

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/03  
Poetry and Prose

## General comments

Examiners saw a full range of responses to the questions on the examination paper this session. At the upper end of the mark range there were answers which were polished and assured, giving perceptive expression to complex ideas and considering effects of writing. It was a pleasure for Examiners to see many answers which included vigorous, informed, personal responses displaying confidence and thoughtful understanding. It was also evident, though, that candidates with more modest achievement had actively engaged with texts and questions and in many cases an enthusiasm for the texts the candidates had been studying was apparent in their writing. In a few cases, textual knowledge was sketchy and responses restricted to narrative paraphrase.

Candidates tend to rely on summary most frequently when writing about prose texts, where reference to the plot is often an important part of the answer. The more confident candidates avoid paraphrase by selecting particular episodes for discussion very securely, making connections between different episodes and showing how they fit within the writer's narrative structure. One key piece of advice is for candidates to develop the habit of discussing the author, and the author's presentation of character or event, rather than characters or events themselves.

There was much less undirected biography and context in answers this session, which has in the past hampered a number of poetry responses in particular. Such material has its place, when used to develop points of the candidate's argument or understanding, as it was in many Wordsworth answers. Used in this way, an awareness of background material can show a mature awareness of the writer in context.

It is worth, too, voicing a reminder about the need to 'comment closely' in answers to the passage-based questions. Candidates who use the passage to focus on choices of structure, vocabulary, imagery, punctuation and other literary techniques and their effects do well. Clearly in this type of question, with the set passage on the question paper, paraphrase or summary has no value at all.

One disturbing feature was the number of candidates who quoted poetry with no indications of the written lines, as if it was prose. Such treatment of poetry was dominant, but demonstrates a fundamental missed appreciation of the ways in which poetry is structured and works.

## Comments on specific questions

1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

(a) Take-up for this first session for Sujata Bhatt's poetry was comparatively small, but the questions produced some interesting and successful answers. There were, though, very few answers to this question. Poems such as '3 November 1984', 'Walking Across the Brooklyn Bridge, July 1990', 'Wine from Bordeaux' and 'Skinnydipping in History' were used to show how Bhatt considers violence and political upheaval in her poems.

(b) Most candidates writing on Bhatt opted for the question on 'The Peacock' and many were able to make connections with other poems about childhood or animals in the collection. Candidates noted the free variation in line length and position as characteristic of Bhatt's poetry, while the most successful also commented on the effects of that freedom in the reading of this particular poem, sometimes comparing those effects with those of other poems. Candidates appreciated the rich language in the description of the peacock, its call, colour and movement and many wrote successfully on the moment of childhood 'magic' recreated in the poem. Some candidates wrote in an interesting way about how the poem links to Bhatt's ideas about the nature of imagination and the craft of poetry.

## 2. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) 'Aspects of human life' offered candidates a very wide choice, which led to a range of answers covering a number of different poems. Aspects considered included death, stress, illness, marriage, pride, sense of identity, to name a few, and poems chosen ranged as widely as 'The Cockroach', 'Modern Love', 'On Finding a Small Fly...', 'Ozymandias', 'The Man with Night Sweats', 'Summer Farm' and 'A Consumer's Report' itself. In a few cases, candidates restricted themselves to a summary of the content of their appropriate poems, but there were many impressive answers which were based on contrasting or complementary poems, allowing candidates to develop a clear thesis in their essay. Those candidates who were able to support their argument with quotations and careful analysis were very successful.
- (b) 'The Planners' was an enormously popular choice and produced some vigorous and individual answers. Some candidates accepted the poem as fulsome praise of architects and planners and their triumph over nature and time, stamping their mark indefatigably on the landscape. In others' view, the poem begins this way, but that view gradually disintegrates as Cheng's irony becomes more evident. Most candidates were alert to the ironic tone from the opening blunt sentences, confirmed by the final lines of the first stanza. Some sophisticated answers demonstrated awareness of further ironies and ambiguities, acknowledging that mathematics does indeed have 'grace' and that there is audacious beauty in the engineering which makes a bridge 'hang'. The extended dental metaphor does imply superficiality and cosmetic surgery with 'gleaming gold' on the one hand, but also reminds the reader of a dentist's role in fighting decay and disease. In these answers, candidates suggested that the ambiguities are finally resolved with the paradox of 'history is new again' and the destruction of the 'fossils of the last century'. The final stanza caused some problems, with many candidates ignoring it altogether. Some noted the past tense of the verb 'would', others that Cheng has not written a conventional poem in terms of form, structure or rhyme, but in that way has expressed his anger all the more powerfully – his art lacks the 'grace' and 'dexterity' expected of poetry and is in that way another challenge to the planners.

## 3. William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Many candidates demonstrated knowledge of Wordsworth's theories and poetry, some making reference to *The Lyrical Ballads* and its *Preface* and were familiar with the idea of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. 'Nutting', 'The Solitary Reaper', 'Tintern Abbey', and 'Intimations of Immortality' were among poems chosen and generally commented on suitably. The strongest answers showed a strong awareness of the treatment and role of emotional memory in the poetry, providing the poet with 'life and food/ For future years'. Less confident candidates restricted themselves to memories described in the poems. While there were many detailed answers, some drifted into speculation, paraphrase or narrative.
- (b) Most candidates had a clear understanding of 'Lines Written in Early Spring', though the comments were often rather broad and sometimes restricted to Wordsworth as a 'nature poet', for example. Given that the question asked candidates to 'comment closely', surprisingly few candidates wrote in detail about form and language. Very few noted the shorter last line of each quatrain, with many describing the rhythm of the poem inaccurately as iambic pentameter. On the other hand some candidates noted such details as the enjambment and sentence structure which mirrors the trailing periwinkle in stanza 3, the energetic verbs 'hopped and played', the determination apparent in "And I must think, do all I can" and the glum repetition of 'What man has made of man.' Some very successful answers noted that it was subtle details such as these which lifted otherwise simple diction – the 'language really used by men' – to an effective poem. The conflict between humankind and the natural world was frequently discussed, and the Romantic view that humanity was diminished by this separation.

## 4. Achebe: *Anthills of the Savannah*

- (a) *Anthills* was an enormously popular text, and this a very popular question. The most successful answers combined excellent organisation of information with high level discussion. Most candidates were well informed on the essential moments for women in the novel and chose to look at a number of female characters, rather than focusing almost exclusively on Beatrice. Frequently answers threw into opposition two views of women: the traditional one of women oppressed, abused, marginalised and exploited in a patriarchal society, and modern woman who is educated, strong, articulate, and spirited, characterised by Beatrice. Many candidates made very well chosen

references to the novel, such as the novel's title, the Idemili myth, Beatrice's African name ('a woman is also something'), Ikem's sexual relationship with Elewa, Beatrice's role at Sam's party and the final naming ceremony. The most successful answers looked at all the female characters, and while most saw Achebe arguing for a greater role for women, some thoughtful candidates suggested that women were still portrayed as only able to get involved after the men had failed.

