

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/11  
Paper 11 (Open Books)

## Key messages

The following are key areas that are necessary for success in set texts papers:

1. *Relevance to the question.* Candidates benefit from being trained to analyse questions, looking for key phrases on which to base their answer. A good answer will keep the question firmly in mind throughout and will not digress into narrative, speculation, general assertion or personal opinion unrelated to the text. A few minutes spent planning an answer will help candidates to stay on course. Successful candidates know the importance of the key phrases in the question as they write their answer. Phrases such as 'Another way in which the relationship is memorable...' or 'This scene is particularly exciting because...' at the start of paragraphs not only help the candidate keep on track and focused, but help the reader see how the answer develops.
2. *A well structured argument.* Classroom discussion is clearly central to acquisition of the skill of constructing a developed argument, an essential ingredient for achieving the highest grades in the paper.
3. *Well selected supporting detail and quotation.* Along with a well structured argument goes the ability to use quotation and close reference to support that argument, not merely as a prop, but as the basis for comment and analysis. Less successful candidates may often demonstrate knowledge by inserting quotation but they do not go on to comment on it; their answers become a series of assertions or narrative. There is also sometimes a mismatch between the quotation and the point being made. Candidates should be encouraged to use quotation effectively, to select appropriately and economically, and to comment on the selection they make.
4. *Analysis of the writer's technique.* Another essential for success is the ability to engage with the writer's choice of language (Assessment Objective 3). While passage-based and poetry questions may seem to have the most overt requirement in this connection, discursive answers are always enhanced by a consideration of the writer's technique. In order to encourage candidates to explore rather than explain the use of particular words, one useful exercise might be to encourage them to try and find synonyms or substitutes and then consider the ensuing effect.

## General comments

In general, the quality of the responses to these papers showed that candidates had been stimulated by and had enjoyed the texts that they had studied.

There were very few examples of misunderstanding or of the wrong character or incident being chosen where one was specified. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were clear indications of enjoyment of and engagement with the texts. There were a significant number of excellent scripts where candidates responded to texts very well and were able to analyse language in depth. Well prepared candidates delivered perceptive, intelligent answers which addressed the point of questions, revealed detailed engagement with text, and integrated textual reference and quotation within answers.

In the majority of papers time had been used sensibly with answers of approximately equal length. (Where this was not the case, it was invariably the third answer that was shorter and sometimes rather rushed.) Some candidates wrote long introductory paragraphs which, in some cases, were almost as long as the main body of their answers. This was almost always a waste of time, as although these paragraphs often supplied a detailed overview of the storyline, they were not aimed at the actual question and so could gain little if any credit.

There seemed to be fewer examples this session of candidates adopting the strategy of using 'one I prepared earlier' in response to a question, focusing instead on the terms of the questions. There were, however, a good few cases where key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', were neglected. These words are intended as prompts for consideration of the writers' methods and as an indication that narrative alone will not be sufficient to meet the demands of the task.

Some candidates included reference to biographical, social and/or historical context at the expense of focusing on the text itself. This was particularly true with the poems *The Voice* and *Full Moon and Little Frieda*, where biographical 'facts' got in the way of considering the power of the words. It was also true to some extent with the topic of the American Dream, which took over some answers to the Miller and the Fitzgerald and became a distraction from the task in hand.

There were some excellent responses to the passage-based questions, the best using details from the passage effectively and economically in support of a strong response to the question. However, some candidates surprisingly did not quote freely from the extract despite it being available to them.

Good answers to the drama questions acknowledged that drama is intended to be watched and is different from prose. In good answers candidates explored all the evidence available to them, especially stage directions, the way actors deliver lines and respond to each other. But a significant number of answers referred tellingly to the play as 'the novel' and the audience as 'readers'. It is recommended that teachers encourage candidates to try and visualise drama in performance i.e. as an audience.

Empathic response tasks were popular in some Centres. The best, through their creation of a convincing voice, showed a sophisticated understanding of the writer's method, and included, whether directly or indirectly, a great deal of detail. Less successful attempts relied on more generalised thoughts and feelings or on narrative without sufficient detailed support.

Poetry answers seemed to suffer less this year from over-display of technical terms, though there was still a tendency for some answers to resort to displaying knowledge of (sometimes abstruse) terminology at the expense of analysis. In weaker answers, alliteration was often deemed responsible for every emotion in any poem, punctuation taking care of anything not covered by the other terms. Such answers often used technical terms as a substitute for any engaged commentary on language, making rather bland comments such as 'the use of enjambment makes the poem flow', 'the caesura shows the pain of his loss', 'alliteration proves how long she's been away'. Some answers seemed to be entirely constructed around the use of caesura, the actual meaning of the poem being lost. By contrast, though, there were many very assured and sophisticated responses, offering perceptive and original interpretations and clearly showing the way in which language and imagery were used by the poet.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A: Drama**

##### ***Death of Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

There were some excellent responses that ranged very widely, pointing out the ironies and the significances, the best answers exploring the timing of the scene and the ways in which it presents a contrast between past and present for all the characters. Most candidates seemed to find that the passage gave access to expressing their understanding of Willy as a parent, as a role model for his sons, as a failure in his work, as a liar or hopeless dreamer and as a character to be pitied. Some candidates, however, seemed to take Willy at face value and believe his stories. His attitude to the stolen football tells us a lot about Willy and Biff and has links with the play as a whole, but this was often not seen. The question asked what makes this so dramatic and revealing and many answers focused on one or the other rather than both. Those answers which went into details about political and social background often wasted time which might more usefully have been given to examination of the extract itself.

##### **Question 2**

Better answers were able to examine Linda's role and to see the irony that her protectiveness of him is one of the causes of Willy's tragedy. Some candidates seemed not to have been prepared to discuss Linda and so reverted to Willy and his shortcomings, thereby losing focus on the task.

### Question 3

Central considerations here were how self-accusatory was Willy? How deluded was he? How far would he take responsibility? On the whole candidates enjoyed their impersonations of Willy and had a good grasp of character and events.

### *My Mother Said I Never Should*

### Question 4

There were some good examples of close reading of the text. Some answers were very thorough and explored fully the nuances of the dialogue between Doris and Margaret and all its tensions and undercurrents. Weaker answers were less precise and wandered away from the passage.

### Question 5

This was a far less popular question. Successful answers showed good knowledge of the character; weaker ones looked to the passage for help. The key words 'vividly convey' were often not dealt with.

### Question 6

Some struggled to find a voice for Margaret, especially as to how she really felt about not inheriting from her father. There was a range of responses from anger to bland acceptance.

### *Much Ado About Nothing*

### Question 7

This was by far the most popular *Much Ado* question. Most candidates had been well prepared and were aware of where the passage fitted in the play and of Beatrice and Benedick's characters and previous relationship and the 'trick' being played on them. There was plenty to write about for most candidates and the contrast of 'moving' and 'dramatic' was obvious to most. Quite a few ventured into the area of the position of women in society as if it had to be included. Responses from some Centres (and their similarity suggested that these were taught responses) portrayed Beatrice as 'manipulative' and 'vindictive', 'using Benedict's declared love to blackmail him into killing his best friend' who was, after all, himself a 'victim and innocent'. Beatrice was 'testing Benedict', 'pushing the limits', and so on. One candidate wrote, 'this takes the character to a new, almost psychopathic level...she has next to no value in love...the audience should lose sympathy for Beatrice when she is put next to Benedict being loyal to Claudio...'. Many such answers ignored 'moving' and 'dramatic'.

### Question 8

The candidates who attempted this question usually did consider both points of view and nearly always plumped for 'silly and conceited'. Some merely gave examples of 'silly' speech. Better answers considered Dogberry's role in the unfolding of the plot against Hero and in bringing the miscreants to justice.

### Question 9

Borachio is a relatively minor character in terms of the amount that he says in the play though his role is very significant. There were some very effective recreations, some taking the line that he blamed himself for being a dupe to Don John and showing some remorse, others taking a more cynical view.

### *Richard III*

### Question 10

Again, the passage-based task was the most popular of the three questions. Most candidates found examples of irony, though the dark humour proved more difficult for some. The best answers showed enjoyment of the black humour and malevolence of the Dukes and the innocence of the child. Very few candidates started at the beginning of the extract and worked through to the end; the question allowed for a much more individual approach.

### Question 11

All candidates attempting this knew something about Clarence and Hastings, and so the task enabled discrimination according to knowledge and ability. There was a tendency for some answers to depend too much on narrative, however, and not to focus on 'dramatic power'. There was usually some sympathy for the men as victims of Richard.

### Question 12

The empathic task expected a mature mixture of hate, anxiety, relief, grief and hope. There were many dead characters to mourn, as well as Richard's attempts on the young Elizabeth to reflect on. However, the task successfully enabled discrimination by knowledge of character and events. There were a few candidates who impersonated the wrong character.

### *Journey's End*

### Question 13

Good answers to this question gave sensitive insights into the reasons for Stanhope's aggressive and unreasonable behaviour in this scene. They saw its significance as being virtually the first scene where he really opens up and reveals the damage that the war has done to him. They understood his disappointment in himself as well as his despair of ever being 'normal' again and they found the closeness of the relationship with Osborne profoundly moving. The best commented on the language and tone of the passage and saw the humour in the interchange with Osborne at the end of it. Some candidates seemed to find the extract difficult, however, and a surprising number did not comment on Stanhope's drunkenness or understand the uneasy blend of warfare, stress and masculine bonding.

### Question 14

The relationship between Raleigh and Stanhope was well understood on the whole, though weaker answers tended not to see that Stanhope's irritation and anger at his arrival is partly to do with his sense of responsibility for Raleigh. There was some relevant material in the passage but answers also needed to consider other significant incidents, such as the dinner after Osborne's death and the final scene of Raleigh's death. Surprisingly, one or other of these scenes was often missed. A key word here was 'memorable', and successful answers showed a strong and sensitive personal response.

### Question 15

There were some excellent Trotters. Many saw the humour, practical good-sense and his enjoyment of his creature comforts, but some candidates focused on the Stanhope-Raleigh situation and involved him in totally uncharacteristic amateur psychology. Some missed the dropped aitches and differences in speech between him and the Public School officers.

## Section B: Poetry

### *Tennyson*

### Question 16

This was the least popular of the poetry questions. Most responses to it explained meaning and indicated 'optimism and determination' without engaging with 'striking', but selecting appropriate textual details. Good answers, however, probed the text for relevant words and images.

### Question 17

Most candidates were able to link the nature descriptions with Tennyson's thoughts and feelings. Responses tended to be chronological but at least they did show the candidates had understood the language and the question. They often commented on pathetic fallacy: the snow was going, Spring was coming and the birds were happy. Better answers engaged with language and image in a detailed and sensitive way.

### Question 18

Most candidates understood the poem though some blamed Sir Lancelot for not returning the Lady's love. However, many did not engage with 'What does Tennyson make you feel' to any extent; there was a little curiosity and a lot of sympathy and that tended to be it. Even weaker answers referred to 'four grey walls' and Lancelot's colours; more successful ones responded sensitively to the language and sounds of the poem.

### *Songs of Ourselves*

### Question 19

*Marrysong*, a densely intricate elegy, proved difficult for some candidates. For example, 'without seasons' could be interpreted as bland and unchanging. Many candidates had been very well prepared and could present a knowledgeable paraphrase of the poem but the explanation of the central metaphor was more challenging and proved the discriminator. There was a fairly widespread misreading of the question as 'Explore the ways in which Scott portrays a beautiful relationship' which takes the emphasis off the examination of language and imagery and which therefore often led to simple paraphrase. The best answers, as ever, offered sensitive and often original interpretations.

### Question 20

*The Voice* was easily the most commonly attempted of all the poems in this section. While there were some very strong responses, others by contrast often suffered from over-use – and sometimes ingenious or questionable use – of literary terminology at the expense of real analysis and personal engagement: e.g. 'Alliteration of 'w' in *wan wistfulness* shows his pain at her disappearance...', 'Assonance of 'e' in *wet mead to me hear (sic)* shows how overwhelmed Hardy was by the whole experience...', 'The pain has struck him with the use of the semi-colon...'. Many answers provided all sorts of background information, but some of it was unsupportable and was not relevant to the task of exploring how Hardy powerfully communicates the pain of loss. There were far fewer responses to *Sonnet 29*. Those who attempted it generally showed fair understanding of it, although weaker answers tended simply to paraphrase it.

### Question 21

Those who answered on *The Flower-fed Buffaloes* usually understood what the poem was about as they could follow the 'story'; rhythm and repetition could be addressed and double meanings considered. The Hughes poem caused more problems. Some of the best poetry answers seen in this Paper were on this poem, written by candidates who engaged with the language and offered some really perceptive ideas but a significant number found it difficult to respond to as they had no idea what was or could be going on. Many candidates adopted a particular learnt interpretation that the poem is a metaphor about the birth of Little Frieda, where the 'dark river of blood' is menstruation, the 'unspilled milk' a reference to breasts and mother's milk, the moon is the father. Alternatively, the boulders and 'dark river' are the obstacles Frieda will struggle against in life and there is a 'sinister reference to death'. She is 'the brimming pail', innocent and just starting life, and will grow to maturity. Even when candidates were writing about the flash of perception as the child links language to an object, 'moon!' they were also tying this into the 'birth' scenario. *Sonnet 43* proved more straightforward, but candidates generally found less to say about it.

### Section C: Prose

### *Wuthering Heights*

### Question 22

This was the most popular question on this text. Candidates could usually find drama in the passage, but it was less common to find a focus on the idea of it being Isabella's narration and what that could mean. Relatively few candidates mentioned anything else about the novel other than what was in this extract.

### Question 23

Many who attempted this question treated Nelly as a real person with little sense of her as a construct. Weaker responses seemed to find it amazing that she made certain decisions or said certain things and very rarely mentioned Bronte. As ever in the case of questions such as this, answers that went beyond prepared

character sketch and began to consider the role and function of the character – and who focused on the terms of the question ('memorable' being the key word here) fared much better.

#### **Question 24**

Heathcliff empathic responses tended to involve much inclusion of details of the plot yet to unfold. However, Gothic cursing was clearly attractive and the task seems to have been enjoyed by candidates.

#### ***Games at Twilight***

#### **Question 25**

There was some good close reading of the passage in evidence, with focus upon feelings as demonstrated through the actions of the children. Good answers explored the vivid descriptions and were aware of the writer's technique to explore. Less successful answers simply 'went through' the passage and said a few words about feelings at the end.

#### **Question 26**

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

#### **Question 27**

This task was only attempted by a few candidates, but there were some pleasing and convincing recreations of Pat.

#### ***When Rain Clouds Gather***

#### **Question 28**

There was plenty of atmosphere for candidates to respond to in the extract: general material for the less skilled in analysis, and rich detail with many literary devices and descriptions for the more accomplished.

#### **Question 29**

Chief Matenge is a vivid character who obviously impressed many. Many found it difficult to go beyond a record of actions and events but some were able to do so and to focus correctly on how he is made 'horrible', a word that demands a strong personal response.

#### **Question 30**

Candidates displayed excellent knowledge of the text in this empathic task, and were usually very successful in impersonating Dinorego's dignity and wonderment at the changes in the village.

#### ***The Great Gatsby***

#### **Question 31**

Candidates enjoyed exploring what the extract said about American society, the rich, Gatsby, conspicuous consumption, exploitation, etc. but the idea of 'striking' was not often engaged with. Only the best answers selected certain impressions and explored them, rather than just wandering through the whole passage. Those that spotted the 'moth' imagery often went on to explore other imagery to good effect. Those who started by listing luxury items often got no further and the implications in this extract, especially about the people who attended, were often missed. Some candidates sensed shallowness and something 'fake' and 'desperate' about the scene and some went as far as insisting on Fitzgerald feeling 'disgust' for the 'conspicuous consumption' he describes. The strongest answers made clear the moral vacuum at the heart of this society.

### Question 32

This question went to the heart of the novel and many candidates quoted the famous lines about the ways in which Tom Buchanan destroyed people and then retreated into his money. This showed how well assimilated the ideas of the novel had been, and this question allowed candidates to display their understanding. Candidates tended to use quotation very well in answering this question.

### Question 33

The empathy question proved successful in so far as all candidates caught Daisy's mixture of sentimentalism, superficiality and materialism. Answers did tend to be rather brief, though, perhaps because we do not often share Daisy's thoughts in the novel. Daisy fared the worst in this category. Her thrilling conspiratorial whispers, sometimes shockingly shot through with bitterness, did not really come through. Candidates did not seem really sure what Daisy feels at this point in the novel and fell back on descriptions of Gatsby's mansion, and cynical remarks about Tom.

### *Ethan Frome*

### Question 34

The extract offered much material for analysis and there were some extremely sensitive responses, showing a good understanding of the poignancy of the latter parts of the novel and showing real engagement. The best did 'explore how Wharton conveys the tension'; weaker answers simply retold what happened.

### Question 35

Candidates were well prepared for this task which went to the centre of the novel, and generally wrote persuasively. Some used material from the extract but geared it to the question and, of course, limited themselves if they did not go beyond that. There were many balanced answers, with candidates being aware of the possible bias in the narrative.

