes the poet 'from the kitchen' and advises her to 'continue' writing. Many answers would have been improved by specific comment on style, language and imagery.

Question 2. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Answers to this question made reference to a wide range of poems, including 'The Cockroach', 'The Bay', 'The City Planners', 'The Woodspurge', 'Summer Farm', 'Pied Beauty' and 'Hunting Snake' among others. The most successful answers clearly looked at 'the different ways' indicated in the question and organised their material as a comparison of the chosen poems. Success also often depended on how well candidates knew the poems, and whether they could quote confidently from their chosen material. There were some extended, very detailed discussions which gained high marks.
- (b) This was a very popular question. Strong candidates were able to make intelligent observations about the physical manifestations of writers' block and to make suggestions as to the interpretation of the more difficult imagery such as 'the child who died', 'his will to die' and 'my child exploding into dynamite'. Such candidates also made thoughtful comments on the use of caesura, exclamation and ellipsis, particularly the discontinuities suggestive of fragmented thoughts. There were some confident observations about the two sonnet structure, noting the frustrated, almost suicidally despairing tone of the first stanza and the contrasting lifting of the mood, inspired by the appearance of the poet's wife, in the second. There was also a large number of candidates who

confused this poem with Gunn's 'The Man With Night Sweats' and wrote extensively about the sufferings of AIDS victims.

Question 3. William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) While many candidates only seemed prepared to write about nature, some were able to adapt their ideas and focus on Wordsworth's celebration of the natural world. There was variety, however, with some candidates writing about celebration of childhood, simple life and honest labour. Poems cited included 'The Prelude', 'Resolution and Independence' 'Upon Westminster Bridge', 'To a Sky-Lark' and 'The Solitary Reaper'. Contextual knowledge of Wordsworth's background and philosophy was often, though not always, well used, and the best answers considered how the tone of celebration is communicated in language, imagery and form.
- (b) This question was answered quite confidently on the whole, with contextual knowledge about the 'Dear Child' often used sparingly and appropriately. Candidates wrote well on the central ideas of the divinity of nature and 'the mighty Being'. Perceptive candidates argued that elements of the poem are both characteristic and uncharacteristic of Wordsworth's wider work and make deft references to other poems to support their points, while closely teasing out an analysis of the selected poem. Less confident answers summarised the poem and added paragraphs on pantheism or nature.

Question 4. Achebe: *Anthills of the Savannah*

- (a) This novel continues to be very popular and is written about with interest and detailed knowledge. While some answers drifted into narrative or character summary, most candidates demonstrated good understanding of, for example, Elewa and Emmanuel as representations of key elements in the novel – the former standing for the uneducated woman (in contrast to Beatrice) and the latter communicating Ikem's beliefs and representing hope for the next generation. Elewa was a particularly popular choice of character, as candidates looked at her significance as a foil to Beatrice. It was refreshing to see the candidates who engaged confidently with the word 'significance' in the question, rather than simply describing what the minor characters do in the novel. It was generally the case that answers on two characters were more sustained and better structured than those on three.
- (b) There were numerous answers to this question and candidates responded well to the political discussions and events described, though many candidates overlooked the requirement to comment closely on the writing of the passage. They therefore missed opportunities to discuss Beatrice's narrative style – detached, analytical, knowledgeable, observant and ironic. On the other hand, most candidates were aware of Beatrice's contempt and anger for the American and her dismay at Sam's deferential attitude. Confident candidates focused usefully on the contrast between Beatrice and the American girl and the latter's behaviour towards Sam. Some answers showed an engagement with Achebe's presentation of Beatrice's thought processes and stronger candidates picked up more subtle points such as the ulterior motives of the journalist and the false hilarity of Sam's sycophantic cabinet.

Question 5. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Many answers to this question were thoughtful and based on detailed knowledge of the text. Nearly all candidates found ways to challenge Rochester's assertion and thus gave themselves grounds for argument. The strongest answers often accepted 'sacrifice' but queried 'delight', illustrating how, for Jane, decisions often cause discomfort and pain. Various interpretations of the word 'sacrifice' were considered and some candidates noted Jane's refusals to sacrifice her independence and principles. Examiners were pleased to see some very sophisticated analysis of character and structure, with clear understanding of Brontë's writing. Less confident candidates struggled with characterisation and some relied on summary, listing all the relevant events in Jane's life. Such answers often had a more limited view of sacrifice, seeing it more in material terms and discussing Jane's financial situation at various points of the novel.
- (b) This passage offered candidates fruitful opportunities to explore detail and nuance in the writing and in general it was done very well, with good attention to language. Many used the passage and its context to demonstrate the sense of foreboding created by Brontë, which creates doubt and hesitation in the reader's mind as well as Jane's. Though both characters are ignorant of Rochester's marital state, the narrative provides a number of suggestions, from Mrs Fairfax's Bible

to Jane's cry of 'am I a monster?' Candidates who picked up on these, as well as Miss Fairfax's hesitations and Jane's clipped dialogue, were very successful. A number of candidates noted that this was one of the few moments in the novel where Brontë presents Jane and Rochester through an outsider's eyes, even though it remains within Jane's narration. There were, on the other hand, less successful answers which missed the details of the writing and relied on summary of both the passage and the rest of the story.

Question 6. Katherine Mansfield: *The Garden Party and Other Stories*

- (a) This seems to have been an unexpected question and a number of candidates found it very difficult to write about male characters, instead veering towards consideration of the women associated with men. Straightforward answers tended towards Millie's 'Men is all beasts' philosophy, illustrating it with reference to stories such as *Frau Brechenmacher* and *the Little Governess*. Those candidates who did challenge this easy assumption tended to be working at a higher level, and Examiners saw some interesting contrasts as well as comparisons between male characters. Candidates writing on Stanley in *Prelude* and *At the Bay* or Harry Young in *Bliss* generally picked up some more subtle points. The most successful responses were answers which examined the different styles of Mansfield's writing, noting the third person narration and interior monologue of *Frau Brechenmacher*, viewing the male externally, to the unreliable male first person narrative of *A Married Man's Story*.
- (b) The extract from *At the Bay* was generally tackled well, with candidates noting Beryl's loneliness and solace in her imagination. Thoughtful candidates carefully examined Mansfield's use of free indirect thought within which the imagined romantic dialogue and reported speech of Mrs Kember take place. There was also some particularly effective commentary on the contrast between Beryl's life by day and by night, and on Mansfield's description of the garden. Some of the strongest answers noted Mansfield's ambiguous treatment of Beryl – the naïve self indulgence of a young woman whose social life means she dashes in and out of her room fixing her make-up at the same time as realising that this is an empty life amongst 'ninnies'. Sophisticated candidates noted that Beryl's joy in ownership of things needs to be seen in the context of her dependence on Stanley Burnell and her resultant desire to meet her saviour. Surprisingly, very few candidates showed they were aware of the irony of Beryl's encounter with Harry Kember just after this extract.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

General Comments

As always, the vast majority of candidates had a sound (if not better) knowledge of their chosen texts, though, of course, not all of them used this knowledge to full effect. With weaker candidates there was the perennial problem of paraphrase and narrative commentary, often without clear focus on the precise demands of the question. Questions usually contain a 'trigger' word like 'presentation' or 'treatment' and this is the signal to candidates to move into thinking of these texts as literary creations. They ignore it at their peril. The best answers folded quotation and text reference seamlessly into developing argument, thus showing that candidates were able to organise thoughts coherently and build a case step by step. Candidates in the bottom bands often resorted to long preambles or conclusions that added little to the substance of their answers. The key here is to get on with the specifics of the question as soon as possible and then let the arguments presented stand for themselves, rather than summarizing at the end.

In (b) questions candidates are given the opportunity to look at passages in great detail, focusing on relationships or issues *as embodied in the extract given*. Too many candidates still see passages as an invitation to general discussion of the play as a whole, and this is ill-advised. A close reading, attending in particular to language, is what is required here.

A note on background information and context. A number of candidates present the Examiners with pre-learned background information about the author (date of birth, history of their works etc.). This sort of information, as opposed to contextualizing background which helps to argue literary points, is not rewarded, and Centres should discourage their candidates from approaching questions in this way.

In a few cases, candidates wrote out lengthy plans or, indeed, drafts of their essays, and this sometimes had the effect that they were not able to fulfil the promise of the plan or to complete a fair copy of their essays. The presence of a plan is not rewarded, so these should be as brief as possible, often acting simply as a way of candidates clearing their minds before starting to write or as a prompt to ensure that nothing is omitted. Many candidates start out with a general sense of direction rather than a specific structure that must be adhered to at all costs, and this often allows their answers to develop pleasingly as the thinking about the issue moves on as a consequence of the writing.

There were only a few examples of rubric errors, with candidates writing twice on the same text or writing on every text they had studied.

Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) The idea of victims also being victimizers was well dealt with by the candidates who tackled this question. They were able to see that Fugard is not merely talking about an oppressive system, but is also talking about human nature in adversity. Most candidates were able to cover a good range of plays, though at times this led to candidates not offering enough detail. Some candidates did not fully appreciate the implications of the word 'compound' in the quotation from Fugard and thus dealt with problems of apartheid rather than how those suffering make things worse for themselves and others.
- (b) Many answers here lacked sharp focus on the passage, but when this was achieved there was perceptive discussion of the relationship between Johnny and Queeny, based on their mutual desire for change, their shared dreams and excitement, and their longing to take a risk and become independent. A few candidates were alert to the ironic undertones here, linking the passage

appropriately to the final betrayal of Queeny. Some candidates simply wrote about the relationship between the two in the play as a whole.

Question 2

- (a) Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is always a popular text. Good answers here were able to engage with the idea that there is not really a relationship between Orsino and Olivia in the first place, more a series of attitudes, showing love to be variously sentimental, controlling, self-centred, precarious, unrealistic or one-sided. At the bottom end, candidates were often content to give an account of the relationship, often dwelling in particular on Orsino's obsession with ideas about love rather than about the thing itself. As always, the key word, the trigger, was the word 'presentation' in the question. A number of candidates, having exhausted their knowledge and understanding of Olivia and Orsino went on to broaden the topic to love in the play in general. This resulted in a loss of relevance and focus. Discussions of the 'love triangle' were only relevant when candidates used them to present contrasts between fake love and the real thing, though of course even here Olivia's instant falling in love with Sebastian makes the discussion more complex.
- (b) This question attracted fewer responses, and some of them were slightly simplistic in approach when dealing with the relationship between Antonio and Sebastian. More successful candidates were able to see how the scene is important for future development of the plot. At the top end, some candidates were able to see how this episode is significant because it creates an unresolved, dramatic tension in the rest of the play: it's one of the two issues (the fate of Malvolio perhaps being the other), where time fails to 'untangle' emotional complexity.

Question 3

- (a) Betrayal in *Julius Caesar* proved an interesting angle for many candidates, and most were able to find a wide variety of examples. Clear distinctions were variously made about betrayals in private relationships (Caesar/ Calphurnia, Brutus/ Portia), in public (Caesar) or in politics (Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Antony/Lepidus). Discussions about betrayal of oneself and one's values tended to be limited to candidates at the higher end of the mark range. The consequences of betrayal (guilt, suicide etc.) were often clearly noted. Good answers also showed a clear understanding of the dramatisation of betrayal through the play's power struggles, vision of political ambition and its presentation of personal greed. Few candidates really engaged with the detail of the central betrayal of the play, that of Caesar by Brutus; most felt he was simply tricked into it by Cassius. At the bottom end, there were a number of answers that did little more than narrate plot.
- (b) In general, candidates were able to characterise the unscrupulous image of Antony that emerges in this scene, particularly with his unsentimental approach to the death of his own nephew. Many candidates worked through the episode through paraphrase, and these answers tended to limit themselves at the mark scheme definition of 'solid.' To do better, candidates really needed to present a coherent view of Antony, attending closely to the language and tone of the passage, particularly in his lengthy, patronising discussion of Lepidus with Octavius. Some useful comparisons, were made with the presentation of Antony earlier in the play. Many candidates were able to see that Antony is partly responding to a difficult political situation, and that his unscrupulousness might be a necessary concomitant to his survival.

