

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/05
Coursework

Key messages

- Centres should check rigorously the completeness and accuracy of all administration before they submit their coursework folders and associated paperwork.
- The submission should be despatched to Cambridge in good time to meet the deadlines stated in the *Cambridge Handbook*.
- Teachers should check they are following the syllabus for the year of submission and remind themselves of all coursework requirements.
- Teachers should check the tasks they set against the examples of effective tasks given in the *Coursework Training Handbook*.
- Teachers should annotate each assignment carefully to point out strengths and weaknesses and to provide a clear justification for the award of a particular mark.
- Where there is more than one teacher in a Centre, there should be evidence of internal moderation with explanations provided for any adjustments made to marks.
- Planning and first drafts of assignments should be completed under direct teacher supervision so that the Centre can vouch for the authenticity of candidates' own work.

General comments

In addition to this report, Centres will receive individual reports on their internal moderation of candidate work. This general report draws together the main points contained within the Centre reports.

There was considerable evidence of candidates' sustained engagement with the texts they had studied and the tasks that had been set. There was much perceptive and individual writing on a range of plays and novels; the most popular included *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Journey's End*, *An Inspector Calls*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Of Mice and Men*. There were also many assignments on short stories and poems from the *Cambridge Songs* and *Stories of Ourselves* anthologies.

Successful critical essay assignments maintained a clear focus on the task, supported argument by means of apt textual reference and sustained convincing analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Less successful assignments showed an insecure knowledge of the text and loss of focus. These responses made general assertions, describing technical features rather than analysing them. They sometimes included extraneous contextual material which got in the way of addressing the task set.

In less successful assignments, candidates appeared sometimes to work through a checklist on punctuation, structure and versification, leading to unproductive assertions: e.g. 'The writer uses punctuation'; 'The long sentences with lots of commas slow the pace'; 'The ABAB rhyme scheme is regular and makes the writing flow and the reader want to read on'. There can be little merit in this kind of straightforward, descriptive approach. Often such comments were very laboured and at the expense of a meaningful engagement with the ideas conveyed in the text.

Successful empathic assignments sustained a convincing voice for the chosen character and moment and rooted the response in the recognisable detail of the text. Less successful responses had neither a clear sense of the voice nor moment. Characters chosen from short stories or peripheral characters from longer texts are not good choices for empathic tasks as there is insufficient detail to make the voice authentic.

For the most part, tasks set by Centres allowed candidates to meet the relevant band descriptors. Where moderation led to some adjustment of Centres' marks, it was sometimes a result of inadequate task-setting. It should be emphasised that for candidates to reach the higher bands in critical essay assignments, tasks should be set that enable candidates to focus on writers' use of language, structure and form in shaping their meanings and achieving their effects.

Examples of tasks that target the syllabus's assessment objectives can be found in the Set Texts question papers. Teachers are advised to look at the command and question words used in these papers. Further examples can be found in the *Coursework Training Handbook* available on the Teacher Support website.

Effective moderation of written assignments relies to a significant extent on effective annotation of candidate work by teachers. Summative comments which draw on the wording of the descriptors and focused ticking of valid and thoughtful points offer subsequent readers, including the external moderator, a rationale for the award of a particular mark. Clean copies of candidate work (i.e. devoid of teacher annotation) are not helpful to the moderation process.

Centres should not submit work they know contains plagiarism. Teachers must be rigorous in their supervision of the stages of planning and writing of first drafts. This will enable them to vouch for the authenticity of candidate work. Moderators are required to send all cases of suspected malpractice to Cambridge's Compliance Department.

Finally, most Centres are to be congratulated on the robustness of their administration, as they recognise the central importance to their candidates of the proper completion of forms and the careful transcription of marks from assignments to record cards and mark sheets. Where there are material deficiencies in a coursework submission, the Centre will be asked to follow one of the other two optional routes through the 0486 syllabus, which are 100% externally assessed.

Checklist of good practice

- 1 The individual record card should be stapled (or secured by treasury tag) to the written assignments in the order they appear on the card. Plastic wallets, cardboard folders and paper clips should **not** be used.
- 2 Critical essays should begin with the **full** title of the critical essay task.
- 3 Empathic responses should begin with the name of the character **and** the chosen moment.
- 4 Each assignment should have focused ticking, marginal annotation and summative comments (the latter may be at the end of the assignment or on the individual record card). Clean copies of written work should not be submitted.
- 5 Where marks have been altered as a result of internal moderation, a concise rationale for the change should be made after the summative comment.
- 6 Copies of non-mainstream poems and stories should be sent with the folders.
- 7 All paper work should be free from arithmetic and transcription errors.
- 8 The sample should be posted to reach Cambridge by the deadline stated in the Cambridge Handbook.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11
Paper 11 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

In order to do well in this subject, candidates should be discouraged from:

- giving unneeded extraneous biographical information
- commenting on how the use of punctuation exclusively adds to the mood and tone of a poem
- describing rhyme schemes and verse forms without showing their function
- answering the general essay question on a text solely by reference to the extract
- treating a poem or passage as an Unseen exercise.

Success will come from:

- a relevant, individual and carefully argued response to the question
- focusing on the key words in the question
- detailed knowledge of the text supporting the points made
- careful commentary on the writer's choice of words and on the effects created.

General Comments

This session showed a wide range of achievement with many excellent responses which were focused, directed, and supported with aptly-chosen quotations that were neatly embedded in the argument. There were answers which were strong enough to be credited the maximum mark of 50. There were also some weak and shorter responses which showed little knowledge or understanding and which barely referred to the questions set. Occasionally answers to passage-based questions gave very little indication that the context was known or that the situation presented in the passage was clearly understood. It should be noted that the words 'at this moment in the novel' presented in passage-based questions should be read as an indicator to candidates that it would be helpful to consider the wider context of the text, if only briefly. Clearly the significance of an incident presented in the passage or the reasons why it is memorable or powerful cannot be fully appreciated without a wider awareness of how the specific passage fits in with the rest of the text.

Most candidates demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of their texts and were able to direct their answers to the specific terms of the question. However, there were many answers which were written using general unsupported assertions, and featured uninformed responses such as 'it helps the reader to empathise' or 'it makes the poem flow more smoothly'. Some candidates provided unnecessary and sometimes inaccurate biographical detail, particularly in relation to *Praise Song For My Mother* by Grace Nichols.

It cannot be emphasised enough that it is essential to answer the question set and that candidates should not merely write down everything they know about a particular piece. Candidates should use the question to 'frame' their answer, and then occasionally re-focus during their response using the key words of the question. This approach provides a sensible if basic strategy to keep answers focused and help candidates in making sure they do not become distracted by irrelevant details.

In previous reports, we have made the point that it is worth spending five minutes on underlining the key words and creating a brief plan relating to them before beginning writing and it was good to see that in many cases this advice had been noted and acted upon. Some candidates limited themselves by offering a narrow range of material which they repeated during their response. The intensifiers in the question, the words such as 'vividly', 'dramatically' and 'memorably', are still being neglected. In weaker answers points were often left un-argued, or quotations were offered without any indication of what the quotation was intended to illustrate. Quotations also sometimes cut off key words, thus distorting the poet's meaning and demonstrating that the candidate did not have a strong understanding of meaning.

It is important to comment on the writer's use of language or technique, but this must be linked to the effect this has on meaning or on the reader, as well as being directly relevant to the question being answered. Some candidates concentrated on using technical language but without actually exploring the effect of techniques. Although knowing terms such as enjambment or caesura is useful and lends sophistication to answers, candidates should support this with a clear explanation of what this means, such as slowing down or increasing the pace and comment on the effect this has.. Simply pinpointing that a certain part of the poem is an example of caesura and then continuing to make another point does not fulfil the criteria for Assessment Objective 3, which requires candidates to appreciate the 'ways' that writers shape 'meanings and effects'.

Candidates are discouraged from using long quotations or listing key words and labelling them as a 'semantic field' without any comment on their effect or meaning, as this does not constitute analysis. Recognition of literary devices such as similes and alliteration does not by itself constitute analysis either. Likewise, describing rhyme schemes and verse forms is rarely particularly relevant. Candidates should be informed that simply describing the language using phrases such as 'positive' or 'negative connotations' without any further elaboration does not contribute to an argument. .

Though not as significant a number of candidates as in the previous sessions, there were still occasional examples of essay questions being answered by candidates using exclusively the material in the printed passage. Candidates must remember that there is a choice of questions on each text and that the second choice of question is a stand-alone, general essay question. The passage provided in the examination is relevant only to the question which refers to it specifically; using only this passage as the basis of an answer to the second question on the text does not therefore provide enough material for a general discursive answer.

The passage-based questions continue to be significantly more popular than the discursive ones, and there were very few responses to general questions such as **Questions 12, 18 and 22**. Those candidates who did attempt them often achieved good marks because of the quality of their engagement with the text and the persuasiveness of their arguments, though they were sometimes over-reliant on generalisations and could have benefited from more specific references.

There were very few rubric errors and very few examples of rushed or incomplete final answers. There were a few examples of candidates answering more than the requisite number of questions but this was less prevalent than in previous sessions.

Section A: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: One Art

The strongest answers to this question were able to comment on both 'amusing' and 'serious' in equal measure, including recognition of the sarcasm and irony. It was clear that some candidates find it difficult to discuss, in the context of an essay, how things are amusing, or how writers make things so. Most candidates were able to see that the things that are lost become more significant as the poem proceeds, culminating in "losing you" when the voice is unable to summon up much conviction that it only looks "like disaster". Strong answers responded to the conversational tone and the flippancy of the early part of the poem, and what the exaggeration of the "realms" and the "continent" might represent, gauging a change in the poem's tone once the mother's watch is mentioned.

Question 2: Praise Song For My Mother

This question seemed deceptively simple to some candidates, when there are actually many nuances in the poem. Weaker answers merely provided a narrative run-through of the poem explaining what made the mother essential to her daughter. The main images of water, the sun and the moon were understood, but the more complex "fathoming", "streaming", and "mantling" were often ignored, as was the fourth stanza. Those

candidates who responded to the sense of nostalgia contained in the poem tended to be more successful. Many candidates referred to the structure of the poem as steps.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *The Clod and the Pebble*

The nuance of this question was also lost on some candidates, who understood it to be much more simplistic than it is. Almost all candidates were able to explain the ideas about love in simple terms but the 'powerfully present' part of the question was largely ignored. Some candidates explored the contrast between the soft and malleable clay and the hardness of the pebble, very few candidates mentioned "sung" and "warbling" and even fewer considered the implications of the poem and what Blake might be saying about the nature of love.

