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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 9695/03

Poetry and Prose

General comments

A large cohort of candidates entered the examination this session, the majority showing thorough knowledge of their texts, often accompanied by engagement and enjoyment. Many Centres are clearly preparing their candidates very well, shown in their detailed knowledge of texts and often a good contextual knowledge as well. Those candidates who were able to select from their contextual knowledge, and use it precisely to inform their answers to the questions, wrote thoughtful and often sophisticated answers.

From such a large candidature, the majority wrote on Keats' poetry and Ngugi's: *A Grain of Wheat*. These two texts overwhelmed the others by some margin, but *Touched with Fire, North and South* and the short stories of Katherine Mansfield were also well represented.

While candidates' confidence in dealing with texts and questions seems to have improved over the years, the issues which divide the successful candidates from those who are less successful remain clear. Successful candidates select carefully from their knowledge to answer the question set, specifically and directly. They support points with reference and quotation, and write about the authors and their techniques rather than characters and plot. Those who are less successful use their knowledge and learning without selectivity, approach answers from a narrative position and use contextual knowledge in the place of textual knowledge. In the passage-based questions, successful candidates analyse the language and form of the extract on the paper in considerable detail.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

John Keats: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This was a very popular question and elicited very varied responses. At the top end of the mark range, candidates used the two quotations in the question to give a lead into appropriate poems and focused specifically on these choices. Usually they were contrasting choices, to indicate the range in Keats' verse, and they examined the language and form in which the views of human life are expressed. Often clear links were made to circumstances in Keats' own life which led him to consider the contrasting elements in human life as a whole. 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode on Melancholy' were frequent and successful choices. In June, a number of candidates seemed to struggle with the narrative verse, so it was surprising that many candidates chose to focus on narrative verse for this question. While 'The Eve of St Agnes' in particular often worked well, many candidates who chose narrative poems struggled to make their choices relevant to the question and relied on paraphrase combined with Keats' biography. 'Negative capability' cropped up in many answers, but often without understanding, while 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' was quoted by very many candidates, but most often without clear relevance to the question.
- (b) Most candidates who attempted this question seemed confident in their knowledge of the poem, and those who paid attention to the question's requirement for attention to language and form were the more successful. The key part of this answer was to link the language and form to the development of the poem's ideas, so those candidates who matched technical knowledge with an overarching understanding of the whole poem did very well. In some cases, candidates relied on identification of poetic devices, with little evidence of an understanding of the poem. This lack of comprehension was apparent in a number of answers which demonstrated that candidates had not understood the progression of seasons in a temperate climate, which led to misunderstanding of what Autumn is and represents.

Question 2

Touched with Fire: ed. Hydes

- (a) This was the less popular of the two options, but many candidates selected appropriate poems and wrote well about poets' treatment of the past, memory, or both. 'Ozymandias', 'Cold in the Earth', 'The Wild Swans at Coole', 'The Early Purges', for example, were all widely-chosen poems. Candidates who choose the open essay question on the anthology tend to be quite confident in their ability to choose appropriate poems and recall them with some accuracy, resulting in fewer answers which are reliant on summary and paraphrase.
- (b) There were very many answers on 'Musée des Beaux Arts', which varied widely in quality. Many candidates seemed to be approaching the poem as an unseen text, rather than one they had prepared, and as some of its ideas are quite complex, a number of these candidates struggled. Candidates who were familiar with the central concepts of art galleries, 'Old Masters' and the Icarus myth had the basis for a successful answer. Some candidates appreciated the subtleties of Auden's casually irregular lines, unassertive rhymes and apparent untidiness as the poem's form imitates a wandering musing on paintings in a gallery. Others were very sensitive to particular images which Auden describes in the paintings, such as 'doggy life', the 'torturer's horse(s)... innocent behind' and 'the expensive delicate ship'.

Question 3

Stevie Smith: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) The majority of candidates on Smith chose this question and most made a reasonable attempt to interpret the poem, although there was a tendency to treat it at a very literal level. This meant seeing it as being about the life of one specific man, rather than the human condition in general. As a result, some candidates struggled to deal with lines such as 'I ran wild for centuries'. The most successful answers referred to religious imagery and the three stages reflected in the poem's structure. A number of candidates were unaware of the sex of Stevie Smith, which was surprising.

Question 4

Elizabeth Gaskell: *North and South*

- (a) There were many good answers on *North and South*, and many candidates felt confident with the contribution which Bessy makes to the novel. Especially pleasing to Examiners was that most candidates avoided a narrative approach and were able to select specific illuminating episodes to concentrate on Bessy's role, rather than just her character. Such candidates often showed an awareness of the significance of the character as a female representative of the working classes, and as a contributory factor in the development of Margaret. Comparisons were also made with Edith and Fanny Thornton, candidates focusing on Gaskell's portrayal of her fortitude, patience and religious conviction.
- (b) The choice of passage proved to be a helpful one for candidates. Because there was little physical action, it was difficult to lapse into narrative and this assisted candidates in focusing on aspects of presentation, such as Mr Hale's nervousness and Margaret's internal monologue. Wider textual knowledge was often impressively linked too, with most answers showing a clear understanding of the significance of decision to move in the lives of the family. Some weaker answers dealt with the passage very briefly before narrating the fortunes of the family in Milton Northern.

Question 5

Katherine Mansfield: *The Garden Party and Other Stories*

- (a) Candidates referred to a wide range of stories in answer to this question, 'Prelude', 'Bliss', 'Millie' and 'Frau Brechenmacher' being particularly favoured choices. The most successful candidates were able to comment on how Mansfield allows characters to reveal themselves through their thoughts and feelings, and how she uses imagery and symbolism. Some were able to point out that the stories reveal Mansfield's attitude to social divisions and her views on the position of women. Textual knowledge was nearly always very good, with few answers dependent on paraphrase.
- (b) Many candidates had a good knowledge of Laura's character as it is presented in the passage and at other key points in the story. Candidates approached the concept of the internal and external worlds of the character by comparing the presentation of Laura's internal thoughts with her external behaviour towards the workmen, an approach which was usually very successful. Many candidates showed good understanding of the social background against which these stories were written. Some saw Laura negotiating a class position with the workmen, while others suggested she is assuming the manners of being grown-up, to which the workmen respond tactfully and sympathetically. Again, either interpretation worked effectively.