Question 4

- (a) Although only small numbers of candidates tackled the question about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as victims, most were able to see that Stoppard's characters are victims of Hamlet, Shakespeare, and indeed Stoppard himself. Candidates were clear about Stoppard's presentation of their meaningless existence and their lack of direction, and evidence of this was often suitably adduced through detailed analysis of specific moments in the play.
- (b) The passage from the play produced a variety of responses. At a basic level, candidates were aware that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are by-standers, unconsciously and ironically witnessing their own fate. Candidates were often also able to engage with some of the ideas presented here about reality and illusion, and about life as not being a play ('That isn't death....it doesn't bring death home to anyone'). Candidates responded well to the multi-layered techniques of the passage.

Question 5

- (a) Fruitful issues raised here often focused on how Rodolpho begins to undermine Eddie's world, threatening his relationships with both family and friends and also interrogating his cultural values and his hidden desires. Weaker candidates saw the question as an opportunity to develop character studies of either Eddie or Rodolpho, and these tended to show limited understanding of the deeper implications of the question. The best candidates often made much of the word 'threat,' and looked closely at moments when the two men confront each other. Virtually all candidates discussed views of masculinity.
- (b) Good answers here were able to show how the scene exposes some of the crucial relationships in the play whilst at the same time resolving some of the play's major themes through drama. Candidates who tracked through the passage chronologically were often able to see the build up of tension, conveyed both through speech, stage directions, body language and action. Some candidates became side-tracked (often through reference to Beatrice's opening cry) into a general examination of the relationship between Beatrice and Eddie. The ironic undertones and symbolic resolution of the very end of the extract were noted in more perceptive answers.

Question 6

- (a) Oddly, a few candidates were perplexed by the word 'manners' and did not have clear mental definition of what bad (or good, for that matter) manners might entail. For those who got the question, there was lots to talk about, particularly in relation to the various ways in which notionally good manners (Cecily's tea party) can be used to subversive effect or in the use of convenient lies (the cigarette case, for example). Oddly enough, many candidates saw Lady Bracknell as an example of someone well-mannered, when plainly putting others at their social ease is far from high in her priorities. The best candidates were able to see the comic potential in displays of petulant bad manners disguised as their opposite. There was quite a lot of undigested unloading of pre-prepared material.
- (b) Good answers here had a secure grasp of the satirical tone of studied flippancy here. Elsewhere, candidates often struggled with (and took very seriously) issues about gentlemen mistreating their servants, though the passage plainly shows that Lane is as much involved in the games ('I didn't think it polite to listen, sir') as his master. Candidates often used the passage as little more than a springboard for a general discussion of the play, despite the richness of the extract given. A small number of candidates thought that Lane was female.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

General Comments

As always, the vast majority of candidates had a sound (if not better) knowledge of their chosen texts, though, of course, not all of them used this knowledge to full effect. With weaker candidates there was the perennial problem of paraphrase and narrative commentary, often without clear focus on the precise demands of the question. Questions usually contain a 'trigger' word like 'presentation' or 'treatment' and this is the nudge to candidates to move into thinking of these texts as literary creations. As candidates rose through the bands of the mark scheme, they tended to look more closely at specifics and to rely much less (or not at all) on recounting the plot or on paraphrase. Some candidates still like to present long introductions or conclusions, and these are usually more of a hindrance than a help. With limited time, candidates need to get to the heart of the question as soon as possible and then actually produce some evidence to back up their case.

In (b) questions candidates are given the opportunity to look at passages in great detail, focusing on relationships or issues *as embodied in the extract given*. Too many candidates still see passages as an invitation to general discussion of the play as a whole, and this is ill-advised. A close reading, attending in particular to language, is what is required here.

A note on background information and context. A number of candidates present the Examiners with pre-learned background information about the author (date of birth, history of their works etc. This sort of information, as opposed to contextualizing background which helps to argue literary points, is not rewarded, and Centres should discourage their candidates from approaching questions in this way.

There were a small number of rubric infringements, often centred on candidates writing twice on the same text.

Although plans of essays can often help candidates clarify their thoughts, it is worth noting that these plans are not rewarded, and thus should be kept brief, merely acting as prompts to candidates later on in order to ensure that they have not missed things out. There is no requirement to produce them at all. Many of the best answers seen are not firmly pre-destined from the moment that the candidate begins to write, and this allows candidates to develop and change their ideas as their thinking moves on. A down side of that is that sometimes candidates lose hold of the question, and in failing to stick to a plan, they also fail to notice that the question has been left behind somewhere along the way.

Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) There were some detailed and well-informed answers, showing clear understanding of the multi-layered presentation of injustice, both from whites to blacks, and indeed within the black community itself. The consequences of such insidious injustice were discussed in most answers, with candidates looking at dehumanisation, loss of dignity or self esteem. There were also answers that focused on the presentation of the hardships of everyday life. Better answers also tended to acknowledge the courage, resilience, humanity and vitality of the characters who struggle against the weight of injustice in these plays.
- (b) There were comparatively few answers on this extract, despite the richness of the passage. Candidates who did attempt it were able to see the humour here in the way that Styles is able to manipulate the story for effect, so that Mr Bradley seems ridiculous, whilst the workingmen score an unlikely victory. Candidates were also able to comment on dual standards and hypocrisy here. The best candidates were able to see this passage as a dramatic monologue, and to imagine the

ways in which Styles might manage different voices along the way, thus revealing his sense of humour and his snide sense of injustice even now not being put right (because done for the wrong reasons) when he talks about the replacement of the asbestos apron and the fire-proof gloves ('the ones I had lost about a year ago').

Question 2

- (a) Candidates who tackled the question about the significance of the scenes with Maria, Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek were usually able to give an account of what goes on in the scenes. To move higher up the mark scheme, they needed also to show awareness of ways in which this trio are responsible for quite an unsavoury episode in the play, and also of how they represent a pleasure principle which stands in stark contrast to other elements of the drama. Some candidates got very bogged down in discussions of the play as a Christmas entertainment, where laws and conventions are turned upside down, but it was only the best who could actually apply these insights about anarchy, disorder and misrule to the action of the play, rather than providing these ideas as background, contextualising information.
- (b) In good answers, the presentation of Olivia and Viola was seen as illustrating many of the major themes of the play. Candidates were often able to comment to good effect on the fact that Olivia's first knowledge of Viola comes through Malvolio's perceptions of him/her. Candidates who moved beyond narrative were also able to see how Viola is defined by her intelligence, quick wit and awareness of the ambiguity of her situation and appearance ('I am not that I play'). Many candidates also noted how the dialogue here shapes the dynamics of their future banter with each other. At times, candidates could have done more to comment on the language of the passage, which is full of the delights of Viola's prepared, slightly sickly amorous speech ('Most radiant, exquisite and unmatchable beauty' or 'tis poetical') which could perhaps be compared with the much more down to earth and tart acerbity of her later rejoinder to Olivia: 'The rudeness that hath appear'd in me have I learn'd from my entertainment.'

Question 3

- (a) The question on the presentation of the crowd in *Julius Caesar* proved popular. Virtually all candidates were able to give an account of what the crowd does. However, the deeper implications of the question were often not seen. One aspect of the crowd's presentation, for example, is the way that other characters talk about it. Thus an idealised crowd (who notionally speak through the letter thrown through the window) as an entity worth defending by noble Romans is an important pressure on Brutus as he tries to decide on murdering Caesar. Moreover, candidates were not always responsive to the ways in which different, more noble characters (particularly Brutus and Antony) shape their speech acts to their audience. The crowd is also presented as having some political insight, not merely as 'fickle,' a view that dominated many answers. For example, when the plebeians meet to hear Brutus talk about why joined the conspiracy, we hear two of them chatting: 'This Caesar was a tyrant.' 'That's certain,' returns the other. 'We are blest that Rome is rid of him.' The issue of tyranny runs throughout the play and there are keen debates throughout about the precise nature of Caesar's nature and ambitions (see Act 1, Scene 2 or Act 2, Scene 1), all of which tend towards the Plebeians' conclusion. And one has to remember too that a Caesar who speaks of himself in the third person, thinks about the Senate as his own personal fiefdom, and compares himself in his next to last words to the northern star which has 'no fellow in the firmament' is well on his way to tyranny if given the chance. And yet minutes later the crowd remembers him as 'royal Caesar' (in itself not necessarily a positive term in context of the times) which further adds to an audience's feeling that Shakespeare is shaping a subtle debate in which the crowd cannot simply be caricatured. Put simply, the crowd is significantly presented as having a real input into the dramatization of issues that are central to the play.
- (b) Candidates who wrote about Cassius' last meeting with Brutus were often able to give an account of the extract's context, but many candidates focused on one character and then the other, without then talking about how character is developed here through their relationship. Candidates who moved beyond narrating what happens were often able to see how one of the philosophical debates of the play, the opposition of Epicureanism and Stoicism, is still developing with Cassius' remarks about his move towards Brutus' position, and Brutus' far from stoical 'that a man might know/ The end of this day's business ere it come.' There was much speculation about the symbolic significance of the birds. Only the best candidates were able to get hold of the tone of the scene

and its melancholy acceptance that all has come to naught. Many candidates saw this scene as a parting of friends, but if anything the two show a rather distant courtesy that is far from affectionate.

Question 4

- (a) There were a small number of responses on Hamlet's madness, as presented in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Candidates were able to see that Stoppard is exploiting ideas established by Shakespeare in order to serve his own purpose. The best answers focused on particular scenes, often on the moment when Ros and Guil plan to 'glean' what afflicts him through questions.
- (b) Answers on the passage were usually clear in terms of what happens here, but candidates did not often really tackle the central issues of the relationship between Stoppard's text and its contrast with the final scene from *Hamlet*. On an emotional level, candidates were often able to locate their sympathy for the protagonists, lost in a mess not of their own making, not even able to manufacture their own ends into a suitably big gesture, and ultimately upstaged (in their own play) by the final action of *Hamlet*.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates were prepared to talk about general issues, often using material about the American dream as an anchor point. There were discussions about clashes of values, too, with many candidates focusing the word 'presentation' by contrasting America with Italy, particularly in relation to opportunity, law, family, or more liberal attitudes. Useful discussions of the difference between the older and younger generations often helped to point up the contrasts. The best answers embedded these ideas into a discussion of the drama of the play. As one candidate put it: 'When Eddie phones the immigration bureau he abandons his Italian values for American ones, yet ironically at the end of the play he relies on his Italian values and sheds the American ones.' Responses to this question illustrated vividly that background information or context is not enough: arguments must make good use of the text and show integrated contextual knowledge of the text if they are to succeed.
- (b) A large number of candidates tackled this question. The best saw clearly that Alfieri has a dual role as both participant and commentator. The episode was clearly seen as a turning point, the beginning of Eddie's dramatic spiral downwards as his anger, frustration, obsession, jealousy and sheer irrationality break out. Candidates were often keen to use detail of stage directions (Eddie's shifts in the chair, for example) to demonstrate Eddie's sense that he is out of his depth here, or that he is lying, which is another possibility. The best candidates were able to see how Eddie's constant interruptions of Alfieri ('Listen...will you listen to me a minute'), who he has, after all, gone to for advice, show just how far he has moved towards irrationality. The whole issue of Eddie's assertion that Rodolpho 'ain't right' was handled with varying success. Some candidates took it that Rodolpho is gay; others could see that it is an irrational 'slur', bearing in mind that we do see Rodolfo acting with strong desire for Catherine in the play. At times this meant that there were long digressions on attitudes towards homosexuality in the 1950s, few of which were pertinent to the passage. Other candidates took Eddie's suggestion to mean that he himself has repressed homosexual feelings for Rodolpho, a reading that is not really sustainable from the text, despite the kiss. Surprisingly, few candidates took the most obvious attitude, which is that Eddie is so deeply caught up in his jealousy that any mud will do. In seeing the scene as a foreshadowing of what is to come, some candidates diverted themselves into a general account of Eddie's behaviour and motives in the play.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates were able to explore the presentation of selfishness by focusing on the main characters, their views, priorities, expectations, social status and by giving examples of their lies, deceits, pretences and petty dishonesties. Some candidates went much deeper, however, and were able to stand back from particular examples or incidents and talk about the world values created here and about Wilde's use of irony and satire. Only the best were able to talk about the play's presentation of selfishness in terms of humour, comedy and audience response.