Question 4: *Tiger in the Menagerie*

The question asked candidates about the striking effect of words and imagery. Candidates were not asked to explain the poem, but quite a number of candidates did so and, as a result of this, demonstrated their misunderstanding of meaning. There was much assertion of rather dubious interpretations, which were not clearly argued and had little to do with the imagery, as the question required. There were strong indicators that candidates were using a question about the tiger's mysteriousness from a previous paper without engaging with the specific terms of this question.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Selected Poems*

Question 5: *My Box*

Though this selection was not offered by many centres, candidates who did write on these poems produced some very good work, particularly on this particular poem, which seemed to resonate with candidates. The poem was well understood and almost all candidates were able to discuss the box's significance in the lives of the poet and her lover, his care and devotion in making it, and the fact that the poet wants to have it and its contents available for anyone to see. Answers that were most successful focused on the word 'moving' in the question and analysed the imagery (the oak and the gold, the tree and the black books) in some depth. The second half of the second stanza was sometimes overlooked entirely, but generally this question produced some strong answers.

Question 6: *Friesian Bull*

This was a less popular question and often seemed to have been treated as an 'unseen' text. There was some misunderstanding that 'powerful' referred to the animal rather than to the picture of him, and this resulted in emphasis on his strength and size. There was not enough exploration of the ideas of entrapment and buried memory to gain the higher marks, though there was a good deal of comment on the abuse of animals by humans.

Section B: Prose

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer At Ease*

Question 7

Most candidates were able to comment on the extravagance of the welcome given to Obi, reflecting the respect that his people have for him as a result of his travels to England and his education. They were able to see how rare this is in Nigeria and how Obi represents hope for the future. The strongest answers picked up details like nobody caring if they had to sit on the floor, because the occasion was so auspicious, and there was some pertinent comment on the exaggeration of the numbers of handshakes. Differentiation in how well candidates performed came from the extent to which candidates commented on the language of the extract and saw the implications for the future of the tribe and for Obi himself.

Question 8

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Question 9

Most responses to this question conveyed both interest and enjoyment. The context was well understood and there was much sympathy for Fanny, who is being berated at this point in the novel for refusing to marry someone whom she does not love. Candidates were keenly aware of her sense of inferiority and of obligation to the Bertrams and admired the way in which she cannot be swayed. Good answers looked

closely at the details of Sir Thomas's verbal attack, and how his anger is conveyed through the harshness of the vocabulary, the prolific use of dashes which gives an almost breathless quality, and the force of the italicised words. Part of the power of this extract comes from the fact that authorial comment is absent here; the words alone are enough.

Question 10

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Question 11

It was pleasing to see that there was some take-up of this new text, but responses often seemed to have little concept of how the passage might fit into the novel as a whole. Candidates tried to show how it was dramatic, and better answers looked at the language in some detail and responded to the vividness of the description. However, there were frequent indications that the passage was being treated as an 'unseen' text. Candidates could have found drama in the pursuit by the wolves and the attack on the bride and groom, but only a few noted the effect of the incident on Pavel and Peter, on the lasting guilt that it causes and the fact that it is the reason why they find themselves in the Mid West. Even fewer candidates considered the shock of the revelation on Jim and on their other friends.

Question 12

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

There were some strong responses to Godfrey in answers to this question. Candidates knew the context and pitied his exploitation by Dunstan, but they had little sympathy for his bad choices, for example his marriage to Molly, even though it was under duress. Candidates were critical of his instinct for self-preservation, his material concerns, and his cowardice, but sympathetic towards his feelings for Nancy and his trust that she might save him. There was also some sympathy for him because of his unloving family, and his appalling father and brother. Godfrey was generally perceived to be weak rather than wicked and candidates dealt very competently with the 'how far' element of the question, usually offering balanced evaluations of him. The strongest answers noted the view that Eliot is suggesting, first by her comments on young men of his type in general, and then through her specific comments about him.

Question 14

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

This particular question produced some very good responses. The context was understood: Stephen has earlier been attacked with the bayonet by Keith, he needs to hide the scarf belonging to Mrs Hayward before anyone finds it, and he is terrified that the police are coming to question him. There was a great deal further to say about his fear on his journey to take the scarf to the tunnel, ranging from his sense of isolation, the darkness, the imagined sounds and 'presences' and the tunnel itself. The vividness of the narrative, the fact that it is in the first person and present tense, was often commented upon, and the way in which Stephen's disturbance is conveyed through the description of physical sensations and through his disjointed patterns of speech. It seems to be summed up in the sentence "The whole sound and shape of the world has become in some way dislocated". In weaker answers there was an unnecessary and excessive concentration on the use of hyphens and ellipses.

Question 16

A few candidates tried to use the passage to answer this question and such attempts were unsuccessful. Those who took it on its own terms could generally not find much to say apart from that his memory did not seem to be very good. A useful starting point would have been the way in which as an adult he sees what was closed to him as a child because of his innocence and naiveté, for example the nature of the Hayward family and of his own family, and his consciousness of the effect that the traumatic events of this summer have had on his subsequent life. The dual perspective creates a much rounder impression of Stephen as a character.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

Candidates generally did quite well on this question and almost all could find something in the extract to comment on. Only the most successful answers looked at the language and imagery in depth, however, and commented on the idea that Will thinks that he has found his “place” but “wind in the leaves up on the ridge was saying something different” with all its implications.

Question 18

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

The illness that has afflicted Susila and Krishna’s concern for her health were central to this question. He feels a growing bond between them and claims to enjoy the times they spend together, but under the surface his anxiety and inability to make decisions is apparent. He is just managing while he is attending to her. Some answers showed understanding of Krishna’s state of mind but there was little focus on the way Narayan ‘movingly’ reveals this.

Question 20

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

This was a popular question and answers generally showed some understanding of the relationship between the parents, of the father’s incurable optimism and the mother’s growing irritation with his unrealistic belief that the perfect job is waiting for him around the corner. Their mutual love and love for their son was appreciated, though there was much assertion in weaker answers that the lack of hugging in the relationship demonstrated that it was a cold and remote one, not that it was merely undemonstrative in nature. The affection in the narrative viewpoint was often not grasped by candidates.

Question 22

There were only a few candidates who attempted to answer this question but of these answers there tended to be narratives of the whole story with little focus on what candidates found particularly ‘surprising’. Candidates should always read the question carefully, picking out the key terms and respond accordingly.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12
Paper 12 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

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General comments

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range of material which they repeated during their response. The intensifiers in the question, the words such as 'vividly', 'dramatically' and 'memorably', are still being neglected. In weaker answers points were often left un-argued, or quotations were offered without any indication of what the quotation was intended to illustrate. Quotations also sometimes cut off key words, thus distorting the poet's meaning and demonstrating that the candidate did not have a strong understanding of meaning.

It is important to comment on the writer's use of language or technique, but this must be linked to the effect this has on meaning or on the reader, as well as being directly relevant to the question being answered. Some candidates concentrated on using technical language but without actually exploring the effect of techniques. Although knowing terms such as enjambment or caesura is useful and lends sophistication to answers, candidates should support this with a clear explanation of what this means, such as slowing down or increasing the pace and comment on the effect this has.. Simply pinpointing that a certain part of the poem is an example of caesura and then continuing to make another point does not fulfil the criteria for Assessment Objective 3, which requires candidates to appreciate the 'ways' that writers shape 'meanings and effects'.

Candidates are discouraged from using long quotations or listing key words and labelling them as a 'semantic field' without any comment on their effect or meaning, as this does not constitute analysis. Recognition of literary devices such as similes and alliteration does not by itself constitute analysis either. Likewise, describing rhyme schemes and verse forms is rarely particularly relevant. Candidates should be informed that simply describing the language using phrases such as 'positive' or 'negative connotations' without any further elaboration does not contribute to an argument. .

Though not as significant a number of candidates as in the previous sessions, there were still occasional examples of essay questions being answered by candidates using exclusively the material in the printed passage. Candidates must remember that there is a choice of questions on each text and that the second choice of question is a stand-alone, general essay question. The passage provided in the examination is relevant only to the question which refers to it specifically; using only this passage as the basis of an answer to the second question on the text does not therefore provide enough material for a general discursive answer.

The passage-based questions continue to be significantly more popular than the discursive ones, and there were very few responses to general questions such as **Questions 12, 18 and 22**. Those candidates who did attempt them often achieved good marks because of the quality of their engagement with the text and the persuasiveness of their arguments, though they were sometimes over-reliant on generalisations and could have benefited from more specific references.

There were very few rubric errors and very few examples of rushed or incomplete final answers. There were a few examples of candidates answering more than the requisite number of questions but this was less prevalent than in previous sessions.

Section A: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: For Heidi With Blue Hair

The strongest answers were able to comment on both 'amusing' and 'serious' in equal measure, including recognition of the sarcasm and irony but it was also obvious how difficult some candidates find it to discuss how things are amusing, or how writers make things so, in an essay context. This was a popular question but often led to candidates writing at great length about freedom of expression; teachers were often castigated as insensitive, candidates argued that the headmistress of the school was victimising Heidi and that the poem was all about standing up for rights. Candidates discussed how Heidi's case was an allegory of the little person standing up against oppression.

When this case was thoroughly argued, and when there was some balance to the argument, enabling the amusing details to be acknowledged, this resulted in a successful answer. When the text itself became a springboard for a more general polemic and the amusing details became limited to just showing how the teachers were shown to be stupid, candidates did not achieve as highly. Candidates often truncated quotations, and referred to: "although dyed hair was not/specifically forbidden, yours/was" as a complete statement, and the basis of a lengthy diatribe on victimisation. In responses to this poem, little was made of the description of the hair itself; some candidates saw the detail as unnecessary, and some suggested it was indicative of mourning. Candidates who argued it exemplified mourning commented on the fact that blue and black are colours associated with funerals, or that blue refers to sadness. The outlandish description was

only acknowledged by a few candidates. Thus, few were able to see any justification in sending Heidi home. Her mother's death was often declared to be the cause and justification for Heidi's actions. Few candidates commented on the description of her father as "freedom-loving". Candidates could have commented on the use of the verbs "shimmered" and "twittered" in the fifth stanza, though stronger candidates did address these details, and these candidates made some perceptive comments.