Question 6

Ngugi: *A Grain of Wheat*

- (a) Most candidates had no difficulty in seeing Karanja as a traitor, but many candidates were more successful in arguing for a more balanced view of his role in the novel. Some of the most impressive answers were those in which candidates discussed the different roles of Karanja, for example, betrayer, rejected lover, servant of the white man and, ultimately, failure. Such essays recognised how Karanja the guitar-playing, witty, debater turns into a lonely, cruel, adulterer once he becomes the Europeans' servant. Some candidates noted that Karanja still has rain falling on him as he goes into exile, so that Ngugi seems to have pity on him despite his failings.
- (b) Though less confident candidates tended to paraphrase the passage, giving a general account of the characters concerned, there were many good answers which concentrated in detail on the language of the passage. There was a good sense of the context in which the passage was framed and a sympathetic commentary on the characters. Those candidates who noted that the reader at this point knows that Gikonyo's and Mumbi's marriage is in difficulty were particularly successful in contextualising the extract. There were several candidates, however, who misplaced the passage, assuming it takes place after Gikonyo's discovery of Mumbi's child by Karanja. Such a misunderstanding led these answers seriously astray. Many candidates appreciated the linguistic details of the passage and its tone of sensuality and sexuality. More confident candidates analysed the effects carefully, while less confident candidates asserted that 'the language shows that Gikonyo is excited'.

<p style="text-align: center;">Paper 9695/04</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Drama</p>

General comments

Although this paper contains questions on six texts, the vast majority of candidates answered on *Macbeth* or *The Glass Menagerie*. In general, candidates showed good knowledge of the texts, though at the bottom end they were not always able to make sensible connections between that knowledge and the requirements of the question. Candidates need to be aware that there is no need for them to include biographical information about an author or to make reference to other work by the same writer, no matter how tempting. Above all, candidates need to ensure that the Examiner knows that they have read these works as plays, as works to be performed in the theatre.

Candidates also need to ensure that they read questions with care: terms such as 'dramatic significance' or words like 'presentation' are designed to trigger responses that move candidates on from dealing with texts as being about quasi real situations involving real people. The aim is to get candidates to talk about issues of language and structure so they can make points about authorial strategies.

In passage based questions, candidates who choose to take a chronological, line-by-line approach instead of a strategic decision to focus on what is really interesting and relevant to the question, usually do themselves no favours. In general, candidates are very willing to tackle passage-based questions, but they often fail to make the passage the central focus of the answer. This can lead to general discussion or simple unloading of half remembered points. Candidates should be encouraged to spend time giving the passage a thorough and careful reading before beginning to write.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

Caryl Churchill: *Serious Money*

- (a) Candidates were able to make clear that the fast talking, superficial world depicted in *Serious Money* has a degree of glamour. They were less secure when trying to locate their own discomfort in the face of this world. For many, there was a need to anchor points more firmly into the detail of particular scenes or moments. More points about the style and form of the play, with the rapid movement of place and the deliberate use of, for example, euphemism would have helped.
- (b) There were few responses to this question. Candidates were able to make sensible points about how there are links between the unscrupulous jobbers of Shadwell's *The Volunteers* and the shady mercenaries of the world presented in *Serious Money*. More attention could have been given to the detail of the passage: a clear continuity was implied though the inclusion of the transition section into the play proper at the end of the passage.

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *The Comedy of Errors*

- (a) Most candidates were able to write sensibly about the contribution of the two women to *The Comedy of Errors*, though many restricted themselves to seeing this simply in terms of plot. Better candidates were able to expand on the contrasting attitudes displayed by the two and how these then contribute to the confusion that follows. Very good candidates were able to stand back from matters of plot and talk about issues of marriage, subservience, loyalty and love.
- (b) The passage based answers on *Comedy of Errors* often suffered because candidates were not really equipped to talk about the linguistic humour of the passage: few were able to comment on how much mirth would have emerged from an audience's perception of the various different countries whose topographical traits characterise the kitchen wench. This led to a tendency to paraphrase the passage and then simply assert that it is funny. Good candidates were able to respond to the hyperbole in the passage, and to the comedy of a question and answer session.

Question 3

William Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

- (a) Most candidates who tackled the question on the forces of darkness in *Macbeth* were able to make sensible comments on the various agencies of darkness – the witches, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth himself. However, many candidates were not able to get close enough to the detail of the text to show how these forces are ‘vivid and compelling’, the key discriminators in the question. The best answers were also able to make points about the presentation of ‘the powers of good’, with some discussing the presentation of Duncan, the scene in England and the conclusion of the play. Surprisingly few answers engaged with the tragic character of Macbeth himself in order to demonstrate that a morally ignoble character, the main perpetrator of the acts of evil in the play can, paradoxically, be compelling to an audience.
- (b) Many candidates wrote with skill and enthusiasm about this central episode in the play. Better answers were able to discriminate between Macbeth’s asides to the audience and his asides to Banquo. The best candidates were also able to make points about the fact that Banquo joins in with these asides – he too is on the brink of a moral decision. A strong sense of how the scene might look on the stage helped a number of candidates. At the top end, many candidates were able to write perceptively about the contrast between these two characters and the choices they face, both here and elsewhere in the play. For some weaker candidates there was a temptation to place the episode in context. This resulted in a degree of plot re-telling that was not highly rewarded. The best candidates were able to locate the ambiguities of the scene in its language and its uneasy linguistic uncertainties (‘cannot be ill; cannot be good’).

Question 4

Richard Sheridan: *The Rivals*

- (a) Although the question misnamed Lydia as a participant in the sub-plot, all candidates took this in their stride. They saw that the intention was for a discussion of the counter-pointed plot, and they soon embarked on a discussion of the different perspective on love presented through the second set of lovers. On the whole, candidates restricted themselves to rather obvious points, with the play as a whole not really considered. A number of candidates restricted themselves to plot summary.
- (b) There were a small number of responses on the scene between Mrs Malaprop, Lydia and Sir Anthony. Some candidates were confused about exactly why Absolute cannot speak straightforwardly; missing the point that he is playing a cunning game of double bluff here. There were points to be made too about language choices. The situation is full of knowing nods and winks to an audience here; more could have been made of this.

Question 5

J M Synge: *The Playboy of the Western World*

- (a) The question about the entire world loving a rogue as long as his roguery does not hurt us was answered by a small number of candidates. There were a number of good answers that engaged thoroughly with the ambiguity of Christy’s presentation in the play. Others simply produced a character study, which was not quite the intention. None of the candidates discussed the idea that the statement about the play in the question – the assertion that it has a simple theme – might itself be worthy of interrogation.
- (b) The extract from *The Playboy of the Western World* proved popular with candidates and gave a number of them an opportunity to talk about the theatricality of the play. More attention to the language of the exchange would have helped to establish the flirtatiousness of the scene and the participants’ growing confidence in the company of the other.