- (b) The humour of the extract was usually clearly understood in terms of its mockery of Victorian values. At the bottom end there was a certain amount of heavy weather discussion with basic assertions that, for example, Jack has been caught out here and simple following comments noting that this is funny. However, most went much further than that, and sources of humour were identified (and substantiated through close reference) variously as dramatic irony, inversion, taking the trivial seriously and the serious trivially. Much was made of the flamboyance of Lady Bracknell's entry and of Gwendolen's obsessive concern with the name Ernest, when actually she is not at all bothered about the deeper issue of true sincerity and earnestness.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

General Comments

The overall standard was once again satisfactory with most candidates achieving at least a sound level of performance. A number of candidates achieved full marks and only a small minority failed to reach the acceptable minimum standard for this paper. There were very few rubric infringements in this session and only very few candidates failed to manage the time in the examination successfully, with the vast majority offering two reasonably balanced answers on a text from each section of the paper. As has been reported before, where there were apparent time problems, these were often as a result of unchecked enthusiasm for the 'favourite' text. This is a particular danger for candidates when the question is focused on an issue on which they have a lot to say or about which they feel strongly. Centres are asked to remind candidates that the two essays are of equal importance and they should divide the time allowed equally between the two tasks.

The standard of written English for most candidates was commendably high. Very few candidates were unable to express themselves clearly and fluently. Inevitably there were varying levels of understanding but only a handful of candidates seemed to be hampered by expressive difficulties rather than a lack of knowledge of the texts. Centres should remind candidates of the need for clear presentation and good English, as required by the rubric. It is also helpful to have a clear indication of the questions attempted on the front of the answer booklet.

Some candidates in this session appeared not to have read the full question before beginning their answer. It is always crucial that the candidate pauses to consider the demands of the task in full, focusing on key words and deciding what material should be selected to support the response to the task. In Option (a) answers there is often a demand for an opinion about, or a judgement on, the issues under discussion. This requires evidence to be marshalled to support the opinion or judgement the candidate makes. Better answers will also consider other opinions or judgements before reaching a final conclusion. To achieve all of this the candidate needs to plan the response in some detail before beginning the actual essay itself. Similarly the demands of the option (b) question often require knowledge of the wider text or some form of contextualisation before they can be fully answered. Candidates once again need to decide, before beginning their answer what material from the wider text is appropriate, taking care to ensure that the focus of the essay is on the passage and not allowing the answer to become a narrative summary of the passage or even more damagingly the whole text. It is a rare script that would not be improved by a few moments of detailed reflection on the precise terms of the question.

It is also worth repeating that a detailed knowledge of the text is a basic requirement of this paper. Whilst supporting material such as critical commentaries, film versions and other recorded adaptations are useful teaching aids, it is the engagement with the text itself and a commitment to understanding the methods and concerns of the writer which best prepare the candidates for the examination. Many candidates in this session were in that position and it is to be hoped in future sessions all candidates will be.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

King Lear

Option (a) was very popular and offered candidates ample opportunity to discuss their own view of the eponymous hero. However the best answers considered carefully the two quotations and in the light of them set the direction of their response to consider Lear's development from ignorance to self knowledge (or for some candidates to self obsession). Nearly all answers had a detailed knowledge of the text and Lear's 'story' on which to draw. This was often supported by some well selected and apposite quotations.

Many answers concentrated on Lear's character only, focusing on his selfishness in the opening scene, through his torment on the Heath to his final reconciliation with Cordelia, leading to his heartbreak (or joy) in his final speeches over her corpse. Fuller answers saw also his development in terms of his roles as king, father, master and head of the natural order, with some perceptive analyses of the role of the Fool. The best answers were able to link all of this into a consideration of Shakespeare's concerns, as suggested by themes such as blindness and sight or motifs such as the use of the word nothing or nature.

Option (b) was also popular, with some perceptive and thorough commentaries, focusing on the task of how an audience might respond, by seeing the passage in its dramatic context. Some answers fell into the trap of giving too much contextual detail, either in terms of the plot or the characters on display. Others failed to spot that the Fool was present on stage for the last time. There were shrewd comments on the care and loyalty of Kent and Gloucester – with a few remembering what happens to him because of his loyalty – as well as the compassion of Edgar. Some answers addressed with perception Lear's references to the three dogs and Edgar's offer of protection, though weaker answers tended to ignore this and other more opaque references. The Fool and Lear's exchanges were often well analysed and those who remembered it was the Fool's last appearance were able to consider how he is reacting at this point – satirically, sarcastically or sympathetically. Kent's references to 'oppressed nature sleeps' was perceptively linked by some candidates to Lear's later awakening in front of Cordelia.

The Tempest

Option (a) was a very popular choice and nearly all candidates had a detailed knowledge and a basic grasp of Caliban's characterisation. Better answers considered Shakespeare's methods of presentation, through Caliban's relationships with other characters. Many considered Prospero's role as the benevolent coloniser, caring for and educating Caliban, with lengthy discussion of the nature/nurture debate in the text. Caliban's use of verse to describe the island and his sensitivity to its beauty was well contrasted to the butler's and jester's responses. Caliban's relationship with Miranda was often seen as the key one in the text – most assessing his attempted rape as an act which irrevocably lost our sympathy, though there was a dissenting minority who saw his wish to 'people' the isle as the inevitable impulse of 'natural' man. His final repentance also drew out varied responses and questions: was he really changed or merely subdued and though most assumed he stayed behind in sole possession of the island, a few wondered if he in fact ended up in Milan. Weaker essays were able to find relevant points about his character and role and the best essays at times had interesting comments on different productions of the play, which represented Caliban in varied ways, both visually and orally. Very few considered his relationship with Ariel, but those that did often were able to explore the thematic and dramatic concerns in depth.

Option (b) was much less popular overall, but candidates were nearly always able to offer views on how and in what ways the ending is satisfying and unsatisfying. Many focused on the final unravelling of the action and apparent 'happy' resolution, though the ambivalence of what happens to Caliban and the failure to 'punish' Antonio and Sebastian troubled a number of candidates. Informed candidates pointed out that though the play ended here there was still Prospero's final 'Epilogue' to come – often linking this into considering the Prospero/Shakespeare's final play connection in detail. The language and tone of the passage were well considered by a few better essays – 'thing of darkness' and 'Every third thought shall be my grave' attracting particular attention. Nearly all candidates were able to explore the ending through the characters on stage, but a few lapsed into paraphrase and narrating the story so far by way of context.

Section B

Persuasion

This was a popular choice of text with an equal split between the options. Nearly all candidates were able to defend Anne from the charge of 'dullness', with better candidates focusing on Austen's presentation of many aspects of her character and relationships and thus showing a detailed and accurate knowledge of the text and the writer's methods and concerns. Weaker essays tended to list her attributes or retell chunks of the narrative, but even these limited approaches were enlivened by engaged opinions and evident enjoyment of the text. More ambitious answers considered the social context and thus were able to show that Anne was proud and privileged, but unlike some of her family also aware of her responsibilities too. These candidates also were the most likely to consider Austen's thematic concerns such as marriage, property and the Navy, through Anne's gentle but ultimately perceptive opinions and responses. Option (b) was less successfully tackled, usually because candidates either did not have sufficient textual knowledge to place the passage with any precision, thus limiting the candidate's ability to evaluate its significance or because the candidates were limited in their ability to explore Austen's methods and style with any conviction. Most responses were

able to focus on Mary and Louisa at least, with some perceptive comments on what is revealed about Wentworth here ('artificial assenting smile' and 'contemptuous glance') and then speculate on how much he blamed Anne's family's 'pride' or 'snobbery' for her rejection of him eight years earlier. It was disappointing that only a minority of candidates seemed sure of the plot significance of this passage – Henrietta's return to Hayter leaving the road clear for a Louisa/Wentworth marriage – and thus could only broadly assess Louisa's strategy and characterisation here. Many though were aware of what Austen was revealing about Anne, in her knowledge of Wentworth, her desire to keep away from Louisa and Wentworth and her patient care for her demanding sister, which led the better answers to analysing the narrative structure and Austen's language choices carefully.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular, if minority choice in this session with only a few candidates offering the option (b) essay. Nearly all option (a) responses had some knowledge of the mock heroic, though this was for weaker candidates synonymous with 'comic'. The description of the 'heroic' cock was well explored and the many references to human relationships and characteristics. Some were able to compare the poor widow's description to that of her hens and cock. There was a generally sound grasp of the beast fable conventions and some even began to explore the satire and Chaucer's satiric targets. It was pleasing to note how many candidates were able to quote accurately from the text to support their points. Option (b) was much less popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's style and methods, including in a few rare cases an understanding of the narrator's role and how that and the dialogue set up the effects of the tale to follow. Better answers saw Chaucer's voice in his description of the Priest himself 'this sweete preest, this goodly man' and recognised the poet's mastery of characterisation through dialogue.

David Copperfield

This was also a minority choice but there were some very good answers on option (b) in particular. Option (a) was quite poorly answered at times with most responses summarising the history of the relationship without considering in sufficient detail its significance. A few essays did see the relationship in terms of David's development, part of the mechanics of the 'bildungsroman', whilst others saw it as part of David's learning the meaning of love and relationships, with this one equally as damaging for some candidates as his friendship with Steerforth. Option (b) was more popular and usually better handled, with some perceptive comments on the context, the use of the narrator's memories, the language and the imagery. The final sentence of the passage, a masterpiece of Dickens's ability to draw his reader into the conflicting emotions of his character(s) was often well explored by perceptive candidates. However, at times a focus on context and narrative paraphrase were allowed to dominate the response, at the expense of such close analysis.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

This was very popular with slightly more candidates tackling the passage question overall. Many candidates had a thorough and detailed knowledge of the text and consequently many detailed and carefully constructed answers were seen. Some limited themselves to considering each of the women in turn. These essays were often a series of similar examples rather than an attempt to develop a balanced argument. However other answers were able to draw comparisons between the women and at times even consider Hardy's presentation of their relationships with each other and with Henchard. This essay rewarded the candidate who had selected material carefully and taken time to plan and construct an essay, before starting to write. It was interesting to note that few candidates had any sympathy for Lucetta, with Susan coming a close second in the popularity stakes to Elizabeth-Jane. Option (b) was very popular and often very well done. Some candidates did focus on the language and tone, pointing out the shifting narrative focus, through the use of Abel and how his simplicity and unselfish concern for Henchard affected the way the reader responded and emphasised the seriousness of the narration. A few candidates were able to contrast the emotionless tone of Farfrae's 'Dear me – is that so?' to the simple 'deep sadness' of Whittle's words and actions and Elizabeth's silence. The pathos of the will – for some readers 'overdone' by Hardy – was often explored, along with varied opinions on its effectiveness as a summary of what had befallen Henchard over the course of the novel, its bleakness often seen as the inevitable but tragic outcome of Henchard's struggles with fate.