Question 2: *The Trees Are Down*

This question produced a great deal of strong answers which were able to focus on Mew's feelings of loss. The strongest responses also addressed the other part of the question regarding how she writes 'movingly'. A common feature of answers was the assertion that the poem looks like a tree, something which may or may not be correct, but which was never argued as being relevant to or contributing either to feelings of loss or the way the writing is 'moving'. Surprisingly few candidates made enough of the material from Revelation at the start and its echo at the end, in the voice of "an angel", but better answers did incorporate this material, seeing the destruction of the trees as a direct 'sin' against God, and to be wept over. Some answers spent a lot of time discussing the dead rat but forgot to link it to the terms of the question. Some candidates thought its death was caused by the destruction of the trees; dying through homelessness. Stronger answers showed understanding and made sensitive and relevant comments. All of the higher achieving answers looked very closely at the language of the poem, analysed its effect, and focused on the question. Very few candidates found nothing relevant to say, though there were some candidates who were determined to see it in allegorical terms about Mew and her family and relationships. One frequent assertion posed by candidates was that each tree being felled was actually symbolic of a family member. What hampered this approach was that for much of the time candidates were asserting a meaning rather than exploring how the language of the poem shows Mew writing movingly about her feelings.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *Last Sonnet*

This question produced many answers which seemed to show little genuine understanding of what the poem was about, or at least what the opening octet was saying. Candidates made a little more of the sestet because they could understand more easily what emotions Keats might have while "Pillowed" on his "fair love's ripening breast". Candidates struggled to make much of Keats's emotions about the star, and therefore, almost inevitably, did not make enough of the contrast between the octet and the sestet in their responses. Some candidates had some overall understanding of what the poem was saying, but did not focus tightly enough on the terms of the question, and did not identify the 'powerful emotions' clearly enough, or made little attempt to show how the writing was 'moving'. Other candidates wrote at length on the moving nature of the writing, without fully understanding what it was saying. There were, however, some very detailed and well-focused responses, sensitive to the writing, and fully aware of Keats's powerful emotions. Such knowledgeable and analytical responses achieved the highest marks.

Question 4: *Heart and Mind*

Some candidates found this poem challenging and felt compelled to explain it, line by line, and image by image, but a good understanding was shown by some. Candidates need to be aware that when a question asks them to 'explore', it expects them to do more than to make the meaning clear. Few responses genuinely wrote about the ways Sitwell uses imagery, or argued what was 'powerful' about the 'effect' this had in the poem. There was much assertion that certain features of the poem were powerful but the responses clearly needed to do more than merely state what is powerful to truly reveal 'the ways' the writer 'uses images to powerful effect'. Nevertheless, most candidates appeared to engage with the lion and lioness in the opening stanzas and were able to comment on the "amber dust", "heat of the Sun" and "fire of that sun the heart" with confidence and enjoyment. The inverted syntax was handled with assurance but the "rippling muscles like a sea" and the "rose-prickles of bright paws" were beautiful images appreciated by only a few candidates. Stanzas two and four provided a great deal of challenge and were often glossed over or ignored.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Selected Poems*

Question 5: *Miracle on St David's Day*

Relatively few candidates attempted this question, but there was some evidence of real enjoyment. Those who did attempt it were often hampered by their lack of clearly identifying Clarke's 'experience in this poem' and then their unwillingness or inability to analyse her language in order to address the question (how she movingly conveys the impact of this experience). Often responses merely worked their way through the poem explaining what was happening. Stronger answers identified this as the 'experience' Clarke had had. The strongest answers argued that for Clarke, the effects of poetry on this occasion seemed a kind of 'miracle' as referenced by the title of the poem, and, through their judicious exploration of some of the language of the poem, were able to see that this was an emotional impact and thus was 'moving'. Few answers actually engaged with the 'miracle' or discussed the significance of the daffodils. Few candidates analysed the whole poem but its length meant there was much worthy of comment and that did not restrict them from achieving high marks as they were able to write in depth and in an informed way about those areas of the poem that caught their imagination.

Question 6: *Buzzard*

Most candidates were able to understand the poem and make some relevant response and were able to see some contrast in the poem between the buzzard and the crows, but this was often not explored far enough. Most were also able to see the contrast between the bird alive and dead, but the language, which is deceptively simple in this poem, received little attention except in the strongest answers.

Section B: Prose

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer At Ease*

Question 7

This rich and detailed passage was a popular choice. Achebe's use of the senses was a clear way into an analysis of 'this moment', allowing candidates to explore the imagery in some detail. Few responses reflected any sympathy for Obi whilst appreciating his confused state and virtual meltdown with the redeeming feature of his last minute remorse for his treatment of Clara. Stronger answers started at the beginning with the unsavoury picture of the doctor counting his "wad of notes carefully" linking it to the theme of corruption and Obi's previous views on bribery. Stronger responses also interrogated the core of the passage in detail noting Achebe's use of time markers and the description of the weather and atmosphere to build up 'tension'. The central simile of the "panicky fly" was also highlighted. Responses that only dealt with a narrow part of the passage were self-penalising, many choosing to deal with Clara and Obi's predicament regarding the abortion and then skipping to the end and the cliff-hanger. Some contextualisation of the passage would have helped candidates to focus on what might be behind the tension or why Obi might be feeling tense. Stronger candidates made something of Obi's anxiety and panic, and used the description of his erratic driving to some effect in making some relevant comments. Few candidates, however, were able to make anything of the effect of the short paragraphs at the tail end of the passage, and some of the images here which indicate Obi's desperation to hear news of Clara.

Question 8

This question often produced narrative responses. A good answer required some argument and illustration of the 'foolish' behaviour of Obi in the novel, and some direction to how Achebe presents the character. The strongest responses were those that took notice of the question and its demands to argue 'how far' Achebe leads a reader to agree with the description of Obi as foolish. Most candidates were alert to this, but weaker responses were too ready to condemn Obi. The mitigating circumstances that convince us that Obi is not foolish were identified by more discerning and thoughtful candidates. For some candidates Obi's arrogance (often asserted rather than argued with textual support), and his stubbornness, as exemplified in the matter of his courtship of Clara, an osu, were cited as major features in his foolishness. More thoughtful answers were willing to at least try to see him as a failed idealist, and note the way circumstances piled up against him.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Question 9

This question produced occasional well-argued responses. This is clearly a pivotal moment in the novel, yet few responses really made clear the importance of the action here. There are some major areas where candidates could have made useful and relevant comment, particularly the way this passage presents the excitement over the play, and the progress of rehearsals, what we are shown about Fanny in this extract, the surprise return of Sir Thomas, and the overall sense of expectancy that the passage leaves us with. More subtly, the language of the passage could have been examined to good effect. The central paragraph, in which the authorial voice is heard, could have been explored in depth and is highly relevant. Most commonly, answers to this question usually presented a summary of the action with an assertion that it was memorable.

Question 10

There were only a few responses to this question. Reasons to admire Lady Bertram included her kindness in welcoming Fanny into her home and her genuine affection for her in the latter stages of the novel, especially in comparison with her two sisters (Mrs Norris particularly). Almost all candidates recognised Lady Bertram's indolence as being one of her main weaknesses, though some candidates argued that this was a positive quality.

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Question 11

Most answers to this question had a tendency to trace through the passage explaining what was happening. Only a few candidates picked out the suggestion that Krajiek may have murdered Mr Shimerda. Few candidates made the realisation that the suicide of Mr Shimerda would prove a turning point for Antonia and her family. Candidates offered a limited reaction to the presentation of the death of this character, and what it implies about the life he was leading far from his homeland.

Question 12

Of the few responses to this question, most revealed a firm knowledge of the character, and enough knowledge of the text to be able to back up their opinions with some quoted evidence. Lena's independence, her flirtatiousness and her friendship with Jim all featured in the strongest answers which were able to show the personality of Lena, including her ability to make something of her life, and these answers were able to go well beyond commenting on her physical attractiveness. Competent responses revealed a firm knowledge of Lena and exhibited a liking for the character which was at the heart of the question. There was a general recognition that Lena was not merely an attractive woman but a smart and caring one too. Lena's ability to rise above her upbringing and stay true to her plans for a better future for herself resonated with candidates. Lena's flourishing business was a topic which candidates often commented on. Lena's attitude to marriage and men in general was also commented upon but not in as much detail. It was this lack of depth and detail which prevented higher marks being achieved in some cases.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

Most candidates were able to comment on what was relevant about the passage, though sometimes the focus slipped from why the betrayal was 'disturbing' to just pity for Silas and condemnation for William: one for the situation he was in, the other for his selfishness and duplicity. Candidates were alert to the disturbing nature of a friend of nine years' acquaintance doing something so calculated and destructive. In fact, William's treatment of Silas was usually discussed adequately by candidates, and sometimes very well. Other ideas could have been explored but were overlooked or mentioned but with little analytical comment, for instance, many candidates narrated that lots were drawn and these confirmed Silas's guilt. Few candidates questioned the appropriateness of this procedure in a Christian community. Another approach explored this part of the novel as evidence of Eliot's mistrust of religious sects, and assembled material from the passage that was disturbing about the way they operated. The arguments were well constructed and the supporting evidence was accurately selected. The strongest answers showed real sensitivity to the views that Eliot is putting across, commenting on her use of irony and to the language of the passage such as Dane's use of 'brother' towards Silas and his references to Satan.

Question 14

Candidates often struggled to gather sufficient textual detail to respond effectively to this question and very few had a broad enough range of material and understanding of what the question required to produce a fully developed response. Candidates were usually able to cite Silas's lack of childcare experience, and acknowledge the debt of gratitude he had for the assistance he gets from Dolly Winthrop. Weaker responses

found it difficult to focus on Silas's parenting difficulties and instead discussed the value of Eppie to him, often as a replacement for his stolen gold.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

This question encouraged some good responses to how Frayn's writing powerfully creates tension at this moment in the novel. Candidates commented on Stephen's having to face what is presented as an ordeal on his own; his fear was noted. The silence of the scene and the intruding rumbles, possibly of thunder, were explored and commented on by many candidates. The length or shortness of sentences was commented on as contributing to the tension, though often candidates did not develop this argument enough for it to have full credence. Many candidates focused on the confrontation with the dogs and the local children, as well as the description of the landscape and the "uneasy yellow light". The strongest answers were those that explored the climax of the last few paragraphs and the devastating last line.

Question 16

Candidates who answered this question seemed to want to write about the Haywards as a family and then include Mrs Hayward as part of this, rather than deal with her as a separate character. This clearly limited such responses. When Mrs Hayward was dealt with as an individual, there was often little sharp enough detail to support the general points that were made about her. Her role in Stephen's 'sexual awakening' was sometimes discussed, but some candidates did not mention this. Most candidates made a general point that the mysterious nature of Mrs Hayward intrigues Stephen when Keith declares his mother is a German spy, and their close observations begin. Mrs Hayward's part in an ideal family, and her 'class', was commented on by most candidates who were aware that part of what attracts Stephen is how different Mrs Hayward is to his own mother whom he perceives as undistinguished. All candidates were able to recognise Stephen's growing understanding of the true nature of the Hayward household behind the veneer and particularly the relationship between Keith's parents. Candidates also included some detailed discussion of the scales falling from Stephen's eyes, regarding his heroine's real life behind the 'calm' exterior which was actually far from the perfection he wished for in his own family. Stronger candidates chose to compare Mrs Hayward and Stephen's own mother, who is always second best. The key word 'fascinating' in this question was often forgotten by candidates or translated as 'attractive'.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

This question was reasonably popular but candidates did not often develop their responses beyond listing quotations which showed Will's surprise or fear in the journey with Blackwood. Most noted by candidates was that Will was an excellent sailor in conditions he knew, but was terrified in the unfamiliar setting of Hawkesbury. Some weaker answers did not focus tightly enough on the 'strangeness' of Will's experience and tried to bring Blackwood into the same answer, missing the focus of the question. The strongest answers offered a good range of detail and ensured that quoted material was explored and directed fully to the key terms of the question. Strong responses also looked at Grenville's language in presenting the scene. Many answers started well enough but then failed to effectively deal with the material concerning the Aboriginals, and Will's perception of them. The best answers handled this effectively and explored the descriptions of the landscape in some detail.