Question 6Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

- (a) There were many fine answers that considered how Williams dramatises a sense of confusion in the characters. Candidates were able to talk about the way that the reality presented to an audience on stage is belied by much of what they say. They were also able to discuss the self-delusion of both Tom and Amanda, and their unwillingness to engage in each others' dreams and fantasies. Answers that simply offered lists of the various confusions within each character tended to fare less well. A number of excellent answers took into account screen legends, stage directions, costumes (Amanda's appearance at the dinner table with Jim) and staging, as well as what the characters actually say about each other and themselves.
- (b) An awareness of the dramatic situation was key to answering the question about the end of the play successfully. There were two important strands to the question. Candidates needed to think about the ending of the play as being a moment of closure for the characters themselves, but they also needed to recognise that the main focus should be the effect on an audience. Thus the action on the stage and the dramatic presentation of the scene needed to be carefully balanced. Tom's closing speech, for example, happens at the same time as the staged 'interior pantomime', thus providing a split focus and a variety of possible effects. Many answers simply re-visited symbols, motifs or themes from earlier on in the play. Answers at the bottom end tended to focus simply on the way that the relationship between Tom and Amanda has reached rock bottom.

Paper 9695/05

Shakespeare and Other Pre Twentieth Century Texts
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General comments

The overall standard this session was once again pleasing, with nearly all of the candidates achieving a sound performance, including a number who were awarded full marks and only a very few who did not reach the minimum acceptable standard for this paper. There were a few candidates who infringed the rubric, by offering two answers from the same section of the paper. Despite the comments in the last Principal Examiner report there were also candidates this session of who appeared to time their performance poorly and left insufficient time for the proper completion of the second essay. Often it was a case of getting carried away with enthusiasm for the first essay but it is a damaging mistake to make. Centres are once again reminded of the need to ensure that all candidates are clear on the precise demands of the paper and understand the need to divide the time available equally between the two essays.

This was the second session in which only two Shakespeare texts were on the syllabus, inevitably leading to a very large proportion of the entry tackling *Antony and Cleopatra*. Just as popular this session was *Emma*. Examiners were pleased to report that some responses were seen on all the texts on the paper, though very few candidates offered '*Middlemarch*'.

A number of Examiners reported how impressed they were by the standard of the candidates' English. A number of candidates show real enthusiasm and interest in the books studied, which is always a welcome sign. Some candidates, of course, do have difficulties with expressing themselves and often the weaker marks are a result of this rather than an obvious lack of knowledge of the texts. Examiners did notice that this was a particular problem when candidates less confident in English tackled the Chaucer text.

The previous report for June 2005 referred to candidates quoting extensive portions of inappropriate critical comment from secondary sources, often with little connection to the precise demands of the task set by the question and often instead of relevant quotations from the text in question. This was once again a problem for some candidates. Centres are reminded of the need for relevant and pointed quotation from the text to support particular views or arguments, with only brief, apposite references to secondary material. There were also a number of candidates who referred to other texts at length, particularly in **Section A**, Shakespeare, answers. A brief well directed mention can be helpful, but some candidates did spend too much time discussing '*Julius Caesar*' rather than '*Antony and Cleopatra*' and little credit can be given for such diversions. A minor point on the Roman play is that some candidates in this session were confusing Octavius and Julius Caesar, with inevitable results.

A specific point arising from this session on passage **(b)** questions is the placing of the passage in a precise context. Examiners have noticed that some candidates do not seem able to do this very accurately at all. This was particularly critical for this exam for candidates offering the passage options on 'Antony and Cleopatra' and 'Wuthering Heights' where failure to spot the precise context severely weakened the quality of the commentary. It is essential that candidates are thoroughly familiar with their texts and as well as having total confidence about where specific events happen are also able to consider the importance of those events to the text as a whole. That importance should include some understanding of the genre within which the text has been constructed. Without those essentials in place, it is difficult to see how a candidate could begin to tackle a passage question with any confidence.

The last report mentioned that a small number of Centres were encouraging candidates to begin their answers, whether option **(a)** or **(b)**, with a detailed biography of the author and then a general summary of the whole text in question. It is pleasing to report that this was much less common in this session and Examiners look forward to seeing none at all next time.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

William Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*

- (a)** This was a popular choice and candidates across the ability range were able to find relevant ideas and supporting textual material. There was a wide range of responses to the proposition. Weaker candidates often adopted one of two strategies: either a narrative discussing Antony with Cleopatra or an essay comparing Rome and Egypt. Examiners reported that candidates who carefully considered the wording of the question and took the time to select and shape the material to the specific demands of the task invariably did well. The key words were 'the presentation of Roman attitudes' and candidates found a wide range of material in the characters and the events of the play to support their arguments. More discerning candidates developed the response to point out, for example, that despite their contempt the Romans were always eager for stories about Cleopatra and her court's excesses. Enobarbus and Octavius were well used by some candidates to explore the varying degrees of attraction and revulsion. Others linked the presentation to Antony's own inner conflict between duty and passion. Antony, before his 'enchantment' by Cleopatra and Egypt, had been the supreme Roman fighting machine.
- (b)** There were many very good answers to this question, though some candidates once again fell into the traps of either giving too much background or not focusing on the language sufficiently. This was a passage which needed a precise context, before an accurate appreciation could be attempted. Some candidates did not know where in the war, between Rome and Egypt, this exchange took place. Antony's sense of doom was well discussed and candidates were quick to notice the language of both Antony and Cleopatra here. Examiners noted a number of candidates who gave apposite references to other exchanges between the lovers, though the best responses focused on the passage and moved out briefly into the wider text, rather than reversing the procedure and spending too much time on other parts of the play. Antony's weakness and Cleopatra's honesty were often debated by candidates and most were able to offer some response at least to the short speech from Enobarbus. As so often is the case, candidates who really got to grips with the language and its effects here did very well but too often paraphrasing or narratives got in the way of such activity.