- (b) This was another popular question and the clearest discriminator was whether candidates had answered the question, which required them to examine the *presentation* of the information in the Special Announcement. Many candidates wrote about Sam's brutal regime, about political dissidence and about what really happened to Ikem, but did not focus at all on 'the presentation of information'. More successful answers examined the language of propaganda and saw the emotive impact of vocabulary such as 'unpatriotic', 'dastardly', 'master-minded', 'foreign collaborators' etc. Such answers often related the announcement to contemporary political 'spin' and demonstrated its separation from the truth by careful reference to the novel's portrayal and the reader's understanding of the events it purports to describe. These contextual references led candidates back to the announcement's euphemisms, such as 'scuffle' and 'fatally wounded'.

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

- (a) At the lower end of the mark range, this question attracted some paraphrase and character summary, but at the higher end, it produced some of the best answers Examiners saw during the session. Some responded to Eliot's hint that Maggie is in fact a tragic figure and traced the novelist's display of both nobility and error at different stages of Maggie's development. Such answers demonstrated that Eliot portrays a progression from childish errors of thoughtlessness, such as the death of Tom's rabbits, through errors based on concern for fellow human beings, like her relationship with Philip Wakem, to her greatest error borne of temptation – her river journey with Stephen. A number of candidates clearly identified with Maggie in her fight for regard in a patriarchal, repressive society and many sympathised with Eliot's portrayal of her essential dignity in the face of rejection and reproof. Some of the most successful answers showed how these aspects are brought together in the tragic ending of the novel, though curiously many candidates ignored the final flood and the deaths of Maggie and Tom altogether.
- (b) The passage gave opportunities to most candidates who attempted it to make sensible comments about Tom's determination, pride, preparedness to work and respect for his uncle, and Uncle Deane himself, who is portrayed as avuncular and controlled, giving sound advice from his perspective as a successful good businessman. The most successful answers supported these observations with a close focus on the detail of the passage, such as the opening interruption when 'Mr Deane put up his hand', and the dialogue, noting Tom's educated correct speech and Deane's more casual enunciation. Candidates with the sharpest understanding of the question, who directly considered the impact on the reader, wrote the most successful answers, blending a close examination of the details of the writing with a personal response. A number were able clearly to express why they were led to a sympathetic view of Tom struggling with his pride, and while some saw Deane as a wise and careful advisor, others viewed him as pompous and proud, undermined by Eliot's descriptions of his expanding waistcoat and his gold chain, as well as his unconsciously comic dialogue, which places the heads of other businessmen under the table with his legs.

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

- (a) Mansfield was again a popular choice and many candidates attempted this question, often interpreting 'disappointment' in individual ways. Some suggested that, for the characters at least, the conclusions were often worse than 'disappointing' – Bertha Young, the Little Governess, for example – and several pointed out that it is invariably women who find themselves in these 'disappointing' situations – and often because they got themselves there. Frau Brechenmacher was often cited as a case in point, as the story's end shows her accepting her lot, and even seems to be training up the next generation to suffer as she has done – 'girls have a lot to learn'. The argument that Mansfield presents disappointment for women in her stories as a method of social critique was popular, and in some cases was argued successfully. Candidates used a wide range of stories, including the two referred to above, *Her First Ball*, *The Garden Party*, *The Woman at the Store* and *Prelude*. Some candidates looked at character epiphanies, some of which are not fully grasped, or are forgotten, leading to disappointment for the reader, while more limiting interpretations included sad or inconclusive endings.

- (b)** Some of the answers to this question were hampered by a lack of awareness of the context from which the passage is taken. Without knowledge of the wartime setting, it is easy to misinterpret the episode, as a number of candidates did, apparently oblivious to the rest of *An Indiscreet Journey*. More informed candidates, who also looked at the details of the passage, picked up on, for example, the first person narration, the use of French, the verbs of motion, the short sharp sentences, the inverted commas round 'our good friend, Madame Grinçon', the use of 'presumably' and 'I supposed' (ll. 42-43) as indicators of 'uncertainty and excitement' and of the context of the passage.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/04

Drama

## General comments

The candidates who did well were able to offer closely argued responses, backed up with detailed reference to the texts, which showed genuine personal insight into how these texts work dramatically. Elsewhere, candidates were almost all able to give some sense of having read the texts with some element of understanding, though sometimes restricted to the most obvious aspects of plot or character. What came across in many scripts was how much the candidates had enjoyed their study. Some Centres could perhaps do more to remind the candidates that they are going to be asked about these texts as dramas, so should refer to the audience, not the reader.

Common mistakes included a reluctance to deal with the precise terms of the question. Thus, though knowledge was sound, understanding was limited. Some candidates plainly felt that they should write as much as they could in the hope that some of it would prove to be relevant. Often the very best answers are relatively brief because candidates take time to work out what is really to the point and then they select restricted but judicious examples to back up the case. There were also candidates who felt that lengthy biographical detail about the author or historical background was necessary: it is not and in general it should be avoided.

As far as (b) questions are concerned, more could still be done by many candidates to talk about language choice, tone and dramatic devices. All too often, candidates work through assertion and a general feeling of what is going on, rather than being able to locate precisely the source of their insights. At times, too, candidates need to remember that although questions encourage them to look outside the passage presented and make links with the play as a whole, detailed reference to the passage itself must be the central focus of any good answer.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1: Athol Fugard *The Township Plays***

- (a) There were many clear, straightforward responses to this question. Characters and incidents were picked out in order to discuss the more obvious aspects of how people's hopes and dreams were dashed by the apartheid regime. The best candidates were able to range widely across the plays, backing up their ideas with close reference to particular moments.
- (b) Most candidates were able to draw comparisons between the conditions under apartheid and Antigone's situation. Some candidates were also able to see how the use of *Antigone* as metaphor is developed in the play. Few, however, dealt acutely with the dramatic action of the scene, though there were occasional interesting and complex answers that started to deal with the role of theatre in a situation of oppression.

### **Question 2: William Shakespeare *Twelfth Night***

- (a) There were many fine responses on this question, with candidates warmly appreciative of how virtually all the characters in the play are fooling themselves in some way. Some candidates focused very closely on one or two characters (the Duke and Malvolio were popular choices) whilst others ranged more widely. It did not matter as long as there was also some attempt to see the individual instances of self-deception as part of the wider pattern and theme of the play. Unfortunately, a significant number of candidates made no distinction between deception and *self-deception* and this led to responses that showed good knowledge of the text but were not in fact answering the question set.

- (b) A number of candidates wrote general essays about the theme of love in the play, with only cursory reference to the Duke or to the detail of the passage. Candidates need to remember with (b) questions that the passage should be the central focus of the answer. Good candidates were able to talk about the elevated diction and the ridiculously self-dramatizing self-indulgence of the Duke before going on to see how this 'excess' suffuses the play as a whole. Some very good candidates also made points about the fact that this is the very beginning of the play so we are not quite sure how to react to what is going on: as an audience with no awareness of what happens subsequently, would our initial reaction in relation to the Duke be quite as simple as it is in hindsight?