Question 18

Most candidates answering on this question either did not understand what the question meant by the English legal system, or they did not have enough relevant material to use and therefore produced limited answers. Some responses to this question lacked detail and were irrelevant. Some candidates made the mistake of discussing the English class system rather than the English legal system. There were one or two partly relevant comments made, but the answers as a whole were not focused on the question. Other responses did not examine the material set in the context of England at all and this limited the response to how the newcomers treated the Aboriginals. Injustices were mentioned by most, but the responses were generally limited.

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

Candidates answering this question were often unable to discuss this as a powerful moment in the novel or to discuss how Narayan's writing makes it so. In this situation, candidates would have been more successful if they had contextualised the passage and to then assess what effect this event has on the rest of the novel. The presentation of Susila's unpleasant experience, and Krishna's responses to it might then have been explored in the light of this. Most candidates did not comment on the complete change in tone in the space of a few lines that this passage features. The happiness and well-being of house-hunting together and the dreams of an idyllic garden of their own are transformed to anxiety and panic by the "red and trembling" Susila emerging from the green-doored lavatory. The details in the second half of the passage are numerous and could have been developed into an effective answer. The physical and emotional state of Susila is powerfully presented, and with analysis could have formed the basis of a good response, but this was rarely attempted. The irony of Krishna's attempts to reassure Susila, had the passage been contextualised, might have formed a very useful response in discussing the power of this passage, given the fatal consequences of this moment.

Question 20

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

There were some strong responses to the passage which made use of plenty of relevant material to analyse in order to answer on the ways Thorpe makes the extract a 'shocking depiction of war'. The strongest answers adopted a methodical approach and worked through the passage. The dramatic opening with the brutality of the Boche and the "darkest shadow of war – that of blood" was noted. Some good analysis of the graphic presentation of the dead bodies was provided by candidates, and suitable attention was given to this and its effect on those who were called upon to witness it. The contrast between the violence of these deaths and the only other death experienced by the narrator, that of his mother "at peace in her bed", was sometimes put to good use. Weaker answers often got this far and then began to struggle, but quite a few candidates were able to discuss the way the swaying body of the hanged resistance leader Petit Ours was used as a threat or warning to villagers, including even children who were systematically "class by class" led to see it and take in its implications.

Approximately a third of responses went on to look at the description of the Gestapo officer, or the act of shaving the inner tube of his tyre. Those who looked at this section and discussed it in full, demonstrating its relevance, greatly increased the scope of their response and were rewarded accordingly. What was often missing was an overview of the effect of the atrocities and of the constant threat of violence on the villagers. Candidates commented on the irony in the fact that the events happened on a Sunday when most people would have been to church and the fact that the bodies are in the Mairie, a building used daily by the French for the workings of a democracy. Another point of irony worthy of comment was the black gloves of the Gestapo officer doing "a little dance" whilst, ironically, still being the one to have Petit Ours hung on the bridge for innocent children to see. It was noted too that his faceless 'minions' probably felt more in common with the narrator than his commander. The meaning of the term 'shocking' in the question proved difficult for candidates to grasp and many skirted round this choosing instead their own synonyms such as gory, brutal or horrific instead.

Question 22

This question offered candidates a free choice of a 'particularly unpleasant' character to write about. Among those who did answer on this question, sensible choices were Teddie from *Ming's Biggest Prey*, Mr Poldero in *the Phoenix* and Mrs de Ropp and Conradin in *Sredni Vashtar*. Only a few candidates were able to provide enough textual support to gain the higher marks but those that did proved that this type of question can be very successful.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13
Paper 13 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

In order to do well in this subject, candidates should be discouraged from:

- giving unneeded extraneous biographical information
- commenting on how the use of punctuation exclusively adds to the mood and tone of a poem
- describing rhyme schemes and verse forms without showing their function
- answering the general essay question on a text solely by reference to the extract
- treating a poem or passage as an Unseen exercise.

Success will come from:

- a relevant, individual and carefully argued response to the question
- focusing on the key words in the question
- detailed knowledge of the text supporting the points made
- careful commentary on the writer's choice of words and on the effects created.

General comments

This session showed a wide range of achievement with many excellent responses which were focused, directed, and supported with aptly-chosen quotations that were neatly embedded in the argument. There were answers which were strong enough to be credited the maximum mark of 50. There were also some weak and shorter responses which showed little knowledge or understanding and which barely referred to the questions set. Occasionally answers to passage-based questions gave very little indication that the context was known or that the situation presented in the passage was clearly understood. It should be noted that the words 'at this moment in the novel' presented in passage-based questions should be read as an indicator to candidates that it would be helpful to consider the wider context of the text, if only briefly. Clearly the significance of an incident presented in the passage or the reasons why it is memorable or powerful cannot be fully appreciated without a wider awareness of how the specific passage fits in with the rest of the text.

Most candidates demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of their texts and were able to direct their answers to the specific terms of the question. However, there were many answers which were written using general unsupported assertions, and featured uninformed responses such as 'it helps the reader to empathise' or 'it makes the poem flow more smoothly'. Some candidates provided unnecessary and sometimes inaccurate biographical detail, particularly in relation to Emily Dickinson and Kate Grenville. It cannot be emphasised enough that it is essential to answer the question set and that candidates should not merely write down everything they know about a particular piece. Candidates should use the question to 'frame' their answer, and then occasionally re-focus during their response using the key words of the question. This approach provides a sensible if basic strategy to keep answers focused and help candidates in making sure they do not become distracted by irrelevant details.

In previous reports, we have made the point that it is worth spending five minutes on underlining the key words and creating a brief plan relating to them before beginning writing and it was good to see that in many cases this advice had been noted and acted upon. Some candidates limited themselves by offering a narrow

range of material which they repeated during their response. The intensifiers in the question, the words such as 'vividly', 'dramatically' and 'memorably', are still being neglected. In weaker answers points were often left un-argued, or quotations were offered without any indication of what the quotation was intended to illustrate. Quotations also sometimes cut off key words, thus distorting the poet's meaning and demonstrating that the candidate did not have a strong understanding of meaning.

It is important to comment on the writer's use of language or technique, but this must be linked to the effect this has on meaning or on the reader, as well as being directly relevant to the question being answered. Some candidates concentrated on using technical language but without actually exploring the effect of techniques. Although knowing terms such as enjambment or caesura is useful and lends sophistication to answers, candidates should support this with a clear explanation of what this means, such as slowing down or increasing the pace and comment on the effect this has.. Simply pinpointing that a certain part of the poem is an example of caesura and then continuing to make another point does not fulfil the criteria for Assessment Objective 3, which requires candidates to appreciate the 'ways' that writers shape 'meanings and effects'.

Candidates are discouraged from using long quotations or listing key words and labelling them as a 'semantic field' without any comment on their effect or meaning, as this does not constitute analysis. Recognition of literary devices such as similes and alliteration does not by itself constitute analysis either. Likewise, describing rhyme schemes and verse forms is rarely particularly relevant. Candidates should be informed that simply describing the language using phrases such as 'positive' or 'negative connotations' without any further elaboration does not contribute to an argument. .

Though not as significant a number of candidates as in the previous sessions, there were still occasional examples of essay questions being answered by candidates using exclusively the material in the printed passage. Candidates must remember that there is a choice of questions on each text and that the second choice of question is a stand-alone, general essay question. The passage provided in the examination is relevant only to the question which refers to it specifically; using only this passage as the basis of an answer to the second question on the text does not therefore provide enough material for a general discursive answer.

The passage-based questions continue to be significantly more popular than the discursive ones, and there were very few responses to general questions such as **Questions 12, 18 and 22**. Those candidates who did attempt them often achieved good marks because of the quality of their engagement with the text and the persuasiveness of their arguments, though they were sometimes over-reliant on generalisations and could have benefited from more specific references.

There were very few rubric errors and very few examples of rushed or incomplete final answers. There were a few examples of candidates answering more than the requisite number of questions but this was less prevalent than in previous sessions.

A growing number of candidates are producing work that is difficult to decipher due to illegible handwriting which occurs mostly when candidates are writing at greater length. Candidates should be advised that it is usually more effective to write shorter, legible answers that can be clearly understood, rather than longer responses which cannot be read due to rushed handwriting.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1: *Reservist*

This question was frequently well-handled. Candidates were generally well informed about the Singaporean system and in many cases had been well instructed about the allusions to Don Quixote and Sisyphus. The tone of the poem was recognised by many candidates, and there was some purposeful analysis of the humour and satire within the poem, often explicitly recognising that this is at least in part how feelings are conveyed 'powerfully'. The imagery of the poem was frequently explored effectively, although the final stanza was sometimes neglected, perhaps because the poem is so rich in detail. It was gratifying to note the relish with which candidates treated the topic of humour in many answers to this question.

Question 2: *Because I Could Not Stop For Death*

The poem elicited many individual personal interpretations, often showing real engagement with its many ambiguities. Most candidates grasped at least some of the deeper implications of the poem, and were able to explore some of the imagery to good effect. Most were disturbed by the personification of Death as a kindly gentleman, because this was so far from their own idea of death. The coverage of different stages of life and the possible implications of courtship or even seduction were often appreciated. Stronger answers engaged with some of the more difficult images, for example of the sun passing her, rather than the other way round. Often such responses went on to consider the significance of “Since then – ‘tis Centuries”, opening up further interpretative avenues. Comment on punctuation was potentially appropriate and fruitful, and there were many answers which grappled successfully with Dickinson’s use of dashes. One or two individual answers struck out boldly to declare that they did not find the poem disturbing at all, although this reaction would have benefitted from further exploration. Nearly all responses to this question gave the impression that the poem had provoked some sort of thought in the candidate.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3: *She was a Phantom of Delight*

This question elicited a mixed range of responses. Most candidates attempted to deliver a ‘translation’ of the poem, and many recognised the stages of the process whereby the initial vision seen by the speaker became “flesh and blood” with an accompanying increase in the degree to which her reality was appreciated. Some candidates assumed that the lady had died, imposing an elegiac reading on the poem, and there were other examples of basic readings. One interpretation provided a rather dismissive slant by offering a truncated textual citation to support the recognition of her mortality “A Creature not too bright or good/For human nature’s daily food”, which acquires a slightly different emphasis if only the first line of this couplet is quoted. Some candidates offered a feminist interpretation about how Wordsworth saw his wife in terms of exploitative physical appearance quoting the line “moment’s ornament”, which in some cases was compounded by her value in domestic terms “the pulse of the machine”. Stronger responses moved beyond translation or explanation to focus more closely on the ‘powerful emotions’ required by the question.