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *Much Ado About Nothing*

- (a) This was the more popular of the two questions on this text. Nearly every candidate was able to give examples of both deception and disguise. More limited responses made this into a list of more or less relevant examples, with little supporting or shaping comment. The key to the better answers was how they approached 'with what effects'. The double or even triple tricking of Claudio was central to many essays. Deception could be both malign and beneficial, depending on the character of the tricker(s). Beatrice and Benedick were victims but found the love through the deception of others, which their own self-deception had kept hidden. Others pointed out that Margaret and Dogberry were also deceived as a necessity of the plot. Candidates who saw the construction of the play as dependent on the characters tricking each other did well and those who saw how the effect of the deceptions and disguises on the characters also often led to the necessary comic and not-so-comic conflicts did better. There were candidates who thought that Messina was in fact full of deceptions from start to finish and no one was to be trusted in anything they did or said. As always this was most successful when evidence supporting the argument was carefully selected and considered. Most were able to see some differences between disguise and deception though weaker candidates did treat the phrase as a whole throughout the essay.
- (b) Candidates who were able to identify from a precise exploration of the language and tone, the various hints of the characters and events to be unfolded in the play did well. Nearly all candidates were able to see the germ of the conflicts between Claudio and Leonato's family and between Beatrice and Benedick here. More discerning candidates saw Claudio's propensity for violence and Beatrice's real concern for Benedick. Leonato's role as the welcoming host was well discussed. Few candidates however, really got to grips with what an opening passage needed to achieve and how the tone of the play was set by these opening exchanges. When they did tackle this issue, candidates did very well. One particular difficulty was noted by some Examiners in candidates' understanding of 'stuffed', as used by Beatrice and the messenger here. Too often this was an implausible peg on which a whole sexual prehistory between Beatrice and Benedick was hung. Nearly all candidates though were able to spot how the tone of the passage changed when Beatrice enters the conversation and also how Hero's brief words displayed not only her modesty – she says so little here and later in the wedding scene, but also how well she understands Beatrice, something she puts to good use later in the play.

Section B**Question 3**

Jane Austen: *Emma*

- (a) This was very popular, perhaps the most popular question on the paper and was often very well done. Nearly all candidates were able to explore how Emma changed and developed during the novel. Most were able to explore why, with nearly all answers focusing on the influence of Mr Knightley. Weaker candidates summarised the relevant events, more or less accurately, focusing on Emma's mistaken view of Elton and her performance at Box Hill under Churchill's influence. Emma's behaviour and character came in for a good deal of criticism some candidates agreed with Austen's prediction that Emma was unlikeable to some readers. Other candidates wondered if she had in fact matured that much – she was still 'something of a snob and self-conceited at the end'. Nearly all saw her progress as a route to being worthy of Knightley. Better candidates were able to avoid the trap of a character study and discuss how Austen used the various episodes in the novel as the framework around which the novel was built or as one candidate put it, 'the pieces of an intricate jigsaw, which when completed, gives us the true picture of Emma, fit to be Mrs Knightley'.

- (b) This was also a popular choice. Generally, candidates handled the dialogue well, though there was some confusion by a number of candidates around Weston, 'who married Miss Taylor for her £30,000 a year' and who in fact said 'lucky guess'. Far from scratching around to find something pertinent to say, most candidates had so much to offer that they were not always able to organise material to optimum effect. Many commented on the ineffectuality of Mr Woodhouse in the paternal role, seeing it as much more tellingly embodied in Mr Knightley. Much was made of Emma's refusal at this early stage to take advice, with the dire results that followed in terms of misdirections, confusions and near tragic heartbreak. More perceptive answers questioned Mr Knightley's assumption that other people were as open-hearted and rational as he claimed, seeing some truth in Emma's postulating of 'something between' the two models he offers. The very best explored his own suppressed feelings for Emma and his antagonism towards Frank Churchill as evidence that he himself was not quite the paradigm of open-hearted rationality he was assumed, and assumed himself to be. As always, consideration of language and tone was largely the province of the higher band answers, with weaker answers offering paraphrase and narrative only.

Question 4

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) This remains a popular minority choice. There was a good deal of narrative summary and scene setting, with character discrimination resting largely on the difference between Arcite's desire to win the contest and Palamon's desire to win Emily. Romantics all, it seems, candidates were unanimous in declaring Palamon the outright winner, with appropriate tributes to Arcite's honour and generosity in defeat. Some candidates might have been talking about Mr Knightley and Frank Churchill for all the awareness of genre shown here.
- (b) This was the less popular of the two options. There was some reference to the role of the gods in the tale, while the better answers attempted to engage with the philosophical debate running through the given passage. Most tried in some degree at least to consider the role of the narrator here, involving the reader/listeners in the moral/philosophical concerns of the story, but these literary critical issues were frequently buried in plot summary. Weaker candidates struggled with the language and Examiners reported some disappointing responses which showed limited understanding of the text.

Question 5

Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*

- (a) This text was more popular in this session, its second showing. Candidates who tackled this question often had strong opinions on Heathcliff and sometimes slipped into the trap of offering a prepared response, which was not sufficiently shaped to the task. Better responses did rise to the challenge of the effect of this 'force' in the world of the Earnshaws. Some grappled with Heathcliff's role and development, seeing him as a misunderstood victim or a malicious villain, according to interpretation. One or two considered 'dramatic presence' in detail, noting how much of the interest in the book comes from the violent passions and scenes in which he is involved.
- (b) This was less popular but candidates were often able to explore Brontë's methods in some detail, many focusing on the role of Ellen, who surprisingly perhaps was seen as a bit of 'a sneak', meddling in 'the affairs of her betters'. Catherine's duplicity was often noticed, her feminine wiles were linked to other episodes in the novel by perceptive candidates and as with other characters, Catherine was seen as having no awareness of the consequences of her actions and all for someone like Linton too! Some weaker answers ignored the narrative voice, inevitably a limiting fact in this sort of question, whilst other answers barely rose above simple narratives. Again Examiners were concerned that some candidates were unable to place this passage precisely, despite being given the chapter reference.

Question 6

Christina Rossetti: *Selected Poems*

There were only a very few responses to this text. Those who tackled option **(a)** were able to see her various responses to the subject of religious faith, although tending to give very few direct quotations. Option **(b)** was rarely tackled and once again appeared to be treated as an unseen by some candidates, with disastrous results. Those who could link the poem to the selection did often make effective comparisons between the concerns of the poem and other concerns, which Rossetti revealed elsewhere in the selection.