### **Question 3: William Shakespeare *Julius Caesar***

- (a) Most candidates showed awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of Brutus and Antony, but many found it difficult to bring the two into focus together. Simple answers often did a character study of one, then of the other and then tried to bring it all together at the end. More sophisticated answers showed awareness of how Brutus's character weaknesses (loyalty, credulity, poor judgement, for example) all allow Antony to seize the advantage. Oddly enough, many were willing to condemn Brutus's speech at the funeral as completely ineffectual, ignoring the fact that until Antony starts to speak, the crowd is completely on his side. He is not a poor speaker, merely one who is up-staged.
- (b) Whilst most candidates were able to write about the general thrust of the scene and Brutus's state of mind at this point, few addressed the issue of language in any great detail. Some good answers were able to comment on the different view that we get of Brutus at this point in the play, distinguishing between Brutus the passionate idealist and Brutus the man of culture. There were many good discussions of the status of the ghost as a projection of Brutus's inner turmoil rather than as fact.

### **Question 4: Charlotte Keatley *My Mother Said I Never Should***

- (a) There were a few responses to this question. The candidate often saw clearly that the dual structure of the play is important to establishing the women's relationships over time whilst at the same time illuminating the cross-generational issues of a woman's role in society.
- (b) Better answers commented on the sharing of domestic tasks (in this case polishing the piano) and their significance with shared activity leading to emotional openness and intimacy across the generations. There were also able discussions of how memories are triggered and evoked.

### **Question 5: Arthur Miller *A View from the Bridge***

- (a) Better responses to this question took on board Catherine's final statement, the tag of the question: 'Eddie, I never meant to do nothing bad to you,' and were thus able to see that Catherine's behaviour (the 'Lolita' effect) was not entirely naïve or unintentional, even at the beginning of the play. Most saw that Catherine's relationship with Eddie has three or four distinct phases. A number of candidates saw the question as an opportunity to describe the relationship from Eddie's point of view, and this proved rather unhelpful in relation to the question as it tended to lead towards character study. Some candidates forgot about the word 'present' in the question and restricted themselves to giving an account of the relationship, not quite the same thing.
- (b) This was a popular choice and produced some good responses. Candidates were often able to make clear, astute comments about how this scene prefigures the eventual outcome of the play. There were often very close analyses of how the events of the scene, backed up by the stage directions, are set at odds with what the characters say. Most clearly saw how this scene is the moment of 'locking of antlers' for Eddie and Marco as each defends a highly Italian worldview of loyalty to the family.

### **Question 6: Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest***

- (a) The questions about triviality and seriousness provoked some interesting responses. Candidates were able to range widely, often focusing on one aspect of seriousness or triviality (marriage, class or manners, for example). There was usually good use of examples, ranging from quirks of plot and situation to wordplay to back up points, and this gave the answers a strong feeling of being rooted in an understanding of what is dramatic in the text, thus responding well to the question's

instruction to deal with how Wilde brings his view 'to life.' Less good candidates struggled and in some cases simply resorted to telling the story of what happens.

- (b)** The majority of candidates chose this question on Wilde. Weaker responses concentrated on describing the humour, whilst stronger candidates considered 'how' the humour is created through word and gesture, barbed comment and incivility beneath the guise of good manners. Some commented well on the presence of Merriman, a member of the lower orders, as a frame for the scene.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/05

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

## General comments

The overall standard this session was once again satisfactory with most candidates achieving a sound performance. There were a pleasing number of candidates who were awarded full marks. Rubric infringements were encouragingly rare this session but nonetheless disappointing for the very few candidates affected. Previous PE reports have mentioned candidates who time their exam poorly and leave insufficient time for the proper completion of the second essay. This is always a damaging mistake and even though sometimes it was a case of getting carried away with enthusiasm for the first essay it severely restricts the candidate's result. 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.

The standard of the candidates' written English expression was generally good. Some candidates, of course, do have difficulties with expressing themselves and often the weaker marks are a result of this. This is particularly noticeable when candidates less confident in English tackle specific texts, Chaucer, for example. Once again Centres are asked to remind candidates to indicate which question and option they are answering and where appropriate repeat these details on the front of their answer booklet. Such courtesies do assist the examination process.

There are some specific points arising from this session. The report on the November 2007 session referred to unbalanced scripts where it seems that one text is much better understood and in some cases remembered even, than the other text. This was once again evident in this session, with as many as fifteen marks more awarded to the answer on the stronger text. In some cases enthusiasm for the favourite text is the culprit, but sometimes candidates are simply not as well prepared to tackle the second text. Centres are reminded that the two answers are of equal weight in the mark scheme and that excellent knowledge of one text is not enough for candidates to achieve a good mark overall.

It is disappointing to report a return in some Centres to candidates opening essays with a page of biography about the author(s). This does not help the candidate at all and indeed may distract from the important task of carefully considering the terms of the question, selecting relevant material and shaping it into a structured response. Many candidates would improve the overall result by taking a few minutes to consider the precise words of the question and deciding how they are going to address the issue raised. Questions may ask candidates for an opinion or a view on a particular interpretation of an aspect of the text.

It is essential that candidates carefully consider their views or opinions before starting their response, rather than, as is too often the case, simply agreeing with the proposition. The option (a) task on *King Lear* suggested the play was 'unrelieved violence' for example. Candidates were free to agree or disagree with this point but very many simply accepted the assertion and then listed the violent events that occur. Many of these essays would have been much improved by a more considered and balanced response, drawn from a few moments of careful planning before starting the essay.

Candidates also need reminding of the importance of reading the question very carefully. In most cases, as stated in the report for November 2007, the question gives a suggested or even mandatory direction to the response. Candidates do need to consider closely the precise wording of the question and decide what the nature of the task is. This will in turn give them a clear direction to their response and enable them to select appropriate evidence and textual support for the arguments or opinions offered in the essay. Too often candidates seem to seize on the general drift of the question and launch into their response without adequate forethought or taking the time to plan their response in sufficient detail. Without a few moments of careful reflection there is grave danger of at worst not answering the question and at best lapsing into generalisations and repetition. It is a rare script that would not be improved by such an approach.



## Comments on specific questions

### Section A

#### Question 1

##### *King Lear*

- (a) The typical approach to this task has already been highlighted. Notwithstanding the potential weakness of the approach the question was well answered with candidates able to provide evidence of verbal and physical violence in abundance. Weaker answers tended to list the examples but those who saw a movement from verbal to physical violence, or were able to use evidence to distinguish how characters are presented or even to explore why the dramatist had chosen to present in his drama in such terms did better. There were some who offered a rounded, more balanced reading of the play, noting the influence of Albany, Edgar and Cordelia, though surprisingly few took advantage of the evidence from the passage as a balance to the unrelenting wave of violence seen elsewhere.
- (b) This was very popular and well answered by the majority of candidates. Shakespeare's dramatic construction of the reconciliation between Lear and Cordelia was explored in depth and detail by nearly all candidates. There was some excellent analysis of the language and the dramatic tension by perceptive candidates, varying from those who saw no real change in the self-obsessed Lear and laconic Cordelia, to those who thought all they had individually suffered had changed them both for the better. Many candidates chose to ignore Kent and the doctor, though the fact this is once again a public meeting was commented on by more alert interpretations. Lear was better analysed than Cordelia in general, with only a very few remembering that her last words with her father were in the opening scene's casting off and she might well be concerned as to the nature of her reception from her unpredictable father and king.