Question 4: *Coming Home*

Although this question lent itself to the overriding comment on structure that one family member is presented per paragraph, this convenient division of attention was not without its pitfalls, and the poem proved deceptively simple for some candidates. Candidates offered a wide range of interpretations. For some, the mother’s “awkward” hug denoted estrangement rather than the renewed surprise that her son is a grown man. This led some to surmise that this estrangement extended to the father-son relationship as well, in some cases the hedge-repair references taken for a metaphor for mending a broken relationship. Conversely, many candidates took the reference to “Dad” to indicate that the speaker’s relationship with his father was much closer than with his mother. Surprisingly few took the hedge-mending literally, as if unaware that the speaker’s father might be a farmer, which led to some metaphorical dead-ends with the “pockets filled with filings of hay” indicating the father working hard for little financial reward. Similarly, a wide range of interpretations were attached to the grandfather’s portrait. For many candidates, the relative brevity of his stanza denoted his shorter life expectancy, but the shaky bottleneck was variously a symptom of alcoholism, arthritis or dementia. There were some interesting comments about the idea that, like the grandfather, vintage wine improves with age, although it was difficult to find any firm evidence that the poem suggests this idea. Generally, the candidates who stayed closest to the poem and avoided too much speculation about the family’s history achieved higher marks on this question.

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Selected Poems*

Question 5: *Heron at Port Talbot*

Of the two questions on this paper, this was the more popular, and was often handled reasonably well. Most candidates commented on the “conflict of man and nature” within the poem, and one or two went some way further, writing persuasively about the heron acting as a “surveyor” to “re-open the heron roads”, in order to re-colonise the industrial works for nature.

Question 6: *Clocks*

This question provided relatively few responses, and of those who attempted it, even fewer made significant progress in analysing it. One of the problems was that most candidates appeared to have little idea of the actual age of the child, despite the clues about language acquisition embedded in the poem, so that the nature of the parent-child relationship was almost inevitably vague at best. This was further compounded by the apparent unfamiliarity for many candidates of the idea of using dandelions to tell the time. Very few answers specifically addressed the ‘so movingly’ aspect of the question.

Section B: Prose

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer At Ease*

Question 7

No Longer At Ease proved a reasonably popular text on this paper, with this being the favoured preference for the majority of candidates. Though some effective responses were produced, many candidates were side-tracked into narrative accounts of the scenes on the dance-floor, or into general disquisitions about bribery, corruption and colonialism, and few seemed to know the text well enough to link what was learned about Obi here to his life elsewhere. This was compounded in some cases by the lack of distinction made between Lagos and Umuofia. There was a good deal of comments on the foreshadowing derived from Obi being left alone when Bisi was asked to dance, and very little recognition of any of the humour in the extract.

Question 8

This question invited a response to the presentation of a character. Candidates who answered this question generally had a fairly limited knowledge of the character, and there was some acknowledgement of his likely collusion in the world of bribery and corruption inhabited by official functionaries. Few candidates made much of this limited knowledge, and were able to move beyond his rather unprepossessing appearance and behaviour to offer a response showing some balance and compassion towards him. It should be noted that questions concerning the presentation of a character other than the central figure in a novel may arise in this paper, and such questions invite a personal response rather than a pre-prepared character study.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Question 9

There was a reasonable take-up for this text and this question in particular. The passage-based question was the more popular option, and was often handled at least competently and sometimes extremely well, with a good sense of the symbolism of the gate, Fanny's morality, and the issues involving Maria and Mr Rushworth. Conversely, as with question 10, there were some answers which confused or conflated the Bertram sisters. Nevertheless, this was a question where many able candidates were able to take advantage of the opportunities it presented.

Question 10

As with the passage-based question, there were some who confused the two sisters. Most candidates who picked the correct Bertram spent most of their time considering the rivalry between the sisters for Henry Crawford, with the consequence that sympathy was fairly readily forthcoming. The few who ranged more widely were able to arrive at a rather more judicious balance between what was Julia's fault and how much others were at fault in their treatment of her.

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Question 11

This proved an accessible question for the candidates who had studied this text. The usual approach was to work through the extract offering a commentary on the characters, particularly Ambrosch, who provoked universal indignation, often arising from a misreading that he wanted to dress his sister up and make a fool of her. Consideration of how Ántonia's life on the prairie added to the sympathy featured in some stronger responses, and candidates were successful in concentrating on the 'how' of the question.

Question 12

There was plenty of material available from which candidates could have constructed a strong response to this question. For those who did attempt it, the main focus was on hardship and deprivation, and the converse, those qualities which made the prairies attractive, was rarely given much consideration. For some, the main consideration was the relationship between Ántonia and Jim, which was in some respects a sensible approach.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 13

This question was not always well-handled, with a significant minority getting little further than Dunstan's wandering round Silas's cottage asking himself rhetorical questions. Stronger responses were able to see the build-up of drama through narrative and the contrast between the warmth within the cottage and the darkness without, and the uncertainty as to when and if Silas might return. Dunstan's felonious intent was condemned by relatively few.

Question 14

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Question 15

This was a very popular option, and was often well-handled. The extract was particularly rich in disturbing elements; therefore examiners did not demand exhaustive coverage. Most recognised that much of the disturbance centred on Mr Hayward and his caning of Keith. Some candidates got little further than this, but others went on to consider Stephen's encounter with Mrs Hayward. Many candidates misread the text, notably that it is Mr Hayward rather than Keith who addresses Stephen as "old bean". Candidates who made the correct ascription were often enabled to go on to make some useful comment about Keith's resemblance to his father, often linking this to the bayonet sharpening. At all levels of achievement, candidates provided evidence of solid study of the text and, in many cases, understanding and enjoyment.

Question 16

Most candidates who attempted this question followed the approach of listing Mr Hayward's psychopathic, abusive and aggressive tendencies, often struggling to find very much to say about Stephen's father beyond the occasional interest he showed in Stephen's progress at school. This approach often enabled candidates to develop a reasonable response overall, although several lapsed into a character study in which Mr Hayward's treatment of his wife was a central focus, even though this was rather irrelevant to the question. Some failed to note the supplementary instruction in the question, and sought to include material from the Question 15 extract, although this was seldom more than the odd quotation.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Question 17

The extract is for this question is particularly rich, and success often sprang from judicious selection of relevant material. The build-up to the failed attempt to kill the kangaroo was a central focus of many responses, and many found the description of the kangaroo and the effect of its appearance on Will's perception memorable. The contrast between the Thornhills' disjuncture with the land and the aboriginals' harmonious relationship with it was often discussed fruitfully, although this sometimes led candidates into digressions about the abusive treatment of the natives, with little reference to the extract. However, responses to this text and question showed clear engagement with the novel's subject matter and themes.

Question 18

Although this question was less popular than the passage-based option, there was some take-up, although candidates frequently limited their opportunities by failing to read the question properly. Some assumed the question referred only to Will, rather than also commenting on Sal's role, which the question facilitated. Other candidates failed to note the reference to London, going on to write at some length about events in Australia. However, candidates who avoided those pitfalls were able to write productively about the hardships of London life, with most mentioning bed-bug eating and many going on to write passionately about the social hierarchy in London, though this was not always directly relevant to the "hardship of the Thornhills' life".

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Question 19

Candidates who selected this option generally found plenty to comment on, perhaps unsurprisingly given the context, and most were able to identify features of Narayan's writing which were powerfully moving. Differentiation arose from the extent to which candidates were able to move beyond the circumstances of the extract – the widower's reaction to the funeral of his beloved wife – to consider the way in which Narayan presents this.

Question 20

There were insufficient responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

Although this question was a popular option, responses rarely reached the higher bands in the mark scheme. Candidates showed a tendency to become too preoccupied with providing descriptive detail or narrative recall and a surprising number of responses overlooked the discovery of the new room and its significance. What was lacking from many responses was any substantial engagement with the ways in which Ballard uses language to create drama. Some candidates were distracted by the topicality of the subject matter of over-population and went into discussion of themes at the expense of text.

Question 22

This question was often reasonably competently handled. Ravi's plight aroused a good deal of sympathy, with some candidates demonstrating their empathy with some brief and relevant autobiographical writing. However, few candidates moved very far beyond the development of the narrative to consider the 'ways' in very much detail, the consequence being that that answers in the higher band were rare.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/21
Paper 21 Drama

Key messages

- Candidates must not refer exclusively to the extract set for the passage-based question on a text in order to answer the discursive question on that text. These two questions are completely separate.
- The most successful responses considered the key terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material in order to answer it.
- Many responses would have been improved by an exploration of language and stagecraft.
- Convincing answers showed an implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive answers used a wide range of direct quotations to support.
- Strong responses avoided merely ‘working through’ the passage chronologically or giving excessive socio-cultural or socio-historical information without a sharp focus on the question, which was necessary to gain the higher marks.
- A personal engagement with the text and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates showed a profound engagement with the characters and ideas of their set texts and the emotional impact the texts have on the audience.

The strongest responses were able to focus sharply on the question, leaving behind the essays they may have written previously, assimilating their preparatory essay-writing experiences to structure this new response. They did not spend too much time on introductions but answered directly or set out the key points of their answer concisely and clearly. Discursive responses ranged confidently across the text, pulling out relevant material to support a compelling argument; passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the topic of the question.

Weaker responses did not maintain a focus on the question throughout and often relied upon prior learning which was clear in stock responses to the text with no relevance to the specific question being answered. Discursive responses often lacked a cohesive argument or clear focus on the question. Conversely responses could outline a clear argument and showed general knowledge of the text but could not support these arguments with specific, precise textual reference. Passage-based responses often drifted outside of the passage into areas that had little relevance to the question, or provided a general analysis of the whole passage rather than focusing on areas of it that were pertinent to the question.

