

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9695/03
Poetry and Prose

General comments

This session was marked by some lively and well-informed answers from candidates, who, by and large, responded to texts and questions with vigour and knowledge. Keats' poetry remained popular, but it was pleasing to see that large numbers of candidates had studied the new CIE poetry anthology, *Songs of Ourselves*, which has proved very successful. Answers on the prose texts were approximately divided equally between the three choices.

It was rare for Examiners to see the work of candidates who lacked textual knowledge; the majority clearly knew their texts very well, and there were many signs of real engagement and enjoyment. Some candidates, though, lacked full development of the skills to apply that knowledge to the particular task on the examination paper. In particular, candidates need to focus on the careful selection of material and precise references and quotations to illustrate their points and advance their arguments. It is difficult to write successfully about an author's language and technique without quotations to exemplify the points being made.

Candidates are sometimes tempted into a narrative approach to questions and insert contextual and biographical knowledge, sometimes where there is little relevance to the question. It is important for candidates answering the passage-based questions to analyse the language and form of the extract on the paper in considerable detail.

Question Specific Comments

Section A: Poetry

1. John Keats: *Selected Poems*

(a) This question raised central aspects of Keats' verse and gave candidates a wide choice of material from which to draw. The odes were very popular choices, while some candidates referred to 'Lamia', 'The Eve of St Agnes' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'. Confident and successful candidates selected their material well and had a clear idea of what they wanted to say about Keats' appreciation of beauty – some linked beauty to women and love, others to temporality and mortality, for example, choosing either complementary or contrasting poems. A number of candidates missed the opportunities provided by the question, though, providing paraphrases of two poems without focusing on the wording of the task. The requirement in the question to discuss 'the ways' Keats writes about beauty was too often overlooked, leading a number of candidates with good textual knowledge to receive disappointing marks. It was interesting to note how many times 'Bright Star' appeared in answers to (a) – while it can be a relevant choice, it was not often made so, suggesting that the candidates who took this route were not confident in their knowledge of the poems as a whole.

- (b) 'Bright Star' proved a popular choice and candidates often wrote well on the poem's main directions, the yearning for 'steadfast' stability and the sensuousness of the final lines. There were some examples of remarkably precise and sensitive analysis of the poem, teasing out its final ambiguities. Such answers noted, for example, that the movement towards mortality is already encapsulated in the midst of the sensuality with the adjective 'ripening'. There were also, though, some casual readings of it which led to misunderstandings. For example, many candidates wrote about the attractive imagery of nature in the first eight lines and picked up the striking 'No –' at the beginning of line 9 without noticing that it follows the 'Not' of line 2, thus missing the crucial context of the natural imagery and some of the poem's meaning. Candidates frequently mentioned that the poem was a sonnet, and while some noticed the difference between the detached 'gazing' of the octave and the experiencing of the sestet, comparatively few showed how Keats makes use of the form.

2. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) This question attracted discussion on quite a wide range of poems, the most popular including 'The Planners', 'The City Planners', 'Summer Farm', 'Where I Come From', 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' and 'The Bay'. The most successful candidates chose their poems according to a plan of what case they wanted to make, so that 'The Planners' and 'The City Planners' were often paired to show how poets responded to the growth of modern urban life, while others linked poems to discuss poets' exploration of the relationship between places and the individual. Candidates are more successful with the poetry (a) questions if they have a clear idea of what argument they wish to pursue in response to the question. A general discussion of two separate poems is seldom as successful.

- (b) 'The Spirit is Too Blunt an Instrument' proved to be very popular and was widely successful as a stimulus to interesting writing. Some candidates, though, found it difficult to discuss the text as poetry, often quoting it as prose, and an overwhelming majority asserted strongly that it has no rhyme. Only a very few, alert candidates noticed the detailed connected rhymes across the stanzas, perhaps mirroring the detailed construction of the baby itself. There were some strongly personal responses, some suggesting an inhumane scientific response to the baby, while others suggested that the poem showed science pushing out the role of the Creator. Most, though, responded to an unusual but vigorous exploration of the delight and wonder at new life, using microbiological terms to demonstrate the amazement. Candidates who also paid attention to the poem's final lines, which suggest that, while 'human passions' cannot in themselves produce the perfection of the child, they successfully create 'despair and anxiety/and their pain', tended to do very well.

3. Stevie Smith: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were few answers to this question.
- (b) Again there were few answers, but here some candidates responded well to Smith's tongue in cheek approach, her clever variations of rhythm and rhyme and her unusual subject matter, treating death as an ambiguous familiar friend.

Section B: Prose

4. Achebe: *Anthills of the Savannah*

- (a) The novel attracted a large number of answers, and Examiners were pleased to see a range of engaged and vigorous answers on quite a challenging text. While some candidates did merely list social problems and suggested there were no solutions, there was some thoughtful debate in many of the essays. Many candidates were able successfully to demonstrate the range of problems which are highlighted in the novel, ranging from drought and poverty, through corruption to political instability. Many remarked that solutions were not easy, and some referred back to Kangan's colonial past, while others focused on Ikem's Marxism. Ikem's speech at the university was often central to candidates' responses, as was his relationship with the taxi drivers, while many considered a renewed role for women in Kangan society, referring to the symbolic naming of the baby by women in the last chapter. Some candidates mentioned that the news of Sam's replacement by another general reminds the reader, though, that nothing is certain.

- (b) The passage was a popular option. Candidates wrote well about the situation described and the irony of the party atmosphere for an execution. Many missed, though, the importance that the extract described 'Ikem's observations' – his role as narrator here is part of the understanding of the excerpt, as the descriptions of 'people's behaviour' are his. The overall impression of behaviour was discussed with energy, but candidates often neglected the opportunity to look in detail at the language and imagery Ikem uses. Candidates who responded to both Ikem's narration and the details of his language were often successful in noting a sense of despair when he looks in vain for a sign that the people are capable of rising up against the authorities, balanced by an appreciation of their immense patience and good humour in the face of adversity.

5. George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) The question on the role of the river was very successful. While there were candidates who opted for a summarised narrative, the majority paid attention to the word 'structure' in the question, and wrote about the river not just as the scene for the novel's actions, but as a shaping motif for the novel itself. Candidates referred to significant episodes, with early childhood, the boat trip with Stephen Guest and the final flood featuring frequently, while other answers linked the flowing of the river symbolically with Maggie's character. Many argued with some deft selections how every aspect of the novel is linked in one way or another to the Floss.

- (b) The passage was recognised as a crucial one in the development of the novel, signalling as it does the real onset of Tulliver's troubles which result in the loss of the Mill. There was usually a clear understanding of Tulliver's stubbornness, his lack of education, his aggressiveness, his love of family and his hatred of lawyers in general and Wakem in particular, and occasionally of the dramatic irony of 'You would not be forced to go to law with him, I hope, brother?' Some very successful answers showed appreciation of the ambiguity of Tulliver's characterisation, presenting him as both a figure of sympathy and one of aggressive stupidity, while others showed a thoughtful response to Eliot's gentle humour in the narration here, arguing that the humour is indulgent, leading the reader to a response to Tulliver which leans towards the sympathetic.

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

- (a) Candidates tended to agree that Mansfield's stories were more concerned with the characters' minds than events, and used stories such as *The Garden Party*, *Bliss*, *An Indiscreet Journey*, *Her First Ball*, *Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding* and *A Married Man's Story* to illustrate their discussion. Ironically, even in these answers, though, some candidates lapsed into narrative summary while asserting that the real interest was in the characters' minds. More successful answers looked closely at the mental life of the characters, contrasting their responses with the events around them. Sophisticated responses examined Mansfield's narrative techniques, showing that events are frequently filtered through the characters' perceptions and responses as the narrative moves in and out of characters' minds, making it difficult to pin down events themselves separately from the characters' mental responses.