#### Question 2

##### *Measure for Measure*

- (a) This was a popular choice and often well handled, though the key performance discriminator was the phrase 'Shakespeare's use of' in the question. Most candidates had many examples of actual disguise (the Duke) and deceptions (the bed trick and the head trick) and some had a grasp of a more metaphorical deception in the seemingly virtuous Angelo. Better candidates were able to focus on the 'use of' aspect by exploring how Shakespeare in using these deceptions and disguises manipulates our response to character. Isabella's easy compliance with 'using' Marianna for example was pointed out to be an important moment in the audience's assessment of Isabella in the play as a whole. Some candidates thought it was these very disguises and deceptions which were at the root of the 'problem' of the play. The audience simply did not in the end know who to trust – only Lucio in fact, according to some candidates, was always himself – a self-serving liar! All candidates found something relevant to say and there were very few mistaken identities, suggesting a pleasing and thorough knowledge of the text.
- (b) Some of the foregoing material turned up quite legitimately in answers to the (b) option, which were also of a generally good standard. Most answers concentrated on the fitness of the punishments in considering if the ending was satisfying or not. Understandably the Duke came in for a good deal of criticism, some seeing his proposal to Isabella as 'an affront to common decency' as one outraged candidate put it, while others were more offended by his treatment of Lucio and Angelo. Those who concentrated on the language often did well, noticing that 'marrying a punk' was perhaps not a fit punishment for slandering a prince. Many inevitably wondered about Isabella's answer to the Duke's proposal, but more perceptive responses also imagined how Claudio would respond to her in view of the harsh words at their previous meeting and some saw no surprise in her not answering the Duke given the shock of seeing her 'dead' brother.

## Section B

### Question 3

#### *Persuasion*

- (a) This was a popular choice and many candidates were able to identify numerous examples of where the Navy or its officers were important in the text. Those who focused on the words of the task and in particular tried to answer the 'uses and effects of Austen's presentation of' element of the task did rather better. Some candidates rather oddly ignored the Crofts but there was ample material in the Harvilles, Benwicks and of course Wentworth episodes to work with. Perceptive answers saw how Austen set the world of the Eliots, with all its formality and coldness, against the vitality and warmth of the naval comrades, though careful responses also remarked that the Musgroves were equally as warm as any naval men were, particularly with regard to Anne herself. Candidates saw a key contrast in Sir Walter and Admiral Croft though others focused more on William Walter and Wentworth. Overall this was well done by candidates who had evidently enjoyed working on the text immensely.
- (b) There were plenty of answers to this question and, as with (a), the overall standard was pleasingly high. Most saw the passage as a detailed assassination of Sir Walter and Elizabeth through the kindly but perceptive eyes of Anne. Those who identified the various shifts in narrative focus – that it is Anne who appears to condemn Mrs Clay for example – had a fund of material to work with. More limited answers concentrated on the characters, particularly Sir Walter, but often had informed opinions to offer. A surprising number of answers ignored the reference to William Walter and even fewer remembered Anne's encounter with him. Those that did of course were able to explore how Austen, having just before this passage, brought Wentworth and Anne closer together, was about to 'muddy the waters of her romantic tale with a villainous rival'. There was once again so much material here that discrimination of answers was generally based on the subtlety and lucidity with which the narrative structures of the passage were considered and the perception with which Austen's language and style were explored.

### Question 4

#### *The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) This was not at all popular and generally not well done with a number of answers simply retelling the tale. Those that did focus tended to concentrate on Pertelote, though some answers did consider in detail how the other hens, in serving only the cock's sexual needs, made Pertelote a more rounded character. One or two answers did explore the dialogue on dreams in detail but these were sadly rare.
- (b) This was slightly more popular and there were good answers which did explore the concerns revealed in the fox's words and the cock's reactions. Few candidates were able to 'pay close attention to the language' however but those that did often did very well.

### Question 5

#### *David Copperfield*

- (a) Candidates seemed to find this text highly congenial and there were some very good answers to both options, though (a) was much less popular. Weaker answers drifted into retelling the story in *their* words, unfortunately, but some answers did explore the narrative structures of the novel to good effect. Most thought the effect was positive; the reader was 'forced to side with Dickens' rather irritating hero' as one candidate put it. Others were able to identify the comic and serious effects of the first person approach. However one or two were side-tracked into seeing David as Dickens himself and while there is some merit in this approach to see the book as only a slightly obscured autobiography is not on balance a helpful approach.
- (b) There were some very good answers on this passage, exploring sensitively how Aunt Betsey and her relationship with David, as well as her importance in his life, are so gently and engagingly revealed here. The combination of the comic and serious, as well as the mundane and the eccentric, were seen as typical Dickens by many good answers. Some noticed that here again character is revealed by eating whilst others saw Betsey's robust dismissal of Emily as an

important counterweight to the sentimentalism of the later searches of Peggotty for his missing girl. More limited answers were tempted into retelling all of Aunt Betsey's involvement in David's life so far, in some cases in great and accurate detail. More selective, though still narrative based answers, had plenty of material here to link to their opinion of her.

### Question 6

*The Mayor of Casterbridge*

- (a) This was very popular and candidates were able to show their detailed knowledge of the text in considering who might rival Henchard. Most accepted that he was the hero but undeniably flawed. Exploring quite where his heroic qualities lay however was the key element of the task and those who could see how Hardy uses Henchard in constructing the novel and presenting views on relationships and fate, for example, often did very well. Candidates had evidently enjoyed this text and showed very detailed and thorough knowledge of the text. Those who could shape that knowledge to the task did well, but those who drifted into retelling the story of Henchard's life often entered into a maze they never got out of.
- (b) This was also a popular choice and often well handled. The very many who knew the text sufficiently well to remember why Lucetta was hiding and why Farfrae was in his 'Sunday best' clothes had a great deal of material to explore. Perceptive answers were alive to the humour of the moment but also to the hints of serious consequences (there was danger to Farfrae after all). Some candidates noted the shifts in narrative voice and the careful way Hardy orchestrates the reader's response so that Lucetta's and Farfrae's internal reactions are not only clear but related to the other key if absent personnel, Elizabeth and Henchard. More limited answers concentrated on the two characters in the passage and gave in some cases too much background material. Nearly every answer though did find relevant points to make.

### Question 7

Andrew Marvell *Selected Poems*

- (a) and (b) This was not a popular text or question. This text more than any other seems to engender either very good or very weak responses. There were some very good answers to both options this time with candidates showing a detailed and informed knowledge of - in option (a) answers - the dialogue poems and - in (b) - the poem offered for critical appreciation. Weaker candidates, however, seemed to struggle to come to terms with the meaning and in (b) answers understanding at even a basic level was lacking on occasion. This text more than any other demands a good understanding of poetic technique and a fluency of expression. As this session once again demonstrated for those who are able to spend sufficient time in mastering the basics, a very good level of performance is possible.

### Question 8

*Gulliver's Travels*

- (a) This was once again a popular choice and once again seemed, perversely, sometimes to have been chosen by Centres whose candidates were least able to cope with its peculiar demands. There were also some very well prepared candidates who had an excellent knowledge of the detail of the text and were able to shape this into a relevant and cogent argument on Swift's treatment of religion and politics. Balanced answers saw the text as so much more than just a satire on these issues. However weaker answers tended to recount the narrative without much regard to the requirements of the task.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to skim over the passage to focus on issues they were more familiar with. However those who focused on the details Swift presents and were up to the task of considering the narrator and how Swift might be using him, often did well. Sadly few were able to explore the humour here or to see this as part of Swift's wider concerns as to how humans waste their opportunities in this as in every other field of endeavour.