Marvell Selection

This was very much a minority choice with neither option being particularly well tackled. Option (a) produced some good answers, looking in detail at Marvell's use of imagery, focusing on 'The Drop of Dew' or 'Bermudas' to support opinions about his desire to escape from the world and for a few candidates his

religious convictions. More basic answers often had a sound knowledge of the text and were able to make and support some simple but relevant ideas. Option (b) was more variable in standard, with some candidates approaching this extract as an 'unseen' and so struggling with meaning and content. Those who knew the poem and the selection well however were in the majority and there were some detailed and thoughtful responses to the language and imagery of this extract, with a generally sound understanding of the overall meaning and concerns.

The Rape of the Lock

This was a minority choice with an even split between Option (a) and Option (b). Weaker candidates focused on the 'rape itself' explaining what had happened and how Pope had described it. Better candidates were able to consider in what ways it was and was not significant, linking this to Pope's concerns – a good knowledge of the wider context of the poem was helpful here. The passage – Option (b) - rewarded those candidates who had fully engaged with the text and were able to explore the various references to classical literature and machinery of the poem in detail. Many answers showed awareness of and at times understanding of the effects of the heroic couplets and how Pope manipulates them to achieve his satirical ends.

Tennyson Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and very few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally did agree with the view offered – Tennyson was always concerned with some sort of 'loss' whether emotional, spiritual or human, with many using the *In memoriam* poems as evidence of this. Option (b) was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Tennyson's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. It is disappointing to record that very few Centres have offered this text over the three years and it is hoped that Hopkins will be a more popular replacement.

The Duchess of Malfi

This was less popular in this session than in previous ones. The majority opted Option (b) with few candidates appearing to be well prepared to answer a question on the sub-plot or to have considered its significance in any detail. Option (a) therefore was disappointing overall, though a few did manage to explore its contribution to the play's thematic concerns of religion, love and power and the corruption of all of these by the Arragonian brethren. Most focused on how these relationships affected our view of the Cardinal, seeing Castruchio and Julia as caricatures and unworthy of consideration. Option (b) was better tackled on the whole, with nearly every candidate having some knowledge of the context and opinions on what is revealed about the brothers here, especially in terms of how they see the Duchess. Some candidates explored the language and imagery to good effect, noting Ferdinand's obsession with his sister's sexuality and what his language tells us about him and how Webster will develop his characterisation later in the play. Sadly only a few candidates remembered this was a play and commented on the dramatic effects of this brotherly chat, but those that did often did very well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

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Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

King Lear

Option (a) was a very popular question, and many candidates wanted to qualify the statement, with some disagreeing quite strongly. A few very good answers argued that the play transcended family concerns, or saw the family as only one vital link in the great order of nature. Thus any breach in the chain (King with subject, father with child, etc.) affected the whole. Shakespeare's use of symbols (e.g. the heath and the storm, Poor Tom, etc.) was to demonstrate the fragile relationship between man and the cosmos.

Candidates seemed comfortable dealing with these wider issues, but they did not ignore family matters, and provided textual support for perceptive comments on father-child problems, and sibling rivalries and jealousies. Many weaker candidates focused on Act 1, with no references to the Goneril-Regan feud in later scenes. Some acclaimed the importance of non-family characters, such as the Fool, and Kent, linking them with the roles of Cordelia and Edgar, as upholders of family values. The best answers showed how Lear eventually acknowledged his need for love and forgiveness from Cordelia, linking the final scenes to his earlier recognition that he had '...ta'en too little care of this', and so linking family values to wider issues. Candidates offering this question had an impressive amount of relevant textual detail and quotations on which to call in shaping their responses.

Option (b) was another popular question and on the whole well answered, although it was disappointing that only a few recognised the exact context (Goneril had already asserted 'Pluck out his eyes', and Edmund had been sent away to avoid his witnessing his father's punishment, thus raising the question for some candidates of whether he ever knew of Gloucester's blinding). There were shrewd comments on the absence of a judicial process, with Gloucester being tied to a chair and being so aggressively interrogated as signs of a kangaroo court. Some of the best answers linked the animal imagery (Gloucester like a bear, 'tied to the stake', his description of Goneril's 'boarish fangs' and his later claim that even a wolf would have been given shelter during the recent storm). Not all candidates were aware that Gloucester was referring to Lear ('his poor old eyes', etc.) and few understood the cosmic imagery in I.10-13. Gloucester's trust in 'winged vengeance' was contrasted to his later despair in the 'wanton Gods'. The moral courage of the 1st servant (Cornwall's not Gloucester's as some candidates suggested) was often linked to the care of the surviving servants who later agreed to bathe Gloucester's eyes and help him. There was strong engagement with this scene, with candidates outraged at the treatment of Gloucester, who was host to Regan and Cornwall, and who was also another old man, like Lear, who deserved respect. The horror of the cruelty and the sadistic relish of Regan ('Let him smell his way to Dover') was fully discussed, as was Gloucester's harsh lesson about his sons. There was much to comment in this passage, but only the best looked closely at the whole extract and its impact on plot (Cornwall's imminent death), characterization (the 'cruelty of Shakespeare to let Gloucester find out about Edmund's treachery now, just after his physical torture' as one candidate put it) and themes.

The Tempest

Option (a) was quite popular, and there were some very good answers linking the usurpation of Prospero in Milan (mirrored in the later plot by Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo) to some of the political upheavals in the History plays. Whereas those plays enacted the historical acts of betrayal and revenge, Shakespeare used the magic to show how repentance and forgiveness might reconcile enemies. Such answers interpreted the magic as a theatrical device which was not absolute (not all the characters changed) and even the Magus had to be shown the way to forgiveness by Ariel. Many other answers looked briefly at all or most of the scenes involved with magic, showing sound knowledge of the play, with a few showing that Prospero was the cause of the 'human mess' in the first place, by neglecting his duties for the sake of magical study, and hence the need for a magic cure! A few candidates had seen good productions and wanted to briefly describe the effectiveness of some of the magic (e.g. Ariel as a huge harpy, with Ariel sometimes presented as just a 'voice') which led to interesting comments on the dramatic effects of presenting the magic.

Option (b) was quite popular, but there only a few thorough answers, with many not able to provide a clear context (which would have helped in their interpretations, as Trinculo had earlier hidden under Stephano's 'gaberdine'). Some better answers were aware of how both the butler and jester considered how they could make money out of the 'monster', effectively comparing these two with Antonio and Sebastian and both pairs to Caliban. Only a few seemed aware of the comic 'business' (e.g. the mock courage of Stephano, the 'four legs and two voices' and Stephan recognising Trinculo's legs). There was some grasp of the bawdy humour in the song and 'Can he vent Trinculos?') and many commented on Caliban's willingness to become the slave of his new 'god' and what this episode revealed about his earlier meetings with Prospero. Some candidates were able to explore the dramatic effects tellingly, with for example interesting opinions on how Stephano would enter here and Shakespeare's use of comic clowns generally.

Section B

Persuasion

This was a highly popular text and answers to option (a) were often thorough and wide-ranging. The way Austen satirised the pride of Sir Walter while contrasting it with the values of the Crofts and the Musgroves was often well explored, with apposite quotation. Anne's freedom from her father's and sisters' pride was shown by her friendship with Mrs. Smith, but better candidates mentioned Anne's suspicions of Mrs. Clay,

who was clearly a foil to Mrs. Smith. The role of the author was considered in some detail, with a sound knowledge of the social context revealed, though too many candidates make too many generalizations about the 'Victorian' period. On the whole candidates knew the novel well and had evidently thought about different types of social and personal pride, weighing up the presentation of Anne and Wentworth for example in contrast to Sir Walter and William Walter. Option (b) was less popular than the previous question, but there were some perceptive commentaries, looking at the gossip, at Anne's disclaimer ('unfounded news') and at Mrs. Smith's reluctance to speak out which only fuelled Anne's curiosity the more. Better candidates were aware of how Austen presented Anne's willingness to 'take any message' as part of her caring personality, and they offered a detailed analysis of the long speech (I.33-50), linking this scene to Anne's earlier rejection of any interest in Mr Elliott in her discussion with Lady Russell in Chapter 17. Weaker answers were, alongside generally accurate paraphrasing, able to recognise the importance of the revelations about William Walter.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

This was a minority choice with a few very sound answers, arguing that serious concerns were not lost mainly because the priest's moral concerns were at the heart of the comedy. Some candidates did grapple with the layers of narrative at work in the Tale, wrestling with what the serious concerns in fact were and showing an understanding of satire and parody. Most candidates enjoyed the comedy and were able to recount in detail relevant parts of the text. Option (b) was less popular and there were only a few thorough answers, with too many weaker candidates choosing this as the perceived easier option, when in fact they could only offer a summary or rough paraphrase of parts of the extract. There was some appreciation of how Chaucer presented Pertelote as a practical and well-educated wife, ready to persuade and cajole her husband. Some enjoyed the contrast between her advice to take some 'laxatyf' when they 'flee fro the bemes' to what the Cock actually performed.

David Copperfield

This was also a minority choice but there were some very good answers on option (a) in particular, contrasting the family warmth of the boathouse with David's own home, and linking the Peggottys with other characters that Dickens wants the reader to admire. A few candidates found Mr. Peggotty's dogged search for little Emily strangely obsessive. The importance of Peggotty to David's early development (a surrogate mother figure but also a source of much of the humour) and the catastrophic effect that David had on the boathouse family were often well explored. It is pleasing to report that candidates often had a detailed knowledge of this long novel. Option (b) produced only a few answers but they showed some sound appreciation of how Dickens introduced the characters of Traddles and Steerforth, and explored their roles in the novel. Steerforth's exploitation of the naïve young David was well explored, with perceptive comments on how the development of both of these relationships, so important to the novel's structure, was cleverly hinted at by Dickens in his choice of language. Better answers also saw the germ of David's future moral development in the faintest hint of David's unease – 'a little troubled in my mind'.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

This was very popular with slightly more candidates tackling the Option (a) overall. Many candidates had a thorough and detailed knowledge of the text and consequently many detailed and carefully constructed answers were seen. Option (a) invited candidates to display their detailed knowledge of the novel. There were widely different interpretations, some agreeing strongly with the statement, but others arguing that Hardy showed many acts of 'human decency' and courage. The better answers considered the Skimmity ride in some detail, as well as the humanizing roles of the women characters, though Lucetta's morality was often questioned, even if Henchard's was not. There was much sympathy for Henchard overall, despite the auction of his wife and child at the start, but surprisingly less for Farfrae, often seen as a cold and calculating figure. Option (b) had fewer answers, with only a very few candidates aware that the 'conversation without' was a continuation of the dialogue by two maids outside that Lucetta had listened to earlier. There were some sound comments on the way Hardy presented Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane, and on the melodrama of the scene, and candidates often knew the novel well and could offer a precise context. Lucetta's fear that Donald would stop loving her was linked to earlier scenes, to Elizabeth-Jane's love for Farfrae, and to the final scenes in the novel. Better answers also linked the passage to Hardy's wider concerns on fate and the past coming to light, as well as how the past influences the present. A few candidates were aware of and could comment on the episodic nature of the novel and how that manifested itself here.