### Question 36

Candidates enjoyed writing as Mattie. Some effective empathic work was seen here, although responses were occasionally rather 'modern' and gushing.

### *Stories of Ourselves*

### Question 37

The extract from *The Third and Final Continent* proved less than straightforward for some. Although candidates could see that this was the moment when the couple begin to fall in love, they often neglected Mrs Croft entirely or failed to see her as the catalyst for the narrator's feelings for his wife.

### Question 38

Mr Wills in *The Taste of Watermelon* was the most popular choice. Surprisingly, a lot of the answers concentrated more on the early part of the story where sympathy is in shorter supply than on the final section. Candidates could identify reasons for sympathy but it was only the stronger ones who realised how the reader's view was directed and manipulated by the narrative viewpoint. There were some very perceptive answers on *The Yellow Wall Paper*. The impact of the diary form was assessed with some perception. Not many tackled *The Signalman*, but those who did were engaged by his character and situation.

### Question 39

Relatively few attempted the empathic task on *The Lemon Orchard*, but there were some convincingly harsh voices here, making good use of the detail of the story and providing believable accounts of 'what happened next.'

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3. *Well selected supporting detail and quotation.* Along with a well structured argument goes the ability to use quotation and close reference to support that argument, not merely as a prop, but as the basis for comment and analysis. Less successful candidates may often demonstrate knowledge by inserting quotation but they do not go on to comment on it; their answers become a series of assertions or narrative. There is also sometimes a mismatch between the quotation and the point being made. Candidates should be encouraged to use quotation effectively, to select appropriately and economically, and to comment on the selection they make.
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## General comments

In general, the quality of the responses to these papers showed that candidates had been stimulated by and had enjoyed the texts that they had studied.

There were very few examples of misunderstanding or of the wrong character or incident being chosen where one was specified. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were clear indications of enjoyment of and engagement with the texts. There were a significant number of excellent scripts where candidates responded to texts very well and were able to analyse language in depth. Well prepared candidates delivered perceptive, intelligent answers which addressed the point of questions, revealed detailed engagement with text, and integrated textual reference and quotation within answers.

In the majority of papers time had been used sensibly with answers of approximately equal length. (Where this was not the case, it was invariably the third answer that was shorter and sometimes rather rushed.) Some candidates wrote long introductory paragraphs which, in some cases, were almost as long as the main body of their answers. This was almost always a waste of time, as although these paragraphs often supplied a detailed overview of the storyline, they were not aimed at the actual question and so could gain little if any credit.

There seemed to be fewer examples this session of candidates adopting the strategy of using 'one I prepared earlier' in response to a question, focusing instead on the terms of the questions. There were, however, a good few cases where key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', were neglected. These words are intended as prompts for consideration of the writers' methods and as an indication that narrative alone will not be sufficient to meet the demands of the task.

Some candidates included reference to biographical, social and/or historical context at the expense of focusing on the text itself. This was particularly true with the poem *Full Moon and Little Frieda* in Question 19, where biographical 'facts' got in the way of considering the power of the words. It was also true to some extent with the topic of the American Dream, which took over some answers to *Death of A Salesman* and *The Great Gatsby* and became a distraction from the task in hand.

There were some excellent responses to the passage-based questions, the best using details from the passage effectively and economically in support of a strong response to the question. However, some candidates surprisingly did not quote freely from the extract despite it being available to them.

Good answers to the drama questions acknowledged that drama is intended to be watched and is different from prose. In good answers candidates explored all the evidence available to them, especially stage directions, the way actors deliver lines and respond to each other. But a significant number of answers referred tellingly to the play as 'the novel' and the audience as 'readers'. It is recommended that teachers encourage candidates to try and visualise drama in performance i.e. as an audience.

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## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A: Drama**

#### ***Death of a Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

The candidates who produced the most convincing responses were those who showed a sense of audience and responded to 'dramatic', demonstrating a sound understanding of the tensions in the passage and using the stage directions as well as quotations to support their ideas. 'Revealing' invited candidates to place the passage within the context of the whole play and even weaker answers seemed to have a general knowledge and understanding of the characters and situations. Some saw Willy's realisation in terms of a flawed version of the American dream. Some did not see any of the deeper issues: that Willy does not seem to realise that it was because of Biff's discovery of his affair that Biff dropped out of college, and that when it is pointed out to him in the extract, he refuses to accept it; or that previously, Bernard is ridiculed by Willy, but here, he's asking his advice.

##### **Question 2**

Many candidates rose to the challenge of this question, showing the complexity of Linda's statement, which not only refers to her current anxieties about Willy's state of mind, but also relates to the wider issue of The American Dream and Willy's role as an Everyman figure having significance for us all. Answers which

concentrated only on Willy's mental turmoil and his potential danger to others (his car etc.) missed some of the depths of the question. Some took refuge in offloading 'prepared' answers, for example about Willy as a tragic hero.

### Question 3

Candidates who tackled this empathic task clearly understood the narrative of the drama and some of Happy's thoughts at this moment. There were some very convincing assumptions of Happy's voice which showed a clear understanding that he was Willy's son in more than name and captured some of the boastfulness as well as the insecurities of coming second to Biff.

### *My Mother Said I Never Should*

### Question 4

Good answers explored all aspects of the passage, focusing on the visual and symbolic aspect of the tension between the women, i.e. the tugging of the sheet, and the ambiguity of Doris's remarks about the weather. They picked up the provocative statements of each of the women and many were able to see that Margaret is challenging Doris's system of values.

### Question 5

Most candidates tackling this question felt sympathy for Margaret and were able to identify moments in the drama which illustrated this. There were some very good answers demonstrating knowledge of the chosen character but a great many responses described each character in turn before adding a short 'answer' in the final paragraph.

### Question 6

Most candidates captured Doris reasonably well, showing her initial disapproval but her coming round to supporting her family and even to look forward to a new Great-grandchild. But some of her more quotable statements such as 'You make me so angry', 'Resentment is a terrible thing' were missing. Weaker answers provided narrative details and speculations from Doris but little sense of her voice.

### *Much Ado About Nothing*

### Question 7

Almost all candidates responded to 'satisfying' in terms of the plot, and were able to say what had gone before and how this rights the wrongs and prepares for what is to come. Many stopped at the end of the first page, ignoring the part of the extract with Dogberry. Better answers picked out 'Choose your revenge yourself' from Claudio to show just how contrite he is; and Borachio's 'she knew not what she did', saving Margaret's reputation by pointing out she was not in on the plot. Only the best answers saw that Leonato has not entirely forgiven Claudio and is going to subject him to public humiliation. In less successful answers there was a lack of direct quotation and of commentary on the language. Good answers described the audience's reactions to this scene.

### Question 8

There were some well informed and interesting discussions of Don Pedro. Most thought Don Pedro was 'well-intentioned and honourable', but also 'scheming', which was considered not a bad thing. Very few thought he was 'untrustworthy', and very few considered his scorning and snubbing of Leonato, the sexual jokes he shares with Claudio and his taunts of Benedick. Candidates were generally able to give textual examples in support of their views and there were some usefully learnt quotations deployed.

### Question 9

Hero was given a lot to think about by candidates who also considered the context of the 'first' wedding. Many picked up on 'My heart is exceeding heavy', and based their approach on it, which made Hero unexpectedly percipient. In weaker answers Hero did not reflect on anything much apart from that it was her wedding day and was not it lovely and she was so nervous and her dress was lovely and her husband-to-be was lovely too. Success in empathic tasks does require some detail from the text and there was much to be said about her meeting with Claudio, the wooing of Don Pedro and her relationship with Beatrice.

### *Richard III*

### Question 10

Many could see how this scene was powerfully dramatic. The best answers provided a sense of how Richard's character permeated the play even in his absence. Weaker answers attempted to retell the whole of the narrative of the drama.

### Question 11

To answer this question well candidates needed to focus on two words – 'lively' and 'humorous' – and to illustrate these characteristics with moments from the drama. There are some really good moments to use so it was surprising to read answers from so many who selected only one characteristic or addressed one as an afterthought in a throw-away sentence. Some candidates appeared to believe that the most hysterically amusing moment of the drama was Richard's death scene, missing the point that the full title of the play includes the word 'tragedy'.

### Question 12

This was handled well on the whole. Candidates were able to develop a voice for Hastings in which his shock and bewilderment began to emerge. Perhaps in some responses he might have been more angry, but generally the feelings expressed were believable and there was supporting detail.

### *Journey's End*

### Question 13

There were some good answers here which drew a contrast with Act One and managed to describe relationships and how these contributed to tone and atmosphere. Candidates mentioned the 'normality' of the scene with the sunlight, the food and the cheerful banter. Better answers explored some of the humour. Inevitably the focus was on Trotter and Osborne, but some noted the contribution that Mason makes. Rarely did anyone mention that Raleigh is there too. Really good answers also noted lighting effects and were clear that this is drama.

### Question 14

While there were a lot of character sketches offered, the most successful answers explored the dramatic purpose of Osborne. There were some moving and erudite responses to the question. It is clear that many candidates had really taken Osborne and the text itself to their hearts and they wrote with real engagement.

### Question 15

There were some very successful responses to this task which managed to reflect on Stanhope's disillusionment with the war, his exhaustion and his anger at and contempt of the Colonel. Weaker answers had difficulty in placing the exact point in the play and so the Colonel was barely mentioned. The voice proved accessible to most candidates.

## Section B: Poetry

### Tennyson

#### Question 16

Most candidates explored the language fairly effectively and even weaker candidates were able to comment on the language in this poem. To demonstrate the gloomy, depressing atmosphere, they selected repetitive rhyme patterns, the repeated last four lines, Mariana's crying whatever time of day, the gloomy depressing garden and house setting, the darkness and marshes, the night-time. Stronger answers considered the effect of, for example, the superlative 'blackest' (line 1), 'rusted' (line 3), 'broken' (line 5), all signs of something worn and broken 'like Mariana's love'. Some pointed out that even pleasant things were scorned, for example 'the sweet heaven' was not looked at. Some picked out the sounds in stanza three, which were all bleak and depressing. Some got quite irritated by Mariana, and thought 'she should get up and do something, and stop moping around', which showed some personal response. There were some, however, who described technical terms without comment on the contribution usage of these terms made to the poem. Rhyme schemes were an example of this, often identified and then left unexplained.

#### Question 17

Good answers focused on the words and the evident mental turmoil of the narrator. One or two candidates felt that the poem was about being buried alive - literally, not as a metaphor (which might be an interesting and legitimate interpretation but would require sustained discussion and that was missing from these answers). There was also evident confusion amongst some candidates about the narrative of the poem as some clearly believed that the poem was about Tennyson's relationship with Hallam and they let this interpretation get in the way of a more objective assessment.

#### Question 18

Very few candidates tackled this question. Those who did tended to write only sketchily about the reflective/questioning nature of this extract.

### *Songs of Ourselves*

#### Question 19

Candidates who answered this well, focusing on the words, did get the point about the joy of the moment and answers were often refreshingly clear. By contrast, some answers elected to focus on the poet's relationship with Sylvia Plath providing completely unnecessary background detail, often at length, which bore no relationship to the question.

#### Question 20

Successful candidates noted the elegiac nature of *Lament*, focusing on the repetitions and images and balanced their answers by spending an equal amount of time on *Report to Wordsworth*. *Lament* seemed to produce a greater feeling of engagement. While some resorted to formulaic comments such as 'this is an example of a metaphor...', better answers went much beyond this to consider the 'how' of the question.

#### Question 21

Not many candidates attempted this question, but it sometimes prompted more original responses than the other two *Songs* questions. *First Love* proved the most productive choice. Some selected one of the poems given in Question 20 but had difficulty in making it relevant to the task here.

## Section C: Prose

### *Wuthering Heights*

#### Question 22

Many candidates knew this text really well. Good answers focused on 'at this moment ...' allowing evidence from the text to support their thinking. Weaker answers rambled all over the novel providing rich but irrelevant detail for which there could be little reward; they did not allow the extract to work for them by using it for quotation. Considering that the Lintons are seen to be quarrelling, screaming, howling, and complaining and that Cathy is then attacked by a monstrous dog, it seemed surprising to find some answers claiming that Thrushcross Grange, at this moment, was a civilised place.

#### Question 23

The best answers maintained a sense of balance, using the text selectively in support. However, a few candidates chose the wrong Catherine and some chose both.

#### Question 24

This empathic task was generally very well handled. There were some good accounts of appropriate narrative detail and something of the voice of Nellie emerged, though many candidates omitted to mention the encounter with young Linton just before they are tricked into entering *Wuthering Heights* in which Nellie offers some very sharp comments which might usefully have been integrated. In the best answers her down-to-earth voice and her more 'correct' form of speech were well blended.

### *Games at Twilight*

#### Question 25

Quite a few summarised the whole story. Those who did focus on the passage were strangely reluctant to develop a personal response to the writing. There were very few really good answers to this question.

#### Question 26

The most popular approach was to inveigh against the selfishness of old people with reference to *A Devoted Son*. This was often done with understanding of the writing; but one might wish that more had seen that there was another side. Many candidates did not see the ruthlessness and arrogance of Rakesh.

#### Question 27

Many answers happily plundered the story successfully for this empathic task, and produced recognisable Mr Boses.

### *When Rain Clouds Gather*

#### Question 28

Candidates were able to contrast Matenge and Sekoto very well, with details from the whole text, though only the best answers saw that perhaps they are not so different but that Sekoto is better at concealing his nastiness. They were less secure on using the writing from this passage to show how Head conveys their differences. They did not seem to understand the jealousy of Chief Sekoto in line 13. They wanted simplicity, one good character, one bad character; and jealousy is a bad characteristic, so often it was Matenge who was jealous of Sekoto.

### Question 29

This was not a popular question but those who answered it frequently rose to the challenge of giving a sincere personal response. The most popular choice was the scene at the end of the novel, when the villagers gather in front of Matenge's house to support Paulina. In some answers 'incident' was interpreted fairly freely, sometimes the whole of the drought being selected. This was a valid approach as long as it did not merely rely on narrative and the qualities of the people were identified.

### Question 30

There were some reasonable thoughts on Makhaya but many attempts at this empathic task on Mma-Millipede were more a character study of Makhaya, rather than Mma-Millipede's impressions. A sprinkling of religious language and biblical expression ensured that most candidates at least used suitable features of expression.

### *The Great Gatsby*

### Question 31

Most candidates experienced little difficulty in identifying the feelings of Gatsby and Daisy, though they tended to find more to say about Gatsby. The 'strikingly' of the question was often ignored. There were some good responses, bringing in his past with Daisy, and pointing out the significance of this moment for him, referring to the fact that he was so awe-struck by her presence that he nearly fell down a flight of stairs. There was less understanding of Daisy here; weaker answers almost completely ignored the brushing of her hair with a gold brush, and the crying into the shirts, stronger ones commented on the ambiguity of her responses. Was she rediscovering her lost love, feeling trapped with Tom or merely responding to Gatsby's fantastic wealth?

### Question 32

Many candidates seemed to think that the only reason for Gatsby's attraction was her wealth, or rather that she came from a wealthy 'old' family. Better answers commented on her unattainability, on the fact that she was liked and desired by most young men, and on her physical charms (her soft voice, for one).

### Question 33

Most candidates knew the moment, though some took the moment into the actual meeting. They understood Jordan's curiosity, but there was a disappointing lack of reference to her golf background, her attitude to the party, to the money or activities going on, or to other characters in the novel, particularly Nick. Most Jordans were really rather sympathetic characters, though they often missed her jaunty optimism.

### *Ethan Frome*

### Question 34

This was the most popular by far of the three questions on *Ethan Frome* and most candidates clearly found it an accessible task. In order to show their shock/surprise some candidates spent too long in establishing context at the beginning of the essay; the best responses managed to integrate such knowledge in the body of the essay at the relevant point. Weaker answers predictably gave a paraphrase of the extract but the majority of answers were good, with candidates finding it relatively easy to choose suitable textual support.

### Question 35

Choice of episode was the discriminator and there was a lot of variety with no common choices. There was occasional misreading of the question where candidates explored two episodes where *they* were disappointed with Ethan Frome's life.

### Question 36

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

### **Stories of Ourselves**

#### **Question 37**

Clear understanding of the passage was demonstrated, although much response to language was implicit rather than explicit even though it was there on the page. Good answers focused on the word 'fascination' and used details in the text to support this; some wrote on affection rather than fascination. The most successful answers looked really closely at details and linguistic choices, going well beyond the obvious.

#### **Question 38**

There was some good comment on the construction and language of both *How it Happened* and *There Will Come Soft Rains* although some candidates took refuge in narrative. Good answers explored the way in which the writer crafted the story and engaged readers.