Many candidates used line or page references instead of direct quotations. This should be seriously discouraged. Candidates must write the exact quotation they want to use to support their ideas, otherwise their intended meaning is hard for examiners to follow and in most cases lost.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without using obscure literary terminology, remains the hallmark of the strongest responses. Some candidates showed an astonishing ability to do this in considerable depth under examination conditions. While most candidates used the terminology of Greek Tragedy (such as hubris, hamartia) to good effect, there remain unnecessary comments whereby candidates pinpoint the antagonist/protagonist in the play without any relevance to the

question. Using poetic terminology such as caesura and enjambment to describe drama texts is equally misguided. Some candidates did not achieve higher marks as they wrote exclusively about stage directions without providing their context or engaging with the actual content of a scene.

Candidates who showed an accurate understanding of the class system pertaining to early twentieth century Britain and avoided simplistic labelling of ideas such as capitalism or socialism in response to *An Inspector Calls* generally wrote more successful answers. Less successful responses often expressed only a partial understanding or sometimes a complete misunderstanding of these terms. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* often wrote at some length reflecting on how an Elizabethan audience might have responded and giving background information about the Jewish Ghetto in Venice, which was often not related to the question and therefore wasted valuable time which could have been spent analysing the passage.

There were a significant number of rubric infringements on Paper 21 this session and candidates need to be aware that they cannot answer two passage-based or two discursive questions. Too many candidates are still assuming that the discursive question on the text relates to the passage-based question above it. These questions are completely separate and candidates need a strong reminder about this.

Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still some who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Question 7** for example as 7:1 and **Question 8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly; the importance of doing this should not be underestimated.

Candidates divided their time more successfully on Paper 21 than in the previous session. Although the quality of candidates' written English is not assessed on this paper, some answers were hard to follow as candidates used personal pronouns (such as he/she/him/her) interchangeably. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Most candidates were able to explain the love motif and the rationale for the impending court case, but not many responses sufficiently analysed the language given to each character, demonstrating the nervous tension between the two teachers. Most responses did address the conflict between Bert and Rachel over the moral issues at stake, the community pressure and the law, the principles of teaching and evolution. Weaker responses seemed unfamiliar with the play, writing on the passage as if it were an unseen text. Others did not place sufficient emphasis on the drama of the scene or explore what is revealed about the main characters and the situation they are in, or the hints about Hillsboro's prevailing attitudes. Few candidates mentioned the effect of Meeker's opening lines.

Question 2

Successful answers on this question balanced their response. Most candidates commented on the fact that Brady was unsympathetic in the early part of the play because of his prejudice, closed mind, arrogance and manipulation of Howard, Rachel and his followers. Sympathy was felt, however, in the scale of his downfall, the pathos of his final words and his sudden death. Strong evidence was given for the views candidates expressed, with apt use of Drummond's praise of Brady in response to Hornbeck's lack of sympathy. Weaker responses either did not know the play well enough, some even confusing Brady with Cates and using the passage in **Question 1** in their answer, or could not provide precise evidence in support of their argument.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Candidates who performed well probed Eddie's ulterior motives for criticising Rodolpho's character at this juncture in the play and his suppressed 'inappropriate' feelings for Catherine. Weaker responses appeared to be unaware of this interpretation, or were unwilling to countenance it, therefore taking what Eddie says about Rodolpho at face value. Strong answers engaged fully with the idea that the moment is striking because it marks the point where Catherine breaks away from Eddie and is angered by him. This change is

fully reflected in Catherine's language, observed in stronger answers. The best responses commented on the scene foreshadowing the tragedy at the end of the play.

Question 4

There was much inappropriate and ill-advised use of the passage in **Question 3** to answer this question. It was surprising to see some responses here discussing Rodolpho's character exclusively from Eddie's biased point of view and not candidates' own. The strongest responses explored Rodolpho's charm, gentleness and generosity, whilst also discussing ideas of masculinity, the issue of his motivation for marrying Catherine and Eddie's irrational hatred for him. Strong candidates made a personal, well-evidenced evaluation.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

The distinction between very good and less successful answers was the degree to which candidates were able to go beyond merely identifying moments in the extract where tension and division exist. Successful answers understood the generational divide in relation to the reality of the Inspector, Eric's "cutting in" and Sheila's "flaring up", and the bitter and sarcastic tones of Sheila and Eric, indicating their frustration with their elders. Weaker responses simply asserted that the older Birlings refused to accept responsibility "for what they did", while the younger Birlings accepted responsibility "for what they did", without providing any indication of what "it" actually is, or the underlying issues. Some candidates made good use of Sheila's recapitulation of their "crimes" and incorporated this into their own evaluation of character and tensions. A significant number of responses however, focused exclusively on Priestley's literary techniques and devices, without any reference to the moral issues at stake. The consequence of this was that these responses were not accessing AO2 which assesses candidates' "deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes".

Question 6

Responses to this question were often enjoyable to read. It was clear that Priestley's moral challenges were taken up by candidates with gusto, who offered well-argued critiques of the men in the play, highlighting their moral turpitude. The strongest candidates showed balance and detailed knowledge. They did not only reduce the men to mere villains but also noted nuances such as Gerald's initial kindness, Eric's stealing to help Eva, the fact that she broke off the relationship with him and that Arthur Birling had done what every other factory owner would have done. They did this without losing sight of the general exploitation of working class women by wealthy men and the misuse of power that involved. The strongest answers often commented on the Inspector to counterbalance the contribution of the other male characters.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Candidates attempted to address the humorous part of the question, with a tendency to describe the ensuing comedic acts, rather than analyse Shakespeare's artistry in blending the hypocrisy, mock bravado, misunderstanding and mangled speech. Strong candidates commented on Pistol's mercenary tendencies.

Question 8

There were too few responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

While most of the responses to this task understood the general principle of appearance versus reality or the idea that appearances can be deceiving which are present in the extract, many thought that Bassanio was referring to Portia in "Look on beauty" instead of critiquing the use of cosmetics and false hair. Candidates who realised they were unaware of the context sensibly side-stepped the trap by carefully selecting less problematic aspects of Bassanio's monologue such as the allusion to Midas or the lead casket. Many misunderstood Portia's aside thinking it to be fearful and suspenseful instead of the "shudd'ring fear" and "doubtful thoughts" being irradiated when Bassanio chooses correctly. Most were more successful at commenting on the powerful moment when Bassanio opens the lead casket. Several candidates wrote quite well about the power of the scene in the context of the plot of the play but in a passage-based answer

candidates need to be confident in understanding the basic meaning of the language and in their ability to explore effects within the passage.

Question 10

The strongest responses understood the key term “disturbing” in this question and this awareness discriminated between successful and less successful answers. Another discriminator was Antonio’s part in this “disturbing” relationship; responses that fully embraced the double-sided nature of this relationship did well, while responses which concentrated almost exclusively on Shylock were less successful. Comments on the nature of Antonio’s revenge on Shylock at the end of the trial were often made in the strongest responses. The ability to support ideas with wide ranging detail from the text characterised strong answers. Less successful responses often only drew material from the early scenes of the play and did not use direct quotations.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/22
Paper 22 Drama

Key messages

- The most successful responses considered the specific terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material from the relevant play in order to answer it.
- Many responses could have been improved by including explorations of language and stagecraft, without the use of jargon or irrelevant literary terminology.
- Convincing responses showed implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive questions demonstrated a strong knowledge of the entire text, using a range of direct quotations to support their answer.
- Weaker responses were characterised by merely ‘working through’ a passage chronologically and giving excessive socio-cultural or socio-historical information without a sharp focus on the question which was necessary to gain the higher marks.
- A personal engagement with the text and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers. Such responses showed a clear awareness of the intentions of the writer as playwright, writing plays to be performed on stage.

General comments

Many candidates showed a profound engagement with the characters and ideas of their set texts and the emotional impact the texts have on the audience.

The strongest responses were able to focus sharply on the question, leaving behind the essays they may have written previously, assimilating their preparatory essay-writing experiences to structure this new response. They did not spend too much time on introductions but answered directly or set out the key points of their answer concisely and clearly. Discursive responses ranged confidently across the text, pulling out relevant material to support a compelling argument; passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the topic of the question.

Weaker responses did not maintain a focus on the question throughout and often relied upon prior learning which was clear in stock responses to the text with no relevance to the specific question being answered. Discursive responses often lacked a cohesive argument or clear focus on the question. Conversely responses could outline a clear argument and showed general knowledge of the text but could not support these arguments with specific, precise textual reference. Passage-based responses often drifted outside of the passage into areas that had little relevance to the question, or provided a general analysis of the whole passage rather than focusing on areas of it that were pertinent to the question.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without using obscure literary terminology, remains the hallmark of the strongest responses. Some candidates showed an astonishing ability to do this in considerable depth under examination conditions. While most candidates used the terminology of Greek Tragedy (such as hubris, hamartia) to good effect, there remain unnecessary comments whereby candidates pinpoint the antagonist/protagonist in the play without any relevance to the question. Using poetic terminology such as caesura and enjambment to describe drama texts is equally misguided.

Candidates who showed an accurate understanding of the class system pertaining to early twentieth century Britain and avoided simplistic labelling of ideas such as capitalism or socialism in response to *An Inspector Calls* generally wrote more successful answers. Less successful responses often expressed only a partial understanding or sometimes a complete misunderstanding of these terms. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* often wrote at some length reflecting on how an Elizabethan audience might have responded and giving background information about the Jewish Ghetto in Venice, which was often not related to the question and therefore wasted valuable time which could have been spent analysing the passage.

There were much fewer rubric infringements on Paper 0486 22 this session but these still occurred and candidates need to be aware that they cannot answer two passage-based or two discursive questions. Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still a few who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Question 7** for example as 7:1 and **Question 8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly; the importance of doing this should not be underestimated. Candidates divided their time more successfully on Paper 22 than in the previous session. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Successful responses to this question evaluated Brady's behaviour by considering his dramatic playing to the crowd, his manipulation of Howard and disparaging comments on both Bert Cates and evolution. An exploration of his emotive language such as: "Evil-ution ... peddlers of poison ... filth and muck" was often the hallmark of a strong answer. Such responses commented on his prejudice and ignorance. Weaker responses could explain Brady's standpoint and relate it to the content of the scene but were less effective in assessing his behaviour or exploring his oratory. Few candidates mentioned his self-aggrandisement and the vindictiveness towards Cates who, according to Brady, should have "the full penalty of the law" meted out to him.

Question 2

This question was answered extremely well by candidates whose knowledge of the play enabled them to make detailed and wide-ranging reference to support the points made. These candidates paid careful attention to the key word in this question, "striking", and in this respect considered Hornbeck's humour, contrast to the people of Hillsboro, cynicism, hatred of Brady and shocking response to his death. Thematic points were made about his own prejudice and narrow-mindedness being revealed at the end of the play in contrast to Drummond's more open and charitable mind set. High achieving answers were impressively exhaustive, with a sophisticated overview.