Marvell Selection

This was a minority choice with very few answers to Option (a), though candidates who had studied the dialogue poems and 'On a drop of Dew' did very well and could find many different methods and concerns in Marvell's presentation to explore and comment on. Option (b) was popular and the poem well known and understood. There were some detailed and thoughtful responses to the language and imagery of this extract, though some candidates appeared unaware that it was an extract from a longer poem. A few very good answers offered detailed and sensitive analysis of the extract, linking it to the rest of the poem, although that was not asked for. Marvell's handling of time and distances was appreciated and his wit in many of the images, especially in the final couplet. It was a pleasure to read such thorough and responsive answers, well able to cope with the nuances of language and Marvell's rather 'risqué' topic and attitudes.

The Rape of the Lock

This was a minority choice with an even split between Option (a) and Option (b). Weaker candidates focused on the comedy rather than on the mock heroic elements, explaining what had happened and how Pope had described it. Better candidates were able to consider in what ways Pope used mock heroic techniques and how these were significant, linking the discussion into Pope's concerns. The passage – Option (b) – rewarded those candidates who had fully engaged with the text and were able to explore the various references to classical literature and machinery of the poem in detail. Answers showed awareness of and at times understanding of the effects of the heroic couplets and how Pope manipulates them to achieve his satirical ends.

Tennyson Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and very few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally did recognise that for Tennyson time was always a concern often linked with some sort of 'loss' whether emotional, spiritual or human, with many using the *In memoriam* poems as evidence of this. Option (b) was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Tennyson's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. It is disappointing to record that very few Centres have offered this text over the three years and it is hoped that Hopkins will be a more popular replacement.

The Duchess of Malfi

There were some very thorough answers, often agreeing with the statement, but giving attention to 'goodness', mainly in the character of the Duchess and her family. Many candidates knew the play well and there was some impressive use of relevant quotations in support of key points. There was a kind of fascinated response to Webster's presentation of evil in this play, especially the Arragonian brethren. Better answers often focused on the presentation of Bosola as a mixture of the good and bad in the play. The Cardinal was seen as symbolic of the evil infesting even religion, but Ferdinand was deemed to be the more interesting and for some dangerous embodiment of what 'evil' can do to people. Option (b) was quite popular, but only the stronger candidates offered close attention to the extract, and showed the extreme changes in Ferdinand from previous scenes. His denial of his part in the murder, his wish that Bosola might have shown pity towards the Duchess and his refusal to offer any 'reward' for Bosola's service were all discussed in detail. Some referred to Ferdinand's hope of 'treasure' had his twin remained a widow, but did not see this as a strong motive, and linked 'the stream of gall' to his earlier incestuous obsession with his sister. Ferdinand's attempt to wriggle out of the responsibility for the Duchess' execution because it was unlawful was discussed well, as was Bosola's final cynical comment on the perversion of justice when 'one thief hangs another'. Weaker candidates could discuss Ferdinand's character in general, but were not able to assess the contribution of this passage to their understanding. Better candidates saw Webster's concerns with guilt and conscience here and how that would emerge in the play's denouement.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
20th Century Texts

General comments

All questions were accessible and there was a clear distinction in the approach to be taken to the (a) and (b) questions. At A level candidates are expected to be able to explore the writer's use of narrative, poetic and dramatic techniques in both questions, but in the (b) questions, to systematically deconstruct and appreciate the significance and effects of the methods used in the passages. Strong candidates made gallant attempts at applying what they knew about a writer's style, genre and the wider text to the (b) questions, whereas weaker candidates often depended on narrative approaches which resulted in paraphrases. Performance was weaker where candidates relied upon textual summary, biographical material and received opinions to determine the content of the questions. The weaker drama responses particularly, lacked an assured approach to addressing dramatic effects and invariably offered narrow, surface readings of the characters and action. Candidates need to be encouraged to develop the techniques of critical appreciation through close reading and to write with competent use of appropriate literary terminology such as *narrative point of view*, *irony*, *symbolism*, *juxtaposition*, *diction* etc. to enable them to demonstrate an informed, sensitive response to significant detail in the texts. Candidates need to be reminded to look carefully at the questions and identify key terms: "With detailed reference" or "How does.. present.." and make sure they manipulate their knowledge to fit the thrust of the questions. It was disappointing to receive very little on the poetry, but many scripts demonstrated substantive textual and contextual knowledge with more able candidates showing some detailed analysis and a genuine personal engagement with the texts. There were hardly any rubric errors, and most managed their time well enough to produce two essays of equal length, though in some cases, extensive time spent on planning, perhaps prevented well developed final essays.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 MARGARET ATWOOD: *Cat's Eye*

This was not a popular choice but both questions produced answers across the range, with (b) proving marginally more attractive.

- (a) The key phrase in the question was "Discuss the ways Atwood presents...". More ambitious answers were able to move adeptly around the text offering astute observations on the way our view of the parental relationships are filtered through the narrative point of view, taking into account Elaine's issues with memory and her childhood experiences, so among the "ways" they included descriptive accounts of her parents and reflections on parenting by Elaine; her memory of comments from other characters and recreated scenes. They focused on specific incidents and made pertinent points of comparison, using a range of textual evidence to support and extend ideas for example – considering the roles played by fathers, ideas about conformity, and Elaine's anxieties over her own role as a mother. Weaker candidates took "presents" to mean Atwood's views on the upbringing and guidance of children and tended to treat the characters as real. In passing judgement on Elaine's parents, some candidates did not seem to understand that their intermittent presence in the story is a function of the writer's presentation of Elaine's memories and reflections. Others relied upon prepared, rather limited textual knowledge and gave brief descriptions of relationships.
- (b) A minority of candidates looked at the passage "in detail" and the best were able to distinguish the interior and exterior worlds in Elaine, drawing appropriate correlation between her thoughts and actions, noting her moments of assertiveness and insecurity and using the wider text selectively to support their comments. Some were able to support valid assertions about Atwood's presentation of Elaine's character and feelings by looking in detail at the self-depreciation in the diction, the character's self-conscious awareness of language, the shifts in tone and the humour. Many focused intelligently on the issue of feminism though some used the passage as a springboard for

a general discussion of the theme or narrative account of Elaine's experience of women and preference for men. Weak candidates were unable to appreciate Atwood's techniques and answers were narrative based, relying heavily on textual knowledge beyond the extract or paraphrases.

Question 2 R.K.Narayan: *The English Teacher*

This was an extremely popular text with candidates attempting (a) and (b) in equal numbers. There appeared to be genuine enjoyment in reading and writing about the text and many candidates showed impressive textual knowledge.

- (a) In directing candidates to consider the presentation and significance of the relationship between the school master and Krishna it was expected that candidates would consider the narrative voice and the function of the relationship. The better candidates compared and contrasted the characters and discussed the contribution of the relationship to Krishnan's personal development, the themes of education, family, death and spirituality. Many wrote intelligently but rather generally, often mentioning the potentially useful idea about unpredictability but only a few were able to look in detail at specific incidents, particularly the schoolmaster's attitude to his predicted death and the impact of his survival. Weaker candidates tended to give a narrative account, or focused almost exclusively on the contrasting attitudes to education. Some were insecure on who was meant by the "schoolmaster" and wrote about either Mr Brown or the medium.
- (b) Narayan's concerns and techniques were effectively addressed by those who were aware of authorial intention and looked closely at the presentation of character – commenting not just on what he was like but analysing the cumulative effect of the diction and contribution of the sentence structure in creating a comic portrait of Krishnan's anxiety and feverish imagination. Answers were often prefaced with apposite contextual allusion, reflecting a clear understanding of the cultural context supported by references from the passage to class and women and concluded with a discussion of the significance of this experience in relation to the Krishnan's development as a family man and ability to cope with change. Weaker responses confused Narayan's concerns with those of Krishnan's and offered a simple but exhaustive description of his anxiety; a summary of the content of the passage which revealed a very literal understanding of the text when considering the dimensions of the railway carriages; or used the passage as a starting point for an outline of the whole novel.

Question 3 LES MURRAY: *from Selected Poems*

No one attempted the very accessible (a) question and the very few who attempted (b) gave the impression of doing the poem as an unseen, struggling to make sense of it and producing very fragmented, thin answers.

Question 4 CARYL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

This was a popular choice of text with candidates performing better on the (a) question, and showing themselves to be more confident discussing characters and ideas than *dramatic effectiveness*. The scenes in the agency were relevant to both questions and it was rather disappointing that many candidates were unable to develop convincing answers because they lacked detailed knowledge and understanding about the issue of work and how seeing the play influences our response to the characters.

- (a) A disappointing number of candidates did not read the question properly and wrote about the patriarchy and what men had done to women, rather than focusing on *women's attitudes to men*. Better responses showed an implicit understanding of the word *presents* and made useful comments on the function of the characters in the first scene bringing out some useful comparisons between them and the modern characters. They ranged over the whole text, discussing the impact of culture in comparing Griselda and Nijo with Mrs Kidd, Marlene, Win and Nell and paid some attention to Joyce. The best candidates were able to give a considered view of how Churchill balances our view of the women. Weaker candidates showed an over-reliance on the first scene, giving narrative summaries of the characters. They tended to assert that Pope Joan and Marlene had adopted male attitudes but were unable to link this idea strongly enough with the question and over-simplified Joyce, labelling her as submissive.
- (b) Perhaps the passage was attempted by candidates who knew the text less well as many wrote with little appreciation of how this scene relates to the wider issues and effects of the play, resorting to

paraphrase and taking Shona's long speech at face value. Better answers were able to place the interview in the context of the other interviews in the play, could connect Nell's attitude to Marlene and discuss the issue of "no ties", and knew that Shona was lying. The best were able to point out some linguistic features such as Churchill's use of repetition as clues to Shona's state of mind and brought out the comic element of the fantastic in Shona's final speech.

Questions 5 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

This was a popular choice of text with candidates generally preferring and performing better on the (b) question.

- (a) The better candidates noted the key word *appropriate* in the question and in considering it, clearly recognised the dramatic qualities of the text. They briefly considered the sense of the "home" in the play, placing it within the context of Absurdist drama and were able to focus in detail on key scenes discriminating clearly between the types of "homecoming" received by Teddy and Ruth. Some able candidates perceived the title as ironic and argued the case effectively. The majority of candidates who tackled this question however, offered a narrative view about the homecoming of Teddy and Ruth with some focus on the subsequent power shifts within the family. Weaker candidates wrote simplistic, generalised accounts, included too much biographical detail about the playwright or presented insecure observations about Absurdist drama.
- (b) Most candidates showed a secure understanding of the characters' relationship and were able to make constructive use of the extract. There was evidence of critical reading and the most able candidates were able to take the idea of "words as weapons" and apply it, commenting on the sarcasm and crudity of Max and noting that Sam's refusal to engage with some of Max's taunts is also a strategy for undermining him as are his references to Jesse. Most candidates focused on the implications of *she can keep us all happy* and some used that as an opportunity to refer to the wider text and Ruth. More able candidates could offer this knowledge in a way that demonstrated their understanding of how this contributes to the dramatic contribution and effect of the extract. The difficulty with critical reading is that it sometimes leads candidates away from the extract into discussion of more general issues so there were often discussions about the Pinter pause which were not clearly anchored into what the pauses are doing in this particular section of the play. Weaker candidates relied on paraphrase or having placed the extract within the context of a power struggle within the family and Sam's knowledge of Jesse's affair, launched into a narrative summary of the text. Many struggled with the idea of dramatic effectiveness and simply saw an "unnatural" relationship with an unhealthy obsession with sex.