- (b) This was a very popular question, though a surprising number of candidates seemed unaware of the context which is revealed in *The Voyage*, namely the death of Fenella's mother, thus missing the emotional undercurrent of the extract. On the other hand, many candidates commented on the pervasive dark imagery at the beginning of the story and suggested that by this means Mansfield is already hinting at the mother's death and the family's mourning. Others commented on the way several parts of the description suggest a childish perception, suggesting that the narrative veers towards Fenella's perception of the journey. There were some very sensitive responses, which looked at Fenella's embarrassment at the emotion between her grandmother and father and questioned her own avoidance of mourning and emotion.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/04

Drama

General comments

This proved a very accessible paper to the vast majority of candidates. However, there were still answers in which candidates felt it was important to include details of a writer's life or vast amounts of historic background. Candidates should always start from the text. The relationship between a writer's work and his or her life and time is always, at best, tangential to the task of answering the question. Similarly, candidates need to be aware that vast amounts of plot-telling or of putting scenes into context are always poorly rewarded. The trouble is that candidates can sometimes fool themselves into thinking that if they throw a lot of material at the question, they must by default be answering it. Candidates who take a hard look at the actual requirements of the question and then select their material judiciously do best: answers of this type tend to be brief but packed full of carefully substantiated comment. As this is a paper about drama, questions often ask about dramatic effectiveness or significance: many candidates seemed ill-prepared to address these terms, and that is something that some Centres may wish to highlight more with their candidates.

On the whole, passage based questions tend to be more popular than essay questions. Candidates need to remember, however, that the main focus of such answers must be a detailed analysis of the printed extract.

One or two candidates made serious rubric errors – writing on more than two texts, writing two answers on the same text -- so Centres are reminded that they should ensure that candidates are absolutely clear about what is expected of them. A number of candidates submitted answers in note form: this is unacceptable, and infringes the rubric requirement for 'good English.' Centres should also remind candidates about using their time well. There were a number of instances where first answers were very long indeed, and then the response to the second question was scanty. No matter how good *one* answer is, candidates do themselves a serious disservice in not balancing their efforts.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 **ATHOL FUGARD: *The Township Plays***

- (a) Most responses were well informed and straightforward. The best made good use of the tag on the question ('We live inside and you live outside') to suggest that in presenting the life of the townships through drama, Fugard is inviting an audience to be both participant and spectator at the same time. Other candidates focused on the experience of the townships without really seeing that there was a matter of dramatic technique at stake here too. Very good candidates were also able to discuss the workshop aspects of the plays and how this might influence an audience's feeling of involvement.
- (b) On the whole, this question was not answered as well as (a). Candidates tended to focus on the depiction of poverty, hardship and sadness here and they found it much harder to get close to 'dramatic effects.' For example, the handing over of the coat has significant symbolic resonance here, as does the fact that the acting company is re-enacting the story as it is told by Aniko. Similarly, movement and gesture, clearly signalled by Fugard, are an important aspect of the passage's impact on an audience.

Question 2 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

- (a) In general, the treatment of Malvolio was handled perceptively, with candidates taking a view both of his faults and the way that others treat him. Subtle answers made the point that whilst initially Malvolio got what he deserved with the extended trickery surrounding the letter, his subsequent treatment during his imprisonment was excessive, pushing him towards madness. A few candidates went further and pointed out that his final cry for revenge might change the balance of sympathy once again as it upsets the notionally happy equilibrium of the play's ending.
- (b) There were many fine answers on the passage, but many candidates at the bottom end often had difficulty locating the precise moment of the action and of being very clear about precisely what is going on. In particular, candidates were often rather uncertain about Olivia's feelings towards Orsino which are not – as many argued – perverse. Rather, she has tried to be honest with Orsino and has even prolonged the mourning for her brother in order to not hurt his feelings. Candidates were at their best when exploring the language used by the characters, particularly the way in which Viola can present the conventional vocabulary of love on someone else's behalf. Few candidates made much of the soliloquy with which the passage ends.

Question 3 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- (a) The question about superstition and the supernatural proved popular. For some it was merely an opportunity to list examples, for others the discussion led, naturally, towards formulation of a view about how both of these factors turn out to be motivating factors for the central characters in the play. Other answers focused on how superstition and the supernatural allow Shakespeare to bring out character traits. Still other answers saw the significance of the omens and storms as being the central issue that creates an audience's sense of how order has been disrupted both in the macro and the microcosm. The wide range of responses demonstrated absolutely that candidates can often take a wide variety of approaches to questions on this paper and still find that they are well rewarded by the Examiners who do not have pre-conceived views of what an 'ideal' answer might look like.
- (b) This proved a popular question. Most candidates were clearly able to see how the relationship between the two is now strained to breaking point. Strangely, many candidates were keen to assert that Brutus and Cassius had been like brothers up to this point, a reading which the detail of the play cannot sustain. In many cases, more could have been made of the detail, of the way in which the two fence around each other, each anxious to make a point, each keen not to go too far. Many discussed the contrast of basic character tendencies – Brutus' idealism, Cassius' pragmatism – with subtlety and understanding.

Question 4 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Comedy of Errors*

- (a) There were very few answers on this text. In the few that there were, the role and presentation of Luciana were usually reviewed in a slightly mechanical way, with the focus more on function than on the way she helps move forward both action and theme.
- (b) There were a small number of answers on this question. Most were able to account for the confusions of the scene but the wider significance of the scene as a contribution to the play's discussion about morality and money was largely ignored.

Question 5 CHARLOTTE KEATLEY: *My Mother Said I Never Should*

- (a) This play has continued to prove a popular addition to the 'canon.' Although there were not many answers on the 'dramatic' nature of ordinary women's lives, most proved well up to the task. Weaker candidates tended to focus on events, often seeing the characters as almost real people; better candidates were able to see that the play is structured to dramatize the changing experience of the various generations of women through comparison and contrast.
- (b) There were many interesting responses on the experience of childhood as presented in the play. The best focused on the extract given and were able to capture the mixture of innocence and half-knowledge that Keatley presents. At the same time, good answers often saw the presentation of childhood as being filtered through what the audience knows about the adult characters in the play.

Question 6 ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

- (a) Weaker candidates tended to focus on the central betrayal of the play -- Eddie's informing of the immigration services. Reference to the story of Vinnie Bolzano often allowed candidates to make the leap towards the wider implications of the basic idea. Most candidates were aware that the play as a whole is a mesh of betrayals of trust and affection. The best responses were able to link ideas of betrayal to those of justice, and this sometimes included interesting and incisive analyses of the role and position of Alfieri.
- (b) There were many interesting discussions of the passage. Some candidates gave a rather limited account of the action of the scene, but most were able to comment on the relationship between stage directions and language. Some candidates got very excited by their view that Eddie is latently homosexual. A more obvious approach might have been to see how Rodolfo threatens a view of masculinity, particularly in relation to women, that Eddie believes unchallengeable.

Question 7 RICHARD SHERIDAN: *The Rivals*

- (a) Most candidates responded well to the question on the role and presentation of Mrs Malaprop, mainly concentrating on her personality traits, her self-delusion and her misuse of words. At the top end, candidates were able to discuss her relationships with the other characters and her importance in showing up the attitudes of the time, particularly with reference to the role and education of women.
- (b) Better students here were able to differentiate between the different sorts of humour, both verbal and physical in this scene. However, many candidates found it hard to get a handle on the term 'comic effects' from the question. In part at least this was because they lacked an awareness of ideas about honour duels (or indeed experience of watching swashbuckling films) to give them insight into the conventions which are being parodied here.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/05

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

General comments

The overall standard of work this session was highly satisfactory. The best work exemplified many of the criteria for bands 1 and 2 listed in the mark scheme, based on a detailed and frequently quite sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the texts and the ability to address the issues raised by the questions. Below this level was a substantial tranche of work in the securely sound to highly competent range, engaging texts and questions in sensible and appropriately focused ways. The more limited work, while often showing detailed knowledge, tended to rely on paraphrase/narrative summary in place of critical exploration of literary features, but nevertheless, achieved enough for a basically adequate standard or something very close to it. Examiners were pleased to report that very few candidates could be described as seriously weak.