Although most responses showed knowledge of Hornbeck's role in the play, less effective answers either could not provide precise supporting evidence or did not evaluate what was particularly striking about him. Many surprisingly insisted that his views on the trial were neutral, widely misquoting and misunderstanding his statement: "I am both Poles and the Equator..."

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This question elicited a wide range of varied responses, most of which showed a strong engagement with the passage and the play as a whole. The strongest responses concentrated clearly on the intensity of the scene. They showed awareness of dramatic effects, such as the airing of the as yet unspoken taboo of Eddie's feelings for Catherine, the varying tones, gestures and movement and the increasing intensity of the language. Strong answers commented concisely on Alfieri's final speech, exploring both its imagery and how his engagement with Eddie's plight and sense of fatalism contribute to the audience's appreciation of the tragedy to come. There were few weak answers. Some candidates misplaced the context or wrote about the context and ignored the passage. Other candidates made no comment on the language and omitted Alfieri's speech. Conversely some candidates wrote about the role of Alfieri in the play as a whole at some length and left little time to explore the passage in relation to the specific question.

Question 4

This question was answered well when candidates paid attention to the key terms “powerfully convey” and selected the most relevant material to explore the drama. Weaker answers explained what the rules of the community were but without any exploration of how Miller portrays them. A range of rules were considered such as the honour code, concepts of family and masculinity. Candidates were very well versed in these issues but the strongest answers looked, for example, at the placing and intensity of the Vinny Bolzano story, the vivid portrayal of the community’s reaction to Eddie’s betrayal and Eddie’s willingness to die or kill in order to maintain his honour. There were some strong answers which explored the difference between law and the community’s code, though less confident answers struggled to make this clear. Some candidates confused Eddie’s ideas about protecting Catherine and subsequent dislike of Rodolpho as a macro community rule rather than Eddie’s own personal preoccupation. The question required candidates to discuss wider rules of the community Eddie is embedded in. Some candidates were confused about the character of Vinny Bolzano and had either forgotten his name or misunderstood the significance of his character.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

Strong responses were characterised by a close focus on what the candidate found striking in the way Priestley chooses to open the play. Some examples of the material selected included: Birling’s desire to impress the higher class, Gerald indicating his social climbing, the palpable tension between Sheila and Gerald foreshadowing his affair with Eva/Daisy, hints of Eric’s drinking problem, Mrs Birling’s conventional views and an incipient generational divide. These ideas were often then connected to Priestley’s aims in the play as a whole.

Weaker responses tended towards character sketches, treating the play as a novel rather than drama. There were some unsupported assertions about the foreshadowing and misunderstandings such as Sheila being childish in her use of “Mummy”, Birling being aristocratic and Lady Croft being inferior because she comes from the country.

Question 6

An awareness of the structure of the play informed the best answers which moved beyond an analysis of the relationship to consider its dramatic impact in relation to the rest of the plot. Issues such as the relationship being the climax of the play, Eric’s dramatic entrance at the beginning of Act 3, the dramatic ironies surrounding Mrs Birling’s lack of realisation as to the identity of the father of Eva’s child, the importance of the relationship in terms of theme and the dramatic intensity of Eric’s revelations were fully explored.

Weaker responses tended to be narrative, lacked attention to how the relationship was dramatic or lacked textual support. Occasionally a candidate wrote about the wrong character in their response, such as Gerald, Mr Birling and Eric’s relationship with Sheila.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Knowing the context of the passage (that the French have just killed the unarmed baggage boys) was an advantage in exploring Henry’s powerful anger at the beginning of the scene. Confident responses understood that the king is as yet unaware that he has won the battle and commented on the powerful imagery in his first speech. The striking way in which the victory is revealed by Montjoy, the contrast with his previous demeanour, his vivid description of the horrors of war, Henry’s humility and history making were fully explored in the strongest answers.

A significant number of candidates seemed unfamiliar with the context of the scene thinking it was at the beginning of the campaign. Some digressed into other parts of the play and concentrated on the narrative rather than commenting in any detail on the power of the language in the scene.

Question 8

There were detailed and well-balanced responses to this question which understood what it was asking and ranged widely through the play in terms of evidence. Most referred to the Agincourt and Harfleur speeches, Henry's testing of morale the night before Agincourt, the greater 'inclusiveness' of the English force as compared to the French, and the ability to win against fearful odds. On the other side of the argument, candidates referred to the rejection of Falstaff, the traitors, the hanging of Bardolph, the antics of Pistol and Williams's view of the King.

The question was answered unsuccessfully when candidates wrote in a generalised fashion without giving any supporting evidence or quotations from the text to justify their argument.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

This question was answered very well when candidates paid attention to its terms. "Vividly convey" draws the candidates' attention towards the writing and asks for more than a narrative description of the passage. The question asked about Shylock's thoughts and feelings and some answers, which were strong in other respects, were constrained by an insistence on 'working through' the whole passage chronologically paying undue attention to the thoughts of Salerio and Solanio and giving extensive background information about the treatment of the Jews in seventeenth century Venice. Other answers were unfocused, writing an essay about sympathy for Shylock, sometimes making the assertion that his final speech is the greatest in the play but providing very little exploration of the ideas expressed in it or Shylock's feelings, as the question requires. The best responses explored Shylock's anger and pain at the mocking Venetians and his daughter's betrayal and how this is conveyed by the repetition ("none so well ... flesh and blood") and playing on the word "dam". Stronger responses commented on Shylock's rage at Antonio and his desire for revenge being firmly rooted in the language used. The strongest answers selected the final speech for detailed exploration, looking at the effects of literary devices such as the use of rhetorical questions, listing, antithesis, the powerful build-up of tension, with increasingly dark imagery, to "And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge". Candidates should be advised that the most successful approach is to focus on the passage itself, to use quotations from it and to avoid digressing at length into other part of the play.

Question 10

Many candidates who answered this question simply did not know enough about Launcelot to give sufficient evidence from the play to support the points made. Successful responses referred to his 'comic relief' role in the scene where he debates with himself and the farcical elements of his meeting with his blind father. They commented on the entertainment value of his role in Jessica's elopement, his relationship with Jessica and his move from Shylock to Bassanio's service and thus from Venice to Belmont. Candidates who could provide quotation and comment on his malapropisms received the highest marks.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/23
Paper 23 Drama

Key messages

- The most successful responses considered the specific terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material from the relevant play in order to answer it.
- Many responses could have been improved by including explorations of language and stagecraft, without the use of jargon or irrelevant literary terminology.
- Convincing responses showed implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive questions demonstrated a strong knowledge of the entire text, using a range of direct quotations to support their answer.
- Weaker responses were characterised by merely ‘working through’ a passage chronologically and giving excessive socio-cultural or socio-historical information without a sharp focus on the question which was necessary to gain the higher marks.
- A personal engagement with the text and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers. Such responses showed a clear awareness of the intentions of the writer as playwright, writing plays to be performed on stage.

General comments

Many candidates showed a profound engagement with the characters and ideas of their set texts and the emotional impact the texts have on the audience.

The strongest responses were able to focus sharply on the question, leaving behind the essays they may have written previously, assimilating their preparatory essay-writing experiences to structure this new response. They did not spend too much time on introductions but answered directly or set out the key points of their answer concisely and clearly. Discursive responses ranged confidently across the text, pulling out relevant material to support a compelling argument; passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the topic of the question.

Weaker responses did not maintain a focus on the question throughout and often relied upon prior learning which was clear in stock responses to the text with no relevance to the specific question being answered. Discursive responses often lacked a cohesive argument or clear focus on the question. Conversely responses could outline a clear argument and showed general knowledge of the text but could not support these arguments with specific, precise textual reference. Passage-based responses often drifted outside of the passage into areas that had little relevance to the question, or provided a general analysis of the whole passage rather than focusing on areas of it that were pertinent to the question.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without using obscure literary terminology, remains the hallmark of the strongest responses. Some candidates showed an astonishing ability to do this in considerable depth under examination conditions. While most candidates used the terminology of Greek Tragedy (such as hubris, hamartia) to good effect, there remain unnecessary comments whereby candidates pinpoint the antagonist/protagonist in the play without any relevance to the question. Using poetic terminology such as caesura and enjambment to describe drama texts is equally misguided.

Candidates who showed an accurate understanding of the class system pertaining to early twentieth century Britain and avoided simplistic labelling of ideas such as capitalism or socialism in response to *An Inspector Calls* generally wrote more successful answers. Less successful responses often expressed only a partial understanding or sometimes a complete misunderstanding of these terms. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* often wrote at some length reflecting on how an Elizabethan audience might have responded and giving background information on anti-Semitism, or gender issues, which was often not related to the question and therefore wasted valuable time which could have been spent analysing the passage.

There were very few rubric infringements on Paper 23 this session, where candidates need to be aware that they cannot answer two passage-based or two discursive questions. However, some rubric infringements occurred on Paper 23, specifically in **Question 4** for *A View from the Bridge*, whereby candidates failed to adhere to the instructions which stated clearly: '**Do not use the passage in Question *3 in answering this question**'. By using the passage as one of the two moments they found moving in the play, it was difficult for candidates to achieve the higher marks. Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still a few who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Q7** for example as 7:1 and **Q8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly; the importance of doing this should not be underestimated. Candidates divided their time more successfully on Paper 23 than in the previous session. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J.LAWRENCE & R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

To answer this question fully, candidates needed to focus on the “entertaining” aspects of the scene and show an understanding of what was amusing in this scene for the audience. Weaker candidates interpreted “entertaining” as interesting or engaging and worked through the passage at a literal level, explaining what was happening. The best candidates linked the scene to context, commenting on the reason for the trial, which is to show how insignificant the case against Cates is and as a lighter moment before the serious tone of the trial begins and before Drummond and Brady really do battle. Most candidates found comments to make related to both physical and verbal drama, for example the braces and honorary title, with the best candidates exploring the humour of the “lavender suspenders” as an example of Drummond’s scoring points off Brady by emphasising them in court by snapping them “jauntily” and stating he had bought them in Brady’s home town as though Brady were responsible for them. Some commented on the linking of Brady and God by Dunlap, indicating that he believes in both, apparently equally, which was a source of amusement for candidates. The best candidates commented on amusing dialogue, for example Drummond’s asking Dunlap a useless question, “How are you?”, because he had been told he could not reject Dunlap without asking him a question. This was linked to the wider whole text theme, which is the need to look beyond surface meaning rather than just accept it. Most candidates commented on the “Colonel” title given to Brady and then, entertainingly, because of its lack of substance, given “temporarily” to Drummond.