#### **Question 39**

This was generally the best handled of the empathic questions in the Prose section. There was a range of 'splendid' Mrs Crofts. Most got the point about Mrs Croft's admiration for Mala and something of the developing relationship between Mala and her husband. The best responses showed understanding of more than the moment specified as it was described in the text and conveyed Mrs Croft's directness and her often acerbic tone.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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**Paper 0486/13**  
**Paper 13 (Open Books)**

## Key messages

The following are key areas that are necessary for success in set texts papers:

1. *Relevance to the question.* Candidates benefit from being trained to analyse questions, looking for key phrases on which to base their answer. A good answer will keep the question firmly in mind throughout and will not digress into narrative, speculation, general assertion or personal opinion unrelated to the text. A few minutes spent planning an answer will help candidates to stay on course. Successful candidates know the importance of the key phrases in the question as they write their answer. Phrases such as 'Another way in which the relationship is memorable...' or 'This scene is particularly exciting because...' at the start of paragraphs not only help the candidate keep on track and focused, but help the reader see how the answer develops.
2. *A well structured argument.* Classroom discussion is clearly central to acquisition of the skill of constructing a developed argument, an essential ingredient for achieving the highest grades in the paper.
3. *Well selected supporting detail and quotation.* Along with a well structured argument goes the ability to use quotation and close reference to support that argument, not merely as a prop, but as the basis for comment and analysis. Less successful candidates may often demonstrate knowledge by inserting quotation but they do not go on to comment on it; their answers become a series of assertions or narrative. There is also sometimes a mismatch between the quotation and the point being made. Candidates should be encouraged to use quotation effectively, to select appropriately and economically, and to comment on the selection they make.
4. *Analysis of the writer's technique.* Another essential for success is the ability to engage with the writer's choice of language (Assessment Objective 3). While passage-based and poetry questions may seem to have the most overt requirement in this connection, discursive answers are always enhanced by a consideration of the writer's technique. In order to encourage candidates to explore rather than explain the use of particular words, one useful exercise might be to encourage them to try and find synonyms or substitutes and then consider the ensuing effect.

## General comments

In general, the quality of the responses to these papers showed that candidates had been stimulated by and had enjoyed the texts that they had studied.

There were very few examples of misunderstanding or of the wrong character or incident being chosen where one was specified. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were clear indications of enjoyment of and engagement with the texts. There were a significant number of excellent scripts where candidates responded to texts very well and were able to analyse language in depth. Well prepared candidates delivered perceptive, intelligent answers which addressed the point of questions, revealed detailed engagement with text, and integrated textual reference and quotation within answers.

In the majority of papers time had been used sensibly with answers of approximately equal length. (Where this was not the case, it was invariably the third answer that was shorter and sometimes rather rushed.) Some candidates wrote long introductory paragraphs which, in some cases, were almost as long as the main body of their answers. This was almost always a waste of time, as although these paragraphs often supplied a detailed overview of the storyline, they were not aimed at the actual question and so could gain little if any credit.

There seemed to be fewer examples this session of candidates adopting the strategy of using 'one I prepared earlier' in response to a question, focusing instead on the terms of the questions. There were, however, a good few cases where key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', were neglected. These words are intended as prompts for consideration of the writers' methods and as an indication that narrative alone will not be sufficient to meet the demands of the task.

Some candidates included reference to biographical, social and/or historical context at the expense of focusing on the text itself. This was particularly true with the poem *Full Moon and Little Frieda* in Question 19, where biographical 'facts' got in the way of considering the power of the words. It was also true to some extent with the topic of the American Dream, which took over some answers to *Death of A Salesman* and *The Great Gatsby* and became a distraction from the task in hand.

There were some excellent responses to the passage-based questions, the best using details from the passage effectively and economically in support of a strong response to the question. However, some candidates surprisingly did not quote freely from the extract despite it being available to them.

Good answers to the drama questions acknowledged that drama is intended to be watched and is different from prose. In good answers candidates explored all the evidence available to them, especially stage directions, the way actors deliver lines and respond to each other. But a significant number of answers referred tellingly to the play as 'the novel' and the audience as 'readers'. It is recommended that teachers encourage candidates to try and visualise drama in performance i.e. as an audience.

Empathic response tasks were popular in some Centres. The best, through their creation of a convincing voice, showed a sophisticated understanding of the writer's method, and included, whether directly or indirectly, a great deal of detail. Less successful attempts relied on more generalised thoughts and feelings or on narrative without sufficient detailed support.

Poetry answers seemed to suffer less this year from over-display of technical terms, though there was still a tendency for some answers to resort to displaying knowledge of (sometimes abstruse) terminology at the expense of analysis. In weaker answers, alliteration was often deemed responsible for every emotion in any poem, punctuation taking care of anything not covered by the other terms. Such answers often used technical terms as a substitute for any engaged commentary on language, making rather bland comments such as 'the use of enjambment makes the poem flow', 'the caesura shows the pain of his loss', 'alliteration proves how long she's been away'. Some answers seemed to be entirely constructed around the use of caesura, the actual meaning of the poem being lost. By contrast, though, there were many very assured and sophisticated responses, offering perceptive and original interpretations and clearly showing the way in which language and imagery were used by the poet.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A: Drama**

#### ***Death of a Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

The candidates who produced the most convincing responses were those who showed a sense of audience and responded to 'dramatic', demonstrating a sound understanding of the tensions in the passage and using the stage directions as well as quotations to support their ideas. 'Revealing' invited candidates to place the passage within the context of the whole play and even weaker answers seemed to have a general knowledge and understanding of the characters and situations. Some saw Willy's realisation in terms of a flawed version of the American dream. Some did not see any of the deeper issues: that Willy does not seem to realise that it was because of Biff's discovery of his affair that Biff dropped out of college, and that when it is pointed out to him in the extract, he refuses to accept it; or that previously, Bernard is ridiculed by Willy, but here, he's asking his advice.

##### **Question 2**

Many candidates rose to the challenge of this question, showing the complexity of Linda's statement, which not only refers to her current anxieties about Willy's state of mind, but also relates to the wider issue of The American Dream and Willy's role as an Everyman figure having significance for us all. Answers which concentrated only on Willy's mental turmoil and his potential danger to others (his car etc.) missed some of

the depths of the question. Some took refuge in offloading 'prepared' answers, for example about Willy as a tragic hero.

### Question 3

Candidates who tackled this empathic task clearly understood the narrative of the drama and some of Happy's thoughts at this moment. There were some very convincing assumptions of Happy's voice which showed a clear understanding that he was Willy's son in more than name and captured some of the boastfulness as well as the insecurities of coming second to Biff.

### *My Mother Said I Never Should*

### Question 4

Good answers explored all aspects of the passage, focusing on the visual and symbolic aspect of the tension between the women, i.e. the tugging of the sheet, and the ambiguity of Doris's remarks about the weather. They picked up the provocative statements of each of the women and many were able to see that Margaret is challenging Doris's system of values.

### Question 5

Most candidates tackling this question felt sympathy for Margaret and were able to identify moments in the drama which illustrated this. There were some very good answers demonstrating knowledge of the chosen character but a great many responses described each character in turn before adding a short 'answer' in the final paragraph.

### Question 6

Most candidates captured Doris reasonably well, showing her initial disapproval but her coming round to supporting her family and even to look forward to a new Great-grandchild. But some of her more quotable statements such as 'You make me so angry', 'Resentment is a terrible thing' were missing. Weaker answers provided narrative details and speculations from Doris but little sense of her voice.

### *Much Ado About Nothing*

### Question 7

Almost all candidates responded to 'satisfying' in terms of the plot, and were able to say what had gone before and how this rights the wrongs and prepares for what is to come. Many stopped at the end of the first page, ignoring the part of the extract with Dogberry. Better answers picked out 'Choose your revenge yourself' from Claudio to show just how contrite he is; and Borachio's 'she knew not what she did', saving Margaret's reputation by pointing out she was not in on the plot. Only the best answers saw that Leonato has not entirely forgiven Claudio and is going to subject him to public humiliation. In less successful answers there was a lack of direct quotation and of commentary on the language. Good answers described the audience's reactions to this scene.

### Question 8

There were some well informed and interesting discussions of Don Pedro. Most thought Don Pedro was 'well-intentioned and honourable', but also 'scheming', which was considered not a bad thing. Very few thought he was 'untrustworthy', and very few considered his scorning and snubbing of Leonato, the sexual jokes he shares with Claudio and his taunts of Benedick. Candidates were generally able to give textual examples in support of their views and there were some usefully learnt quotations deployed.

### Question 9

Hero was given a lot to think about by candidates who also considered the context of the 'first' wedding. Many picked up on 'My heart is exceeding heavy', and based their approach on it, which made Hero unexpectedly percipient. In weaker answers Hero did not reflect on anything much apart from that it was her wedding day and was not it lovely and she was so nervous and her dress was lovely and her husband-to-be was lovely too. Success in empathic tasks does require some detail from the text and there was much to be said about her meeting with Claudio, the wooing of Don Pedro and her relationship with Beatrice.

### *Richard III*

### Question 10

Many could see how this scene was powerfully dramatic. The best answers provided a sense of how Richard's character permeated the play even in his absence. Weaker answers attempted to retell the whole of the narrative of the drama.

### Question 11

To answer this question well candidates needed to focus on two words – 'lively' and 'humorous' – and to illustrate these characteristics with moments from the drama. There are some really good moments to use so it was surprising to read answers from so many who selected only one characteristic or addressed one as an afterthought in a throw-away sentence. Some candidates appeared to believe that the most hysterically amusing moment of the drama was Richard's death scene, missing the point that the full title of the play includes the word 'tragedy'.

### Question 12

This was handled well on the whole. Candidates were able to develop a voice for Hastings in which his shock and bewilderment began to emerge. Perhaps in some responses he might have been more angry, but generally the feelings expressed were believable and there was supporting detail.

### *Journey's End*

### Question 13

There were some good answers here which drew a contrast with Act One and managed to describe relationships and how these contributed to tone and atmosphere. Candidates mentioned the 'normality' of the scene with the sunlight, the food and the cheerful banter. Better answers explored some of the humour. Inevitably the focus was on Trotter and Osborne, but some noted the contribution that Mason makes. Rarely did anyone mention that Raleigh is there too. Really good answers also noted lighting effects and were clear that this is drama.

### Question 14

While there were a lot of character sketches offered, the most successful answers explored the dramatic purpose of Osborne. There were some moving and erudite responses to the question. It is clear that many candidates had really taken Osborne and the text itself to their hearts and they wrote with real engagement.

### Question 15

There were some very successful responses to this task which managed to reflect on Stanhope's disillusionment with the war, his exhaustion and his anger at and contempt of the Colonel. Weaker answers had difficulty in placing the exact point in the play and so the Colonel was barely mentioned. The voice proved accessible to most candidates.

## Section B: Poetry

### Tennyson

#### Question 16

Most candidates explored the language fairly effectively and even weaker candidates were able to comment on the language in this poem. To demonstrate the gloomy, depressing atmosphere, they selected repetitive rhyme patterns, the repeated last four lines, Mariana's crying whatever time of day, the gloomy depressing garden and house setting, the darkness and marshes, the night-time. Stronger answers considered the effect of, for example, the superlative 'blackest' (line 1), 'rusted' (line 3), 'broken' (line 5), all signs of something worn and broken 'like Mariana's love'. Some pointed out that even pleasant things were scorned, for example 'the sweet heaven' was not looked at. Some picked out the sounds in stanza three, which were all bleak and depressing. Some got quite irritated by Mariana, and thought 'she should get up and do something, and stop moping around', which showed some personal response. There were some, however, who described technical terms without comment on the contribution usage of these terms made to the poem. Rhyme schemes were an example of this, often identified and then left unexplained.

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Good answers focused on the words and the evident mental turmoil of the narrator. One or two candidates felt that the poem was about being buried alive - literally, not as a metaphor (which might be an interesting and legitimate interpretation but would require sustained discussion and that was missing from these answers). There was also evident confusion amongst some candidates about the narrative of the poem as some clearly believed that the poem was about Tennyson's relationship with Hallam and they let this interpretation get in the way of a more objective assessment.

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**Stories of Ourselves**

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# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/02  
Coursework

## Key Messages

- The framing by teachers of appropriately worded assignments remains vital to success in this component. To engage with higher grade criteria, assignment titles should encourage candidates to go beyond simple paraphrase of theme and character and to consider authors' presentation and language. (More guidance can be found in the Coursework Training Handbook.)
- Assignments on poetry / short stories must cover a minimum of two poems / stories.
- Teachers should be using the marking criteria (out of 25) to mark each assignment. (Hence the folder total is now out of 50, not 40.)

## General comments

Overall there was much to praise in the quality of the submissions, internal assessment and moderation, and the general presentation of the folders this session.

There was much evidence of enthusiastic and often perceptive engagement with literature in the assignments. The texts chosen and the tasks were usually suitably challenging, and candidates seemed to have enjoyed responding to the challenge. In a number of cases perhaps rather more adventure might be beneficial. In some whole Centres every candidate wrote on the same texts to the same titles, with very similar ideas being communicated, in very similar sequence. It is worth stressing that one broad aim of coursework is to encourage some element of *personal* choice and response and that the encouragement to explore outside the current examination text list can bring the reward of more lively and engaged work.

As in previous sessions, each Centre entering for the coursework component will have received an individual report on its work and its assessment and administration. These have been intended in the vast majority of cases to congratulate individual Centres on the work presented and for their careful presentation and moderation of the folders. In a minority of cases they are intended to bring to the Centres' attention features of their assessment and presentation which need addressing and to offer advice how that can be achieved. Evidence emerged in a very small minority of Centres that advice offered last year had not apparently been acted upon in areas of task setting and/or assessment of assignments.

At this level, teachers should set tasks which encourage candidates to explore the language of a text, as this is an important assessment criterion for securing marks in the higher Bands. Tasks which simply invite exploration of theme and character without requiring consideration of the ways in which the author has brought those things into being can significantly curtail candidates' prospects. More guidance on this can be found in the Coursework Training Handbook.

The move to the new marking criteria (out of 25 for each assignment) worked well. (Only a very few Centres assessed on the old scheme but it was, fortunately, possible for their marks to be adjusted straightforwardly. Those Centres, though, do need to return to the Syllabus Booklet to make sure they are up to date.) In some relatively rare cases, there seemed to have been some misunderstanding of the new Bands. From the annotation on the assignments, it appeared that some Centres were assessing on the assumption that Bands 1, 2 and 3 of the new scheme were directly equivalent to the old top three Bands. As the Band Descriptors show, that is not so. For instance, in the old scheme a notional Grade C was indeed equivalent to Band 3, but in the new scheme that becomes Band 4. In a few Centres that misunderstanding led to some significant over-marking which was addressed by consequent scaling downwards.

Some Centres seemed unaware that all assignments on poetry or on short stories must cover at least two texts.

Centres are reminded that they should include with their sample a copy of the MS1 mark sheet as well as the Coursework Assessment Summary Form filled in with the original and the moderated marks for the whole Centre, not just for those of the sample.

The information found on the Candidate Record Cards can still be variable in its quality; this was so sometimes even between sets within Centres. Generally, the more information about how the teacher sees the folder *in the light of the assessment criteria*, the easier it is for the external Moderator to see the basis for the assessment. Just occasionally what was written communicated nothing germane to the moderation. (The personal history and character of the candidate is not an assessment criterion.)



# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/31

Alternative to Coursework (Unseen)

## Key Messages

- The ability to focus critically on the writer's selection of words and images and to comment effectively on the effect of language choice is crucial to success in this paper. (The relatively few who struggled on the Paper tended towards paraphrase, moralising about a situation rather than considering how it was described, or they shaped narratives of their own which did not fit the words of the text.
- Candidates will benefit from spending twenty minutes reading, re-reading, annotating and planning before they begin writing their responses.
- Teaching might profitably focus on the syllabus Assessment Objectives 2 and 3, which take candidates beyond knowledge and understanding towards analysis of language and implied meaning, and the evaluative confidence in judgement.
- The availability of Time Zone variant question papers (available on the Teacher Support site) is now a further source of material for preparation and practice.

## General comments

Examiners saw an encouraging range of mainly strong responses this summer to the unseen texts. The confidence and thoroughness with which candidates approached this material was a testament to the strength of their preparation and practice. A good many responses showed maturity of thought supported by stringent analysis and clear willingness to come to judgements. Candidates clearly enjoy the extra freedoms that this paper provides. It was especially encouraging to see the ways in which candidates continue to write about cultures, values and emotions which may be very different from their own, and show qualities of empathy and emotional intelligence, which are among the most important skills our subject can teach. The more obvious skills of close reading and well-organised and sensitive writing were clearly displayed too.

Most answers were thorough and well-structured, and Examiners saw relatively few weak scripts, awarded marks in Band 6 or below. Candidates and Centres are now clearly familiar with the change to the Paper's time allocation: few candidates ran out of time, and few omitted comment on the last section of their chosen text or final bullet point.

Some candidates found it difficult to appreciate the tone and mood of the texts and to structure a detailed reading which supported the emotional thrust of the writing. There was some difficulty in identifying where writers' sympathies might lie in the poem, and therefore how readers' emotions might be engaged. The prose passage was less popular, and tended to produce both fewer weak responses and fewer very strong ones: most candidates can shape an answer around narrative and characterisation, and some less confident candidates might have done better to have chosen the prose, rather than the more elusive poem. They should not be daunted by the length of prose passages, as the selection of detail is more important than the comprehensiveness of the response. While it is easy to find plenty to say about poems, and to hook responses securely to the text through the use of extensive quotation, it can be harder to tease out the full implications of a complex image, let alone its emotional resonance for the attentive reader. Band One and Band Two responses were relatively rare, and teaching might profitably focus on the Assessment Objectives which take candidates beyond knowledge and understanding towards the subtlety of analysis of language and implied meaning, and the evaluative confidence in judgement which lead to higher award.