Question 7

John Donne: *Selected Poems* (from *The Metaphysical Poets* ed. Gardner)

This was also a minority choice. Those who tackled option **(a)** had plenty of material to draw on. 'The Flea' cropped up in nearly all answers, candidates relishing Donne's witty, cynical, manipulative reasoning, which was teased out with a good deal of subtle insight. Some candidates suggested that by the triumphant end of the poem Donne was more fascinated by the argument than by the woman. There was also much well focused comment on the variety of tones and moods in the poetry, and on the bewildering range of personae adopted by the poet. The more limited work displayed some difficulties in the basic meanings of the texts and offered rather weak paraphrases without much reference to the task. Option **(b)** was more rarely seen and there were inevitably some quite weak attempts to paraphrase. There were however, some very good answers, which wrestled with the language and the syntax with a good deal of tenacity and skill.

Question 8

George Eliot: *Middlemarch*

This was the least popular text in this session. Generally those who did tackle option **(a)** were able to find contrasts between the Garths and the Vincys, with passing reference to Casaubon and Brooke as unacceptable guardians in different ways. Option **(b)**, was very rarely offered and generally little more than a paraphrase resulted. There was much to find in the passage, however, for the very few who considered Eliot's marvellous use of dialogue and authorial comments in detail.

Question 9

Alexander Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*

- (a)** This was once again a popular choice and Examiners continue to be impressed by how readily so many candidates entered the rather esoteric world which Pope creates. Indeed some answers positively sparkle with enthusiasm, always a welcoming sign. Weaker candidates ignored 'portrayal of' and launched into their own particular vision of Belinda, ranging from those who could balance her vanity and idle self-centredness with some redeeming features, her care for her lapdog, for example, to those who thought that 'the Lock was far too little a punishment when the Baron might have equally cut her throat'. Better answers were able to see the need for balance in a successful satire and to applaud the economy with which Pope created his heroine and then pilloried her.
- (b)** There were a number of sound responses to the passage, showing a detailed grasp of how the Ombre game informed the more general satiric intentions. Some candidates were less successful, appearing not to understand what in fact was going on at all. Better candidates concentrated on the language and the imagery and found plenty to connect to the wider text and Pope's concerns.

Question 10

Ben Jonson: *The Alchemist*

This was a more popular choice in this session. Candidates who tackled option **(a)** were able to explore Face in considerable detail, seeing him as a both a cause of comedy in others but also as amusing in himself. The main comparisons were inevitably Subtle and Dol but candidates did show a good grasp of the whole text. Option **(b)** answers were rare but most takers were able to explore the effectiveness of the passage as the opening to the play, noticing the violence and the coarseness of the language and the role of Dol Common as peacemaker. The speed and vibrancy of the action was also often noticed, though few were able to explore in detail Jonson's dramatic and comic skills, spending more time on what this particular exchange led to.

Paper 9695/06
Twentieth Century Texts

General comments

- The Principal Examiner was impressed by the overall performance of candidates from a range of countries, their fluency and general awareness of themes, characterisation, symbolism and literary genres; candidates had been well prepared for the examination for the most part, and had genuinely engaged with the texts.
- Most candidates were able to make some thoughtful comment on the texts, though there is still a proportion who rely on narrative rehearsal to make their points for them.
- The Pinter-Stoppard kind of combination, using overlapping material, has become much rarer, but the shorter, weaker second answer continues to feature at some Centres.
- Use of English was generally very good.

Candidates and teachers might give some thought to strategy in dealing with a set passage/poem: to begin at the beginning and work through in a linear way has a number of potential problems (e.g. repetition, tendency to miss significant features, not getting to the end of the passage/poem); answers organised by discussion of selected technical and thematic issues often made better, more focused use of the set material, particularly on poetry where adherence to sequential discussion can be particularly inhibiting.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

(a) invited candidates to work with two key terms, 'domestic' and 'tragedy'. In relation to the first term, candidates argued for wider significance in various dimensions. A number of Centres had explored the concept of the American Dream and its relevance to the play and this emerged in useful commentaries on Nick and his aspirations and on George and Martha as latter-day versions of the first American presidential couple. The tensions between George's liberal humanist views and the implications of Nick's scientific research suggested to some candidates another arena of significance, as did Nick's almost-shared first name with Nikita Khrushchev in gesturing towards the Cold War. 'Tragedy' was also a useful term to test against the play, and many saw its application to the 'death' of Martha and George's 'son', and the potential redemptive release from illusion that this 'death' might bring. There was valid emphasis on the potential for a new start in both relationships at the end of the play. Poorer answers tended to accept the question at face value, though there was *passim* some reasonable discussion of the domestic setting and the sad inadequacies of the two marriages. In part (b) those who tackled the passage usually found a great deal to appreciate in its dramatic effects, and often commented on the impact of the action of finger snapping. It was important to place the extract in context, to have some sense of what had led up to it and of the unspoken issues that lie behind the declaration of war. Good answers also explored its working out in the action that follows this extract.

Question 2

Elizabeth Jennings: *Poems*

Only a handful of Centres had studied these poems and this year Examiners were delighted with the subtlety and sensitivity evident in some of the answers. In (a), the experience of suffering was related to the hospital poems and to the sad feelings of emotional deprivation that characterise both her love poems and poems about family life. These candidates knew the poetry well and were able to quote at length. Weaker responses tended to lump all the poems together without discriminating their different and precise tones. There was also a tendency for weaker candidates to rely too much on bits of biographical information about the poet and to force poems into matching up with that knowledge. That tendency was more particularly evident in the part (b) responses to 'Love Poem' where some candidates reported about the priest she had been in love with and about her emotionally repressed family. Weaker answers also commented on sound effects, alliteration etc. but with little understanding of what Jennings was actually saying. However, the general standard of response was very encouraging and there were a number of essays in which candidates sensitively explored the sounds of words and the nuances of meaning in the poem and related it successfully to other poems.

Question 3

R. K. Narayan: *The Guide*

This was a popular choice of text and answers were generally at least competent, though in both options too many merely offered a highly simplified version of the narrative. In part **(a)**, many candidates saw irony in Raju's present situation and past experiences and appreciated the rich ambivalences in our response to the final moments of the novel and the question of whether or not he is indeed transformed into a selfless *swami*. Some Centres had also made good use of critical ideas that interpreted the novel in terms of *vanasrama*, the four stages of the ideal Hindu life. Some perceptive answers showed awareness of how Narayan playfully mixes genres, and considered the novel's evolution not only in terms of plot and character but also with reference to tone and narrative technique. Some asserted straightforwardly that he starts off as a rogue and turns into a saint at the end; such answers tended to ignore the question of tone and the comic, humorous qualities of the novel and sometimes to be too censorious of the apparent gullibility of rural Indian people. Most candidates attempting **(b)** could provide a reasonable summary of Raju's dilemma, as described in the passage. More developed answers picked out characteristics such as Raju's opportunism, eagerness to please, and avoidance of the truth, and related them to other parts of the novel. There was some thoughtful writing on Velan's role and on the passage's importance in the novel's structure. Some candidates noted humorous aspects of the passage and a few explored how Narayan presents the flow of Raju's thoughts and feelings in this third person narrative sequence.