Question 6 T.S.ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

Very few candidates offered this text. Some candidates were well prepared but while we expect candidates to make use of secondary reading, material on Eliot can sometimes be difficult to assimilate and a more straightforward approach to the texts might serve them better.

- (a) This question was very accessible and candidates who had studied the text were able to demonstrate some sound knowledge of the poems and basic understanding of some relevant poems. The more able candidates addressed the question and offered reasons from within the poems for why man's search for meaning was frustrated. Weaker candidates offered fragmented accounts of some of the poems.
- (b) Most candidates opting for this question seemed to be doing it as an unseen. They tried to respond on the level of situation and character but there was rarely any sense of any knowledge of the wider poem being used to inform the discussion which was very tentative. Most were able to see the character's self-consciousness, but there was little attempt to comment on the effect of the language.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

This was not a popular choice of text. Again it was disappointing that candidates seemed to have more material on biographical details and the cultural and political background than on the play itself.

- (a) The more able candidates examined some of the different cultural values quite sensibly, focusing on attitudes to death and duty, and were able to deal with the tension caused by *misunderstanding* though very few could refer to scenes in detail to illustrate this. Some candidates knew that Soyinka had denied the proposition and suggested that the play was about affirmation and regeneration. Weaker candidates relied on prepared background material and narrative summary.
- (b) This was a very accessible question with lots of material within the passage to demonstrate an understanding of Olunde's role within the context of the cultural issues, while commenting on the presentation of character and the dramatic effects within the dialogue, but few candidates were willing to look at the passage in detail. Most were able to explain Olunde's role in the plot and some were able to discuss the significance of his experience of Western culture. The best candidates presented detailed, critical understanding of Olunde's role, focusing on his opinion that the captain's sacrifice was *an affirmative commentary on life* and made some attempt to explain the way this conversation with the more *understanding* Jane, dramatises the difference in values and attitudes. A few candidates shifted the focus onto Jane.

Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

This was a popular text with some candidates having an impressive range of critical material to draw upon for support, though many were unable to apply it to the questions.

- (a) This proved a challenging question for the majority of candidates. The more able candidates responded well to the steer in the question *How does* and presented the character's isolation as a function of the narrative technique. They had specific detailed references to show the effects of the stream of consciousness and how the symbolism and the structure of the novel are used to present Clarissa's feelings. The best candidates analysed their quotations to discuss the effectiveness of the language. Weaker candidates gave a fragmented account of Clarissa's loneliness; others either misread the question or did not have enough material on Clarissa and gave generalised character sketches of Septimus, Peter and other characters as well. Many candidates alluded to the stream of consciousness but lacked developed, secure understanding of its working and did not have the detailed knowledge to illustrate its effect. They also offered a rather naïve reading of Clarissa, asserting that she was a failure as a wife and mother; and that her loneliness was her own fault for choosing social position and security over love when she chose not to marry Peter. Some argued that she could not be lonely because of all the parties she held.
- (b) This question seemed to be the choice of weaker candidates who struggled to examine the passage in detail. Most candidates considered Septimus in this passage and the way his behaviour reflects his mental state. There was some misunderstanding, most notably, those who considered Dr Holmes to be a professional man whose judgement on Septimus should be believed. Some recognised Holmes for what he is but then digressed too far in discussing him. Shell shock was usually mentioned, again causing some digression, but a detailed examination of the extract was rare. Many gave overlong biographical details on Woolf's own experience of madness, and some in an attempt to argue that many other characters were mad, presented character sketches of Clarissa, Peter and Miss Kilman.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
20th Century Texts

General comments

All the questions proved accessible in terms of content: theme and character, but they were discriminating in demands for literary appreciation: an understanding of how writers use methods and create effects to shape the response of readers and audiences. Hence the emphasis in both (a) and (b) questions on key phrases like 'Consider the ways...presents; How does.... Discuss the effects of the writing'. The best scripts showed evidence of close reading and detailed study of the set texts, with many accomplished candidates making selective use of relevant critical and background material, balancing this with competent, even expert demonstration of the use of appropriate literary terminology in the detailed analysis of specific illustrations. When they had opted for the (b) questions, they sensitively deconstructed the extracts to demonstrate their skills and understanding. Many candidates who had been taught terms such as *irony*, *the stream of consciousness*, *overlapping dialogue* and *juxtaposition*, tended to make general assertions about their use, while less accomplished scripts demonstrated reliance upon textual summary and received opinions to determine the content of responses. Drama responses particularly, lacked an assured approach to addressing dramatic effects and tended to offer narrow, narrative summaries or character sketches. Not many centres opted for the poetry but those who did, tended to produce a higher proportion of average and above average responses. Questions using a leading quotation offered the challenge of adopting an immediate critical stance which the best candidates seized upon with some relish. However, some candidates need to be reminded to look carefully at the focus or steer within the questions, so they can structure and exploit their knowledge more effectively. There were very few scripts demonstrating poor textual knowledge though a small minority of candidates appeared to be writing about passages as though they were unseen. Few candidates seemed to have problems with time.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 MARGARET ATWOOD: *Cat's Eye*

This was quite a popular text and candidates often displayed an impressive amount of knowledge.

- (a) The majority of the candidates responded to the quotation and chose to focus on Elaine being the product of her experience, the different periods of her life rather than the narrative methods used to create a sense of period. A few of the best candidates did both, and like those who focused on the presentation of Elaine, were well rewarded when they commented explicitly on the way Atwood makes Elaine's ideas about her memories, values and identity, a function of the narrative structure of the novel and the character's detailed descriptions of her personal, familial and wider social contexts. The key phrase was 'By what means and with what effects' and it was expected that candidates would be able to look closely at some specific recreated dramatic scenes, or moments of description which trigger the character's reflections on her memories and demonstrate her sense of dislocation. . Weaker answers offered a narrative account of the development of Elaine's character.

- (b) This was often well done, though weaker candidates had problems with the specific context and maintaining the focus on Cordelia. Some candidates did deal with the passage in terms of how Cordelia's memory of her father explained her treatment of Elaine and then used the passage as a springboard for a discussion of their relationship using the wider text. More able candidates addressed the methods used to present the character and focused on the effects of the narrative point of view, the way memories are triggered in the novel, the patterning and the choice of language to discuss the effects of the writing. This enabled them to make detailed relevant comments on those paragraphs describing Elaine's emotional response to the exchange. Competent candidates explored the resonances and impact of details like 'ritual', 'blister', 'smirk', 'face dissolves' and the surprise of Cordelia's perception that 'I didn't have any good friend there, except for you'. There was some debate over how far Cordelia's 'pensive, reminiscent smile' signified a conscious awareness of the manipulative effect her memory might have on Elaine.

Question 2 CARYL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

This was also a fairly popular text with the (b) question proving the more popular option.

- (a) This was a very accessible question, focusing on one of the play's major concerns, and candidates should not have been put off by the direction to consider specific scenes. Most candidates were able to show some insight into the way Churchill's presentation of the *Top Girls* agency contributes complexity and ambiguity to her exploration of the theme of equality. The more able were able to structure their essays around such ideas as women's aspirations, the need for recognition opportunities for promotion, discrimination, the treatment of women by women and the cost in terms of their personal lives, using detailed references to the scenes to support their ideas. The best candidates had an impressive range of pertinent quotations available. Competent candidates had a good memory of the issues and enough detail to show intelligent understanding of them while weaker candidates tended to give generalised summaries of the characters involved.
- (b) More candidates chose to write about this intense passage and it was generally well done, with many of them appreciating how it focuses the audience on the central issues of the play and shapes understanding and response to Marlene. Most were secure on the context and some could discuss the dramatic impact of the chronology of the play. The more able candidates recognised the combative nature of the scene, showing how this was created by the aggression in the diction and sentence structure and enhanced by the effect of the over-lapping dialogue. They focused on specific details like 'So what are you saying sunshine?', the effect of questions, the use of repetition and the effect of Joyce's non-standard English. The best answers noted that Joyce was no walkover, could pick out examples of where the audience would not be able to take Marlene seriously and discuss how this affected response to the characters.

Question 3 T.S.ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

This was not a popular choice, though those candidates who offered it performed reasonably well on both options with the (b) question proving to be the more popular.

- (a) The more able candidates explained the symbolic use of landscape to convey sexual and spiritual sterility or the quest for meaning and regeneration and had a convincing range of quotations and references to support their argument, though opinions on its effectiveness tended to be asserted rather than analysed. Weaker candidates tended to produce more fragmented essays, raiding the poems for examples of townscapes or the atmosphere of surroundings.
- (b) Those who had studied the poem were able to contextualise this and exploit the link to the neurotic speaker of the first part of a *Game of Chess* to demonstrate how Eliot universalises the sense of emotional alienation and sterility. Most focused on the portrait of the relationship, and the more able candidates communicated an accurate sense of the situation and audience. Some less secure candidates became distracted by general discussions on the purpose of marriage or the theme of time and weak candidates dismissed the conversation as trivial. Very rarely did candidates have the confidence to look at the effects of the colloquial diction and speech rhythms and while some identified the allusion to Ophelia, they had little to say about its effect.

Question 4 LES MURRAY: from *Selected Poems*

This text is gradually becoming more popular and those candidates who have systematically studied the poems tend to do well.

- (a) Very few candidates opted for this question but those who did took a broad view of the phrase *specific local detail* and wrote in detail about a variety of poems, often ranging from ones which exploited a landscape like *Driving through Sawmill Towns* or *The Forest Hit by Modern Use* to those which used an everyday object or occurrence like *Louvre*, *Shower* or *An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow*. They were not afraid to handle complex ideas and the best candidates were able to demonstrate literary appreciation of some of Murray's poetic techniques and use of form, though not enough attention was paid to Murray's witty wordplay.
- (b) This was the more popular option and many produced detailed responses showing a good understanding of the development of ideas in the poem, with some seeing the neighbour as a latter-day Job. They nearly all commented on the presentation of the neighbour as the honest, hard working farmer and the irony of his being punished for having received the "Great Golden Letter". Most candidates were able to comment on specific details like the significance of his washing his hands, the suggestion of snakes in the onomatopoeic description of the way the pages 'slid...slithered' and 'hissed' onto the table and the way he held each page 'by its points' to suggest the character's distaste. Most chose one or two examples from the letters to illustrate the 'crude rehearsed lies' but the best candidates commented in a more literary way on the effects of the diction, the fragmented sentence structure, the manipulative terms of address within the letters and were not afraid to look at some of the more complex imagery towards the end of the poem. Less assured candidates showed an understanding of the poem and embedded phrases from the poem within their discussion without commenting on the poetic methods and effects so that they tended to produce paragraphs of detailed paraphrase rather than literary appreciation. Most candidates though managed to suggest a personal response and appreciation of the personal tone and immediacy of the poem.

Question 5 R.K. Narayan: *The English Teacher*.

This was a fairly popular text with both options proving equally attractive though candidates generally performed better on the (a) question.