Recent Examiners' reports have concentrated on the need to structure a response, and the need for candidates to ask themselves questions about prose texts which are just as forensic as those they ask of poetry. While the form and structure of verse are often evident, prose passages need to be annotated just as extensively, and the writer's craft just as carefully analysed. At the risk of repetition, it must be

emphasised that candidates have plenty of time for reading and annotation. Although the time allocation has decreased slightly, there are still many overlong answers, and the recommendation is still that candidates spend twenty minutes reading, re-reading, annotating and planning before they begin their responses. Texts should be read twice, and then a third time making careful annotation on the question paper of the impact of descriptive language before candidates begin to think about writing. Extensive re-drafting, or fair copies waste time. The best scripts usually articulate a clear and lucid overview of the whole text, address the stem question, and put forward a strategy for answering it in an opening paragraph. Centres could help their candidates to prepare better by practising the construction of such paragraphs in response to past unseen papers. Too often, candidates change their minds about the meaning of a text, or realise the tone or implications of the writing only halfway through their responses, or only begin to synthesise their observations, instead of constructing a paraphrase, at the very end. While Examiners are open to the idea that candidates need to explore a text to establish its meaning, they are especially impressed by a response which has an overall understanding and hence a strong sense of direction from the very start. Essays need not be longer than two-and-a-half to three sides of average-sized handwriting on standard script paper. Candidates who wrote well-directed and thoroughly-supported responses of this length were perfectly capable of achieving a mark in Band One or Band Two, especially if they clearly addressed the question and used the framework provided by the bullet points throughout, and concluded with a strong and individual evaluation of the impact of the whole text in their conclusions.

What should candidates ask themselves while preparing a strong opening statement? Tone, mood and viewpoint are key terms to teach (and more likely to yield interpretative understanding than this year's favourite literary term, *asyndeton* (not to mention the ubiquitous *caesura*)). They require a candidate to hear a piece of writing, picking up the tone of poetry, or to see the world with the eyes of the person viewing it. They require a sensory responsiveness, and a willingness to engage with what someone's choice of description might reveal about their thoughts or feelings. Shakespeare's Bottom is perhaps not such a fool when he says 'I see a voice'. The candidate who can see the rhythms and 'mood music' of a piece of writing when she or he reads the text, and can hear the intonations of the chosen vocabulary, is the one who can judge viewpoint and the emotions expressed through the text. Misreadings this session often arose when candidates concentrated on particular words and phrases in isolation instead of seeing their relation to the whole text, and only beginning to comment on individual parts once they had achieved some sense of the whole. The questions in both papers highlighted 'the poet's feelings' or the feelings of the character whose viewpoint or perspective shaped the prose. Moreover, the question clearly directs candidates towards the writing, or the words the poet chose. Thus while skills of personal response and critical appreciation are tested in this paper, it is above all an exercise in *literary* criticism: the emphasis is on writers and writing, and on the ability to explore other people's responses as well as your own. Assessment Objectives 2 and 3 – which focus on the need to explore meaning beneath the surface, and to examine critically the ways in which writers consciously craft meaning, and readers shape meanings through choices of language structure and form – lead to the most sensitive and informed personal responses.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

Strong candidates saw that this poem by Carol Rumens begins with the title and with the poet's observations about the lives of children who are only 'One Street Beyond' her own viewpoint, but are abandoned to sink or swim in a world which seems without fairness or care. It presents a challenging and disturbing picture, far removed from images of childhood innocence and fair play which are more commonplace, both in literature and – one might hope – in life. Candidates were less successful when they tried to fashion their own response to the children's play, instead of considering the voice and viewpoint of the observing poet, or when they only perceived her as angry and irritated, instead of pitying the children for their neglect and abandonment. It was also less helpful to focus on the questions the poem raised rather than the words of the poem itself. Some weaker candidates had problems with the surface meaning of the poem, reading it as about the joys of the summer holiday, or thought that the poet did not understand children and did little more than condemn them. It requires some sophistication of analysis to see that the poem might express irritation and even fear at the same time as it voices concern. While the poem has a clear social context and social message, it is also sharply focused on what these children do, and good responses picked up the active verbs ('skirmishing', 'sliding', 'throwing', 'tumbling'), the implicit violence ('threats', 'clambering', 'stranded') and, in contrast, the sense of emptiness or purposelessness ('trackless', 'empty', 'absurd', 'stranded', 'standing staring', 'vacant'). None of these children have names, or any clear identity; they do not seem to belong anywhere or to anyone. They acquire meaning only through persistence, emphasised by repetition of long vowel sounds: 'always', 'all day', 'all day', 'all through the long August'. Any attempt to see this as a happy existence is challenged not only by the seediness of the urban landscape ('grit', 'main road', 'rusting')

but also by the next development in the poem. Good responses to this first section, and to the first bullet point, were also aware of where this poem is heading. As one candidate put it, very powerfully, 'darkness and dirt seem to be crawling from every corner...darkness is approaching them from the shadows.'

There is an important change of tone at the mid-point of the poem, signalled by a time-shift towards the end of the holidays and giving this apparently free poem a very clear structure. Children are 'darkening, hardening' in more than a literal sense: they are getting suntanned but are also becoming hard enough for the world around them. The dash sums them up as 'outdoor children' – shut out or excluded rather than just choosing a feral existence. The bullet points directed candidates towards the portrayal of the parents, and here a degree of judgment seems to be invited. Fathers leave 'without a word': significantly one of the shortest lines in the poems, as if there is nothing more to say. Mothers shout from a distance, which stronger candidates saw as symbolic as well as literal. It is important to see that texts can be literal and descriptive and have symbolic resonance or implication at the same time. Equally stronger candidates pay attention to syntax in poetry as well as prose; less successful candidates ignored the full stop and thought that the mothers made 'little barbed worlds' and not the children. However, attentive readers saw both the poignancy and the danger of this image of children preferring an imaginary 'match-stick' world of 'broken glass' at the edge of kerbs to their own homes. This image presents the idea of being marginalised in a very literal way. Some weaker candidates found it hard to see how children could be both playing and 'alone', and the implications of the end of the poem are meant to be challenging, not least as the poet suggests that this is the inevitable fate of these children, and that they find themselves beyond even love. Stronger candidates picked up the cyclical structure of the whole text through the repetition of 'always' and the echo of the title. However, a reader with the ability to hear the rhythms of these lines, and their much slower pace than the opening of the poem, should be able to appreciate their plangency and regret at innocence lost. Candidates should be encouraged to sound poems out aloud in their heads and hear their music before committing themselves to an interpretation based on the words alone, and without thinking about the tone in which they might be said.

## Question 2

The prose question was less popular but provided a clear narrative for weaker candidates and plenty of material in the physical description of Ugwu's new surroundings and how he sees them with which the mid-range and stronger candidates could engage. The opening of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel describes the historical atmosphere of colonial Nigeria in the early 1960s, so she is using the eyes and other senses of Ugwu to describe a world she never knew at first hand as it was before she was born. Candidates need a similar degree of imaginative empathy to appreciate the recreation of what seems to Ugwu a larger than life existence, although it seems quite normal to use. Candidates seemed very alert to Ugwu's feelings, of excitement, adventure and opportunity, but also slight trepidation and homesickness. Stronger responses needed to be rooted in the writing, and in the second and third bullet points, which directed candidates to developments and changes in Ugwu's viewpoint and emotions, and encouraged them to shape and overall response to their observations. Many wanted to ground their response to narrative prose in character, both Auntie and Master, as well as Ugwu, when actually we know very little about them from the evidence in front of them, but we can say a great deal about the comparisons and contrasts which Ugwu makes. One of the differences between unseen prose and set text prose is that the former encourages a reading which is based more on the effectiveness and function of description and less on plot and character. Pace and syntax give the prose a rhythm too, capturing not just Auntie's quick pace, but also Ugwu's slower rhythm, lost in wonder at what surrounds him, and stopping to take in its sights, sounds, smells and texture. Stronger candidates focused strongly on the sensuous qualities of the writing. The similes, many noted, try to accommodate what he sees to what he knows, but end up with a fairytale or surreal element: 'bungalows...like polite, well-dressed men' and 'hedges...like tables wrapped with leaves'. This is so fantastic that we can understand why Ugwu feels he could never describe this to his sister. Strong candidate noticed how he feels the heat and smells heady scents, and appears to be in some kind of heavenly landscape, glistening and secluded.

Stronger candidates always notice development in a piece of writing. Many noticed how Ugwu starts to articulate his more uncomfortable feelings, that he is not at home and that his new life will take him away from his home, as he reaches Master's house and physically wants to reach and touch this new reality and contrast it with where he came from. Some saw a form of symbolism in the glass door. Others commented on experiences of their own which were like this moment. Certainly the description of Master and the interior of his house seemed to invoke a mixture of the potent and the disconcerting for many candidates as well as Ugwu. Some thought the description of his appearance and lack of greeting connoted arrogance or rudeness. Some thought the comparison of his complexion to 'old bark' was an indication of wisdom or seniority. Most were interested that Master spoke Ugwu's own language and were interested in how reassuring Ugwu would find these 'feathery' sounds. A few even speculated about the significance of the fact that although the text was in English, Ugwu's original thoughts would not have been; this certainly

demonstrates the degree to which all writing is imaginative recreation and not to be understood with documentary literalism. It is this entry into a new world, new language and new way of seeing things which the whole passage captures: a top Band response might have taken this as a starting point, and not just saved it for the ending. If the whole piece is seen as recapturing a particular moment of transformation, every individual part of the description makes more sense. Each helps to capture the individual's overall sense of wonder and communicates this powerfully to the reader.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali's poem describes a moment of shock as he sees a group of prisoners at dawn from the frosted window of his railway carriage. The cold morning and the physical as well as emotional distance account for the apparent chilliness of tone and objectivity of description in the first part of the poem. This text certainly needed to be read and considered carefully before coming to judgments. Varied line lengths give the poem a slow and ponderous rhythm, provoking the reader to think. Candidates are often keen to *spot* enjambment and to see this as evidence of a fast pace; they need to be taught that rhythm in free verse and in blank verse are very different things, and the significant detail is the amount of space, and therefore time, which each line is intended to occupy. An attentive reader will therefore see which lines s/he should pause over, and which have a more rhythmic effect. While the men are seen from the outside objectively, in ways which emphasise the indignity and humanity of their treatment ('like sheep after shearing', 'like cattle at the abattoir', 'shaven clean as a potato') the poet is also careful to give them a voice ('Go away! Cold wind! Go away!') and to treat at least one of them as an individual ('Oh! Dear Sun! Do not you warm my heart with hope!'). These cries are not to be understood at a simple literal basis, but as an expression of the sympathy, indeed empathy, which no one else seems to extend to these prisoners. Even nature appears to show no sign of relenting despite their pleas, and, ominously 'the train went on its way to nowhere'. The expression of pity, as well as shock, seems very clear and most candidates saw this and responded to the tone of the poem. Others clearly found it difficult to conceive that prisoners should be viewed with any emotions other than horror and contempt. They sometimes tried to find signs of penitence or remorse for their crimes in the prisoners' cries, and even found distaste as well as distance in the poet's view of them, and felt that nature concurred in giving these evil men the punishment they deserved. Often it

was the same candidates who thought that it was the man in the last stanza who had a red eye, and not the sun: this is a misreading which comes from lack of attention to the grammar of the poem, and the other comes from a misreading of its tone. Both show the need to respond to a relatively short text with great care.

It is important to engage with how the poem asks to be read and to achieve a fuller understanding before beginning to write. Some candidates appear to interpret 'personal response' as an opportunity to outline at length their own reaction to how they see the imagined situation, tenuously connected with the text through quotation, instead of looking at how someone else's viewpoint is communicated. They might have read the poem differently had they known that it is probably set in Apartheid South Africa, and that the prisoners are therefore likely to be victims of an unjust and illegitimate regime. But they were neither required nor expected to know that. The injustice of their cold and inhuman treatment should have been apparent.

Strong responses appreciated the contrast between the warmth of the poet's viewpoint and the coldness of the men. They noticed that to him they are always 'men' and not prisoners, and that he finds how they look, sound and move pitiful. They are treated like beasts, but they have human voices, asking questions and appealing for some mercy or hope. Many picked up the sounds they seem to make as a protest at their treatment and at the way their human dignity has been taken from them. Some saw them, rather speculatively, as heading for their deaths just like cattle at an abattoir. The point of this simile seems to be an equally instinctive revulsion at their fate. Stronger candidates saw a contrast between the rising sun which at least appears to be pitiful, its 'red eye wiped by a tattered/ handkerchief of clouds' and the man treated by fellow humans as no more than a potato. They also saw how powerful the final line is: there is no response to what proves to be a rhetorical question, but the poet as well as the men appear to be heading nowhere as a result. He no longer seems to care about where he is going, and he may be making a broader comment on the nature of human society. This poem exerts a powerful emotional pull once fully understood. Examiners did find that most candidates had something to say, often engaging with issues of justice and inhumanity in their own cultures' history, and with the sadness and misery of its portrayal of humanity at its lowest ebb, observed by us, as readers, just like the poet, in a tone which is detached but not dispassionate.

## Question 2

The extract from Penelope Lively's novel *The House in Norham Gardens* provided plenty of opportunity for engagement with the detailed portrayal of Clare's emotions and their growing dislocation and disorientation. Candidates did not know the cause of this discomfort, or quite how much it might end up detaching her from the setting of the school play. However, they appeared to enjoy this narrative uncertainty, as it allowed them to focus on detail and at how the writing provokes unease and a series of questions. Most had little difficulty in engaging with the basic narrative. From the temperature, and the contrast to the 'warmth' of the school building which 'steamed' to the now and 'orange-looking sky' outside where 'oppressively', 'lurking', 'something waited' to the accumulation of tension through the backstage chaos, Clare's difficulties in distinguishing between reality and fantasy once on stage, her deliberate breaking of the 'fourth wall' separating performers and audience to expose the artificiality of the play, and her flustered and apparently frightened journey home, there were many descriptive details to engage with. Clare's emotions and state of mind are vividly portrayed through the way she sees the world, and most candidates had little difficulty in both sharing her point of view and commenting on some of its distortions. Many liked the Gothic implications, and even saw her as in some ways possessed. Most saw that she has become oddly detached from her surroundings, and is therefore able to comment on ordinary things as if they had become extraordinary: the stage 'ghost' seems more real than her own friends around her.

Close detail and response to language and effects were prominent in strong responses to this extract. They traced the unidentified underlying unease throughout the writing, while also finding moments of humour. They often shaped and structured their responses around different stages of the extract: Clare's journey to school, the backstage preparation, the performance of Clare's scene and the journey home, and they traced the accumulation of suspense and the growing sense of disturbance.

The bullet points helpfully direct candidates to shape their responses this way, but also to think about the wider implications of each 'movement' in the passage, and the emotions they provoke in the reader. The good candidate proved to have read the passage through carefully more than once in order to have an overall sense of its direction, and was happy to remain in a Keatsian state of negative capability, happy with the text's indeterminate and inconclusive character without too much irritably reaching after fact and certainty. This passage was less popular than the poetry, but it did produce many very good answers. Candidates identified the off-stage panic. One of them noted how apt was Mrs Cramp's name, and that she did little to calm the 'atmosphere of crisis'. More candidates might have paid closer attention to the rhythm of the syntax: short sentences add to the tension among those about to go onstage. Stronger candidates responded to the complex ideas which are then added: shadows rather than substance, confusion of what is

real and what is illusion; the best were able to connect this to the 'ghost' scene. Phrases such as 'vaguely sinister' and 'dimly visible' intensify the feeling of unease. Many highlighted the question 'Which was real, us or them?' Some saw this as Clare questioning her role in the play, or even resenting that she did not have a bigger part. Stronger candidates concentrated on the question and on Clare's feelings of isolation, and sense that they were not actors but 'unreal observers' and commented on how this turns our usual understanding of performance upside down. This observation made it easier to see why she does not perform the unspeaking part in the ghost scene which Mrs Cramp assigned to her: she has become detached from the conventions of her role. Quite a few candidates rather admired her apparent bid for freedom. Most had a sense of how Clare's performance falls apart here; some strong candidates picked up the comedy of the ghost 'stripping off cheesecloth and becoming Liz again'. The best understood that the detached comment on the scene is from Clare's point of view, and that she is not only becoming uncomfortable with the performance, but also an unsettling presence to her own friends 'accused by some of frivolity and others treachery'. They appreciated that there is more than stage fright at work here, but some unidentified unease and disturbance. The focus in the final paragraph is on Clare's isolation, in the snow and 'whirling darkness'; Clare seems unsure of her direction and in a panic to get home as quickly as possible. Stronger candidates noted how this builds on the less urgent sense of unease in the first paragraph and is moving closer to terror, as if Clare is caught up in a larger drama than the school play, and as if bigger shadows lurk outside. This was a complex passage, but it gave candidates plenty of material, and those who gave the whole text thoughtful consideration before writing were able to craft highly convincing analysis of its form, structure and use of language.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Some candidates found it difficult to appreciate the tone and mood of the texts and to structure a detailed reading which supported the emotional thrust of the writing. There was some difficulty in identifying where writers' sympathies might lie in the poem, and therefore how readers' emotions might be engaged. The prose passage was less popular, and tended to produce both fewer weak responses and fewer very strong ones: most candidates can shape an answer around narrative and characterisation, and some less confident candidates might have done better to have chosen the prose, rather than the more elusive poem. They should not be daunted by the length of prose passages, as the selection of detail is more important than the comprehensiveness of the response. While it is easy to find plenty to say about poems, and to hook responses securely to the text through the use of extensive quotation, it can be harder to tease out the full implications of a complex image, let alone its emotional resonance for the attentive reader. Band One and Band Two responses were relatively rare, and teaching might profitably focus on the Assessment Objectives which take candidates beyond knowledge and understanding towards the subtlety of analysis of language and implied meaning, and the evaluative confidence in judgement which lead to higher award.