Question 4

Harold Pinter: *The Caretaker*

It would be interesting to know if there is a common source for the notion (frequently proposed in answers on this text each session) that everyone in England post-World War 2 was poverty stricken, disillusioned, afraid of the outdoors, had an identity crisis, and collected junk. Or, as an Examiner suggests, perhaps it is just that candidates take too literally the idea that the play speaks of its time. As previously, candidates often alluded to the theatre of the absurd and existentialism without integrating these concepts into their answers, often leaving unclear whether they understood what the terms mean. Undeveloped references to 'the search for identity' and a 'lack of communication' were also frequent. Basic responses to part **(a)** tended to consist of three character sketches, intermittently raising issues relating to power or status. However, the character-by-character format was not always a limitation, and some candidates used it to good effect, carefully characterising Davies, Aston and Mick through a discussion of the forms of power/status that they display, desire, or fear. Weaker candidates sometimes used vague equivalences to carry them out of the given topic and into their prepared material: so an assertion that dreams equals power would lead to an essay concentrating on the characters' unrealised aspirations. Fuller answers contextualised the idea of a struggle for power within the play by tracing issues, for example, of status, ownership, identity, sanity, and ambition, and discussed ways in which power is dramatised: e.g. physically by means of violence, the positioning of characters on stage, and the use of props; and verbally by way of threats, boasts, jargon, and mystification. A few interesting answers saw around the question and came to the conclusion that the understated relationship between the two brothers was actually 'at the heart of the play'.

The part **(b)** extract prompted some good commentaries that considered the dramatic impact of Mick's long speeches, Davies' bewildered responses and even the drip into the bucket. Some answers drew on prepared material on pauses and lack of communication but failed to read carefully what was actually in the extract or to realise that what the characters say cannot be taken as literal 'truth' (i.e. 'Mick has lots of criminal friends who keep changing addresses so that they will not be caught by the police'). Most of the candidates could explain in general terms how Mick dominates and disorients Davies. Many related the extract to a desire on Mick's part to protect Aston, and then described how the relationship between Mick and Davies develops. Although a large part of the extract consists of Mick's monologues, few candidates examined them in any detail. Most saw them as collections of nonsense, strung together in order to baffle Davies, and also providing evidence of Mick's volatility. Those candidates who undertook a more detailed analysis commented on the ironic parallels and contrasts between the characters in Mick's bizarre speeches and what we know by this point in the play of Davies himself. Very few responded to the comedy in the extract. Candidates need to be encouraged to imagine the play on the stage, to make the imaginative effort to see and hear the extract; this passage comes alive if approached in this way.

Question 5

Jean Rhys: *Wide Sargasso Sea*

In weaker answers to **(a)** a vague link was sometimes asserted between Antoinette and nature, but with little supporting detail. It was difficult to give much reward to candidates who took 'the world of nature' simply to mean human nature. On the other hand, candidates who explored the ways in which Rhys relates the natural world to human character and experience – e.g. through symbols, parallels, foreshadowing, and dream imagery – could score highly, especially when they had sufficient recall of the text to provide detailed examples. There was some thoughtful discussion of Antoinette's identification with nature in contrast with her husband's hostility, and sympathetic understanding of how this tension intensifies the pathos of her later experience under his malign control. For **(b)** most candidates offered at least a basic comment on the background of racial conflict in the passage, the symbolic death of Coco, the prevalence of superstition, the symbolic, prefigurative nature of the fire, and the significance of Tia's rejection of Antoinette. Better answers explored how features such as these fit into wider patterns in the text, usually focusing on thematic concerns such as racial identity, patriarchy and colonisation, refuge and betrayal. Less frequently, candidates considered Rhys's literary methods: Antoinette's recollection of her childhood experience, for example, prompting discussion of the narrative voices and points of view in the novel; or the symbolism and foreshadowing (e.g. fire/mirror) in the passage seen as instances of pervasive techniques. Weaker answers used aspects of the passage as pegs on which to hang prepared material, particularly about the significance of *obeah* and superstition in the novel.

Question 6

Tom Stoppard: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

Part **(a)** invited candidates to consider relations between theatrical and philosophical aspects of the play; in earlier examination sessions this issue has interested candidates while they are answering other questions. It was evident this year, again, that some Centres had addressed the issue with great care, and many candidates were able to consider various examples of philosophical discourse, though most of these found it more difficult to characterise the play's dramatic qualities and effects. A whole Centre put forward an argument that the play was both dramatic and a philosophical debate, in relation to the two principal characters – Rosencrantz being given to dramatic utterance and Guildenstern to philosophising. In a couple of Centres, where Stoppard was taught alongside Pinter, (an unfortunately narrow choice of texts), 'absurdism' took over the answers and it would have been better if the candidates had never heard the phrase 'theatre of the absurd'. Elsewhere there was some interesting discussion of issues raised by the play's relation to *Hamlet*, and in some answers the concept of 'meta-theatre' was promoted, with varying degrees of conviction. The part **(b)** passage question was often done well, with the pattern of build-up followed by anti-climax carefully identified and the characters of the two protagonists carefully contrasted. The contrast between their roles in the play and those of the tragedians was also explored. The movement in the passage between banal comedy ('the toenails on the other hand...'), existential *Angst* ('We are entitled to some direction...') and a philosophical *cadenza* on the nature of perception/reality was effectively considered in a few answers. Examiners report seeing many intelligent and well-supported essays on Stoppard. Few were alert to comic effect.

Question 7

Derek Walcott: *Selected Poetry*

Part **(a)** was rarely attempted, though in previous sessions candidates have seemed eager to make Walcott's treatment of 'the experience of colonialism' a central issue in answers to other questions. 'Ruins of a Great House' was most frequently cited, with some thoughtful exploration of the poem's evaluation of the colonial dual legacy. 'The Swamp', 'Parades, Parades' and 'Hawk' were also considered. Issues to do with Walcott's own genetic and poetic inheritance were hardly ever addressed. In **(b)**, discussion of 'The Almond Trees' tended to be very good or very weak. Some answers sensitively traced the linkage between the transportation of women slaves, their modern descendants, and the almond trees through the rich implications of the poem's imagery. Some, however, resorted to identifying features such as alliteration and speculating on their immediate effect; some headed off into discussion of poems they knew better than the one set.