There were very few rubric errors or obvious mismanagement of time in the exam. It is always disappointing when these problems arise and Centres are asked to ensure that candidates do have a clear understanding of the precise demands of the paper. It will be a happy day when the Examiners can report that no candidate's result was affected by such unnecessary mistakes. Examiners were disappointed that a few candidates had returned to the wasteful practice of opening essays with a biographical summary of the author, sometimes nearly two sides in length. Shakespeare, Austen and Bronte were particularly subjected to this treatment. There was also a minority of candidates who, perhaps in trying to give a clear context for a passage based question, presented a (sometimes) brief summary of the entire text. This was most common with the Shakespeare passage questions. Centres should stress to their candidates that neither of these practices help the candidate and serve only to waste valuable time, which would be much better spent in tackling the specific question.

There is also a more general point of concern, which Centres would do well to address. Many candidates seem to be unable to give a precise context for an extract from the text, when dealing with a passage based question, the option (b) on each text. The text specific comments below refer to this concern in more detail. Each option (b) question gives a brief reference, where applicable, such as Act 2 Scene 4 for this session's *King Lear* passage question. However Examiners would expect the candidates to know that this extract takes place in Gloucester's castle and to explain how the main characters in the extract came to be there. This would naturally enable the candidate to discuss what has happened immediately before the scene and how this scene links in to what is to happen. The *dramatic effect* of setting the scene in Gloucester's castle could thus quite easily be integrated into the answer and in this way the candidate is able to demonstrate an awareness of the construction of the text, of how Shakespeare has created the drama taking place before us. Similar points could be made about many of the passage questions. Candidates should be aware that the passages are often selected because the passage is a turning point or key development in some way. Recognising where exactly in the text it is located is essential if the candidate is to address fully the demands of the task.

Finally the Examiners were particularly struck this session by the high standard of written English more or less across the ability range. The best work showed a confident command of language, while much of the sound/competent work was clearly and accurately articulated.

2. Choice of texts and questions

Across the paper as a whole, *King Lear* was the most widely favoured text this time. In **Section B** *Wuthering Heights* was the most popular choice, closely behind *King Lear* in the paper as a whole. *Persuasion* was fairly widely subscribed, as was Marvell, who was often tackled very well. There were a few Centres who offered Chaucer, Swift and Dickens but only a handful of answers on Jonson or Tennyson. Speaking generally, in this session candidates preferred the (b) option questions, except for *Measure for Measure* where there was slight balance in favour of (a).

Comments on specific questions

Section A Shakespeare

King Lear

- 1(a)** This question was less popular than option (b). Candidates offered many and varied interpretations of 'Nature'. The best answers often located the quotation in Edmund's defiant manifesto and went on to explore several ways in which 'nature and natural imagery' could be construed. For Edmund and the elder Lear daughters human nature was seen as perverted, 'denature' so to speak, seditiously undermining the conventional order and sowing chaos in the process. At the same time, this process was seen paradoxically as a form of 'natural' justice inflicted on Lear and Gloucester for their various 'sins' of omission and commission. 'Nature' was also the element in their awesome majesty, holding human life in their terrifying power but bringing enlightenment to both Lear and Gloucester through their suffering at both its hands and those of 'denatured' humans. There was some perceptive comment but in general a lack of close textual support. The more limited answers concentrated on the storm and the use of animal imagery to define the filial ingrates. Some candidates also commented on the pagan gods and how 'unnatural' such beliefs were. Others referred to the Great Chain of Being and in the best of these answers had a useful framework on which to build a perceptive and detailed response.
- 1(b)** This was the most widely subscribed question on the paper and Examiners saw the full range of answers to it, though very few in the lowest band. Centres should take note of the general comments above about the importance of candidates' ability to place the passage accurately. The best answers were able to do this and were quite superb, exploring the passage in depth, teasing out its nuances of tone and subtle discriminations of character. There was little sympathy for Lear, widely seen as the author of his own downfall and as learning nothing from this particular experience. There was much reference to his 'quantitative' conception of love, measuring it by the weight of oleaginous words in the opening of the play and by the number of knights retained in this passage. His rash and ill restrained temper was seen as caught in his irrational reaction to Goneril and his pathetic attempts to play off one coldly determined sister against the other. There was much comment too on the lethal skills with which the undaughterly duo systematically strip him of the remaining vestiges of his authority and power. The less accomplished work fell into the trap of partisanship, seeing Lear as a loving father basely abused by demonic daughters. Interestingly, quite a few answers went in the other direction, constructing Lear as a doddering old fool, more in need of a Zimmer frame than a pack of unruly followers, his daughters by contrast a pair of model housewives sensibly trying to make the most of their limited resources.

Measure for Measure

- 2(a)** This was another well answered question. The best interrogated every aspect of the quotation, starting with 'partly', which they took to express Isabella's own reservation about her attempted act of mercy. Candidates related it to Angelo's cynically heartless treatment of Marianna, his sincerity well in doubt long before Isabella entered his world. Most saw his efforts to restore a stricter public and private morality, in particular his deployment of capital punishment, as a kind of perverted sincerity. There were mitigating references to his eagerness to be tested to breaking point before assuming office and his self reviling after the first meeting with Isabella. More pedestrian answers saw the situation in morally more simplistic terms, though most saw a redeeming feature in Angelo's desire for death following exposure. There was much textual detail and generally appropriate argument offered by the vast majority of answers, though some did produce what felt like prepared answers on Angelo, only loosely adapted to the task in hand.

- 2(b)** There was plenty of proficient/good work on this question, Most referred in detail to the dramatic irony of the passage, with Lucio oblivious of whom he is talking to and as a consequence allowing full rein to his lewd loquacity. Many candidates appreciated his humour, noticing how this set him apart from others in the main plot. The best answers relished the inexorable way in which he digs himself into an ever deeper hole and admired the restraint of the Duke. In general answers would have benefited from closer attention to the language of the passage. At times Examiners detected a kind of squeamishness preventing candidates from too explicit a concern with the text. Some candidates though were able to link this passage into the play's general concerns with morals and human sexuality. Sadly no answer even glanced at the possibility of a double irony: that Lucio knew very well whom he was addressing and what's more knew that the Duke knew he knew. Nevertheless, there was much sensible and well directed comment even in the more critically modest appreciations.

Section B

Persuasion

- 3(a)** There were plenty of answers to this question and again much work in the sound to securely proficient range to enjoy and reward. Candidates who were aware of Austen's satirical methods often did very well, lining up their ducks - Sir Walter and his eldest and youngest daughters - in a row to shoot them down with glee. There was much reference to self-regarding vanity and snobbery, Sir Walter's obsession with breeding and good looks, his daughters' concern to cultivate the high-born and disdain the low. Mary's resentment of the Hayters, Sir Walter and Elizabeth's fawning over their lofty relatives and their contempt for Anne's loyalty to socially fallen friends, all received detailed treatment in the context of an age which revered social rank and in which it was essential for genteel young ladies to marry as well as they could. Better answers probed the issue more subtly, with reference to Lady Russell's genuine affection for her late friend's family and in particular her deep concern for Anne's future security and happiness. Some candidates used the twin reference points of the Baronetage and the Navy Lists as a way of exploring how Austen discriminates between the various ranks of society and status, the best seeing the distinction between 'breeding' and 'good breeding'.
- 3(b)** This was a passage which rewarded candidates who were able to give it a precise location in the troubled history of Anne and Captain Wentworth, enabling these candidates to explore the deep significance of this particular encounter and why Mr Elliot's attentions were evil. There were some quite stunning answers to this question, exploring the passage in close detail, and showing a sophisticated awareness of tone, nuance and the literary methods by which Austen articulates Anne's view of the events and thus Austen's own concerns. Language - *vacant, grave, irresolute, by very slow degrees*, for example - was interrogated in depth to bring out the dynamics of feeling in the passage, its dialectic so to speak. Again below this level was much sound/competent work, drawing out the principal features of the passage and relating them intelligently to the wider context of Anne's developing relationships with both Captain Wentworth and William Elliot.