Recent Examiners' reports have concentrated on the need to structure a response, and the need for candidates to ask themselves questions about prose texts which are just as forensic as those they ask of poetry. While the form and structure of verse are often evident, prose passages need to be annotated just

as extensively, and the writer's craft just as carefully analysed. At the risk of repetition, it must be emphasised that candidates have plenty of time for reading and annotation. Although the time allocation has decreased slightly, there are still many overlong answers, and the recommendation is still that candidates spend twenty minutes reading, re-reading, annotating and planning before they begin their responses. Texts should be read twice, and then a third time making careful annotation on the question paper of the impact of descriptive language before candidates begin to think about writing. Extensive re-drafting, or fair copies waste time. The best scripts usually articulate a clear and lucid overview of the whole text, address the stem question, and put forward a strategy for answering it in an opening paragraph. Centres could help their candidates to prepare better by practising the construction of such paragraphs in response to past unseen papers. Too often, candidates change their minds about the meaning of a text, or realise the tone or implications of the writing only halfway through their responses, or only begin to synthesise their observations, instead of constructing a paraphrase, at the very end. While Examiners are open to the idea that candidates need to explore a text to establish its meaning, they are especially impressed by a response which has an overall understanding and hence a strong sense of direction from the very start. Essays need not be longer than two-and-a-half to three sides of average-sized handwriting on standard script paper. Candidates who wrote well-directed and thoroughly-supported responses of this length were perfectly capable of achieving a mark in Band One or Band Two, especially if they clearly addressed the question and used the framework provided by the bullet points throughout, and concluded with a strong and individual evaluation of the impact of the whole text in their conclusions.

What should candidates ask themselves while preparing a strong opening statement? Tone, mood and viewpoint are key terms to teach (and more likely to yield interpretative understanding than this year's favourite literary term, *asyndeton* (not to mention the ubiquitous *caesura*)). They require a candidate to hear a piece of writing, picking up the tone of poetry, or to see the world with the eyes of the person viewing it. They require a sensory responsiveness, and a willingness to engage with what someone's choice of description might reveal about their thoughts or feelings. Shakespeare's Bottom is perhaps not such a fool when he says 'I see a voice'. The candidate who can see the rhythms and 'mood music' of a piece of writing when she or he reads the text, and can hear the intonations of the chosen vocabulary, is the one who can judge viewpoint and the emotions expressed through the text. Misreadings this session often arose when candidates concentrated on particular words and phrases in isolation instead of seeing their relation to the whole text, and only beginning to comment on individual parts once they had achieved some sense of the whole. The questions in both papers highlighted 'the poet's feelings' or the feelings of the character whose viewpoint or perspective shaped the prose. Moreover, the question clearly directs candidates towards the writing, or the words the poet chose. Thus while skills of personal response and critical appreciation are tested in this paper, it is above all an exercise in *literary* criticism: the emphasis is on writers and writing, and on the ability to explore other people's responses as well as your own. Assessment Objectives 2 and 3 – which focus on the need to explore meaning beneath the surface, and to examine critically the ways in which writers consciously craft meaning, and readers shape meanings through choices of language structure and form – lead to the most sensitive and informed personal responses.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali's poem describes a moment of shock as he sees a group of prisoners at dawn from the frosted window of his railway carriage. The cold morning and the physical as well as emotional distance account for the apparent chilliness of tone and objectivity of description in the first part of the poem. This text certainly needed to be read and considered carefully before coming to judgments. Varied line lengths give the poem a slow and ponderous rhythm, provoking the reader to think. Candidates are often keen to *spot* enjambment and to see this as evidence of a fast pace; they need to be taught that rhythm in free verse and in blank verse are very different things, and the significant detail is the amount of space, and therefore time, which each line is intended to occupy. An attentive reader will therefore see which lines s/he should pause over, and which have a more rhythmic effect. While the men are seen from the outside objectively, in ways which emphasise the indignity and humanity of their treatment ('like sheep after shearing', 'like cattle at the abattoir', 'shaven clean as a potato') the poet is also careful to give them a voice ('Go away! Cold wind! Go away!') and to treat at least one of them as an individual ('Oh! Dear Sun! Do not you warm my heart with hope!'). These cries are not to be understood at a simple literal basis, but as an expression of the sympathy, indeed empathy, which no one else seems to extend to these prisoners. Even nature appears to show no sign of relenting despite their pleas, and, ominously 'the train went on its way to nowhere'. The expression of pity, as well as shock, seems very clear and most candidates saw this and responded to the tone of the poem. Others clearly found it difficult to conceive that prisoners should be viewed with any emotions other than horror and contempt. They sometimes tried to find signs of penitence

or remorse for their crimes in the prisoners' cries, and even found distaste as well as distance in the poet's view of them, and felt that nature concurred in giving these evil men the punishment they deserved. Often it was the same candidates who thought that it was the man in the last stanza who had a red eye, and not the sun: this is a misreading which comes from lack of attention to the grammar of the poem, and the other comes from a misreading of its tone. Both show the need to respond to a relatively short text with great care.

It is important to engage with how the poem asks to be read and to achieve a fuller understanding before beginning to write. Some candidates appear to interpret 'personal response' as an opportunity to outline at length their own reaction to how they see the imagined situation, tenuously connected with the text through quotation, instead of looking at how someone else's viewpoint is communicated. They might have read the poem differently had they known that it is probably set in Apartheid South Africa, and that the prisoners are therefore likely to be victims of an unjust and illegitimate regime. But they were neither required nor expected to know that. The injustice of their cold and inhuman treatment should have been apparent.

Strong responses appreciated the contrast between the warmth of the poet's viewpoint and the coldness of the men. They noticed that to him they are always 'men' and not prisoners, and that he finds how they look, sound and move pitiful. They are treated like beasts, but they have human voices, asking questions and appealing for some mercy or hope. Many picked up the sounds they seem to make as a protest at their treatment and at the way their human dignity has been taken from them. Some saw them, rather speculatively, as heading for their deaths just like cattle at an abattoir. The point of this simile seems to be an equally instinctive revulsion at their fate. Stronger candidates saw a contrast between the rising sun which at least appears to be pitiful, its 'red eye wiped by a tattered/ handkerchief of clouds' and the man treated by fellow humans as no more than a potato. They also saw how powerful the final line is: there is no response to what proves to be a rhetorical question, but the poet as well as the men appear to be heading nowhere as a result. He no longer seems to care about where he is going, and he may be making a broader comment on the nature of human society. This poem exerts a powerful emotional pull once fully understood. Examiners did find that most candidates had something to say, often engaging with issues of justice and inhumanity in their own cultures' history, and with the sadness and misery of its portrayal of humanity at its lowest ebb, observed by us, as readers, just like the poet, in a tone which is detached but not dispassionate.

## Question 2

The extract from Penelope Lively's novel *The House in Norham Gardens* provided plenty of opportunity for engagement with the detailed portrayal of Clare's emotions and their growing dislocation and disorientation. Candidates did not know the cause of this discomfort, or quite how much it might end up detaching her from the setting of the school play. However, they appeared to enjoy this narrative uncertainty, as it allowed them to focus on detail and at how the writing provokes unease and a series of questions. Most had little difficulty in engaging with the basic narrative. From the temperature, and the contrast to the 'warmth' of the school building which 'steamed' to the now and 'orange-looking sky' outside where 'oppressively', 'lurking', 'something waited' to the accumulation of tension through the backstage chaos, Clare's difficulties in distinguishing between reality and fantasy once on stage, her deliberate breaking of the 'fourth wall' separating performers and audience to expose the artificiality of the play, and her flustered and apparently frightened journey home, there were many descriptive details to engage with. Clare's emotions and state of mind are vividly portrayed through the way she sees the world, and most candidates had little difficulty in both sharing her point of view and commenting on some of its distortions. Many liked the Gothic implications, and even saw her as in some ways possessed. Most saw that she has become oddly detached from her surroundings, and is therefore able to comment on ordinary things as if they had become extraordinary: the stage 'ghost' seems more real than her own friends around her.

Close detail and response to language and effects were prominent in strong responses to this extract. They traced the unidentified underlying unease throughout the writing, while also finding moments of humour. They often shaped and structured their responses around different stages of the extract: Clare's journey to school, the backstage preparation, the performance of Clare's scene and the journey home, and they traced the accumulation of suspense and the growing sense of disturbance.

The bullet points helpfully direct candidates to shape their responses this way, but also to think about the wider implications of each 'movement' in the passage, and the emotions they provoke in the reader. The good candidate proved to have read the passage through carefully more than once in order to have an overall sense of its direction, and was happy to remain in a Keatsian state of negative capability, happy with the text's indeterminate and inconclusive character without too much irritably reaching after fact and certainty. This passage was less popular than the poetry, but it did produce many very good answers. Candidates identified the off-stage panic. One of them noted how apt was Mrs Cramp's name, and that she did little to calm the 'atmosphere of crisis'. More candidates might have paid closer attention to the rhythm of

the syntax: short sentences add to the tension among those about to go onstage. Stronger candidates responded to the complex ideas which are then added: shadows rather than substance, confusion of what is real and what is illusion; the best were able to connect this to the 'ghost' scene. Phrases such as 'vaguely sinister' and 'dimly visible' intensify the feeling of unease. Many highlighted the question 'Which was real, us or them?' Some saw this as Clare questioning her role in the play, or even resenting that she did not have a bigger part. Stronger candidates concentrated on the question and on Clare's feelings of isolation, and sense that they were not actors but 'unreal observers' and commented on how this turns our usual understanding of performance upside down. This observation made it easier to see why she does not perform the unspeaking part in the ghost scene which Mrs Cramp assigned to her: she has become detached from the conventions of her role. Quite a few candidates rather admired her apparent bid for freedom. Most had a sense of how Clare's performance falls apart here; some strong candidates picked up the comedy of the ghost 'stripping off cheesecloth and becoming Liz again'. The best understood that the detached comment on the scene is from Clare's point of view, and that she is not only becoming uncomfortable with the performance, but also an unsettling presence to her own friends 'accused by some of frivolity and others treachery'. They appreciated that there is more than stage fright at work here, but some unidentified unease and disturbance. The focus in the final paragraph is on Clare's isolation, in the snow and 'whirling darkness'; Clare seems unsure of her direction and in a panic to get home as quickly as possible. Stronger candidates noted how this builds on the less urgent sense of unease in the first paragraph and is moving closer to terror, as if Clare is caught up in a larger drama than the school play, and as if bigger shadows lurk outside. This was a complex passage, but it gave candidates plenty of material, and those who gave the whole text thoughtful consideration before writing were able to craft highly convincing analysis of its form, structure and use of language.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/41  
Paper 41 (Closed Books)

## Key messages

The following are key areas that are necessary for success in set texts papers:

1. *Relevance to the question.* Candidates benefit from being trained to analyse questions, looking for key phrases on which to base their answer. A good answer will keep the question firmly in mind throughout and will not digress into narrative, speculation, general assertion or personal opinion unrelated to the text. A few minutes spent planning an answer will help candidates to stay on course. Successful candidates know the importance of the key phrases in the question as they write their answer. Phrases such as 'Another way in which the relationship is memorable...' or 'This scene is particularly exciting because...' at the start of paragraphs not only help the candidate keep on track and focused, but help the reader see how the answer develops.
2. *A well structured argument.* Classroom discussion is clearly central to acquisition of the skill of constructing a developed argument, an essential ingredient for achieving the highest grades in the paper.
3. *Well selected supporting detail and quotation.* Along with a well structured argument goes the ability to use quotation and close reference to support that argument, not merely as a prop, but as the basis for comment and analysis. Less successful candidates may often demonstrate knowledge by inserting quotation but they do not go on to comment on it; their answers become a series of assertions or narrative. There is also sometimes a mismatch between the quotation and the point being made. Candidates should be encouraged to use quotation effectively, to select appropriately and economically, and to comment on the selection they make.
4. *Analysis of the writer's technique.* Another essential for success is the ability to engage with the writer's choice of language (Assessment Objective 3). While passage-based and poetry questions may seem to have the most overt requirement in this connection, discursive answers are always enhanced by a consideration of the writer's technique. In order to encourage candidates to explore rather than explain the use of particular words, one useful exercise might be to encourage them to try and find synonyms or substitutes and then consider the ensuing effect.

## General comments

In general, the quality of the responses to these papers showed that candidates had been stimulated by and had enjoyed the texts that they had studied.

There were very few examples of misunderstanding or of the wrong character or incident being chosen where one was specified. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were clear indications of enjoyment of and engagement with the texts. There were a significant number of excellent scripts where candidates responded to texts very well and were able to analyse language in depth. Well prepared candidates delivered perceptive, intelligent answers which addressed the point of questions, revealed detailed engagement with text, and integrated textual reference and quotation within answers.

In the majority of papers time had been used sensibly with answers of approximately equal length. (Where this was not the case, it was invariably the third answer that was shorter and sometimes rather rushed.) Some candidates wrote long introductory paragraphs which, in some cases, were almost as long as the main body of their answers. This was almost always a waste of time, as although these paragraphs often supplied a detailed overview of the storyline, they were not aimed at the actual question and so could gain little if any credit.

There seemed to be fewer examples this session of candidates adopting the strategy of using 'one I prepared earlier' in response to a question, focusing instead on the terms of the questions. There were, however, a good few cases where key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', were neglected. These words are intended as prompts for consideration of the writers' methods and as an indication that narrative alone will not be sufficient to meet the demands of the task.

Some candidates included reference to biographical, social and/or historical context at the expense of focusing on the text itself. This was particularly true with the poems *The Voice* and *Full Moon and Little Frieda*, where biographical 'facts' got in the way of considering the power of the words. It was also true to some extent with the topic of the American Dream, which took over some answers to the Miller and the Fitzgerald and became a distraction from the task in hand.

There were some excellent responses to the passage-based questions, the best using details from the passage effectively and economically in support of a strong response to the question. However, some candidates surprisingly did not quote freely from the extract despite it being available to them.

Good answers to the drama questions acknowledged that drama is intended to be watched and is different from prose. In good answers candidates explored all the evidence available to them, especially stage directions, the way actors deliver lines and respond to each other. But a significant number of answers referred tellingly to the play as 'the novel' and the audience as 'readers'. It is recommended that teachers encourage candidates to try and visualise drama in performance i.e. as an audience.

Empathic response tasks were popular in some Centres. The best, through their creation of a convincing voice, showed a sophisticated understanding of the writer's method, and included, whether directly or indirectly, a great deal of detail. Less successful attempts relied on more generalised thoughts and feelings or on narrative without sufficient detailed support.

Poetry answers seemed to suffer less this year from over-display of technical terms, though there was still a tendency for some answers to resort to displaying knowledge of (sometimes abstruse) terminology at the expense of analysis. In weaker answers, alliteration was often deemed responsible for every emotion in any poem, punctuation taking care of anything not covered by the other terms. Such answers often used technical terms as a substitute for any engaged commentary on language, making rather bland comments such as 'the use of enjambment makes the poem flow', 'the caesura shows the pain of his loss', 'alliteration proves how long she's been away'. Some answers seemed to be entirely constructed around the use of caesura, the actual meaning of the poem being lost. By contrast, though, there were many very assured and sophisticated responses, offering perceptive and original interpretations and clearly showing the way in which language and imagery were used by the poet.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A: Drama**

##### ***Death of Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

There were some excellent responses that ranged very widely, pointing out the ironies and the significances, the best answers exploring the timing of the scene and the ways in which it presents a contrast between past and present for all the characters. Most candidates seemed to find that the passage gave access to expressing their understanding of Willy as a parent, as a role model for his sons, as a failure in his work, as a liar or hopeless dreamer and as a character to be pitied. Some candidates, however, seemed to take Willy at face value and believe his stories. His attitude to the stolen football tells us a lot about Willy and Biff and has links with the play as a whole, but this was often not seen. The question asked what makes this so dramatic and revealing and many answers focused on one or the other rather than both. Those answers which went into details about political and social background often wasted time which might more usefully have been given to examination of the extract itself.