- (a) Stronger candidates were able to develop and question the statement by considering Krishnan's identity as a writer and teacher while at the same time looking in great detail at the way his family relationships, particularly after Susila's death, contribute to his growth and spiritual development. The best candidates picked up on the word 'presentation' in the question and included intelligent literary comments on the narrative methods, supporting their observations with an impressive range of detailed references and quotations to the text. Less assured candidates tended to rely on narrative summary of Krishnan's family life but usually managed some response to the question by suggesting that the schoolmaster also played an important role in his development. Weaker candidates had difficulty constructing a coherent argument and relied on generalised assertions or narrative summary.
- (b) This was a particularly rich extract and most of the candidates certainly appreciated the significance of the occasion to Krishnan, though weaker candidates relied on narrative summary to explain the context, focusing on Krishnan's grief and later experience of communicating with Susila. Those who looked at the passage in more detail commented on Narayan's choice of words like 'enchanted', 'vision', 'illumination' and the use of sound to create the atmosphere of 'eternal peace' followed by the dramatic use of 'scratched' and 'tore' to describe the violent movement of the pencil. The best candidates considered the presentation of the medium and explained how his down-to-earth self-deprecation helped to manipulate the reader into accepting the possibility of this extraordinary experience, with some noting the detachment in the repeated use of "his hand wrote".

Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

This was the most popular text with slightly more candidates opting for the (b) question but both questions provoked a full range of responses. Many candidates drew on critical material, much of which was potentially useful, though weaker candidates tended to treat the play as though Pinter were writing a case study to illustrate Freud's oedipal complex.

- (a) Able candidates responded well to the terms of the question, and the best could see that the comedy of the play adds to the general sense of menace, and that an audience would be disturbed by their own responses as Pinter constantly challenged conventional assumptions about family life and the nature of comedy. They developed constructive arguments, sometimes structuring the essay around an analysis of the different kinds of comic effects while presenting detailed examples of verbal and physical savagery. The best answers gave a real sense of the complexity of the dramatic effects. Less assured candidates tended to focus on one term quite adequately but neglected the other. Weaker candidates often talked too generally, rather than anchoring their responses to 'specific episodes' or simply listed episodes and relied on assertion rather than substantiated argument when dealing with comedy. Too many of the weaker candidates wanted to write on power struggles rather than answer the question.
- (b) Most candidates engaged well with the issues and those who could use their critical reading to inform the discussion of specific details in the extract did well. For example Bernard's assertion that the room is a 'cage in which inmates scratch and snarl at each other' was widely quoted but few actually used it as a tool to analyse the verbal games in the extract, while many were distracted by Freud, or information about the Theatre of the Absurd. Most candidates were able to explain the immediate context and the dramatic irony arising from Lenny's replies to Max's questions. They also successfully explained why Lenny's repeated use of 'Dad' and question about 'the real facts' of his conception are so provocative. Many could refer in detail to the opening scene of the play to show that this scene was typical of the way these characters interacted. The more able analysed the use of props and made insightful remarks about the significance of the glass of water. In talking about the Pinter pause, they looked at specific moments in the extract to discuss its effect. The best candidates looked closely at the language, focusing on the diction to track the shifts in tone, contrasting examples of Max's aggressive questioning with Lenny's seemingly innocent enquiries. They could analyse the way both characters self-dramatise in order to assert themselves and discussed the effect of specific words like the repetition of 'pop off' and 'I thought I'd pop it to you.' Weak candidates tended to treat the characters as real and expressed indignation and disapproval at the way the characters behaved to each other.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

It was good to see a few more candidates offering answers on this very accessible play. Those who did tended to do well.

- (a) Candidates felt the inevitable ambivalence of audience reaction to a man of immense vitality trying to face his own death and were able to explain the beliefs that made his tragedy the tragedy of the whole Yoruba people. In focusing on the question 'Explore the ways' stronger candidates looked critically at the presentation of Elesin's character and the way the language conveys his sensuous attachment to life and his agony at his failure of will and his son's death, as well as contributions made to the issue by the roles of the Iyaloja, the Praise Singer, Olunde and the Pilkings.
- (b) This was the less popular option but some candidates did identify the way the vitality of movement and increasingly crowded stage contributed to the powerful presentation of Elesin. There was some exploration of the treatment of the theme of death and reference to the context to explain the significance of the Not-I bird but there needed to be more sustained, detailed analysis of the diction and rhythm to bring out the lyrical, visual and dramatic qualities of the language.

Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

This was a popular text with many candidates showing a good understanding of the narrative method and thematic content of the novel. Many wrote with impressive confidence and control, supporting their arguments with detailed references to the text and many apt quotations. Most were able to make appropriate use of relevant critical reading, though on both questions some candidates were distracted by attempts to include Freudian ideas.

- (a) There were some convincing accounts of the parallels between Septimus and Clarissa and more able candidates could explore the sense that knowledge of Septimus's death somehow completes Clarissa's experience. There were some really impressive answers in which the textual knowledge was presented with a sophisticated literary appreciation of the way the narrative technique, the shared moments and symbolism contribute to the argument. Less assured candidates took the

question to mean 'compare and contrast the characters of' and some simply wrote on Clarissa with occasional references to Septimus.

- (b) The passage was very accessible and candidates were usually comfortable with the techniques, looking in detail at the third person story telling and the internal, stream-of-consciousness of the characters to appreciate the communication of different viewpoints and the intensity of the feelings. Candidates were less keen on looking at the impact of the sentence structure and diction though there was much useful discussion about the props – Clarissa's mending and Peter's knife. The latter was often treated too symbolically and this took candidates back to Freud in a way that added little illumination to what is actually going on in the passage. Some less assured candidates talked generally about Woolf's style – for example her use of brackets - but did not use the details in the text to explore the effect. Weaker candidates used moments in the passage as a springboard for accounts of other moments in the novel where Peter and Clarissa meet, and moved too quickly away from the detail of the passage.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/07

Comment and Appreciation

General comments

All three questions proved to be equally accessible and appropriately demanding, and all led to some very thoughtful and critically perceptive responses. No question proved to be significantly more popular than others, and while the poetry (**Question 3**) was sometimes handled a little less skilfully than the prose or drama there seemed to be few particular difficulties in any of the three. Most candidates were clearly very much aware of the need to explore not just *what* each passage says, but more importantly *how* it is said: the nature and the effects of the language and where appropriate the poetic and dramatic skills used were what mattered, and most answers – even if sometimes only tangentially or implicitly – seemed well aware of this requirement. Relatively few scripts simply “told the story”, a point noted and praised by Examiners.

A point also noted, however, was the surprising number – not huge, but significant – of candidates who seemed determined to read much more into their chosen passages than was written. It is sometimes simpler and more astute just to accept that a writer means exactly what s/he says, and is not trying to convey something entirely different. Further examples of this tendency will be given in each section below, but some particularly unexpected interpretations – with no supporting evidence whatsoever in the writing, and with absolutely no foundation at all in what each writer actually says, included the assertion that in **Question 1** Walter Hartright is travelling on a train, that the passage is about global warming, or that “as the Wise Men came from the East, he chooses evil by going West”; and perhaps most surprising of all was the statement that Thomas Hardy wrote his poem “after his death”.

Only one script failed to answer two questions, and while a handful of answers were clearly unfinished – occasionally ending before the end of a sentence or even in the middle of a word – almost all candidates managed their timing either satisfactorily or well.

A word does need to be said about presentation, however: Examiners are of course aware that candidates are writing against the clock, and because this inevitably creates a huge amount of pressure they are fully prepared to accept work that is not entirely polished. The instructions on the front of the question paper, however, do make the clear point that candidates “*are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation*” in their answers; handwriting is certainly a very personal matter, and Examiners become accustomed to a huge variety of style and tidiness, but there are occasions when parts of a script become difficult or sometimes literally impossible to decipher. Candidates who do not take care and trouble to write with at least reasonable care and clarity are doing themselves no favours. And while occasional slips of the pen and mis-spellings are inevitable and in no way penalised, it again does not help when what is written is incomplete, when words are omitted, or when seriously inaccurate spelling becomes a real hindrance

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was quite a long passage, and a very rich one, but while the huge majority of candidates wrote about it with intelligent thoughtfulness, Examiners were disappointed at the number who spent a long time considering the opening, often making sensible and perceptive comments about Hartright and his relationships with his family and his feelings about London, but who then found that they were unable to do real justice to the second half of the passage, and his encounter with the Woman. This unbalance did not in itself lead to a lower mark, of course, provided that what was said was critically appropriate, but given the clear importance of this meeting to Walter it did seem a pity that it was so often skimmed over.

The introduction to this passage (in bold, to differentiate it from the extract from the novel itself) says that Hartright is *leaving* London to take up his new position; very many candidates found themselves in something of a quandary in that they ignored this idea, and assumed that he was going to London in order to

teach – given his very deep dislike of the city this made his feelings doubly complicated, of course, and some clear mis-readings followed. Many candidates suggested that the painful heat of the day, combined with the “close and sultry” nature of the night, might well reflect his own feelings of entrapment in the city.

Most answers commented on his reluctance to leave his mother and sister, that he “stopped, and hesitated” as he left the house, but that the servant “locked the garden-gate behind me”, suggesting a finality and irrevocability in his departure. The fact that there is a servant was made much of by a lot of candidates – but nowhere else in the passage is the family’s wealth, or indeed their lack of wealth, made an issue. The walk towards London was explored by almost all candidates, with a great deal of sensitivity and perception – the crossroads representing a moment of decision in Hartright’s life, the moon in a starless sky implying his own solitude, and so on. Most saw clearly how he became lost in his “fanciful visions” of his two future candidates, so that when his shoulder is tapped (“laid lightly” – he was not hit or assaulted by her) his shock and momentary terror were again well noted and discussed; the hyperbolic sentence that “every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop” was noticed and discussed in virtually every answer to the question.

Candidates were almost uniformly determined that the Woman is unreal – either a ghost or an angel; very few indeed saw her, as Collins surely intends, simply as a woman temporarily lost and asking for help. It is of course a fair point to make that she is alone in the dead of night, that Collins does make a great deal of her physical appearance and its whiteness, and that he does use the word “apparition” in line 43, but what follows in the final long paragraph is surely just a description of a rather ordinary if mysteriously placed young woman. Examiners were of course fully aware that candidates have not read the rest of the novel, and were always positively interested in whatever candidates said about the woman, provided – and this had to be a big proviso – that what they said was based upon what Collins has written. For example, she is certainly not old (she has a “youthful face”); there is no evidence whatsoever that she is a prostitute, that she is looking for a job, or that she is Mr Fairlie’s wife.

There was considerable loose and unconvincing comment in many scripts about the layout of the passage and its punctuation – it is written in paragraphs “to make it easier to read”, for example – and a surprising number of candidates suggested that Collins uses commas and hyphenated words to make the passage more exciting. There are some moments (line 6, for example, or lines 39 to 42) when punctuation does have a particular impact, and where these were mentioned credit was duly given, but often such remarks were generalised and entirely unsupported.

Question 2

This was marginally the least popular question, but still answered by a very significant proportion of candidates, many of whom managed it with considerable critical confidence. The biggest weakness lay in the fact that too many simply paraphrased, or saw the extract as in some ways a representation of a real event, rather than a fictional and above all a *dramatic* creation; there was often an implied appreciation of Rose’s writing, but worded in such a way as to suggest that candidates somehow thought that these were real jurymen discussing a real murder trial.

The fact that none of the men have names was a feature noted by many, and a good number saw this as suggestive that these were “everyman” figures, that each character could perhaps be any one of us, or that to give them names would individualise them too much, rather than making them simply characters who represent ordinary human foibles and prejudices. Not many candidates were as sophisticated as the one who wrote the following, the idea is very good indeed, and in fact reflected, though not in the same words, by several others: “the play’s title itself tends to suggest the clone-like nature of jurors and that they are a monolithic entity, but Rose paints a fascinating dichotomy between the characters”.