Wuthering Heights

- 4(a)** Given the popularity of this text, there were relatively few answers to this option, tempting though it is. Virtually all candidates gave their primary attention to location, establishing a contrast between the eponymous house - dilapidated, gloomy, gothic - and Thrushcross Grange, brightly lit, warm, civilised. Some candidates noticed how Thrushcross changed Catherine, though were divided as to whether this was for the better. There was much reference to the nature and nurture theme, with a range of variations being played on it. For the most part it was the Lintons who came up smelling of roses, the brood up at the Heights seen as a 'savage' lot who brought destruction, death, and very bad manners wherever they went. It was significant, these answers noted, that when the evil was finally exorcised from the Heights by the idyllic love of Hareton and the younger Catherine, the protagonists immediately moved house to the Grange. Better answers brought in Gimmerton village and the moors, though few dealt in any detail with the scenes that take place on the moors. Few answers showed much if any idea of what the Yorkshire moors are actually like and worryingly Examiners saw references to the 'crashing waves on the coast', presumably a memory of a film based on the text candidates had seen. Centres do need to remind candidates of this danger when 'other' versions of the texts are used.

- 4(b)** This was a very popular question, second only to 1(b). Once again candidates who knew the precise location fared very well, able to recall that the mild Linton here is the same one who earlier punched Heathcliff in the throat. Examiners saw some excellent exegeses of the passage, closely attentive to language and tone, teasing out the nuances of the Catherine/Edgar relationship with sensitivity and insight. These answers brought out the cardinal importance in the passage of the character most obviously absent from it, the returned Heathcliff, your average, six foot tall, darkly brooding, Byronic home-wrecker. There was a clear-sighted understanding of Linton's flaws and inadequacies and his doomed incompatibility with his chosen wife, but at the same time relatively few candidates had much sympathy for our teeth-gnashing, head-banging heroine or her absent suitor. A few though did remember that this is the start of the end so far as she is concerned. There was also some perceptive comment on Isabella, widely seen as a spoilt and naïve little rich girl, desperately on the hunt for excitement. Better answers also explored the role of Nellie here, as narrator, remembering to whom she is telling the story, and as participant, seen by many candidates as far from innocent or unbiased. Indeed for some she was a mischief maker who should have kept out of the affairs of her betters. Below this level was a substantial body of very sound/competent work, seeing the broad outlines of the passage if not the battery of fictional methods by which Bronte constructs her highly emotional scene.

The Knight's Tale

- 5(a) and (b)** There were few answers on this text. Examiners were sometimes left wondering why Centres with hard working but critically limited students would choose this text in preference to, say, the Austen or the Bronte, which they would surely have found more manageable. In **(a)** candidates struggled with the notion of 'chivalrie' and most did little beyond recount parts of the plot. A few candidates were able to explore the issues in the context of the two 'warring' knights and Theseus. Those who saw an ironic debunking of the whole courtly 'code' did well, often seeing the ambiguity of Emily's position and exploring the effects of the far from chivalric conduct of the Gods. **(b)**, the more popular choice, proved a shade more congenial. Most drew detailed attention to the antagonism and rivalry of the gods, mirroring that of their earthly vassals, and also to the clever trick by which Saturne succeeds in keeping both warring parties happy. However, there was scant attention to language and tone, while the long section of the passage in which Saturne recounts his depressing *curriculum vitae*, of which he appears inexplicably proud, was almost always ignored.

David Copperfield

- 6(a)** There were few attempts at this question. Most had at least a rudimentary knowledge of the various stages in Copperfield's career when the Micawbers appear. Nearly every answer recognised the importance of Mr Micawber in the downfall of Heep. Better answers focused on the warmth and vitality of the family, the loyalty of Mrs Micawber and the sense of family and belonging they gave to a young and vulnerable Copperfield.
- 6(b)** Candidates who tackled this question often focused on the 'concerns', considering the themes such as family, betrayal, prostitution, sexuality in some depth. Few answers though were able to explore the 'methods' Dickens employs with any confidence. It was surprising how few referred for instance to the effect of Copperfield himself narrating the story or why Dickens uses this 'method' of narration. Examiners did see answers that at least explored how Dickens manipulates the tone in the passage and thereby his readers' emotions.

The Alchemist

- 7(a) and (b)** This was the least popular text and not generally very well handled. Perhaps the difficulties of language and context are greater in Jonson even than in Chaucer, though perhaps less obvious. Candidates did show some knowledge of the basics of the text, in terms of action and character, but few were able to offer more than sound responses to the tasks set.

Marvell Selection

- 8(a)** Examiners were gratified to see how popular this text is and moreover how well and enthusiastically so many candidates responded to it. Better answers chose a few relevant poems as the focus for their answer, identifying common themes and issues, whilst also exploring the ambiguities and the ambivalence which is such a key aspect of Marvell. Weaker answers simply summarised some of the poems, often quite accurately, but did not shape or direct the material towards 'presentation of women' as required by the task.

- 8(b)** There were some quite brilliant answers to this option. There was much thoughtful and probing exploration of language, tone and imagery by means of which Marvell creates his paradise, Eden reborn in which mankind can rediscover its primal innocence and happiness. Such features as Marvell's use of simile, metre, rhythm, the rhyming couplet were analysed in depth. Then the poem was deconstructed as a neo-Platonic exercise, a dream of Eden evoked by men whistling to keep their courage up as they battle with the winds and 'the watry maze' to reach any kind of landfall, which would, these candidates averred, turn out to be very different from the dream. Weaker answers were still often able to see explore the issues sensibly, referring to other poems to support their view that this aspect was or wasn't typical of Marvell generally.

Gulliver's Travels

- 9(a) and (b)** This was a minority choice but some candidates responded enthusiastically to the challenge of Swift's satire. Those who attempted (a) were divided in their judgement as to Swift's attitude. Some claimed that Swift did not hate mankind since he wrote to 'improve' it, swooping on bits of the text by way of support, more often than not the colloquy between Gulliver and the Brobdingnagian king. Other candidates though saw little to support a positive view at all. Swift's obsession with the disgusting and perverse in human life, culminating in Gulliver's desire to be a horse, was so all pervading as to admit of no redeeming features. Answers to (b) were not so wide ranging and at times relied heavily on paraphrase and the linking of characters to their 'real life' models. Better answers linked this into the wider text and Swift's methods, principally his use of the naïve narrator. However, a few candidates focused on Swift's misogyny. He did not hate mankind, they averred, using the option (a) question as a starting point, just the female half of it. How typical that a male writer should blame the whole catastrophe in this passage on girls and their contemptible reading habits. It was a refreshing change and often lead into a detailed analysis of the passage as a whole.

Tennyson Selection

- 10(a) and (b)** This was also a minority choice but it is to be hoped will tempt more Centres over the coming sessions. Candidates were enthusiastic and had an encouraging knowledge of the poems. Option (a) was much more popular than (b) and candidates were able to engage with Tennyson's themes and in better answers his poetic methods, with some understanding. As ever the choice of poems to explore had a considerable effect on the eventual essay, some candidates trying hard to fashion relevant comments from unhelpful sources. Those who had a deeper pool in which to fish often produced detailed and sensitive explorations of Tennyson's poetic use of isolation, in terms of his subjects and above all in relation to himself.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/06

Twentieth Century Texts

General comments

Almost all questions addressed key issues of the texts making them accessible to all levels of ability. Many of the questions were very open which had the advantage of differentiating between those candidates who knew a lot but could also develop a coherent thesis, while allowing weaker candidates an opportunity to demonstrate basic knowledge. There seemed to be fewer obvious links with questions from previous sessions which reduced the risk of candidates reproducing prepared material. The unfortunate double negative in 6(a) did not produce serious difficulties, though there was some concern that neither question on Narayan's *The Guide* offered ready access to the material candidates would have prepared on Raju's career and personality. However the questions efficiently differentiated between those who had responded to the novel at a sophisticated, literary level and those who could not.