##### **Question 2**

Better answers were able to examine Linda's role and to see the irony that her protectiveness of him is one of the causes of Willy's tragedy. Some candidates seemed not to have been prepared to discuss Linda and so reverted to Willy and his shortcomings, thereby losing focus on the task.

### Question 3

Central considerations here were how self-accusatory was Willy? How deluded was he? How far would he take responsibility? On the whole candidates enjoyed their impersonations of Willy and had a good grasp of character and events.

#### ***My Mother Said I Never Should***

### Question 4

There were some good examples of close reading of the text. Some answers were very thorough and explored fully the nuances of the dialogue between Doris and Margaret and all its tensions and undercurrents. Weaker answers were less precise and wandered away from the passage.

### Question 5

This was a far less popular question. Successful answers showed good knowledge of the character; weaker ones looked to the passage for help. The key words 'vividly convey' were often not dealt with.

### Question 6

Some struggled to find a voice for Margaret, especially as to how she really felt about not inheriting from her father. There was a range of responses from anger to bland acceptance.

#### ***Much Ado About Nothing***

### Question 7

This was by far the most popular *Much Ado* question. Most candidates had been well prepared and were aware of where the passage fitted in the play and of Beatrice and Benedick's characters and previous relationship and the 'trick' being played on them. There was plenty to write about for most candidates and the contrast of 'moving' and 'dramatic' was obvious to most. Quite a few ventured into the area of the position of women in society as if it had to be included. Responses from some Centres (and their similarity suggested that these were taught responses) portrayed Beatrice as 'manipulative' and 'vindictive', 'using Benedict's declared love to blackmail him into killing his best friend' who was, after all, himself a 'victim and innocent'. Beatrice was 'testing Benedict', 'pushing the limits', and so on. One candidate wrote, 'this takes the character to a new, almost psychopathic level...she has next to no value in love...the audience should lose sympathy for Beatrice when she is put next to Benedict being loyal to Claudio...'. Many such answers ignored 'moving' and 'dramatic'.

### Question 8

The candidates who attempted this question usually did consider both points of view and nearly always plumped for 'silly and conceited'. Some merely gave examples of 'silly' speech. Better answers considered Dogberry's role in the unfolding of the plot against Hero and in bringing the miscreants to justice.

### Question 9

Borachio is a relatively minor character in terms of the amount that he says in the play though his role is very significant. There were some very effective recreations, some taking the line that he blamed himself for being a dupe to Don John and showing some remorse, others taking a more cynical view.

#### ***Richard III***

### Question 10

Again, the passage-based task was the most popular of the three questions. Most candidates found examples of irony, though the dark humour proved more difficult for some. The best answers showed enjoyment of the black humour and malevolence of the Dukes and the innocence of the child. Very few candidates started at the beginning of the extract and worked through to the end; the question allowed for a much more individual approach.

### Question 11

All candidates attempting this knew something about Clarence and Hastings, and so the task enabled discrimination according to knowledge and ability. There was a tendency for some answers to depend too much on narrative, however, and not to focus on 'dramatic power'. There was usually some sympathy for the men as victims of Richard.

### Question 12

The empathic task expected a mature mixture of hate, anxiety, relief, grief and hope. There were many dead characters to mourn, as well as Richard's attempts on the young Elizabeth to reflect on. However, the task successfully enabled discrimination by knowledge of character and events. There were a few candidates who impersonated the wrong character.

### *Journey's End*

### Question 13

Good answers to this question gave sensitive insights into the reasons for Stanhope's aggressive and unreasonable behaviour in this scene. They saw its significance as being virtually the first scene where he really opens up and reveals the damage that the war has done to him. They understood his disappointment in himself as well as his despair of ever being 'normal' again and they found the closeness of the relationship with Osborne profoundly moving. The best commented on the language and tone of the passage and saw the humour in the interchange with Osborne at the end of it. Some candidates seemed to find the extract difficult, however, and a surprising number did not comment on Stanhope's drunkenness or understand the uneasy blend of warfare, stress and masculine bonding.

### Question 14

The relationship between Raleigh and Stanhope was well understood on the whole, though weaker answers tended not to see that Stanhope's irritation and anger at his arrival is partly to do with his sense of responsibility for Raleigh. There was some relevant material in the passage but answers also needed to consider other significant incidents, such as the dinner after Osborne's death and the final scene of Raleigh's death. Surprisingly, one or other of these scenes was often missed. A key word here was 'memorable', and successful answers showed a strong and sensitive personal response.

### Question 15

There were some excellent Trotters. Many saw the humour, practical good-sense and his enjoyment of his creature comforts, but some candidates focused on the Stanhope-Raleigh situation and involved him in totally uncharacteristic amateur psychology. Some missed the dropped aitches and differences in speech between him and the Public School officers.

## Section B: Poetry

### *Tennyson*

### Question 16

This was the least popular of the poetry questions. Most responses to it explained meaning and indicated 'optimism and determination' without engaging with 'striking', but selecting appropriate textual details. Good answers, however, probed the text for relevant words and images.

### Question 17

Most candidates were able to link the nature descriptions with Tennyson's thoughts and feelings. Responses tended to be chronological but at least they did show the candidates had understood the language and the question. They often commented on pathetic fallacy: the snow was going, Spring was coming and the birds were happy. Better answers engaged with language and image in a detailed and sensitive way.

### Question 18

Most candidates understood the poem though some blamed Sir Lancelot for not returning the Lady's love. However, many did not engage with 'What does Tennyson make you feel' to any extent; there was a little curiosity and a lot of sympathy and that tended to be it. Even weaker answers referred to 'four grey walls' and Lancelot's colours; more successful ones responded sensitively to the language and sounds of the poem.

### *Songs of Ourselves*

### Question 19

*Marrysong*, a densely intricate elegy, proved difficult for some candidates. For example, 'without seasons' could be interpreted as bland and unchanging. Many candidates had been very well prepared and could present a knowledgeable paraphrase of the poem but the explanation of the central metaphor was more challenging and proved the discriminator. There was a fairly widespread misreading of the question as 'Explore the ways in which Scott portrays a beautiful relationship' which takes the emphasis off the examination of language and imagery and which therefore often led to simple paraphrase. The best answers, as ever, offered sensitive and often original interpretations.

### Question 20

*The Voice* was easily the most commonly attempted of all the poems in this section. While there were some very strong responses, others by contrast often suffered from over-use – and sometimes ingenious or questionable use – of literary terminology at the expense of real analysis and personal engagement: e.g. 'Alliteration of 'w' in *wan wistfulness* shows his pain at her disappearance...', 'Assonance of 'e' in *wet mead to me hear (sic)* shows how overwhelmed Hardy was by the whole experience...', 'The pain has struck him with the use of the semi-colon...'. Many answers provided all sorts of background information, but some of it was unsupportable and was not relevant to the task of exploring how Hardy powerfully communicates the pain of loss. There were far fewer responses to *Sonnet 29*. Those who attempted it generally showed fair understanding of it, although weaker answers tended simply to paraphrase it.

### Question 21

Those who answered on *The Flower-fed Buffaloes* usually understood what the poem was about as they could follow the 'story'; rhythm and repetition could be addressed and double meanings considered. The Hughes poem caused more problems. Some of the best poetry answers seen in this Paper were on this poem, written by candidates who engaged with the language and offered some really perceptive ideas but a significant number found it difficult to respond to as they had no idea what was or could be going on. Many candidates adopted a particular learnt interpretation that the poem is a metaphor about the birth of Little Frieda, where the 'dark river of blood' is menstruation, the 'unspilled milk' a reference to breasts and mother's milk, the moon is the father. Alternatively, the boulders and 'dark river' are the obstacles Frieda will struggle against in life and there is a 'sinister reference to death'. She is 'the brimming pail', innocent and just starting life, and will grow to maturity. Even when candidates were writing about the flash of perception as the child links language to an object, 'moon!' they were also tying this into the 'birth' scenario. *Sonnet 43* proved more straightforward, but candidates generally found less to say about it.

### Section C: Prose

### *Wuthering Heights*

### Question 22

This was the most popular question on this text. Candidates could usually find drama in the passage, but it was less common to find a focus on the idea of it being Isabella's narration and what that could mean. Relatively few candidates mentioned anything else about the novel other than what was in this extract.

### Question 23

Many who attempted this question treated Nelly as a real person with little sense of her as a construct. Weaker responses seemed to find it amazing that she made certain decisions or said certain things and very rarely mentioned Bronte. As ever in the case of questions such as this, answers that went beyond prepared character sketch and began to consider the role and function of the character – and who focused on the terms of the question ('memorable' being the key word here) fared much better.

### Question 24

Heathcliff empathic responses tended to involve much inclusion of details of the plot yet to unfold. However, Gothic cursing was clearly attractive and the task seems to have been enjoyed by candidates.

### *Games at Twilight*

### Question 25

There was some good close reading of the passage in evidence, with focus upon feelings as demonstrated through the actions of the children. Good answers explored the vivid descriptions and were aware of the writer's technique to explore. Less successful answers simply 'went through' the passage and said a few words about feelings at the end.

### Question 26

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

### Question 27

This task was only attempted by a few candidates, but there were some pleasing and convincing recreations of Pat.

### *When Rain Clouds Gather*

### Question 28

There was plenty of atmosphere for candidates to respond to in the extract: general material for the less skilled in analysis, and rich detail with many literary devices and descriptions for the more accomplished.

### Question 29

Chief Matenge is a vivid character who obviously impressed many. Many found it difficult to go beyond a record of actions and events but some were able to do so and to focus correctly on how he is made 'horrible', a word that demands a strong personal response.

### Question 30

Candidates displayed excellent knowledge of the text in this empathic task, and were usually very successful in impersonating Dinorego's dignity and wonderment at the changes in the village.

### *The Great Gatsby*

### Question 31

Candidates enjoyed exploring what the extract said about American society, the rich, Gatsby, conspicuous consumption, exploitation, etc. but the idea of 'striking' was not often engaged with. Only the best answers selected certain impressions and explored them, rather than just wandering through the whole passage. Those that spotted the 'moth' imagery often went on to explore other imagery to good effect. Those who started by listing luxury items often got no further and the implications in this extract, especially about the people who attended, were often missed. Some candidates sensed shallowness and something 'fake' and 'desperate' about the scene and some went as far as insisting on Fitzgerald feeling 'disgust' for the 'conspicuous consumption' he describes. The strongest answers made clear the moral vacuum at the heart of this society.

### Question 32

This question went to the heart of the novel and many candidates quoted the famous lines about the ways in which Tom Buchanan destroyed people and then retreated into his money. This showed how well assimilated the ideas of the novel had been, and this question allowed candidates to display their understanding. Candidates tended to use quotation very well in answering this question.

### Question 33

The empathy question proved successful in so far as all candidates caught Daisy's mixture of sentimentalism, superficiality and materialism. Answers did tend to be rather brief, though, perhaps because we do not often share Daisy's thoughts in the novel. Daisy fared the worst in this category. Her thrilling conspiratorial whispers, sometimes shockingly shot through with bitterness, did not really come through. Candidates did not seem really sure what Daisy feels at this point in the novel and fell back on descriptions of Gatsby's mansion, and cynical remarks about Tom.

### *Ethan Frome*

### Question 34

The extract offered much material for analysis and there were some extremely sensitive responses, showing a good understanding of the poignancy of the latter parts of the novel and showing real engagement. The best did 'explore how Wharton conveys the tension'; weaker answers simply retold what happened.

### Question 35

Candidates were well prepared for this task which went to the centre of the novel, and generally wrote persuasively. Some used material from the extract but geared it to the question and, of course, limited themselves if they did not go beyond that. There were many balanced answers, with candidates being aware of the possible bias in the narrative.

### Question 36

Candidates enjoyed writing as Mattie. Some effective empathic work was seen here, although responses were occasionally rather 'modern' and gushing.

### *Stories of Ourselves*

### Question 37

The extract from *The Third and Final Continent* proved less than straightforward for some. Although candidates could see that this was the moment when the couple begin to fall in love, they often neglected Mrs Croft entirely or failed to see her as the catalyst for the narrator's feelings for his wife.

### Question 38

Mr Wills in *The Taste of Watermelon* was the most popular choice. Surprisingly, a lot of the answers concentrated more on the early part of the story where sympathy is in shorter supply than on the final section. Candidates could identify reasons for sympathy but it was only the stronger ones who realised how the reader's view was directed and manipulated by the narrative viewpoint. There were some very perceptive answers on *The Yellow Wall Paper*. The impact of the diary form was assessed with some perception. Not many tackled *The Signalman*, but those who did were engaged by his character and situation.

### Question 39

Relatively few attempted the empathic task on *The Lemon Orchard*, but there were some convincingly harsh voices here, making good use of the detail of the story and providing believable accounts of 'what happened next.'

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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**Paper 0486/42**  
**Paper 42 (Closed Books)**

## Key messages

The following are key areas that are necessary for success in set texts papers:

1. *Relevance to the question.* Candidates benefit from being trained to analyse questions, looking for key phrases on which to base their answer. A good answer will keep the question firmly in mind throughout and will not digress into narrative, speculation, general assertion or personal opinion unrelated to the text. A few minutes spent planning an answer will help candidates to stay on course. Successful candidates know the importance of the key phrases in the question as they write their answer. Phrases such as 'Another way in which the relationship is memorable...' or 'This scene is particularly exciting because...' at the start of paragraphs not only help the candidate keep on track and focused, but help the reader see how the answer develops.
2. *A well structured argument.* Classroom discussion is clearly central to acquisition of the skill of constructing a developed argument, an essential ingredient for achieving the highest grades in the paper.
3. *Well selected supporting detail and quotation.* Along with a well structured argument goes the ability to use quotation and close reference to support that argument, not merely as a prop, but as the basis for comment and analysis. Less successful candidates may often demonstrate knowledge by inserting quotation but they do not go on to comment on it; their answers become a series of assertions or narrative. There is also sometimes a mismatch between the quotation and the point being made. Candidates should be encouraged to use quotation effectively, to select appropriately and economically, and to comment on the selection they make.
4. *Analysis of the writer's technique.* Another essential for success is the ability to engage with the writer's choice of language (Assessment Objective 3). While passage-based and poetry questions may seem to have the most overt requirement in this connection, discursive answers are always enhanced by a consideration of the writer's technique. In order to encourage candidates to explore rather than explain the use of particular words, one useful exercise might be to encourage them to try and find synonyms or substitutes and then consider the ensuing effect.

## General comments

In general, the quality of the responses to these papers showed that candidates had been stimulated by and had enjoyed the texts that they had studied.

There were very few examples of misunderstanding or of the wrong character or incident being chosen where one was specified. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were clear indications of enjoyment of and engagement with the texts. There were a significant number of excellent scripts where candidates responded to texts very well and were able to analyse language in depth. Well prepared candidates delivered perceptive, intelligent answers which addressed the point of questions, revealed detailed engagement with text, and integrated textual reference and quotation within answers.

In the majority of papers time had been used sensibly with answers of approximately equal length. (Where this was not the case, it was invariably the third answer that was shorter and sometimes rather rushed.) Some candidates wrote long introductory paragraphs which, in some cases, were almost as long as the main body of their answers. This was almost always a waste of time, as although these paragraphs often supplied a detailed overview of the storyline, they were not aimed at the actual question and so could gain little if any credit.

There seemed to be fewer examples this session of candidates adopting the strategy of using 'one I prepared earlier' in response to a question, focusing instead on the terms of the questions. There were, however, a good few cases where key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', were neglected. These words are intended as prompts for consideration of the writers' methods and as an indication that narrative alone will not be sufficient to meet the demands of the task.

Some candidates included reference to biographical, social and/or historical context at the expense of focusing on the text itself. This was particularly true with the poem *Full Moon and Little Frieda* in Question 19, where biographical 'facts' got in the way of considering the power of the words. It was also true to some extent with the topic of the American Dream, which took over some answers to *Death of A Salesman* and *The Great Gatsby* and became a distraction from the task in hand.

There were some excellent responses to the passage-based questions, the best using details from the passage effectively and economically in support of a strong response to the question. However, some candidates surprisingly did not quote freely from the extract despite it being available to them.

Good answers to the drama questions acknowledged that drama is intended to be watched and is different from prose. In good answers candidates explored all the evidence available to them, especially stage directions, the way actors deliver lines and respond to each other. But a significant number of answers referred tellingly to the play as 'the novel' and the audience as 'readers'. It is recommended that teachers encourage candidates to try and visualise drama in performance i.e. as an audience.

Empathic response tasks were popular in some Centres. The best, through their creation of a convincing voice, showed a sophisticated understanding of the writer's method, and included, whether directly or indirectly, a great deal of detail. Less successful attempts relied on more generalised thoughts and feelings or on narrative without sufficient detailed support.