## Question 9

Tennyson *Selected Poems*

This text was more popular in this session, though still a minority choice. Few candidates tackled option (a) but those that did had a rich variety of material to explore and were able to tease out a view of Tennyson's poetry and concerns from the way he used natural imagery with some confidence. Those candidates who were comfortable in the text did very well, moving between poems with dexterity and linking arguments and textual support with a deft linking quotation. Option (b) was more popular and nearly all candidates were sympathetic to Godiva's situation and her courage. Few were able to explore the tone successfully but most had some relevant points to make about the use of diction and imagery.

## Question 10

*The Duchess of Malfi*

- (a) This was a popular choice with many answers focussing, in some cases unhelpfully, on Ferdinand's sexual obsessions about his sister. Most candidates had a good knowledge of the text and were able to explore it in some detail, but those who responded to 'Webster's presentation' and selected, then shaped, their material accordingly did very well. More limited answers tended to see the Duchess through her relationship with Antonio only, without paying enough attention to how she handles her brothers and what the effect of that is.
- (b) This was also popular and generally better handled than (a), with some excellent answers exploring in detail how Webster's language, choice of imagery and masterful selection of details informs the audience's response to his Duchess. Some noted how the dignity and grace she displays here leads ultimately to the death of her brothers (and Bosola) in view of the effect it has on him. Others explored the personal details, the care for the children, her almost humorous dismissal of other means of death and above all her humility in falling to her knees as the keys to unlock the mystery of the Duchess. Overall there were very few seriously weak responses and very many which achieved the highest bands.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/06  
Twentieth Century Texts

## General comments

The overall difficulty of the paper seemed comparable with previous years. The questions were accessible and prompted a full range of responses. There were few rubric errors, though sometimes candidates spent too long on their first answer and did not leave enough time to develop their second answer fully enough. Examiners are still concerned that all too often candidates opting for (b) questions, tend not to pay close enough attention to the passage itself and the way the writers achieve their purposes and effects. It was clear that in those Centres where levels of achievement were high, candidates had been encouraged to demonstrate a personal understanding of a variety of issues based on a close reading of the texts and an appreciation of the effects of the writing. The quality of some of the insights and the ability to sustain and structure detailed analysis was in some cases, well above "A" level. There were many intelligent, well prepared candidates in the middle bands who wrote too generally with not enough detailed references to support their points and develop their arguments. Encouragingly, there were fewer candidates who seemed to be deploying pre-prepared general background material on cultural contexts and genre and very few who showed little relevant knowledge, weak preparation or poor control of argument and expression. Candidates should be warned that however desperate they are for a second question, it is never a good strategy to choose the (b) option of a poetry text which has not been studied.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

#### **MARGARET ATWOOD: *Cat's Eye***

There was very promising take up of this new text; a number of Centres tackled it well. Candidates came armed with a good understanding of the psychology and an obvious enjoyment and appreciation of the novel, shown in the confidence with which they ranged around the text and selected an impressive number of detailed references to illustrate their points. Both questions proved equally popular though candidates tended to perform better on **Question (a)**.

- (a) The quotation in a question is important and candidates should be encouraged to do more than just take it as a signpost to the general question that follows. Good candidates were able to place the quotation and to link it with the rest of the opening chapter and to Elaine's brother's ideas. The best candidates explored the quotation and its imagery, using it as a starting point to discuss the chronology of the novel and the effects of the parallel narratives to explore the way memories are presented and to evaluate the extent to which Elaine was able to resolve her inner conflicts. Some answers dealt appropriately with the determining effect of Elaine's younger years, but without quite focusing on the nature of memory highlighted in the question. Weaker answers gave summaries of Elaine's childhood.
- (b) The "world of the artist" was a good notion to explore and there were some sensitive discussions about the individualistic way that Elaine saw and commented on her own life. Many explored the role of the artist as satirical commentator, as well as relating the pictures mentioned in the extract to Elaine's childhood experiences. The best candidates also discussed the effects of the writing: the way the choice of language and sentence structure generate the defensive tone in the opening of the passage and the drama at the end; the effect of the present tense, the specificity of the descriptive details and the titles of the paintings. More modest candidates seized on specific details in the passage like Elaine's mention of her mother or the mystery of why Elaine hated Mrs Smeath and chose to explain Elaine's relationship with both. A common error was the confusion of the group show described in the passage with Elaine's big retrospective exhibition at Sub Versions.

## Question 2

### SAMUEL BECKETT: *Endgame*

This was a popular text producing a range of well prepared answers, some of which conveyed some feeling for the dramatic effects in the play, though many continue to find the concept of “absurdity” rather challenging. Again candidates tended to perform better on the (a) question, finding it more difficult to sustain the focus on the passage.

- (a) Many candidates showed a secure knowledge of the text and were able to select specific references and quotations to explore the contributions to the theme of the claustrophobic and depressing set; the characters’ physical deterioration; the exhausted supplies; reminiscence with images of clarity and growth from the past heightening the despair in the present; Hamm’s sadism; the lack of meaningful emotional contact; and the use of routines and ritual in a futile attempt to counter despair through order and control. In covering these ideas, the better candidates commented on the cumulative effect of the recurring patterns of imagery and circularity in the interactions. It is difficult for candidates to appreciate the wit and edgy humour of the play but a few were able to consider their effect as part of the treatment of the theme. The best pointed out that the experience of despair can extend to the audience who give up hope of finding progression, resolution or stable meaning in the play. Weaker candidates offered more generalised philosophical comments on the social, political and economic context or focused rather narrowly on the chess motif.
- (b) This was a particularly good passage for stimulating discussion of the self-reflexive qualities of the action though candidates tended to home in first on the character of Hamm and on his relationships with other characters. The majority of the candidates used the passage as a stepping stone to prepared thematic material on such issues as the “generational conflict”, or “fear of regeneration” or “the cyclical nature of experience”. Weaker candidates had little to say about Hamm’s monologue. Better candidates discussed the monologue as a device for self-assertion and resisting “the end”; as a compendium of fantasies, regrets and resentments; the child in the story having some connection with – or being Clov. The best candidates looked at the way the monologue was set up by the previous interactions with Clov and Nagg, tracking the tone and dramatic effect generated by the use of repetition, the shock of Nagg’s emergence; the surprise of the humour as well as the significance of the questions “Do you believe in the life to come?” and “Why did you engender me?”. In exploring the monologue they commented on the effect of Hamm’s tendency to evaluate his own performance, and were prepared to focus on specific details like the use of the various scientific instruments coupled with the contradictory descriptions of the weather, or choice of language and sentence structure. A few were also able to make useful links to Hamm’s other monologues.

## Question 3

### CARYLL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

A popular text, which encourages personal engagement with the issues though candidates are not always confident about the structure and sometimes appear not to be aware of the effect this has on audience response. Again candidates tended to perform better on option (a).