There was an impressive range of scripts. Even when candidates were not achieving high marks, there was evidence of knowledge and engagement with the texts, while at the higher levels Examiners were pleased to see some genuine attempts to explore the implications of the questions, structure a response and use specific quotations and references to support insightful and appreciative readings of the texts. Candidates achieved much more highly on the (b) questions than in previous years. Candidates seem to be more confident and competent in analysing aspects of "dramatic effect", structure, narrative point of view and symbolism. There is still some reluctance however to analyse the various ways comedy works or to apply the skills of close reading and practical criticism to the poetry questions and the (b) questions on the prose text which specifically ask for a discussion of the "effects of the writing". Candidates should be warned that it is unwise to reject outright, the invitation to consider a particular theme as being a "central concern" as this sometimes signifies a desire to present prepared material; neither should they include lengthy biographical details or generalised theoretical material on genre and philosophy. Some very good candidates spent too long on the first question and so compromised their score, while some weaker candidates wasted time by giving an outline of the plot before addressing the question. There were very few candidates for whom this examination was not an appropriate test of their skills in English.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Edward Albee: *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

This was a popular choice of text, which elicited some good, substantial responses on both questions, though (a) proved to be more popular.

- (a) Good answers provided a social context for the question and discussed the illusion of The American Dream showing the extent to which both couples were suffering from disillusionment or trying to shore up their relationships with illusions of their own. They looked at a range of ideas including Martha's relationship with her father and George, the games-playing including the illusory threat of the gun, and the ambiguity surrounding George's family history and novel, as well as covering the obvious material on the "child", and the exposure of the reality of Nick and Honey's marriage. The best answers included an appreciation of the patterning and ironies in the play and supported discussion with detailed references to specific moments of realisation and tension. Weaker candidates listed the illusions or focused very narrowly on one issue such as alcohol.

- (b) Some candidates made a good case for this being a pivotal point in the play and good answers were able to link backwards and forwards in terms of the ugliness of “the games” making insightful comments on characterisation, relationships, motivation, structure and dramatic effect. The best answers also looked closely at the language of the passage to explore the games-playing in the scene and audience response, commenting on the changes in tone and mood, the use of the boxing-match motif and the black comedy following Nick and Honey’s entry. Weaker candidates tended to give a narrative summary of the passage or of the whole text.

Question 2 Samuel Beckett: *Endgame*

The text was well studied with an impressive balance between general discussion of genre, cultural background and specific evaluation of dramatic methods and effects. Some candidates approached questions with confident, sophisticated personal responses while others reproduced extensive taught material well. In answers to both questions there was a distinct reluctance to recognise or examine the comedy.

- (a) Good candidates applied sound knowledge of what the Theatre of the Absurd means in relation to *Endgame* with ideas about “meaningfulness”, “no resolution”, “damned to an eternal routine”, and so on, which together with the symbol of the chess game, the ambiguities in the Hamm/Clov relationship and the end-of-the-world scenario suggested a fascination with the theatrical impact of the text. The best candidates related these to Beckett’s techniques: the setting, symbolism of names, the use of repetition and allusions like “It is finished”, visual comedy and the relationship with the audience. Weaker candidates often had a range of ideas but presented them in a generalised way, with little reference to specific moments in the play.
- (b) The length of the extract opened up a wide range of possibilities. The best candidates were able to link the themes of the pointlessness of life, its cyclical nature, the dying world etc. through the dramatic techniques of the repetitions, the apparently pointless but comic routines, the ironies, the ambiguities in the Hamm/Clov relationship, and the problems of interpretation for the audience. There was some attempt at focusing on the language particularly the significance of “Grey” and “Zero” though while many quoted “If I could kill him I’d die happy” or the lines where the telescope is turned on the audience, very few were prepared to deconstruct and explore them in terms of meaning and humour. Weaker answers picked up some of the above, often in the course of paraphrasing the passage but tended to stress that actions and dialogue were meaningless, a boring attempt to fill in time, commenting on the number of pauses and oblivious to the comedy.

Question 3 Caryl Churchill: *Top Girls*

Its topical thematic relevance and dramatic qualities made this a popular choice of text. Candidates found it easier to structure their responses to (a) but both questions produced interesting, literary responses as well as an intelligent awareness of the issues.

- (a) Candidates elaborated on a range of questions about the nature of success; the lengths women go to in order to achieve it; whether the characters in the play were successful; what price they had to pay and the consequences of their actions for themselves and others. Good candidates tied this into structure and technique, making comparisons between the past and present characters, while the best foregrounded the ambiguity in Churchill’s presentation by suggesting how she shows the *Top Girls* have “adopted the traits of forces they claim to be fighting”, or the feminist versus socialist perspective in the contrast between Marlene and Joyce. Good candidates linked characters to themes, ranged across the whole play and were aware of how the ideas were reinforced by the dramatic structures and techniques. Overall the broad aims of the play were understood across the range of marks though weaker candidates tended to focus more narrowly on Marlene and Angie.

- (b) Very good candidates understood how the dramatic technique of using different characters from different cultures and times universalises the issues and challenges audience response. In a systematic way these candidates explored the impact of Act 1 and its contribution to the rest of the play, focusing on similarities and differences between the characters e.g. Griselda and Marlene and the sacrifices they made and comparing it with the later scene between Marlene and Mrs Kidd or Marlene and Joyce. At the same time they were able to explore the dramatic effect of the meal with its silent waitress, the focus on food, the irony of the fairy tale and Joan's pride in commanding obedience. Everyone commented on the overlapping dialogue and interpreted it as competition, underscoring the theme that individual success does not equate with emancipation for all or sensitivity to each other's needs and feelings. Weaker candidates tended to give a brief description of what the different characters represented, and either gave a summary of the passage or then went on to discuss themes in a general way.

Questions 4 Les Murray: *Selected Poems*

Very few students chose this text with the majority opting for the (b) question.

- (a) This was not well done. Candidates lacked detailed knowledge of three poems in order to explore how Murray represented landscape and its inhabitants.
- (b) The most successful candidates responding to this question adopted a practical criticism approach, tracing the development of ideas and commenting on the effect of the imagery as they worked through the poem. The general theme of the poem *A Forest Hit by Modern Use* was generally understood, with most candidates sensing that while Murray notes the damage done to the natural environment, in this poem he is celebrating the resilience of nature. Stronger candidates commented on the detached tone, the use of visual detail, commenting on the contribution made by specific words like "graced", "jammed", "toughen" and "paradox for mystery" but very few were prepared to do a detailed analysis of the lexis, to look at the potency of particular phrases like "to shade the rest to death" or "carrying flash of song" or discuss the significance of the images in the final stanza. Weaker candidates offered a summary of the ideas with some descriptive detail and some candidates gave little evidence that they had previously studied the poem.

Question 5 R.K. Narayan: *The Guide*

This was a very popular text and the challenging questions allowed good candidates to generate lively, intelligent and perceptive essays showing a keen sense of the ironies and ambiguities in the novel. Even if the questions required a more analytical approach that some could provide, this was a very successful text for many Centres, with even modest candidates showing a convincing level of engagement and grasp of detail.