Question 8

Evelyn Waugh: *Decline and Fall*

There were some good answers to **(a)**, comprehensive in their knowledge of how social classes are represented in the novel, and aware of Waugh's satirical intent: some thoughtful appreciations of the symbolic value of Paul's treatment at Oxford, the class judgments dramatised at Llanabba (though Waugh's anti-Welsh prejudice was rarely noted) and Waugh's treatment of the higher regions of society. In some thoughtful answers the dynamic/static contrast in characters was put forward as a reading of class relations in the novel. Some candidates, missing the clues in the question and a good deal of what the novel is about, took 'class' to mean *classroom*, severely limiting the range of their discussion. There were some interesting commentaries on the passage in **(b)**, alert to the satire on English public schools and the significance of the rich boys bullying the lowly teacher. Unusually, candidates responded to the comic effects of the writing – e.g. the Tangent game, the reference to 'Welsh blood', Paul's threatening to 'very nearly kill you with this stick', the essay title and the prize for 'the longest essay, irrespective of merit'. Some candidates thought the passage represented 'what English education must be like'; some thought it must be wildly exaggerated and improbable.

Paper 9695/07

Comment and Appreciation

General comments

Candidates generally responded well and confidently to each of the three passages set for discussion and with a few exceptions noted later in this report. There seemed to be a clearer and more certain understanding of what is expected in a critical 'comment and appreciation' examination. There were, for example, rather fewer instances where candidates simply paraphrased what a passage said, or where they just mechanically listed without a comment sequence of literary devices – this tended to be more often the case in **Question 2** than in either **1** or **3**, but it was thankfully rather less frequent than has sometimes been the case in past years.

Perhaps because of the themes of the passages this November, there was also rather more personal involvement by many candidates who responded with an often quite warm and heartfelt sensitivity to the situation drawn in **Question 1**, and to a lesser extent to the ideas of the poems in **Question 2**. Occasionally, the personal response began to take over to the extent that a more objective, critical stance did become secondary. There were, for instance, some clearly very sensitive responses to the matter of separation and divorce in **Question 1**, but it was not critically helpful – and certainly not relevant to the task – when candidates criticised the writer for portraying the characters in what they felt was an unlikely mood for such a situation (some insisted that the passage was unconvincing because a separating couple would always argue and shout and so these candidates failed to discuss properly what the writer *actually* says in the given passage). Similarly, there was rather too much generalising about the nature of love and/or time in **Question 2**, and about the nature and undesirability of warfare in **Question 3**. Candidates must, of course, have personal opinions and these will always help them to respond warmly and with feeling, but it is very important that when writing a piece of formal criticism they should try to be as coolly objective as possible.

Timing seemed to create few serious difficulties, though a number of candidates appeared to have rushed a little through their second answer. Given that there is an hour for each question and that the passages set each session are relatively short, it is a shame that not all candidates are able to be a little firmer about keeping their eye on the clock.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

As noted above, this passage led to some very interesting and thoughtful answers. Candidates that answered the question were well able to see at least some of the ways in which Penelope Lively creates mood and character relationships and there was some very perceptive and sensitive writing here. Some candidates tried to go beyond the passage and speculate about what might have led up to the marriage breakdown, or about what might happen to Susan and Matthew in the future, but most found that there was ample material within the passage itself to occupy their time. The nursing chair, and of course the house itself, were rightly seen by almost all as images used by Lively to suggest and reflect what is happening within the characters themselves, and most commented also on the effects created by the comparison of the two characters to auctioneers and removal men. The shifting times within the passage were noted and discussed by many, seeing these as Lively's way of enriching and exploring how the characters (Matthew in particular) were affected by the situation; the memory of the holiday in Provence, for example, and the impact that this had on Matthew, was sensitively commented on by many, as was the section where Matthew is seen walking past the house after the separation was complete. There is a wealth of simile, metaphor and symbolism in the passage, and few candidates found nothing at all to discuss – even those few who relied upon paraphrase found themselves almost by chance making relevant and critically sensible remarks.

Question 2

As has been the case in most recent sessions, poetry was the least popular form, though in fact rather more candidates attempted the question than has been customary. There were some interesting and thoughtful responses to all three poems, with the last one perhaps surprisingly leading to some of the most astute comments. Few candidates found themselves unable to make at least some thoughtful, relevant and supported comments about the three poems. Rather too many did resort to paraphrase, often stolidly pursuing each poem stanza by stanza. Perhaps this demonstrated some limited understanding of what the poems were about, but it did not show very much awareness of real critical acumen. In general, however, such answers were the exception rather than the rule.

Most candidates explored – or at least noted – the common flower imagery in each poem, with sensible and apt understanding of the traditional literary use of roses as symbols of youth, beauty and perhaps also love. Most understood at least in broad terms what each poet is saying, though surprisingly few seemed to pick up Herrick's somewhat lighter tone, in comparison at least to Housman's undoubted gloom and nostalgia. Gonzales' poem was largely ignored by several candidates, perhaps simply because of its brevity, but many managed some very interesting thoughts about its *apparent* simplicity and lack of emotion. Many commented on the physical shape of his poem (though surprisingly few seemed to see that it is clearly a flower, presumably a rose), and even fewer made more than passing and general comment on the vertical printing of the word 'f-a-d-e', with its suggestion of gradual but inevitable decay. Some certainly saw this, but they were very much the minority; a few wanted the poem to be seen as other shapes, though rarely explored *why* it could be a funnel, a cross, a pyramid, a coffin, a 'well-endowed woman' or a raindrop; the one or two who saw it as an hour-glass were a little more thoughtful in their explanations. One candidate, however, clearly saw the effectiveness of the poem's shape and meaning, and it is worth quoting exactly what s/he says – it is tight and focused, if slightly clumsy: 'The poem also makes the feeling of mortality visible as it is evident that in our prime of 'bloom in splendour' we are 'wide' and energetic but as we grow older we simply fade, as the poem gradually fades on the page.' Whatever else it might be, though, the poem is quite certainly *not* either a haiku or, more astonishingly, a limerick.