Poetry answers seemed to suffer less this year from over-display of technical terms, though there was still a tendency for some answers to resort to displaying knowledge of (sometimes abstruse) terminology at the expense of analysis. In weaker answers, alliteration was often deemed responsible for every emotion in any poem, punctuation taking care of anything not covered by the other terms. Such answers often used technical terms as a substitute for any engaged commentary on language, making rather bland comments such as 'the use of enjambment makes the poem flow', 'the caesura shows the pain of his loss', 'alliteration proves how long she's been away'. Some answers seemed to be entirely constructed around the use of caesura, the actual meaning of the poem being lost. By contrast, though, there were many very assured and sophisticated responses, offering perceptive and original interpretations and clearly showing the way in which language and imagery were used by the poet.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A: Drama**

#### ***Death of a Salesman***

##### **Question 1**

The candidates who produced the most convincing responses were those who showed a sense of audience and responded to 'dramatic', demonstrating a sound understanding of the tensions in the passage and using the stage directions as well as quotations to support their ideas. 'Revealing' invited candidates to place the passage within the context of the whole play and even weaker answers seemed to have a general knowledge and understanding of the characters and situations. Some saw Willy's realisation in terms of a flawed version of the American dream. Some did not see any of the deeper issues: that Willy does not seem to realise that it was because of Biff's discovery of his affair that Biff dropped out of college, and that when it is pointed out to him in the extract, he refuses to accept it; or that previously, Bernard is ridiculed by Willy, but here, he's asking his advice.

## Question 2

Many candidates rose to the challenge of this question, showing the complexity of Linda's statement, which not only refers to her current anxieties about Willy's state of mind, but also relates to the wider issue of The American Dream and Willy's role as an Everyman figure having significance for us all. Answers which concentrated only on Willy's mental turmoil and his potential danger to others (his car etc.) missed some of the depths of the question. Some took refuge in offloading 'prepared' answers, for example about Willy as a tragic hero.

## Question 3

Candidates who tackled this empathic task clearly understood the narrative of the drama and some of Happy's thoughts at this moment. There were some very convincing assumptions of Happy's voice which showed a clear understanding that he was Willy's son in more than name and captured some of the boastfulness as well as the insecurities of coming second to Biff.

### *My Mother Said I Never Should*

## Question 4

Good answers explored all aspects of the passage, focusing on the visual and symbolic aspect of the tension between the women, i.e. the tugging of the sheet, and the ambiguity of Doris's remarks about the weather. They picked up the provocative statements of each of the women and many were able to see that Margaret is challenging Doris's system of values.

## Question 5

Most candidates tackling this question felt sympathy for Margaret and were able to identify moments in the drama which illustrated this. There were some very good answers demonstrating knowledge of the chosen character but a great many responses described each character in turn before adding a short 'answer' in the final paragraph.

## Question 6

Most candidates captured Doris reasonably well, showing her initial disapproval but her coming round to supporting her family and even to look forward to a new Great-grandchild. But some of her more quotable statements such as 'You make me so angry', 'Resentment is a terrible thing' were missing. Weaker answers provided narrative details and speculations from Doris but little sense of her voice.

### *Much Ado About Nothing*

## Question 7

Almost all candidates responded to 'satisfying' in terms of the plot, and were able to say what had gone before and how this rights the wrongs and prepares for what is to come. Many stopped at the end of the first page, ignoring the part of the extract with Dogberry. Better answers picked out 'Choose your revenge yourself' from Claudio to show just how contrite he is; and Borachio's 'she knew not what she did', saving Margaret's reputation by pointing out she was not in on the plot. Only the best answers saw that Leonato has not entirely forgiven Claudio and is going to subject him to public humiliation. In less successful answers there was a lack of direct quotation and of commentary on the language. Good answers described the audience's reactions to this scene.

## Question 8

There were some well informed and interesting discussions of Don Pedro. Most thought Don Pedro was 'well-intentioned and honourable', but also 'scheming', which was considered not a bad thing. Very few thought he was 'untrustworthy', and very few considered his scorning and snubbing of Leonato, the sexual jokes he shares with Claudio and his taunts of Benedick. Candidates were generally able to give textual examples in support of their views and there were some usefully learnt quotations deployed.

### Question 9

Hero was given a lot to think about by candidates who also considered the context of the 'first' wedding. Many picked up on 'My heart is exceeding heavy', and based their approach on it, which made Hero unexpectedly percipient. In weaker answers Hero did not reflect on anything much apart from that it was her wedding day and was not it lovely and she was so nervous and her dress was lovely and her husband-to-be was lovely too. Success in empathic tasks does require some detail from the text and there was much to be said about her meeting with Claudio, the wooing of Don Pedro and her relationship with Beatrice.

### *Richard III*

### Question 10

Many could see how this scene was powerfully dramatic. The best answers provided a sense of how Richard's character permeated the play even in his absence. Weaker answers attempted to retell the whole of the narrative of the drama.

### Question 11

To answer this question well candidates needed to focus on two words – 'lively' and 'humorous' – and to illustrate these characteristics with moments from the drama. There are some really good moments to use so it was surprising to read answers from so many who selected only one characteristic or addressed one as an afterthought in a throw-away sentence. Some candidates appeared to believe that the most hysterically amusing moment of the drama was Richard's death scene, missing the point that the full title of the play includes the word 'tragedy'.

### Question 12

This was handled well on the whole. Candidates were able to develop a voice for Hastings in which his shock and bewilderment began to emerge. Perhaps in some responses he might have been more angry, but generally the feelings expressed were believable and there was supporting detail.

### *Journey's End*

### Question 13

There were some good answers here which drew a contrast with Act One and managed to describe relationships and how these contributed to tone and atmosphere. Candidates mentioned the 'normality' of the scene with the sunlight, the food and the cheerful banter. Better answers explored some of the humour. Inevitably the focus was on Trotter and Osborne, but some noted the contribution that Mason makes. Rarely did anyone mention that Raleigh is there too. Really good answers also noted lighting effects and were clear that this is drama.

### Question 14

While there were a lot of character sketches offered, the most successful answers explored the dramatic purpose of Osborne. There were some moving and erudite responses to the question. It is clear that many candidates had really taken Osborne and the text itself to their hearts and they wrote with real engagement.

### Question 15

There were some very successful responses to this task which managed to reflect on Stanhope's disillusionment with the war, his exhaustion and his anger at and contempt of the Colonel. Weaker answers had difficulty in placing the exact point in the play and so the Colonel was barely mentioned. The voice proved accessible to most candidates.

## Section B: Poetry

### Tennyson

#### Question 16

Most candidates explored the language fairly effectively and even weaker candidates were able to comment on the language in this poem. To demonstrate the gloomy, depressing atmosphere, they selected repetitive rhyme patterns, the repeated last four lines, Mariana's crying whatever time of day, the gloomy depressing garden and house setting, the darkness and marshes, the night-time. Stronger answers considered the effect of, for example, the superlative 'blackest' (line 1), 'rusted' (line 3), 'broken' (line 5), all signs of something worn and broken 'like Mariana's love'. Some pointed out that even pleasant things were scorned, for example 'the sweet heaven' was not looked at. Some picked out the sounds in stanza three, which were all bleak and depressing. Some got quite irritated by Mariana, and thought 'she should get up and do something, and stop moping around', which showed some personal response. There were some, however, who described technical terms without comment on the contribution usage of these terms made to the poem. Rhyme schemes were an example of this, often identified and then left unexplained.

#### Question 17

Good answers focused on the words and the evident mental turmoil of the narrator. One or two candidates felt that the poem was about being buried alive - literally, not as a metaphor (which might be an interesting and legitimate interpretation but would require sustained discussion and that was missing from these answers). There was also evident confusion amongst some candidates about the narrative of the poem as some clearly believed that the poem was about Tennyson's relationship with Hallam and they let this interpretation get in the way of a more objective assessment.

#### Question 18

Very few candidates tackled this question. Those who did tended to write only sketchily about the reflective/questioning nature of this extract.

### *Songs of Ourselves*

#### Question 19

Candidates who answered this well, focusing on the words, did get the point about the joy of the moment and answers were often refreshingly clear. By contrast, some answers elected to focus on the poet's relationship with Sylvia Plath providing completely unnecessary background detail, often at length, which bore no relationship to the question.

#### Question 20

Successful candidates noted the elegiac nature of *Lament*, focusing on the repetitions and images and balanced their answers by spending an equal amount of time on *Report to Wordsworth*. *Lament* seemed to produce a greater feeling of engagement. While some resorted to formulaic comments such as 'this is an example of a metaphor...', better answers went much beyond this to consider the 'how' of the question.

#### Question 21

Not many candidates attempted this question, but it sometimes prompted more original responses than the other two *Songs* questions. *First Love* proved the most productive choice. Some selected one of the poems given in Question 20 but had difficulty in making it relevant to the task here.

## Section C: Prose

### *Wuthering Heights*

#### Question 22

Many candidates knew this text really well. Good answers focused on 'at this moment ...' allowing evidence from the text to support their thinking. Weaker answers rambled all over the novel providing rich but irrelevant detail for which there could be little reward; they did not allow the extract to work for them by using it for quotation. Considering that the Lintons are seen to be quarrelling, screaming, howling, and complaining and that Cathy is then attacked by a monstrous dog, it seemed surprising to find some answers claiming that Thrushcross Grange, at this moment, was a civilised place.

#### Question 23

The best answers maintained a sense of balance, using the text selectively in support. However, a few candidates chose the wrong Catherine and some chose both.

#### Question 24

This empathic task was generally very well handled. There were some good accounts of appropriate narrative detail and something of the voice of Nellie emerged, though many candidates omitted to mention the encounter with young Linton just before they are tricked into entering *Wuthering Heights* in which Nellie offers some very sharp comments which might usefully have been integrated. In the best answers her down-to-earth voice and her more 'correct' form of speech were well blended.

### *Games at Twilight*

#### Question 25

Quite a few summarised the whole story. Those who did focus on the passage were strangely reluctant to develop a personal response to the writing. There were very few really good answers to this question.

#### Question 26

The most popular approach was to inveigh against the selfishness of old people with reference to *A Devoted Son*. This was often done with understanding of the writing; but one might wish that more had seen that there was another side. Many candidates did not see the ruthlessness and arrogance of Rakesh.

#### Question 27

Many answers happily plundered the story successfully for this empathic task, and produced recognisable Mr Boses.

### *When Rain Clouds Gather*

#### Question 28

Candidates were able to contrast Matenge and Sekoto very well, with details from the whole text, though only the best answers saw that perhaps they are not so different but that Sekoto is better at concealing his nastiness. They were less secure on using the writing from this passage to show how Head conveys their differences. They did not seem to understand the jealousy of Chief Sekoto in line 13. They wanted simplicity, one good character, one bad character; and jealousy is a bad characteristic, so often it was Matenge who was jealous of Sekoto.

### Question 29

This was not a popular question but those who answered it frequently rose to the challenge of giving a sincere personal response. The most popular choice was the scene at the end of the novel, when the villagers gather in front of Matenge's house to support Paulina. In some answers 'incident' was interpreted fairly freely, sometimes the whole of the drought being selected. This was a valid approach as long as it did not merely rely on narrative and the qualities of the people were identified.

### Question 30

There were some reasonable thoughts on Makhaya but many attempts at this empathic task on Mma-Millipede were more a character study of Makhaya, rather than Mma-Millipede's impressions. A sprinkling of religious language and biblical expression ensured that most candidates at least used suitable features of expression.

### *The Great Gatsby*

### Question 31

Most candidates experienced little difficulty in identifying the feelings of Gatsby and Daisy, though they tended to find more to say about Gatsby. The 'strikingly' of the question was often ignored. There were some good responses, bringing in his past with Daisy, and pointing out the significance of this moment for him, referring to the fact that he was so awe-struck by her presence that he nearly fell down a flight of stairs. There was less understanding of Daisy here; weaker answers almost completely ignored the brushing of her hair with a gold brush, and the crying into the shirts, stronger ones commented on the ambiguity of her responses. Was she rediscovering her lost love, feeling trapped with Tom or merely responding to Gatsby's fantastic wealth?

### Question 32

Many candidates seemed to think that the only reason for Gatsby's attraction was her wealth, or rather that she came from a wealthy 'old' family. Better answers commented on her unattainability, on the fact that she was liked and desired by most young men, and on her physical charms (her soft voice, for one).

### Question 33

Most candidates knew the moment, though some took the moment into the actual meeting. They understood Jordan's curiosity, but there was a disappointing lack of reference to her golf background, her attitude to the party, to the money or activities going on, or to other characters in the novel, particularly Nick. Most Jordans were really rather sympathetic characters, though they often missed her jaunty optimism.

### *Ethan Frome*

### Question 34

This was the most popular by far of the three questions on *Ethan Frome* and most candidates clearly found it an accessible task. In order to show their shock/surprise some candidates spent too long in establishing context at the beginning of the essay; the best responses managed to integrate such knowledge in the body of the essay at the relevant point. Weaker answers predictably gave a paraphrase of the extract but the majority of answers were good, with candidates finding it relatively easy to choose suitable textual support.

### Question 35

Choice of episode was the discriminator and there was a lot of variety with no common choices. There was occasional misreading of the question where candidates explored two episodes where *they* were disappointed with Ethan Frome's life.

### Question 36

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

**Stories of Ourselves**

**Question 37**

Clear understanding of the passage was demonstrated, although much response to language was implicit rather than explicit even though it was there on the page. Good answers focused on the word 'fascination' and used details in the text to support this; some wrote on affection rather than fascination. The most successful answers looked really closely at details and linguistic choices, going well beyond the obvious.

**Question 38**

There was some good comment on the construction and language of both *How it Happened* and *There Will Come Soft Rains* although some candidates took refuge in narrative. Good answers explored the way in which the writer crafted the story and engaged readers.

**Question 39**

This was generally the best handled of the empathic questions in the Prose section. There was a range of 'splendid' Mrs Crofts. Most got the point about Mrs Croft's admiration for Mala and something of the developing relationship between Mala and her husband. The best responses showed understanding of more than the moment specified as it was described in the text and conveyed Mrs Croft's directness and her often acerbic tone.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/51  
Paer 51 (Closed Books – B)

## Key Messages

As this is a set text paper, the Key Messages given in the report for Paper 41 apply here too.

## General Comments

There was ample evidence this session of candidates' engagement with their set texts and an ability to form strong opinions on them.

There has been a noticeable improvement this session in candidates' work on poetry and responses to empathic questions. Poetry texts were tackled with enthusiasm, and answers showed an ability to analyse language and theme in a sensitive and effective manner. Biographical/contextual matters had clearly informed candidates' learning but without appearing as extraneous material in answers. In empathic tasks, a greater number of candidates this session showed an ability to write in the voice of a character and to pinpoint the exact moment in the text the question addresses.

Candidates answered discursive questions more successfully too in terms of balancing their views and supporting them with textual reference. A significant minority of candidates answered an 'essay' question (i.e. the second question on each of the prose/drama texts) using only reference to the passage printed in the previous question in order to support their ideas. This inevitably limited the ideas that could be explored. In response to passage-based questions more candidates are referring closely to the extract, although this is an area that could still be improved. Direct quotation from the passages is the best way to support points made and many candidates would improve their level of achievement if they adopted this simple strategy. Candidates are not required to put the passage in context at great length. Doing so often leads to an imbalanced response which is often not relevant to the question set.

Candidates showed sound knowledge of the narratives of plays and novels and the best answers used this knowledge to respond to the question set. Sometimes in response to *Romeo and Juliet*, in particular, less effective answers concentrated too much on plot at the expense of looking at the dramatic impact of scenes or characters.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses. Some candidates are wasting valuable writing time providing a word count which is simply not required.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### ***I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings***

**Question 1** Candidates responded to the disturbing nature of the passage both in understanding the collusion of the used-to-be sheriff with the 'boys' of the Ku Klux Klan and in analysis of the power of the language. The strongest answers explained the nature of the sheriff's 'crime', in Angelou's view, very clearly and gave textual support for the humiliation of Uncle Willie and of African Americans in general. The strongest responses commented on the powerful presentation of the fear the sheriff's visit caused to Maya's family.

**Question 2** elicited answers which showed knowledge of why Maya and Bailey had formed such a close bond. The most successful answers here ranged quite widely through the text in support of their views or used key passages in the text closely in support. Maya's feelings of Bailey's superiority in appearance and intellect featured in such responses. His helping her take revenge on Mrs Cullinan was used in evidence but more candidates could have mentioned their shared humour and how this alleviated the more stressful parts of their childhood. Knowledge of key quotations such as 'My pretty Black brother was my Kingdom Come' proved invaluable.

**Question 3** Candidates often gave a very convincing rendition of Momma's "voice" in answer to this question, especially in capturing her biblical vocabulary. The best answers understood her moral victory over Dentist Lincoln and that she had extracted money from him in order for Maya to visit a black dentist. Some answers underestimated her glorying in her victory over him or were too general in their comments. Answers which combined a strong voice with sound knowledge of the exact situation, gained the highest marks here.

### ***Whose Life is it Anyway?***

**Question 4** Most candidates commented effectively on the scene as an upsetting turning point for Ken, where his distaste for professionalism and 'the optimism industry' boils over. There were many impassioned personal responses to Ken's plight and to the way in which medical professionals treat him as being incapable of making his own decisions. A stronger response to the language of the scene such as the rhetorical questions, the non-sequiturs, the use of ellipsis and the swearing, would have moved many answers up the mark range. Some candidates thought that Mrs Boyle was a doctor rather than a hospital social worker.