- (a) Good candidates were clear about what "traditional" and "modern" meant and were able to show how elements of both were present in the characterisation and relationships of Rosie, Marco and Raju. Good candidates were able to put these in the context of the modernisation of life from the rural to urban or from family traditions to modern life styles without falling into the narrow focus of equating "traditional" values with "good" and "modern" with "sinful" as weaker candidates did. Indeed some related tradition to spirituality and modernity to materialism and argued that rather than being about conflicting values, the novel explores how spirituality and traditional values can be possible in a materialistic world. The best candidates also pinpointed the "clash" precisely and in a variety of ways, whereas others showed a reasonable understanding but confined themselves to a narrow range of material e.g. the clash between Raju and his mother over Rosie. Less secure candidates tended to argue that they did not think this issue was very important and after some brief, undeveloped references to some instances of traditional and modern values, started to write about other themes, much of which could have been related to the question.
- (b) There were many answers across the range which used the process of exploring specific textual details to highlight character, theme and narrative method. Good candidates generated perceptive discussion about the many ironies of Raju's past behaviour and present situation and the behaviour of the crowd, with the best candidates demonstrating a sensitive response to the tone and humour in the writing, commenting on the impact of specific details and choice of language. Weaker candidates recognised the context and focused on explaining how Raju had come to this end, displaying a wide range of knowledge without focusing sufficiently on the extract.

Question 6 Jean Rhys: *Wide Sargasso Sea*

This continues to be a popular text which stimulates passionate engagement, particularly from girls. Both options proved equally popular. Some biographical material on Rhys proved to be a distraction.

- (a) Candidates tended to find it easier to put the case against Antoinette's husband than to make out grounds for sympathy. Good candidates were prepared to take a balanced view, showing how Rhys even-handedly explores the parallels between the two main characters by giving him a voice and showing Rochester's feelings about his need to marry for money, his insecurities and prejudices in an alien environment and conflicting emotions in relation to Antoinette. The best candidates were able to comment on the impact Rochester's language had on reader response at precise moments in the text. Some weaker candidates missed out "presentation" and wrote about the extent to which Rochester was capable of being sympathetic to Antoinette while others demonstrated some well-informed personal views but replaced literary appreciation with indignation.
- (b) This was a well selected extract because those who responded with discrimination to the passage, could only do so if it could be related to the wider context and attention was paid to the narrative point of view. Many candidates were able to place the extract in its crucial position in the novel and to tease out the quality of the interaction between the married couple with varying levels of insight. Good candidates were able to understand the complexities and development of the characterisation and the nuances in the emotions, in both the dialogue and actions, understanding what has brought both characters to this point and the implications for the future. They understood the possible reasons for Rochester's use of "Bertha" and Antoinette's use of "dark" and explored the role and importance of Christophine and obeah. The strongest candidates were able to question Rochester's reliability in his presentation of the scene and focus on how the language and rhythm affect reader response. Weaker candidates often gave an account of events up to this point or went for surface meaning suggesting that the first signs of Antoinette's madness are seen here.

Question 7 Derek Walcott: *Selected Poetry*

This was not a popular text but was often very well done. The candidates often bring a real sense of personal engagement with the issues and are beginning to develop the necessary skills to demonstrate poetic appreciation.

- (a) Very few candidates opted for this question. Strong candidates examined the question and explained the implications before launching into detailed explorations of poems like *Ruins*, *Homecoming*; *Anse La Raye*, and *Veranda*. They sometimes used the idea of "personal and historical memory" to look at Walcott's attitude to the colonial heritage, his personal history and desire to reconcile the tensions and frustrations by creating something new – his poems. The best students were able to select apt quotations and comment in an analytical way on the impact of the imagery, choice of language and tone. Weaker candidates did not have enough detailed knowledge of three poems available and either resorted to biographical detail or an explanation of the colonial experience and legacy in the Caribbean.
- (b) Candidates understood the general sense of Walcott's own reconciliation with his white ancestor and were able, with varying degrees of success, to trace the development of ideas. Those who had studied the poem were able to present confident explorations of the theme and poetic style and looked at the structure of the poem, the variations in tone, the impact of the imagery and choice of diction. They were not afraid to discuss specific devices like the implications of the archaic word "Sire" in the direct address to his grandfather; the use of colour; the metaphorical references to trees and houses; the simplicity of "bully-boy roarers of the Empire club" compared to the complexity of the idea that the souls of his Africa ancestors "like pressured trees brought diamonds out of coals." Weaker candidates seemed to be struggling to make meaning, with some arriving at a reasonable if generalised understanding of the poem even if they lacked the detailed critical analysis of language and poetic effects that this type of question demands.

Question 8 Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

This is becoming an increasingly popular text, with candidates offering substantial responses across the range. While there was some use of prepared material on the social and literary context or characters, many of the candidates were able to focus on the specifics of either question and develop mature, well constructed discussions with lots of detailed analysis and appreciative commentary.

- (a) The question allowed candidates to approach it from a number of angles and Examiners were impressed by the freshness of the considered responses evident in the answers. The best candidates examined the term love and structured their essays around different aspects: romantic love; the institution of marriage; love connected to religion; the love of life, humanity, the moment, status etc. by examining the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Some also looked at the limitations of love. They brought out the contrasts between the characters and selected specific moments for detailed commentary to show their sophisticated understanding of the relationships as well as the writer's themes and techniques. e.g. Clarissa's ruminations on her decision to marry Richard rather than Peter, her memory of the intense experience of being kissed by Sally and her dislike of Miss Kilman's relationship with Elizabeth, Septimus and his relationship with Lucrezia. Weaker candidates often focused more narrowly on the Dalloways and sometimes misunderstood the reticence for lack of love, making simple statements like "Mrs Dalloway just wanted to be told she was loved," or compared Clarissa and Septimus rather generally. The openness of the question lead some candidates to write broad generalised answers, thin on specific detail.
- (b) Candidates possibly felt this was more accessible than (a) and it was often thoroughly discussed with appropriate appreciation of narrative method. Good candidates understood the stream of consciousness technique allowing them to show the different responses to the car from Septimus, Rezia and Clarissa in some detail. Good candidates were able to analyse the language in the passage to reveal both the outer and inner world of the characters and the parallel lives of Septimus and Clarissa as well as make links to their situations in the wider novel. The best candidates also noted the voice of the omniscient narrator but needed to look at the tone created by the detail and structure of the sentence beginning "But there could be no doubt that greatness was seated within." Weaker candidates used the passage to discuss aspects of character or social status which they often did with some insight and copious references to the wider text, while not really considering the terms of the question.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/07
Comment and
Appreciation

General comments

This was in many ways a very pleasing session, with a good deal of work that demonstrated real understanding, not merely of the contents of the passages or poems printed, but more significantly of how critical exploration and discussion should be approached. Certainly there were some answers that did little more than simply paraphrase what was printed, and some too that merely listed the skills and devices used by the writers concerned, but such answers were much rarer than has been the case in some years.

This point about paraphrase is in some ways the most important when preparing candidates for this Paper – Examiners cannot give more than very low marks to an answer that simply shows knowledge of what each given passage or poem says, or of what it is about; an answer worthy of a mark above the lowest two bands must show at least an awareness, and for higher band marks a sensitive and perceptive understanding, of exactly how each writer has created his or her characters, moods, atmospheres, ideas. This cannot be done by just paraphrasing what is printed. Nor will marks be given to answers that simply *assert* things; there must be proper evidence that candidates have seen and appreciated the *effects* of the writers' skills and techniques, and of how these have influenced a reading or response. Examiners will certainly not be impressed by general comments such as "Elizabeth Vroman is a truly excellent writer" or "this is a wonderful opening page of a really beautiful novel that I am longing to read myself"; they will, however, be impressed by answers that look closely at the words and phrases that the writers use, and at the impact that these create on the person reading the passages – and above all *why and how* this impact is created.