Focus tended, quite naturally, to be mainly upon the 7th, 8th and 9th Jurors and the Foreman; the last was frequently seen as a weak man, whose “big speech” in lines 20-24 is ironically very brief and singularly unimpressive; he was often seen as dictatorial and unkind, in his treatment for example of the 9th Juror’s slightly late arrival, but both here and later in the extract candidates pointed to his apparent inability to lead any sort of discussion, but rather to submit quite weakly to whatever the other jurors want. The 7th Juror was almost always regarded with distaste, though a few praised his decisiveness; most however were scornful and very critical of his preference for baseball discussion, and later with his total lack of feeling for the alleged murderer. Rather curiously, though in some ways understandably, he was quite often called the protagonist of the play, with the more humane and thoughtful 8th Juror as the antagonist, even by candidates who sided with the latter’s wish to discuss and consider their decisions more carefully.

Most candidates took at least some notice of the stage directions, but not all made sufficient attempt to use these in a discussion of the extract as a piece of theatre, but rather as a way of enlivening or supporting a reader's view of the passage. These directions (they are not "director's notes", really, and certainly not "the narrator's voice") are frequent and full, and should certainly have been used more widely by candidates; there is a good deal of action and movement in the extract, which is not just plain dialogue or conversation. For example – as noted by a good number – lines 38 to 41 are hugely significant, in showing that seven or eight jurors are immediately convinced while a few others are less certain, and one, the 9th Juror, appears very uncertain; these actions, followed by the 8th Juror's vote of "not guilty", are essential in appreciating character, but also very important in creating suspense and tension on stage, or in an audience – the visual impact is greater than the verbal here. The 4th Juror's lighting of a cigarette in line 53 says something about his nature, too – contempt for other jurors, possibly, or for the supposed formality of a jury room, or perhaps simply to show that he wishes to relax a bit after a few moments of some tension in the room.

Much of Rose's language is significant, too (and in writing this it is worth noting that relatively few answers noted that Rose is the writer, and not all the jury members – the play is a fictional creation); for example, the casual colloquialisms used at the start by the 7th Juror make clear his informal and possibly deliberately uninterested view of the proceedings, and even by line 100 when a little more involved his use of the expression "Okay, slugger, be my guest" implies a similar lack of formality or perhaps respect. The 9th Juror's apology at the start, together with his age, pick him out as perhaps a more serious-minded person, and certainly a more courteous one, as does his action of removing his hat as he enters the room, another minor stage direction that several candidates noted. And as already mentioned, the Foreman's "big speech" is anything but big, and his language and idiom too are noticeably more relaxed and informal than one might have expected.

More than a few candidates saw the extract as meaning something more or other than just a jury's discussion about a murder case; one saw it, interestingly, as an allegory of the passion and trial of Jesus Christ – an unfair and unjust procedure – though quite how the twelve jurymen represent the twelve apostles was not made entirely clear. Many others saw it more convincingly as a comment by Rose on the often unjust nature of trial by jury, or of the whole justice system in the United States of America, while others simply, and probably more sensibly, read it as just a representation of twelve ordinary and anonymous people caught up in a situation which they were not confident with, and which they dealt with in a variety of unsatisfactory ways.

A surprisingly large number found some or even the whole passage humorous; there are perhaps some lighter moments, but the situation presented by Rose is not at all comic – it is, quite literally, a matter of life and death. It can be argued that some of the 7th Juror's comments may come because he is in fact nervous about the responsibility that he has been given, but to say that they act as "comic relief" at the very start of the given passage is not convincing.

Question 3

Comment has already been made about the need to address the given passages for what they actually say rather than for what they *might* be saying, and this was nowhere more true and valid than in this question; these two poems are surely and quite straightforwardly poems about wind and storm; there is no need to make other assumptions that they are in any way metaphorical – there is plenty to discuss in what they actually are.

Hardy's poem is a fairly simple and straightforward account of a "storm-strid" night when the poet can hear the kind of weather that is going on outside his house; it is very dark indeed ("the blind profound") so there can be, and is, no visual description of any sort, despite what several candidates asserted. Because he has heard storms like this before, the poet knows that trees are being rocked, their leaves scattered, and in some cases they are even being uprooted; the rain clearly is or at least has been heavy, since in line 7 the streams are "swollen" and in line 11 church towers are "saturate". A touch of humour enters in the second stanza, where eels are said to "migrate", and have been felt by men's feet as they walk home late at night, and most noticeably in the final line where "witches ride abroad" – this may of course be a more serious kind of superstitious belief, but more likely a touch of comedy to end what is overall a strongly-felt poem. It is unlikely to be about a battle between good and evil, though some candidates made sensible attempts to see it as such – the last line, though, is really the only one where this can properly be supported, with the "good" church-timbers being cracked, and witches coming out into the open.

Most candidates wanted to say something about the poem's quite intricate structure and shape, which was often said to look physically a little like a windy night; and many commented upon the strict rhyme pattern adopted by the poet, as echoing the fact that despite the storm's violence the poet was able to maintain

control. One candidate made the rather nice comment that “the poem’s structure is picturesque in a wavy sort of manner” – though did not go on to say what effect this had upon her response to it. The rhyme pattern is, incidentally, AABAAB, and emphatically not ADEBCF as one answer suggested, though this was not as extreme as the answer which said that Hughes’ poem used the rhyme scheme ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ. However, very few candidates made any real use of the rhyme scheme beyond identifying it, and simple identification is not of any critical value. Nor is it helpful to say simply that there are no similes or metaphors in the poem; this may be true, but it does not add any critical weight to the discussion.

“Mid-fall”, incidentally, means “mid-autumn”, and is not a place name as several candidates believed – though no loss of credit was ever imposed because of this understandable error. And “the tree-trunks rock to their roots” does not mean that they were dancing in the wind; if nothing else, Hardy would certainly not have known that the word “rock” came to mean a kind of music or dance later in the century.

Hughes’ poem is significantly different in many ways: the storm is more violent, it lasts longer, the poet is physically involved in it, and its language, as well as being more recent, is much more complex and figurative. Most candidates grasped at least one of these contrasts, and many made something of at least one of them, though very disappointingly far too many preferred to remain very much on the surface, and stressed that the main differences lay in the fact that two different poets had written them, that they were (possibly) from two different centuries, that one was “much longer” than the other, that Hughes does not use any rhyme scheme, or that unlike Hardy he uses a great deal of enjambement (or “enjurement” as one candidate put it). In fact his writing is remarkably tight in its control, though certainly not as conventionally so as Hardy’s; all Hughes’ lines are very similar in length, each stanza is regular, and there is a perhaps surprisingly regular use of half-rhyme in most stanzas. There is a good deal of metaphor and simile, and much of his language is indeed hard and violent, unlike most of Hardy’s quite simple and even romantic terminology; most candidates isolated and noted several of Hughes’ more striking words, though few actually made much critical use of them, relying on identification alone.

And herein lay one of the most common and biggest weaknesses of the poetry answers; unlike most of those on **Question 1** or **Question 2** there was a frequent tendency just to list devices and images, with no thoughtful concern at all for the impact these have upon a reader. A good many candidates, in fact, quite simply devoted one paragraph each to as many devices as they could find, with little or no serious attempt to see either poem as a whole, or indeed what either poem is actually describing. And where some attempt was made to say what effects were created by the poet this was often very general and even vague – “the full stop shows that the sentence has ended”, “darkness shows that it is night”, “the rhyme makes the poem interesting”, “we feel sorry for the stones who are not happy” are some of the less sophisticated thoughts that do certainly show a very little personal response, but certainly not a critically sensitive one.

More helpful were those answers which tried for example to explain the meaning of line 1, which is certainly not literally true, but an image to suggest the ferocity of the wind and rain of the night. Where this line was seen as literally true, most argument quickly ran into difficulties, except for the few who went on to suggest that the hills, woods and fields are themselves metaphors for waves, and the fire at the end is the setting sun; not an altogether convincing interpretation, but where pursued with consistency and apt textual support it was well rewarded – it is how a candidate responds that matters, not primarily what he or she believes. Some mis-interpretations were caused by misunderstanding of individual words – for example, several candidates thought that “goblets” were “goblins”, so decided that like Hardy’s poem this was also about superstitions, and even about the battle between good (the people indoors and the stones) and evil (the goblins and the wind) – if pursued sensitively and consistently, then again such mis-readings did not in themselves lead to lower marks.

There were a good many attempts to make both poems mean more than they actually say, particularly “Wind”, which was rarely seen as just a very powerful and memorable account of a violent and even vicious wind (line 11, for example, and the whole of the final stanza, suggest how strong and frightening it is). The poet and his friends/family are sitting in front of their fire trying unsuccessfully to ignore the noises outside; like Hardy, they are listening to the raging storm, but unlike Hardy they cannot be at all comfortable or even half-humorous about it.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

This was a very good session; the coursework submitted was of a particularly high standard, and it was evident that candidates had been excellently taught and prepared; even where folders were written by somewhat less confident candidates it was clear that they knew and appreciated the two texts that they had studied, and wrote about them with confidence and clarity. Essays were in general well or often very well structured and argued, with references and quotations fluently and often quite elegantly integrated into their writing; many candidates, where appropriate, also used secondary critical material as a means of supporting and reinforcing their own responses. It was a pleasure to read so many mature and at times sophisticated critical discussions.

Texts used were what might be termed “safe” ones, and where they were not from what might be termed the conventional English Literature canon they were ones that the Centres had used before. Neither of these factors is in any sense a criticism of the choices, nor does it suggest any kind of monotony or lack of imaginative response by candidates, who by and large demonstrated a very pleasing degree of carefully and thoughtfully argued personal reactions to the texts and to the tasks being addressed.

Few essays relied over-much upon narrative or paraphrase, which was good to see, and where these were introduced they served only as a means to an end; by far the majority tackled the set tasks with a confident overview of the text in question, and showed an ability to use the whole of it, often moving fluently and convincingly between different parts, or between different poems. The only significant weakness in writing about poetry was a tendency by some candidates – not exclusively the less confident – to write separately about a number of individual poems, almost presenting a short sequence of mini-essays, with perhaps a concluding general summing-up at the end; the best, however, managed to move easily and frequently between poems within paragraphs, moving their argument forward by means of linking and comparing them in the course of what they were writing. To do this successfully is not always easy, of course, but it does almost invariably make for a better and more sophisticated piece of criticism. At the same time, and particularly pleasingly, many candidates also explored *how* their poets (predominantly Plath and Larkin) wrote, again linking poems together in respect of the particular poetic techniques used in them; close critical exploration rarely relied upon device-spotting, too, and the focus was almost always upon what impact on the readers such devices achieved.

Much the same was the case with the novels used, where most candidates showed a confident whole-text appreciation, supported by an ability to draw examples and quotations from throughout the novels. There was rarely any serious doubt about the confidence with which candidates knew and appreciated what they had studied.

Annotation and summative comments by teaching staff did vary a little, but in the main these were full and very helpfully directed towards the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate’s writing, and towards the skills that are demanded by the Marking Criteria. It is always important for an external Moderator to be able to see how and why a mark has been reached, particularly – as was the occasional case in this submission – where internal moderation has led to a small change to the original mark offered by a teacher. Assessments were generally very close indeed to agreed standards for this syllabus, suggesting that Centres are increasingly confident about not only their teaching and preparation for coursework but also in marking their candidates’ folders. In all, then, a very good session indeed in almost every way.