- (a) This was a stimulating question which provoked detailed appraisals of the historical characters and of Marlene’s career. Better responses often focused on the choices faced by the characters and on the loss and sacrifice caused by decisions to pursue success, both for the individual - a denial of femininity, a loss of maternity – and for those who were used and neglected. The best answers looked critically at the pursuit of success through a consideration of the dramatic methods and effects. Candidates often explored parallels between the characters and showed a response to the weary pathos of the final scene and the aggressive feminism of the agency scenes. The particular kind of success that Marlene embraces was described as a form of capitalist feminism at odds in the play with the collective female action led by Dull Grete and with Joyce’s socialist views. More modest candidates presented a succession of character studies, often showing more familiarity with the dinner party than subsequent parts of the play. Weaker candidates failed to see the point of the question and merely described instances of success in the play or embarked on a generalised discussion about the position of women in the work place.

- (b) There was much sound writing on Marlene's reaction to Angie's arrival and many candidates explored the passage in quite a detailed way, tracking her surprise, unease, lack of rapport with the child; her treatment of Angie as an interviewee, with a stream of questions; her relief as the conversation shifts to her own promotion. Those who looked closely at the dialogue – the adjacency pairs, choice of words and syntax were able to suggest how in performance, Angie's "It's me. I've come...I was looking for you" could express a profound emotional need which is either quite lost on Marlene or apparent enough to prompt desperate defensiveness in some of her responses: "That's very nice of you to think of paying your aunty a visit....Unfortunately you've picked a day...I have not got a spare bed". However, in responses with limited evidence of textual knowledge, the aunt-niece relationship was sometimes taken at face value. Weaker candidates also tended to mistake the tenor of the meeting, seeing Marlene as a caring aunt/mother. Although wider reference was not stipulated in the question, it was very useful in evaluating the presentation of the relationship and enabled competent candidates to explore the use of dramatic irony in the passage.

#### Question 4

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

It was encouraging to see Centres taking up this new option. Candidates have been provided with an impressive coverage of cultural contexts and general poetic techniques and some of them showed exceptional ability to generate a coherent exploration of themes and methods by focusing on specific poetic details and effects. A common weakness was a limited reading of the poetry as a response to the First World War and a reliance on prepared summaries.

- (a) This was often chosen by good candidates. The degree to which they were successful depended on whether they could sustain the focus on the "descriptive qualities" and the best candidates were able to move confidently between the poems, exploring the methods and analysing the effect of very specific examples. Many were critically appreciative of the dramatic interplay of sensuous imagery, wit and tone and had intelligent things to say about form: the apparent fragmentation and structural devices. Modest candidates tended to give more or less detailed accounts of the poems and could have raised their level of achievement by exploiting their quotations more rigorously.
- (b) This question provoked a whole range of responses with some candidates demonstrating evidence of intensive study, their intelligent interpretation of the extract underpinned by an understanding of the poem as a whole, while others gave little sense of how the passage connects to the rest of *The Waste Land*. Good candidates exercised their skills of practical criticism, discussed the chains of imagery and the device of "persona" to track the shifts in tone within the passage as well as to provide useful and insightful under-reference. Modest candidates focused on a discussion of the social context – the dislocation of society after the First World War and the issue of memory without explicitly exploring the poetic techniques and effects. Some candidates could give a factual account of the allusions without imparting any understanding of what the poet might mean while others tended to grossly oversimplify. It will not do to assert that "Eliot includes bits from languages other than English just to confuse the readers who are then in the same state of confusion as the characters in the poetry". Some candidates showed no evidence of having previously studied the extract.

#### Question 5

##### **LES MURRAY: from *Selected Poems***

Examiners continue to be disappointed at the low take up of this text which offers stimulating, challenging and accessible poems to those candidates who study it.

- (a) Very few candidates chose this option. Few gave the impression of having intensively studied the poems as poetry. They tended to present prepared material on general concerns and summaries, lacking any confidence to apply what they knew of Murray's methods to the theme.
- (b) This question provoked a range of answers. A few were very mature explorations of the poem using the skills of practical criticism to draw out the poet's response to the experience, his appreciation of "the mysteries of the gum forest" and to show understanding of his feelings – particularly the last stanza. A few were able to show how the typical compression in the imagery and sentence structure, the shifts in perspective contributed to the "mystery." More modest

candidates tried to work systematically through the poem, teasing out the meaning and noting devices like the use of similes - but were reluctant to look in detail at the effects of particular examples. It was a rare candidate who considered the choice of lexis, the effect of the first person pronoun, the cumulative effect of the minor sentences and sensuous appeal of the imagery: "Foliage builds like a layering splash....the shoal life of parrots....the water smuggling creeks ,,,the pouring sound high up."

### Question 6

#### R.K. NARAYAN: *The Guide*

Both options proved equally popular and the questions achieved the intended differentiation. More sophisticated candidates perceived the issues raised by the questions, while modest candidates were able to respond in a more straightforward way. Most demonstrated a sound knowledge of the text even if they were not always able to select and use material in the most effective way.

- (a) The best candidates were able to use the narrative style to focus on the presentation, pointing out that while both characters were performers, Raju is the narrator of his early rise to fame and Rosie's career whereas the national fame he achieves during the fast is presented by a more obviously ironic and satirical third person narrator. They were able to develop points of comparison: while both use others to achieve their ends, their public lives are controlled by others – Rosie's by Raju and Raju's by Velan. They had the confidence and knowledge to move around the text comparing each character's experience and response to fame pointing out the irony that Raju cares least for fame when it is at its height. More modest candidates gave an account of how the characters achieved fame with some attempts to compare and contrast but a few did not understand "public lives" and just provided character sketches.
- (b) This was usually well-answered showing clear textual knowledge and understanding particularly of Velan's role in turning Raju into a swami and helping him to achieve dharma. The best candidates used this to inform a detailed analysis of the passage. They picked up on the passage's humour and pointed out the irony in Narayan's evocation of traditional customs and concerns, which Raju had spent so much of his life evading. Just like Velan's sister, Raju is in the process of losing his freedom to meet others' expectations; Velan increasingly dominates the conversation while no-one has previously made Raju afraid to use his voice, his greatest asset; "What is gone is gone" is a doctrine that will head off Raju's bid to escape by recounting his past. Many appreciated the anticipatory irony of "A vow of silence was indicated, but there was greater danger in silence." More modest candidates with a good knowledge of the text tended to neglect the passage and its literary qualities – or they asserted the humour but found it difficult to explain the ironic tone and comedy and presented a character study.

### Question 7

#### HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

*The Homecoming* was a popular choice and seems to be a text to which candidates can relate. Both questions prompted a lot of personal response but although many candidates obviously had access to material on genre, there was little acknowledgement of "absurdity" or its effect. Most candidates seemed to treat the play as social realism.