Detailed comments on each of the three questions follow, but a few general thoughts may be of interest and help. It should not be necessary really to say this, but candidates who repeatedly refer to stanzas in a piece of prose, or paragraphs in a piece of poetry, are not doing themselves any favours. Examiners are well used to the occasional slip of the pen under examination pressure, and such slips are of little consequence, but when it appears that a candidate really does not seem to know what stanzas or paragraphs are then a big question mark must hang over at least parts of the answer. The same is true of parts of speech and figures of speech – at A Level, candidates really should be able to use terms like adjectives, adverbs, similes, metaphors with accuracy.

Although this has been said in previous Reports, and although there were fewer instances of it this year than sometimes, candidates really should be able to copy poetry as it is printed on the Paper; poets use their line-breaks very carefully indeed – poems are not just prose printed in a strange way. So it was a great shame to see, for example, the following lines from Betty Davis's poem in **Question 2** written in this way by more than a few candidates:

"She rises early, in the shower, coffee over, teeth pearly, blow dry, powder, blush, line each eye.
Perfect suit for ambition. Never trust to attrition."

It is particularly disappointing to see it like this when a candidate makes reference to the rhymes that occur at the end of lines 2 and 3, and 4 and 5! It is not hard to copy it in the same way as the five lines of the original, or even like this, to save space and possibly time:

"She rises early, in the shower,/coffee over, teeth pearly, blow dry,/powder, blush, line each eye./
Perfect suit for ambition./ Never trust to attrition."

An expression used by surprisingly many candidates is "the writer here is trying to say "; Examiners will invariably want to ask if the attempt has been successful, which is of course where the skill or art of critical appreciation comes in. Much better, surely, to say simply "the writer says . . . ", and then to explore how and why this has worked for the reader.

Very few scripts appeared incomplete, and time rarely seemed to be a major difficulty; indeed, it was not at all uncommon for the second answer to be longer and better than the first. In the few instances where time did appear to run out, it would have been better, perhaps, for candidates to have spent the final few minutes making brief bullet-point comments rather than simply stopping dead, possibly mid-sentence, and leaving parts of the passage untouched.

No single question was significantly more popular than any other; roughly equal numbers of candidates tackled each passage, and while some of the best answers appeared in response to **Question 3** there were very good ones on the other two. No particular difficulties seemed to be found with any passage, though the setting and time of the first poem in **Question 2** did cause some slight difficulty for a number of candidates, as will be noted below.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The situation portrayed in this passage was very familiar to almost all candidates, though from a rather different angle, and one or two expressed some rather irrelevant but interesting surprise that a grown woman could ever be nervous about facing a class of forty-three young pupils for the first time! Most saw how Vroman uses two voices here, the conventional third person narrative voice for the most part, but also the silent first person voice to show what Jane Richards is thinking; some answers, however, failed to see that where she *appears* to be talking, but where there are no speech marks, we are actually reading her private thoughts rather than her spoken ones, so that her comment about Uncle Tom may be a hint of some residual racial prejudice in her, but it is certainly not something that she actually speaks, so overt discourtesy or downright rudeness cannot be inferred from the words.

There was plenty of comment on the opening of the passage, with Jane's careful placing of her stationery suggestive of both her professionalism but also her slight tension and uncertainty. The contrast between her inner anxiety and her outer show of bright confidence was well seen by most candidates, who also commented at length about the different personalities and appearances of Booker T Adams and Rachel Veronica Smith, and about the contrasting reactions that these two have on Jane herself. Some noticed the momentary humour, quickly controlled, of the phrase "Crisis No. 1." – Jane is shown to be in remarkable control of both herself and her new class at this moment, despite the underlying threat that Booker and Rachel suggest.

Most answers commented on Jane's clear relief and approval of Rachel, many suggesting – though there is no convincing evidence of this in the passage – that Jane and Rachel are both white, unlike the rest of the class. Few, however, saw the possibly even greater threat that the final words of the passage imply; Rachel's smugness has been seen already in line 48, but surely there is an ominous note in her over-polite remark to Jane, and certainly in Vroman's almost sinister last three words, "her smile angelic".

One last comment on the passage; no candidate was disadvantaged by this mis-reading, but the word "tattoo" in line 33 is surely a reference to military drums rather than to a skin tattoo. The words that "Miss Murray's voice beat a distant tattoo in her memory" suggest that Jane can hear Miss Murray's voice echoing again and again in her mind, rather than that Miss Murray has either literally or metaphorically imprinted Jane's skin with her ideas?

Question 2

Two very clearly contrasting poems, though addressing some linked and in many respects similar ideas, and many candidates obviously found them both striking and appealing. Some found a problem with the time and setting of “woman’s work”, though in most cases this did not prove too significant a concern, even though several candidates openly expressed puzzlement as to how the speaker, writing in the late 20th century, could actually see women working so many centuries before (and incidentally it was also quite surprising how many seemed to think that the nineteenth century was “backward one thousand years”). Most, however, appreciated that the time travel was entirely imaginary. A quite substantial minority of answers interpreted the poem as a feminist blast against male oppression, but this does not seem to be evident in anything that Reichick writes here; most answers did however see the speaker’s growing admiration, through appreciating the hard physical labour of the ancient women, for their strength and determination – and their sense of community as opposed to the greater isolation and independence of the female executive in Davis’s poem. The pregnancy and birth images that permeate Reichick’s poem were well noted by many, as implying that work and childbirth were the only two things that mattered to the Chumash Indian women, and the way too in which the speaker sees herself too as linked to them and indeed to all women and their “holy work”, a link which began perhaps when she “feels the gentle curvatures” of the stone – an image possibly echoing the curvatures of the women themselves. Most also saw, and many commented upon, the relative length and slowness of the poem and its natural imagery, whether relating to the acorn flour that they are making or to the pregnancy and childbirth concept.

Davis’s poem, by contrast, is short, pointed, tightly focused, and as many answers rightly said, reflective of the hectic and rushed life that the woman lives. Her life is of course easier in many respects, but while the Chumash Indian women suffer almost endless physical hardship, the female executive is severely constrained both physically and psychologically by the time pressures that she is under, reflected in the list-like nature of almost all the poem, and emphasised by its occasional sharp rhyme, the most striking being the wonderfully expressive line 10. Almost invariably, too, candidates saw how despite the woman’s daily rush she finds time to “call home” three times, and finally, in the only complete sentence in the poem, finds or makes the time to “mother her tiny one” – the word “tiny” being especially powerful after the mechanistic rush of the rest of the poem. Here, too, is where the poems are connected – the ambitious and successful female executive is a mother too – whether she sees this as the climactic and best part of her day, or whether she simply tags it on reluctantly after all the important work has been completed.

Question 3

This is certainly a mysterious passage, raising far more questions than answers, and many candidates commented on this as being a particularly good characteristic of the opening of a novel – why is Anna so depressed this year? why is the Rector so withdrawn? who is or was Mrs Mompellion? why has the apple harvest failed? Just one candidate appeared to have read the novel, or perhaps made some lucky guesses about it, but several suggested (correctly as it happens) that the village had been visited by plague; other guesses included war, a dictatorial Rector whose staff left because of his ill-treatment, and something that Mrs Mompellion had said or done. Guesses about the rest of the novel, however, as with the rest of the story in **Question 1**, were of course almost invariably irrelevant and unhelpful to the critical reading of the passage itself, and gained no credit at all.

What did gain credit, though, was the ability to see how Anna, the speaker, is shown by the writer to move from her lush description of the kind of autumn or harvest that she “used to love” towards an expression of such desolate depression that when the harvest fails this year “neither matters much to me” and “we are all so tired”. There were some excellent explorations of the first paragraph’s descriptive qualities, once or twice being linked – irrelevantly but perceptively! – to Keats’s “Ode To Autumn”. As so many pointed out, all the senses are involved in Anna’s description here, and many answers explored these descriptions very sensitively indeed.