**Question 5** The strongest responses here understood that the question was about the play rather than Ken's medical condition. Such responses balanced their views and supported them with close reference to the play. The humour in the play and Ken's achieving his right to die were cited as uplifting aspects but these were countered by the affection we feel for Ken because of his wit and fortitude, which makes it depressing to lose him. Surprisingly the more upbeat subplot concerning John and Nurse Kay Sadler was rarely mentioned.

**Question 6** This question was answered well when candidates had a clear idea of Dr Travers's role as the hospital's psychiatrist. Such candidates demonstrated knowledge of the powerful, if brief, scene between Ken and Dr Travers. They therefore showed him coming to the conclusion that Ken is not clinically depressed and is of sound mind. A professional, calm voice was all that was needed here and was achieved in many responses. The strongest showed that Travers had been moved by his conversation with Ken. Some candidates did confuse Dr Travers with Dr Emerson.

### ***Death of a Naturalist***

**Question 7** This question elicited a great range of responses, many showing an excellent ability to analyse the poetry in detail, within the framework of an intelligent overview. Most candidates realised that there were two relatives to discuss and that Heaney's diction offered them the opportunity to explore his contrasts of tone, which were genuinely open to interpretation: from straightforward admiration and pride to criticism and scorn. It was refreshing to see form not simply identified but explored for its contribution to Heaney's theme of 'passing on': as in 'trade/fade', 'wall/fall'. Some candidates made judicious use of Heaney's self-proclaimed 'career move' in *Digging* and aptly applied it here – taking the photograph to the attic could be seen as Heaney breaking with his family's agricultural traditions or consigning his great uncle to the 'attic' of his memory. There were varying interpretations of what the great uncle's picture represented. Many answers commented on Heaney's use of 'chronicle' as showing the importance of this chapter in their lives. Some candidates misunderstood the final verse of the poem but many responded effectively to its moving qualities.

**Question 8** In answer to this question some candidates mechanically described the activities in the poem, rather than probing Heaney's range of literary techniques or methods. More sensitive responses exploited Heaney's fascination, almost obsession, with the senses, which he uses in order to commune with the world around him, as does the diviner. The best answers supported their points with apt quotation. Some answers surprisingly missed Heaney's admiration of his father and grandfather's skills in *Digging*.

**Question 9** The most popular and appropriate choices here were *Death of a Naturalist*, *The Barn*, *Blackberry Picking* and *An Advancement of Learning*. Candidates generally focused effectively on the upsetting aspects of nature in the poems and commented on how this was created by the style. It might help candidates to note that there are usually two ‘Heaneys’ in many of these poems with distinct voices: a younger version of Heaney, often the persona in poems, and a more mature Heaney, the poet, shaping and crafting the experiences that confront him. Understanding this is likely to give a discussion on theme greater impetus. Some candidates chose to write about *The Waterfall* and *Valediction*, which were not suitable to this particular question.

### ***Nineteen Eighty-Four***

**Question 10** Many answers here explored Orwell’s use of tension, suspense, surprise and contrast with great confidence and understood the significance of the passage in the novel as a whole. The strongest responses paid full attention to what was ‘dramatic’ about this pivotal encounter between Winston and Julia and gave detailed support from the extract.

**Question 11** Room 101, the Two Minutes Hate, Winston’s job re-writing history and the Parsons children were cited most often in answer to this question. It was answered well when candidates avoided narrative and responded personally to what was so striking (and often horrific) about the Party’s methods of control.

**Question 12** was tackled by some who were undecided or slightly confused as to Mr Charrington’s role, although most showed knowledge of the incident in the question and its place in the novel as a whole. The best responses to this question grasped Charrington’s fanaticism and the pleasure he would have gained from trapping the dissident Winston. One interesting response went for a complete physical makeover, so that the elderly man seen by Winston gradually took off his physical disguise to reveal a young, politically enthusiastic officer. Some Charringtons were officious; some were sadistic, hoping that trapping Winston would bring them promotion to the Miniluv so that they could actively correct the wrong thinkers using the latest instruments. Many candidates who chose this seemed to be enjoying themselves.

### ***Brave New World***

**Question 13** Many candidates were able to identify individual words and actions that disturbed them, sympathised with the children in the scene and were shocked at the unfolding horror of the activities. The strongest answers explored Huxley’s sinister vocabulary that converted delicate human beings into emotionless objects for example: “The infants were unloaded” and commented on the horrific descriptions of children in distress. An ability to select and comment on such disturbing images was the key factor in discrimination. Another distinction between responses was that able candidates understood Huxley’s satirical purpose in presenting *Brave New World*’s corrupt ideology of conditioning. The passage provoked strong personal response and engaged answers.

**Question 14** The responses to this question were successful according to how effectively candidates could identify a specific moment to illustrate their sympathy and Huxley’s pathos. The choice of moments was sometimes too wide and generic, for example Bernard’s problematic conditioning and hence his ‘misfit’ role and his attempts to shine or impress by using Linda and John.

**Question 15** The strongest responses to this question were sensitive to the moment which offered opportunities such as the Director’s potentially conflicting emotions for both Linda and John, yet his utter contempt for them and horror at failing the *Brave New World* society. Many candidates also ranged more widely across the text, dealing with apt narrative antecedents such as the Director’s inadvertent revelation to Bernard about his trip to the savage world. Many candidates produced convincing voices by mirroring the specific vocabulary of the novel such as the hypnopædic sayings and the scientific lexis. This was combined with the shock and outrage the Director was feeling along with perceptive evocations of his pride in his status, now ruined by the revelations of his past.

### ***Romeo and Juliet***

**Question 16** In answer to this question candidates needed to show knowledge of context, particularly that *Romeo and Juliet* are married at this stage of the play, without allowing narrative to dominate their answers. They also needed a clear grasp of the Nurse’s betrayal of Juliet and the consequences of this, as outlined in the last lines of the passage. A strong grasp of the drama of the situation itself and the language of the passage were characteristic of successful answers. The very best selected the irony of Juliet’s ‘thou hast

comforted me marvellous much,' commenting on the scene as the point where Juliet truly 'grows up' in the play.

**Question 17** produced good answers when candidates gave a rounded portrayal of Capulet as a father and did not concentrate exclusively on his anger when Juliet refuses to marry Paris. Strong responses cited his early concern not to marry her off too young and that his arranging a strong dynastic marriage for her reflected the custom of the times. Less successful responses tended to give a character sketch rather than answer the question set.

**Question 18** The most successful answers used knowledge of the text to reflect the Friar's views on Romeo's previous love for Rosaline, the dangerous haste of the couple, their obvious love and his desire to turn their 'households' rancour to pure love'. The best answers also captured his voice using appropriate religious language. Some answers overestimated his knowledge at this point in the play, thinking that he knew about Capulet's plans for Juliet to marry Paris and that he was already preparing his potion plan. Others suggested that marrying Romeo and Juliet was 'sinful' and against the church rather than rash.

### ***Songs of Ourselves (selection from Part 1)***

**Question 19** This was by far the most popular question on this text. The most successful candidates paid attention to the question and did not merely just 'go through' through the poem, trying to explain the meaning. They identified 'animal' imagery in stanza one and related it to the theme of the poem also commenting on the narrator's varying moods and tones. Most candidates could comment on the basic 'narrative' of the poem and on the narrator's feelings but closer reference to the language would have improved many answers.

**Question 20 and Question 21** There were far too few answers on these questions to make appropriate general comment.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/52  
Paper 52 (Closed Books - B)

## Key Messages

As this is a set text paper, the Key Messages given in the report for Paper 42 apply here too.

## General Comments

There was ample evidence this session of candidates' engagement with their set texts and an ability to form strong opinions on them.

There has been a noticeable improvement this session in candidates' work on poetry and responses to empathic questions. Poetry texts were tackled with enthusiasm, and answers showed an ability to analyse language and theme in a sensitive and effective manner. Biographical/contextual matters had clearly informed candidates' learning but without appearing as extraneous material in answers. In empathic tasks, a greater number of candidates this session showed an ability to write in the voice of a character and to pinpoint the exact moment in the text the question addresses.

Candidates answered discursive questions more successfully too in terms of balancing their views and supporting them with textual reference. A significant minority of candidates answered an 'essay' question (i.e. the second question on each of the prose/drama texts) using only reference to the passage printed in the previous question in order to support their ideas. This inevitably limited the ideas that could be explored. In response to passage-based questions more candidates are referring closely to the extract, although this is an area that could still be improved. Direct quotation from the passages is the best way to support points made and many candidates would improve their level of achievement if they adopted this simple strategy. Candidates are not required to put the passage in context at great length. Doing so often leads to an imbalanced response which is often not relevant to the question set.

Candidates showed sound knowledge of the narratives of plays and novels and the best answers used this knowledge to respond to the question set. Sometimes in response to *Romeo and Juliet*, in particular, less effective answers concentrated too much on plot at the expense of looking at the dramatic impact of scenes or characters.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses. Some candidates are wasting valuable writing time providing a word count which is simply not required.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### ***I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings***

**Question 1** This question was answered well when candidates paid attention to the question wording and to the passage rather than narrating the events which led up to the passage. There was general understanding of how important Mrs Flowers is to Maya and candidates who proved this from the vivid depiction of her in the passage rather than merely asserting it from knowledge of the autobiography in general, fared better. The strongest answers referred to the paragraph where Angelou compares Mrs Flowers to 'women in English novels'.

**Question 2** The strongest answers here chose two moments carefully, explored them in sufficient detail and focused clearly on why Maya's feelings were hurt and how this was caused by the behaviour of white people. Apt choices were her re-naming by Mrs Cullinan, the graduation ceremony, the behaviour of the

'powhitetrash' girls towards Momma and the incident with Dentist Lincoln. Candidates were less successful when they chose to write about more than two incidents or wrote about racism in general terms rather than referring to specific moments in the text.

**Question 3** There were too few answers to this question to make meaningful general comment.

### ***Whose Life is it Anyway?***

**Question 4** was well answered when candidates understood the context of the passage and focused on the tension and suspense in the situation and the personal/professional clash between Emerson and Hill. The best answers did not merely outline the issues but saw the inherent tension in the clash of views. As always in passage-based questions, comment on the language used is vital for the higher ranges of marks. Here strong language such as 'the law is not such an ass...' or 'You make me sound as if I were some sort of Dracula' could have been used in support. Clear-sighted candidates saw that the end of the scene leads into the climax of the play where we will see whose view predominates.

**Question 5** Candidates produced a range of views as to why Ken Harrison is such a dramatic central character in the play. The liveliest wrote effectively about how his strong intellect and biting humour, contrasted with the hopelessness of his physical condition, made for effective drama. Many candidates appreciated that he is the cause of dramatic conflict both in the ethical issues his situation provokes and in the personal relationships he forms during the play. His relationship with the audience was also examined with some sophistication.

**Question 6** Most candidates managed to find a balance between Dr Scott's professional views and her growing personal involvement with Ken Harrison in answer to this question. Her inner debate was often conveyed effectively and the best answers had a clear grasp of the moment in the play. Some made her rather too dramatic and emotional, not fully grasping her thoughtfulness and rationality.

### ***Death of a Naturalist***

**Question 7** Candidates were generally successful in selecting words and images which showed Heaney's admiration of his father's expertise and the best responses commented on these in some depth. Many also explored his feelings of inferiority in some detail with effective support from the poem. The discriminating factor was often the candidate's ability to see that his father's "stumbling" behind Heaney in the final verse was metaphorical rather than literal.

**Question 8** There were some sound responses to the imagery in both *The Barn* and *Death of a Naturalist*. Candidates spotted patterns of imagery and explored how these conveyed the child Heaney's fears effectively. The poems were well known with candidates quoting usefully and often seeing a common theme running between the two poems. The contrast between the teacher Mrs Walls's description of frogs and tadpoles and the reality faced by Heaney in *Death of a Naturalist* could sometimes have been explored in more detail, though response to the military and grotesque imagery was well-developed.

**Question 9** Too few candidates tackled this question to make meaningful general comment.

### ***Nineteen Eighty-Four***

**Question 10** There were some excellent responses to this powerful passage. Strong answers saw the full implications of Winston seeing five fingers and explored the horror of the treatment he receives and O'Brien's didactic coldness. The language used to convey this – particularly in the opening paragraph – was explored in some detail in effective answers. There were misconceptions in less developed responses. Some of these commented on how much pain Winston was suffering here, despite the text saying 'A terrific, painless blow...'. Most understood the context, with some narrating what has led up to this extract. Others focused only on the implications of Winston agreeing that two and two make five, at the expense of looking at the passage as a whole.

**Question 11** Most candidates showed some overview here and understood what Orwell was trying to convey about the frightening nature of family life in Oceania through his portrayal of the Parsons family. The best responses looked at Mr Parsons and his arrest towards the end of the novel as well as concentrating on the Parsons children. Such responses showed very good textual knowledge and gave detailed support. Less effective responses tended to describe the family and their activities, rather than looking at Orwell's purpose.

**Question 12** There were some excellent Julias which captured her rebelliousness, her contempt for the party, her cynicism and her sexuality. Candidates knew the details of the moment such as her knowledge of the area gained from community hikes, her membership of the anti-sex league and her hatred of the all-girls hostel, and used these to make a credible response. Less successful responses were knowledgeable but rather flat, failing to capture Julia's quite distinctive voice.

### ***Brave New World***

**Question 13** candidates found plenty to say here about the Director in general, and about his anger at the end. The best answers focused clearly on the extract itself, and responded to what Huxley makes you feel about the Director and what he reveals of himself. A personal response, with understanding of how the repression of emotion in *Brave New World* fails in this moment, was often the most successful approach.

**Question 14** This question was answered well according to the aptness of the chosen moment and the depth and detail of the exploration. A successful choice was the incident in the hospital when Linda dies. The strongest answers did not merely retell the events or leave the sympathy implied. Some candidates chose to write about John at the end of the novel, pointing out the tragedy that John did not fit into either the reservation or the new world.

**Question 15** Many candidates skilfully adopted a convincing voice for Lenina and reflected her rather superficial and cosseted attitudes. Her horror at Linda's appearance and the 'too much reality' of the reservation found their way into many sound responses. Many candidates had her reaching for the soma bottle and perceptive responses also saw her attraction to John.

### ***Romeo and Juliet***

**Question 16** Most candidates understood that the extract was moving in general because it showed Romeo and Juliet's love at first sight and their discovery that they love 'a loathed enemy'. Answers moved up the mark range according to how effectively candidates understood the religious language in the lovers' dialogue and its effect, and commented on the dramatic ironies at the end of the passage. An exhaustive paraphrase of what the speech means was not required but a general sense of the element of purity and 'worship' in Romeo and Juliet's love went a long way to an examination of why the scene is moving. Answers would have been improved by writing less on Rosaline and referring to the extract in more detail. The strongest answers examined Shakespeare's moving creation of a pre-ordained love and inevitable fate for the lovers.

**Question 17** Candidates who avoided narrative and really looked at Tybalt's dramatic role in the play fared well. Such answers commented on his unrelenting hatred for the Montagues and how this manifested itself at the beginning of the play, at the Capulet ball and in the fights with Mercutio and Romeo. A clear grasp of the consequences of his death and its role as the pivotal moment in the tragedy informed strong answers.

**Question 18** This question produced a wide range of responses and many were very enjoyable. The most effective had some focus on Juliet's prospective relationship with Paris and his chastisement of Tybalt, conveying his sense of honour and family pride. Some over-exaggerated his kindness to Romeo and had Capulet seeing Romeo with Juliet and being quite pleased. This did not make for a convincing response. Many did capture his voice effectively, though some spent too long outlining the catering arrangements. Some very sound knowledge of the scenes leading up to this moment and of the scene itself was evident.

### ***Songs of Ourselves (selection from Part 1)***

**Question 19** Most candidates did well to focus very firmly on 'the ways' in which Tichbourne makes his poem powerful, rather than concentrate solely on the morbidity of the subject matter and the highly charged political context in which it was written. Answers were more effective when candidates did not trawl through a list of poetic devices mechanically but accompanied these with an analysis of their effects and purpose, for example mainly creating a sense of pathos and/or finality. It would be difficult, however, to assess this poem without a grasp of paradox and the best answers integrated this knowledge successfully in their answer. It might be useful to consider weaning students off a line-by-line method of analysis and adopt a thematic style instead for example theme, tone, imagery as they feature throughout the whole poem. There were, in general, many effective and detailed personal responses to the poem.

**Question 20** Unlike answers to the previous question, responses to the Queen Elizabeth poem were over-reliant upon social and political context. Successful responses gave some attention to form. In response to Drayton's *Sonnet 61*, for example, the best answers showed that the sonnet form was sufficiently understood, with comment on the rationale behind the rhyme scheme or the tone shift of the *volta*.

**Question 21** In answer to this question candidates chose *Fear No More The Heat O'The Sun*, *The Flowers that on The Banks and Walks Did Grow*, *The Procession of The Seasons*, *A Litany in Time of Plague* and *Come Live with me, and be my Love*. Visual and 'nature' imagery were singled out and explored well, but exploration of other forms of imagery such as auditory and tactile would have developed responses further.