- (a) Most candidates worked through a catalogue of characters and could describe, to some extent, the ways in which the men in the play treat women in an exploitative and dehumanised fashion, and the way that Ruth gains power over them. The more developed responses offered explanations for the men's behaviour e.g. the lack of a stabilising female figure in the house, the need to dominate. The best candidates challenged the quotation in the question and traced how Ruth becomes complicit in the men's treatment of her, exploiting their need for mother, wife or whore. Better candidates referred to particular dramatic moments, using apt quotations and commenting on the impact of the language used. It was a rare candidate who was able to define quite what we experience when watching this play and could convey something of its edgy fascination – but those who did were well rewarded. More often personal response took the form of indignant condemnation of the characters and disgust at their behaviour, particularly at Ruth's abandonment of her family and Teddy's acquiescence.



- (b) The passage prompted some rigorous commentaries tracking the presentation of character and dramatic effects, noting how the structure of the dialogue conveys Teddy's uneasiness and Ruth's increasing dominance. Good candidates communicated a critical awareness of the way the lines generated tone, pace and atmosphere. While the question as worded did not require discussion of the play beyond the given passage, better candidates did range more widely, using selected under reference to develop exploration. For example, one candidate noted how the menace and violence of the previous scene subtly lingered over this one, while others could explain the irony of "They're my family. They're not ogres" and could see foreshadowing effects in the handing over of control with the key to the house or the significance of her walking the streets.

### Question 8

#### VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

This was again a popular choice of text with many candidates appreciating the effects of the extraordinary narration and sensitively aware of the ambivalence in the reader's view of the characters. Those candidates who persisted in seeing the novel as a satire on English society, its materialism and class-ridden nature, or who tried to relate everything to post-First World War conditions, tended to provide rather wooden, mechanical or fragmented responses to the questions.

- (a) The city of London needed to be considered in its physical presence in the novel, as well as a society to be criticised. Answers fully addressing the question had a sense of both time and place and discussed how Woolf establishes the mood and characteristics of post-war London, as a setting for public appearances and performances contrasting with the private hidden lives; a geographical embodiment of certain English attitudes and expectations; a densely-populated place where diverse lives are unexpectedly brought together in the street or park. Good candidates brought out the unifying symbols of the car with its blinds down, the park, the aeroplane advertisement, Big Ben as experienced by all the characters locked in their own worlds and preoccupations. Some candidates struggled to relate their prepared material to this question which led to rather disjointed answers offering brief miscellaneous recollections of references to London in the novel intercut with material on class, Peter's experience of India and attitudes to the medical profession.
- (b) More candidates chose the (b) option. Those who maintained a good balance between detailed commentary on the extract and wider references to the novel as a whole did well. The best candidates understood that they had to show how the literary style draws the reader into experiencing and judging the inner world of Peter Walsh as he moves through central London. They traced the techniques by which Woolf conveys Peter's thoughts – the rhythm and structure of the sentences; the ambivalence of his fascination with the marching boys, though some struggled with the epiphanic nature of the closing paragraph. Competent candidates used the passage to inform a character study of Peter and pursued a detailed examination of his role in Clarissa's life. Weaker candidates gave an account of Peter's relationship with Clarissa.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/07

Comment and Appreciation

## General comments

There was some good and interesting critical writing this summer; candidates generally seemed to find all three questions very accessible, and in the great majority of cases demonstrated an ability to go well beyond mere narrative or paraphrase, and to explore the passages or poems with critical insight and confidence. There were of course some answers which failed to do this, and which did simply rehearse the plot or the “story” of the poems, but these were relatively few. Encouragingly, too, there were relatively few answers which simply listed poetic and literary devices without relating them to the given writing; in most cases there was at least some attempt to explore not just *what* was said, but *how* it was, and what in particular made it effective and successful. The first question was by far the most widely attempted, but answers to the second and third were very evenly split, with perhaps a few more tackling the two poems than the second piece of prose.

## Comments on each question

### Question 1

As noted above, this was the most widely answered question, and it led to some very thoughtful responses. Most answers remained largely on the surface, seeing the passage simply as a description of a threatening and violent hurricane, leading towards what might become the novel’s main theme – the triangular relationship between Hortense, Stella Ryder and Michael Roberts; answers that did this were often very thorough and very perceptive in seeing ways in which Andrea Levy creates the idea of the power and violence of the storm, and how also she creates the very different characters of the three, especially the contrasting natures of Hortense and Stella as they prepare for the hurricane’s arrival. A quite large minority, however, saw the two parts of the passage as a whole, and discussed the hurricane as a metaphor for the potentially stormy and destructive nature of what might well be an adulterous relationship between Michael and Stella; such answers pointed to the ways in which a storm can destroy and scatter apparently firm objects so very easily, in the same way that a love affair (if that is indeed what Levy is hinting at) can utterly destroy a marriage. There is of course no clear evidence of such a relationship – and indeed those few answers that suggested that Michael has come to tell Stella Ryder that her husband has been killed may well be correct – but the hints are very strong, and were picked up by many candidates. Hortense’s fascination with Michael’s physical appearance, combined with her certainty that he has come to be with her, do suggest that there is more – at least in her mind – than simple friendship, and her alarm at the end of the passage is surely a hint of potential jealousy. No “penalty” of any sort was given to those answers that did not suggest a link between the storm and the relationships, but reward was certainly given to those answers that tried to at least draw the passage together as a whole piece rather than simply as two disparate parts.

Very few answers seemed to appreciate exactly what paragraph three is saying, and almost all assumed that Michael had done all the things listed in lines 21 to 26 before running to the School building; in fact, of course, the words “he would have to sit” and “the rage inside would have blown” in lines 25 and 26 surely make it clear that he did *not* do these things, but instead ran to be with Hortense and/or Stella. This misreading was so widespread, however, that no answer was penalised for it, and to misunderstand it did not significantly change most readings – Hortense’s belief in Michael’s strength and goodness remains central whichever way the paragraph is taken.

### Question 2

These are not entirely easy poems to handle, and some candidates clearly found them quite problematic, especially “Up-Hill”; there was a generally greater confidence about Stevenson’s sonnet. It is of course not immediately obvious that Rossetti is using the idea of a hard and difficult journey as a metaphor for what some answers called the journey of life, but it was quite surprising that almost all saw this in Stevenson’s

poem while only a relatively did so with Rossetti's. Many regarded the dialogue in Rossetti simply as that between two people setting out on a literal journey up a hill; one has never walked this way before, and asks his companion for advice on how best to manage the walk and how to find an inn (or indeed a hotel in many instances) at the end of the day. This is a perfectly reasonable but very limiting way to read the poem, and those who read it as signifying the journey from birth through life and finally to heaven were able often to make it a much more satisfying poem. Its structure, with regular alternation of question and answer, together with steady rhyme and rhythm, was often well handled, though a surprisingly large number seemed to find a sing-song, even nursery-rhyme, quality in it, which was rarely justified by any argument beyond assertion.

Stevenson's poem was more securely managed by most, seeing it as a perhaps more personally felt and intimate poem about one man's journey through life's difficulties, which are made easier as he becomes older and as he grows ever closer to his "dear", whether she is still alive with him or whether she too is already in the heaven towards which the poems seems to be heading. The rather more romantic language used by Stevenson, especially in the final six lines, was noted by many candidates, comparing this with the slightly cooler and more detached language of Rossetti's poem.