The introduction of the second character continues the desolate theme, his personal appearance echoed in “the dim room where he sits, still and silent” – an example of alliteration that many noted, and several discussed. Comment was also quite common on the “thin as paper” slices of apple, this simile perhaps foreshadowing the ill or at least deeply distressed and frail nature of the Rector. Anna’s description of his face fascinated many candidates, especially the contrast drawn between its current drawn and haggard look with that of the young “pup” of only three years ago. And here the mysteries of course deepen – why has he changed so much in such a short time? what has Mrs Mompellion done? how can a mere servant girl be taught to read? what are Anna’s real feelings towards the Rector? is she perhaps in love with him? – certainly she clearly cares very deeply about his well-being and wishes to stay with him and comfort him. The Rector’s quiet and courteous words, contrasting with the word “winced” at the mention of Mrs Mompellion, are very striking; despite everything that is said about him here he is clearly portrayed as a man of warmth and charity. The final sentence of the passage, however, is empty and sad in its apparent lack of emotion – but then none of the villagers can remember how to laugh, and they are all so tired, an echo of earlier parts of the passage that a few candidates noted.

It was a shame that so much time was spent by many candidates on speculation rather than on what is actually here in Brooks’s writing – there is a great deal that could be said about the passage and its writing, and across the whole entry virtually every word was explored and analysed for its effectiveness. Relatively few individual answers, however, covered as much as they could have done, though many made perceptive comments about at least some parts of the passage. As with answers on both **Question 1** and **Question 2** there was ample evidence of sensitive and thoughtful personal response, in the best cases firmly linked to the words and expressions used by the writer.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

General comments

This was a very pleasing session indeed; Centres submitted some excellent work, which was helpfully and professionally assessed and presented, and it was abundantly clear that Centres and candidates alike were very much aware of what is required of Coursework, and of how most successfully to approach the two texts being written about. There were, of course, some concerns and problems, which will be covered later in this Report, but it is important to open by thanking all those involved – teachers and candidates – for making the Moderator’s work so straightforward and indeed so enjoyable.

There was rather more evidence than usual this session of candidates choosing their own tasks, and rather fewer instances of all candidates using the same ones; both approaches are of course entirely legitimate, and neither assessment nor moderation should be influenced by what a Centre asks its students to do. However, it is certainly worth suggesting that – particularly in the case of able or very able candidates – more confidently individual and even original work can result when they are exploring a text in a more personal and less highly taught manner.

At the end of this Report is a list of texts and tasks that were used successfully this session; there is no single common factor, though in general the most helpful tasks for candidates will ask them to go considerably beyond merely rehearsing the plot or narrative of a text, and to explore the way in which a writer creates his or her effects upon the reader or audience. A quick glance at the Marking Criteria shows that all Bands above a mark of 6/25 require candidates to look in some detail at stylistic features – for example, to achieve a mark between 6 and 9 there must be “*an attempt to engage with issues of literary context, form and language*”, and for a mark between 22 and 25 this engagement must be “*detailed*”. A task, therefore, which encourages such an approach by its wording is likely to be helpful in encouraging such an approach.

Some tasks, and therefore some essays, ask candidates questions concerning contextual matters – historical, social, literary, or biographical, for example – and while the Marking Criteria certainly require some understanding of the contexts within which texts are written and read this should not be the *main* focus of any answer. Nor, indeed, should the opinions of critics other than the candidates themselves be more than a relatively peripheral part; it can be very helpful to make reference to published critical views, or some from an Internet website, or even perhaps ideas expressed by a teacher, but only as a means towards establishing a personal judgement. Where other people’s views are quoted, of course, it is important to use quotation marks appropriately, and to acknowledge the source, preferably by a footnote and then in a brief bibliography after the essay. To do this makes it entirely clear where, and indeed why, other views are being discussed, which will add some authority to an argument, and at the same time remove any possible question as to the authenticity of a candidate’s comments.

Before starting any preparatory work, Centres are expected to submit the titles of their two texts to CIE, together with suggested tasks, so that these can be approved, and if appropriate some adjustment recommended to the exact wording of the tasks. Such adjustments are of course not obligatory, but the precise wording of a question can help, or occasionally hinder, a candidate when he/she begins to write an essay.

A major assessment criterion is the quality of the writing in each essay; there are two aspects to this, each essential for a high mark. First – and this was almost never any concern this session – candidates must write accurately and fluently; for a mark between 6 and 9 “*errors ... may be quite common ... however, there will be no sustained loss of communication.*” For a mark between 22 and 25 “*control of written English will be accomplished, with few errors*”; it is essential that this is clearly noted and taken into account by the Centre when assessing work, otherwise some marking may well be too generous – however good and incisive the ideas being presented, if they are not entirely clear in presentation and argument they cannot be given the very highest mark.

Annotation has been touched on, and here Centres vary a great deal; some write almost nothing at all on essays, and even nothing on cover sheets, while others write voluminously throughout. There is no “perfect” way to approach this, but it is particularly unhelpful to the Moderator if he or she cannot see how and why a mark has been reached, and a completely untouched essay may give rise to a suspicion that this could be a re-written copy of an already marked draft (to be fair, such untouched essays were almost entirely absent this session). It is especially helpful, too, if annotation can be related to the wording and requirements of the Marking Criteria; more general and unfocused comments, however, justified, are not always so useful in the moderation process. Basing an assessment upon the requirements of the Marking Criteria is also more likely than not to help candidates in their writing, and teachers in their marking; it is certainly worth keeping these Criteria in mind, or literally on the desk, when teaching and when making judgements about the quality of candidates’ work.

A word must – like last year – be made about the word limit. The Syllabus is quite clear on this, saying that folders should contain “a minimum of 2000 and a maximum of 3000 words”, but a disappointingly large number of Centres allowed candidates to exceed this, often by quite a substantial number of words. To do this is clearly unfair; it is a breach of the regulations as printed in the Syllabus booklet (page 10), and perhaps more importantly it means that not all candidates are being measured against the same criteria. Folders that are over the word limit should not be submitted; if they are, then they will be returned to the Centre for re-marking up to the 3000 word point.

A few concerns, therefore, but as said at the outset this was another very pleasing session for the great majority of Centres and their candidates, most of whom demonstrate a real understanding of the values and strengths of good coursework.

Some texts and tasks successfully used by candidates:

PROSE

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| <i>Dracula</i> | Consider some of the ways in which Stoker explores commonly accepted views of Victorian society in the novel. |
| <i>Brave New World</i> | How, and how far, does Huxley succeed in making the relationship between Bernard, John and Lenina credible?
Discuss the significance of John the Savage in the novel. |
| <i>The Great Gatsby</i> | Explore how the failure of the American Dream is conveyed through Fitzgerald’s characterisation and imagery in the novel.
How does Fitzgerald portray women in the novel? |

DRAMA

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| <i>The Crucible</i> | With reference to two or three key episodes, discuss how Miller creates and sustains tension in the play.
Does Miller portray John Proctor as a hero or as a fool? |
| <i>Othello</i> | How does Shakespeare dramatise the effects of jealousy and deception in the play? |
| <i>Educating Rita</i> | Explore some of the ways in which Russell presents views of education in the play. |
| <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> | Explore how Williams presents confinement and escape in the play. |
| <i>Master Harold and the boys</i> | Explore the metaphor of dancing in the play
Discuss Fugard’s use of the kite in the play |

POETRY

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| <i>Poems of Christina Rossetti</i> | With close reference to three or four poems, discuss Rossetti’s presentation of the themes of exclusion and rejection. |
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Poems of Sylvia Plath

“Because of the focus in Plath's poetry on death and despair, her celebration of life is often overlooked.” Consider this comment, with close reference to three or four poems.

Focusing upon at least four poems, discuss Plath's use of colour.

Explore some of the ways in which Plath uses nature in her poetry.

Poems of Philip Larkin

Discuss Larkin's treatment of love in this collection.

Larkin's poetry is often criticised for being too pessimistic; is it, in your view?