Herrick's imagery – rosebuds and sunshine in particular – was sensibly and often very thoughtfully explored, and there was some quite sensitive discussion of his view that we should grasp life before it is too late. Housman's sadness was noted by all, though details in his poem were often misunderstood; there is, for instance, surely no suggestion that he regrets having wasted his time as a young man? He is merely (though the word is hardly the right one here) lamenting the inevitable loss of youth and friends through the course of time. The opening line, 'With rue my heart is laden', led to some interesting comment – the unusual word-order lays particular stress on 'rue', and because it ends the line, also upon the heavy word 'laden'; even the ambiguity of 'rue' was noted by several as suggestive not simply that his heart was sad, but that it was metaphorically being taken over, overgrown, by the herb, to the exclusion of other more friendly plants or flowers. The later images of 'lightfoot lads' and 'rose-lipt girls' were well managed by many candidates, though the 'brooks too broad for leaping' are surely more figurative than simply suggestive that the 'lads' are now too old to jump? The 'fields where roses fade' were rightly seen by most as emblematic of death, and many candidates linked the concept here to both Herrick and Gonzales. The word 'laid' was seen by a surprising number as having a sexual connotation, which did lead to some rather odd misreading, and 'rose-lipt' certainly does not imply an excessive use of lipstick!

Incidentally, while relatively few made this error, it is important that candidates should be aware of what rhyming couplets are – none of these poems use them; and Gonzales' poem, while certainly in a kind of free verse ('concrete poetry' was a phrase used by a few), is emphatically not using blank verse. Comment on structural matters like this, or on rhyme and rhythm, are really of little value unless some use is clearly made of them by the poet. To quote one Examiner's words, 'To say that a poem is in quatrains, or that one is longer than another, or that the poet uses rhyme or assonance, is of little value or relevance unless the intent and effect are discussed.'

Question 3

This passage from 'Arms and the Man' led to a number of very good and thoughtful responses, and very few that were of no value at all; most candidates were able to see Shaw creating a nicely ironic situation (a young woman seemingly in love with a Bulgarian officer, but in the event saving the life of a Serbian who has threatened her life), and could trace at least some of the ways in which the characters were gradually revealed to each other and to the audience. Most, though by no means all, were aware of its dramatic and theatrical nature, and many spoke of ways in which an audience would respond, especially at the beginning of the extract; a few – though this few was quite a large number – spoke of the extract as if it were simply a piece of prose, with a lot of dialogue in it; at least one candidate noted that there was 'lots of speaking'. The best answers, however, made frequent and sensible reference to the *actions* taking place, and to the lighting and sound effects, particularly at the start, clearly seeing the extract as live theatre.

Understanding of Raina's character was frequently good and often very good – the contrasts between her initial romanticism when adoring Sergius's picture ('silly' was a word quite often used) and her courageous and then admirable defence of 'the man' were well managed. The transition in her personality and behaviour from 'silly' to terrified, then to increasingly spirited and bold, even ironically humorous, then finally to determined irritation, was well traced by most candidates. A few candidates were puzzled – as Raina and the audience must be too – as to who the intruder is, but happily only a few believed him to be Sergius, a belief that led of course to some complicated explanations as to how and why he was on the run, though one imaginative candidate decided that the whole sequence was in fact a dream-memory of the first meeting between Raina and Sergius – ingenious and well argued, but not correct, unfortunately.

As with **Question 1**, there were a few instances where candidates questioned the likelihood of such events actually taking place – no soldier worth his salt, for example, would throw down his revolver – rather than focusing upon what Shaw actually writes. Centres might be wise to advise candidates very strongly *not* to include any general comments of this sort, nor indeed any historical or social ideas that they might have about a situation being portrayed; they should focus absolutely and wholly upon what is presented to them, and confine their critical discussions to this, and this alone. In the same way, reference to, or comparison with, other writers or other texts, is almost never necessary, and rarely helpful.

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

General comments

Candidates this session had clearly been well prepared for this work, and the resulting folders were well written in every way; the standard of written English was high, with few significant errors of syntax or expression, and the critical confidence demonstrated by candidates was very sound indeed.

What is looked for in a good folder is of course knowledge – a candidate who makes factual errors, or who suggests an uncertain understanding of the texts being discussed, will never achieve a high mark – but more important than this is the ability to address the tasks that are set, to show some critical and organisational skill, and to manage this with confidence and control. Mere rehearsal of contents or plot simply shows knowledge, and very pleasingly there were no folders or essays this session that did this alone. Successful candidates will always show an understanding of *how* the writer achieves his/her effects, of *how* characters are created, and of *how* s/he affects and perhaps manipulates a reader's responses.

Implicit in this of course is the need for a candidate to know, and know how to use, at least some critical vocabulary – but again not merely to demonstrate a knowledge of the words, but of how exactly they are used to create particular effects; simple listing of technical devices will gain very little credit, and it is good to report that such writing was not seen this session, in which candidates did appear very conscious of the need to explore and examine closely and analytically, rather than just catalogue.

Moderators will look for at least some awareness of the different styles and impacts of different genres, particularly where poetry and drama are concerned; neither is just prose laid out in a strange manner! Poetic techniques and styles must be discussed and understood, so that the effects of, for example, rhyme and rhythm, are properly demonstrated; stanza length, line length, enjambment, can all also influence the way in which we read and respond to a poem, and *comments* on these must be made for high marks to be awarded. Similarly, when discussing a play, it is important that at least some awareness is shown that it is dramatic, and intended for shared theatrical experience, rather than just private reading, even if this is necessarily how it has been studied in the classroom.

Finally, but by no means last in importance, is the need for accurate and appropriate writing – while the emphasis in the syllabus is naturally upon the literary skills and understanding that candidates show, these cannot be rewarded highly unless they are entirely clear in meaning. As said above, there was little inaccuracy in candidates' writing this session, but it remains very important that teachers should make clear to their candidates how essential this is, and indeed to bear it very firmly in mind when marking their work; Moderators will take it into account when deciding how appropriate a Centre's marking is.

Annotation and summative comments were generally helpful to the Moderators this session; too much annotation can be distracting, and too little is certainly unhelpful. What matters is that Centres draw attention to where the writing is positively good, where it is clearly addressing what matters, and why it is therefore attracting marks. Some annotation may of course be directed towards the candidates, but it is more helpful if it is at least in part directed towards explaining to the Moderator why a mark has been awarded. This is particularly so when summative comments on the two pieces are written – these need not be lengthy, but they should draw particular attention to the overall strengths (and maybe also weaknesses) of the two pieces together, and therefore to the reasons that led to the decision to award a particular mark.

Overall, then, a very pleasing session, demonstrating once more that while entry to this syllabus may remain fairly small the standard of work submitted remains high, and often very high. Coursework is unquestionably enabling some candidates to achieve and demonstrate a real critical confidence and maturity.