There was some discussion of the structure of the two poems, but as mentioned above this led to some thoughtful ideas on Rossetti, but most were unable to say much about Stevenson other than that the poem is a sonnet. This in itself is of little real significance, and too many spent far too long explaining the differences between various kinds of sonnets rather than looking in any exploratory way at this poem; knowledge of different sonnet forms can be useful, of course, but simply to identify them – not always correctly – is of little critical value.

### Question 3

This extract is from a novel well known to some candidates, and by a writer very well known to many, but happily very few spent any time at all on matters outside the passage itself; a few tried to explore how the events described here were/were not typical of Hardy, and for a number of candidates from a number of different Centres there was some discussion rather unhelpfully of Henchard from Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. There will never be any expectation at all in this Paper that candidates should know anything at all about the writers whose work appears, and no credit will ever be given if such knowledge is used; anything that is not directly and explicitly relating to the given passage/poem will be wasted.

That said, there was some very good and close reading of this moment from the novel, and some very sensitive and personal response to the fearful accident and its immediate aftermath that are described. Tess was seen almost uniformly as caring and warm in the way she looks after Abraham: the "nest" image in line 4 was noted and explored very well indeed by many candidates, as was the way in which Hardy creates an increasingly drowsy atmosphere, in which reality and dream become indistinguishable; many too saw how his language creates a foreshadowing effect – "the mute procession" as a kind of funeral, "fantastic scenes outside reality" echoing exactly the way in which Tess's mind is moving, "the sigh of some immense sad soul" pre-echoing the end of the passage. The sudden jerk which wakes Tess, her growing horror at what has happened, Abraham's terror, and finally Tess's guilt and shame, were all very well managed by most candidates, particularly when contrasted by the rising sun and the twittering birds, ironic emblems of the new day. The gruesome picture that Hardy creates of the dying and then dead Prince was also well contrasted with Tess's dreams of a few moments earlier (though many did note that these dreams were not wholly happy – the "gentlemanly suitor" was "a grimacing personage, laughing at her poverty"). The irony of Prince's name was mentioned by many.

As well as the tendency to write about Hardy and his other works, a few candidates spent considerable time discussing how this passage illustrated the harmful effects of industrialisation, and the downtrodden nature of poor country folk. Hardy may well have intended this in the novel as a whole, and certainly the image of the speeding mail van killing the old and tired horse is certainly one such aspect in the novel as a whole, but there is no explicit evidence anywhere in the passage itself that this is what Hardy is saying; candidates do need to be warned very strongly that they must focus upon what is given, and that they must explore that and only that, in a purely literary manner – contexts are not required, are not helpful, and may well detract from what candidates should be doing.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/08

Coursework

## General comments

This was a very pleasing session indeed; work submitted by Centres showed very clear evidence that candidates knew their texts well, and that they were able to write in such a way as to demonstrate not simply understanding of their contents and themes, but also an ability to explore in critical detail ways in which writers created their effects. Writing was almost invariably fluent, syntactically accurate and often elegantly structured. Centres' annotations and comments were full and aptly focused, and assessment was in general very close indeed to the standards required by the Marking Criteria. Moderation this session was a genuine pleasure, and it was very clear not only that Centres were thoroughly well aware of what was required, but perhaps more importantly that candidates knew exactly what they had to do, and that they enjoyed both what they had read and what they were writing.

Texts studied ranged widely – some are listed below, together with some of the tasks set on them – covering the three genres and a pleasing spread of period as well; some were unexpected and non-canonical, suggesting that Centres wanted their candidates to think for themselves and to formulate fresh personal opinion rather than simply assimilate taught responses. Even where all candidates had studied the same text, however, there was often a variety of tasks and almost never any significant common material or ideas in a Centre – candidates in all Centres had very obviously thought and responded individually and independently.

As said above, the standard of written English was uniformly good and often excellent; essays were clearly and cogently organised, and the use of quotation and reference was impressive. Many candidates used secondary critical material, and nearly always made appropriate use of this in forming their own arguments, rather than simply using it for simple support or illustration. Contextual information was also widely and sensibly incorporated, and again this was generally used for supporting a viewpoint, or to make a specific critical point; it was rarely there simply as aimless background.

Word-length was once more a concern in a few Centres, where a number of folders went beyond the 3000-word limit. It is, as has been said before, essential for all candidates that this limit is strictly adhered to, and Centres *must* ensure that all work is edited properly and appropriately before it is submitted. Quite apart from the technical aspect that to submit over-long work is in breach of the Specification regulation, and that to do so can perhaps unfairly advantage or indeed disadvantage some candidates, the discipline of writing within a given limit is itself a very valuable part of the learning process.

Annotation and summative comments were almost always full and helpfully related to the wording of the Marking Criteria; it is worth repeating, though, that work with no annotation at all is not helpful to the moderator, and may even give rise to the thought that it could be a fair copy of an already marked piece, which is again not allowed. Brief but pointed comments are always helpful, and a summative note to show how and why the final mark has been agreed is very useful indeed.

Unusually, there were a few instances this session this session where marks had been wrongly transcribed; if this had not been noticed by the moderator a few candidates would have received lower marks than was intended by the Centre. It is extremely important that transcription from essay to cover-sheet, and then cover-sheet to mark-sheet, is very carefully checked.

Some texts and tasks that were successfully used by Centres this session; it is not suggested that they be copied by other Centres, but the ideas they propose may be of interest and help:

**Prose: Brave New World (Huxley)**

- Discuss the role and significance of John the Savage in the novel.

**Disgrace (Coetzee)**

- Is Coetzee's David Lurie presented in the novel as a tragic hero?

**Captain Corelli's Mandolin (de Bernieres)**

- How, and how effectively, does de Bernieres use historical facts in the novel?
- "In the novel, de Bernieres presents the lives of individuals damaged by events outside their control." Discuss this comment.

**The Pride of Miss Jean Brodie (Spark)**

- Discuss how Spark portrays moral corruption in the novel.

**Wuthering Heights (Brontë)**

- In the light of events in the novel, do you consider that Brontë portrays Heathcliff as 'a fiend from hell' or a victim of social prejudice?
- How far do you agree that in Heathcliff Brontë has created a truly tragic hero?

**Poetry: Poems of Sylvia Plath**

- Many of Plath's poems give a strong impression of energy. Discuss some of the ways in which she creates this effect.

**Poems of e e cummings**

- Explore cummings' poems dealing with love

**Poems of Allen Curnow**

- How does Curnow express the self through the theme of nature?

**Poems of Larkin**

- How, and how effectively in your view, does Larkin portray change in his poetry?

**Poems of Yeats**

- The portrayal of old age in Yeats' poetry.

**Poems of Christina Rossetti**

- An exploration of Rossetti's longing for self-fulfilment

**Drama: Copenhagen (Frayn)**

- An exploration of Frayn's unusual narrative and dramatic methods in the play, with reference to the concept of uncertain truth.

**Murder in the Cathedral (Eliot)**

- What role does the Chorus play in intensifying the drama in this play?
- How far do you agree that Becket is more successful as a vehicle for Eliot's ideas than as a dramatic character?

**The Caretaker (Pinter)**

- Explore how Pinter presents madness in the play.

**The Glass Menagerie (Williams)**

- Explore the uses and effects of some of the unconventional dramatic techniques that Williams uses in the play.
- How, and with what effects, does Williams use symbolism in the play?