Question 2

Relatively few answers were submitted but they tended to be either very strong answers or brief and narrative in approach, re-telling what happened to Cates and Rachel in the play. The best answers explored the principles of “the right to think” and showed understanding of how it is explored dramatically in the play. These responses engaged with the text and explored Rachel’s role in the play from unthinking believer to timid thinker by the end of the play, and how memorable she is in contrast to Brady’s dogmatic certainty. Rachel is also memorable as the authors show her not being convinced by Darwin’s theory when she reads it, stressing the point she has “the right to think” and to decide for herself. Strong answers also focused on how “the right to think” had been removed from Hillsboro people and often considered how Hornbeck cut through the complacency of Hillsboro with his sarcasm, referencing his behaviour, for example, to buy a hotdog or bible, or to feed his stomach or soul, seeing both of equal importance.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

The AO4 requirement for candidates to make “a personal response” was explicitly addressed in this question. Most candidates, at all levels, were comfortable in addressing this personal aspect of the question

which asked them what “Miller’s writing makes you feel about Eddie”, but some did not make a direct response to this, instead focusing on how the tension made them feel or what they felt about the situation, rather than focusing on the key words of the question. Candidates were required to discuss Eddie specifically.

The best answers responded thoroughly to the drama on stage, analysing Miller’s writing to show explicitly how he made them feel about Eddie. Feelings of anger, disbelief, sympathy and outrage towards Eddie were explored in relation to his jealous behaviour and bullying treatment of Rodolpho and stereotypical ideas of masculinity. Candidates expressed dismay at how Eddie could try to come between Catherine and Rodolpho and his sarcasm and put-down of the perceived talents of Rodolpho. Weaker responses misread the sarcasm in Eddie’s listing of these talents indicating he was jealous as, being devoid of these, he had no choice but to work on the water front. The best responses explored the stage directions of Eddie twisting and ripping the paper, when he “has bent the rolled paper and it suddenly tears in two” which candidates used as evidence that he was losing his patience and becoming out of control, unaware of this visual manifestation of his anger and confirmed by him punching Rodolpho.

Weaker responses approached the question through the writer’s methods, listing the stage directions and use of punctuation without exploring them in context of the situation and their dramatic impact. Eddie’s clear intentions of opening the subject of boxing as a way to punch Rodolpho was seen by most candidates and his cunning in pretending to want to help Rodolpho defend himself was explored. It was clear to most candidates that it was likely to be Eddie who would want “to step on his foot or sump’m”. Other characters’ feelings towards Eddie were well used by candidates too, suggesting that Miller invites the audience to feel the same as these other characters; examples included “uneasy”, “embarrassed” or “with beginning alarm”. Few but the very best candidates considered the drama of the final stage directions in this scene, “MARCO rises” as threatening and foreshadowing Eddie’s now inevitable death, making them feel Eddie has gone too far.

Question 4

This question reinforced the need for candidates to carefully read the terms of the question. There were clear instructions for this question stating: **‘Do not use the passage in Question *3 in answering this question.’** Some candidates wrote about the passage as one of their moments which prevented them from achieving marks in the higher bands. Most candidates chose two apt moments. The most popular moments were Eddie’s death, Catherine’s commitment to marry Rodolpho, Marco’s lifting chair challenge and Eddie’s informing the Immigration Bureau. The best responses were able to use very detailed quotations and close reference to the moments and to comment on the use of language as well as dramatic features to show how Miller made them moving. Weaker responses narrated the moments they felt moved by without commenting on what was specifically moving about them.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

This question elicited a wide range of responses. All candidates, in varying degrees, showed some knowledge of the plot, characters, socio-political background and Priestley’s methods. Most candidates understood “gripping”, but many ignored this word and focused on “tension” or “suspense”, which were presumably more familiar terms and were still considered acceptable although less encouraging of a personal response. The best responses focused on the drama of the passage and put this passage into context, mentioning Mrs Birling’s accusations at the end of Act Two or Eric’s dramatic entrance “the others are staring at him” accusingly, or the extremities of characters’ emotions “distressed, bitterly, miserably, explosively” (though not always exploring them in context to show how they made this a “gripping” opening). Some candidates also commented on how, in contrast to other characters, the Inspector appeared calm. The Inspector’s control, as in his contradicting Mr Birling’s “No” to Eric’s request for a drink, and his brief questioning of Eric, were explored. Eric’s emotion, at the end of the passage, as the enormity of what he has done strikes him, and his mother, were features of the strongest responses. There were also some responses where the sensitive questioning of Eric’s actual behaviour and revelations of his treatment of Eva, “threatening to make a row”, were considered.

Weaker responses did not focus on “gripping”, often starting with the dramatic opening in context of the previous scene and the cliff-hanger effect created by Mrs Birling, but then continuing only to explain some other irrelevant topic such as how Sheila had matured/grown up or how the older generation have not learned to accept responsibility while the younger generation have, or capitalism versus socialism. Weaker

responses also tended to omit any discussion of the deeper revelations in the Inspector's interrogation of Eric, instead commenting on techniques but not the actual content of the scene.

Question 6

The strongest answers avoided the temptation to write a character study, focusing fully on the term "to what extent" and often considered the meaning of a "villain". This meant their answers were more evaluative and balanced, showing a clear awareness of his business philosophy, errors of judgement with the Titanic and fear of war, pay-caps (which some saw as sound business practice), or his poor parenting skills, and concluding that these were not sufficient to make him a villain. Most found him at fault as the first member of the family to come into contact with Eva, starting the chain reaction which ultimately led to her suicide. Some candidates were able to compare Arthur Birling's behaviour to the other members of the family, and Gerald's, highlighting that what really made him a villain was more his refusal to accept any guilt or responsibility; such responses achieved the higher marks. Arthur Birling's attitude in believing the whole incident was a "hoax" and the belief that their behaviour would not be publically revealed was also featured in these responses.

Weaker responses tended to list his interactions with characters as evidence of his villainy, while others asserted he was a villain just because he was a capitalist character and the playwright was a socialist, so he intended for the audience to view Mr Birling as the villain of the play. The weakest answers wrote character studies with little reference to the extent Arthur Birling is portrayed as a "villain" specifically and instead discussed the lighting, the Titanic and predictions of war, with no reference to Eva, thereby not answering the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

This was the more popular of the two questions on this text. Most recognised the structured and contrasting views of Henry in the passage, using supporting quotations. The irony in the unpleasant and immature Dauphin, deriding Henry for his "vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth" was not lost on candidates, many of whom argued successfully that King Henry was not the same as Prince Hal of his youth, often citing his considered reaction and verbal dexterity to the gift of the tennis balls received from the Dauphin. The best answers included the French King's and Constable's fear of Henry, exploring the language closely, in particular "You are too much mistaken" and "look you strongly arm to meet him". The significance of their fears of conflict, and of the King himself, was supported further by the French King's words of Henry being "crown'd with the golden sun" and "stem of that victorious stock", leaving the audience, and candidates, without doubt that Henry is victorious by nature and lineage.

Weaker responses tended to retell the passage with some misreading and misunderstanding of context. Some candidates thought the battle had already taken place and quoted from the text without showing understanding or focus on the question.

Question 8

The best responses gave a thorough evaluation of Henry from young man to wise, Christian King, balancing comments on his cruelty, lack of compassion, but also his humility and sense of brotherhood with his men. The skill with which he gauges morale and makes his stirring motivational speech to his men was supported, often with brief, aptly selected phrases, for example, "band of brothers". Weaker responses were character studies without comment on what there was to admire about King Henry.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

In response to this question, candidates often only worked through the passage with scant focus on the question and used Portia's disguise to explore feminist issues during Shakespeare's time or the homosexual implications of Bassanio and Antonio's relationship, the latter supported by Bassanio giving away the ring as soon as Antonio "commanded" him to do so.

The strongest answers focused on the "memorable" aspect of the question and placed the passage accurately in context, following the court scene and as comic relief before the final scene at Belmont. These

responses explored the humour of the passage, in the dramatic irony of Portia's disguise and Bassanio's comic dilemma of whether he should give the ring or not. They explored the symbolism of the ring and Bassanio's reluctance to part with it having vowed to "neither sell, nor give, nor lose it". They commented on foreshadowing as a dramatic device, viewing the scene as setting up the lovers' battle to follow shortly after, when Portia questions Bassanio about his missing ring. This enhanced the drama and audience engagement as they waited to see how Bassanio would get out of it.

Weaker responses wrote what appeared to be adapted answers to this question. Portia was seen as cruel and heartless, demonstrating her true qualities, and Bassanio as breaking their marriage vow by giving away the ring and thereby proving that he really loved Antonio and only married Portia for her money. Candidates frequently misread the passage, thinking that Bassanio and Antonio's first speeches were to each other so Antonio was "indebted" to him and pledged "love and service...evermore", therefore declaring his love for Bassanio. In addition, weaker responses misread that the ring was deemed worthless as it was "a trifle", while others simplistically commented on the fact that it was "the dearest ring in Venice" therefore Bassanio could not give it away, without any deeper understanding of what the ring signifies.

Question 10

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates could select appropriate material and were able to use very detailed references to support their comments. The best responses addressed the "striking" aspect of the question and evaluated the risks and their dramatic impact on other characters and the audience, understanding that risks have consequences. The greatest risk chosen was Antonio risking his life against his ships returning to port, for Bassanio, a spendthrift and undeserving recipient of the money. Other risks explored included the caskets, Portia's disguising herself as Balthazar, Jessica risking losing her people to marry a Christian and Shylock's risk of being further ostracised in refusing to accept anything less than his "bond" from Antonio. The most successful answers were able to explore these risks and their "striking part" in the play to understand, for example, that without the caskets, Bassanio would not have needed the money or Antonio the loan. Some candidates commented on Jessica's escape with Lorenzo, a Christian, which incited further hatred and determination in Shylock to obtain his "pound of flesh". Weaker responses were narrative in approach, re-telling the plot and listing risks without consideration of the outcomes of the risk-taking.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31
Paper 31 Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

- Candidates must not refer exclusively to the extract set for the passage-based question on a text in order to answer the discursive question on that text. These two questions are completely separate.
- The most successful responses considered the key terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material in order to answer it.
- Many responses would have been improved by an exploration of language and stagecraft.
- Convincing answers showed an implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive answers used a wide range of direct quotations to support.
- Strong responses avoided merely ‘working through’ the passage chronologically or giving excessive socio-cultural or socio-historical information without a sharp focus on the question, which was necessary to gain the higher marks.
- A personal engagement with the text and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates showed a profound engagement with the characters and ideas of their set texts and the emotional impact the texts have on the audience.

The strongest responses were able to focus sharply on the question, leaving behind the essays they may have written previously, assimilating their preparatory essay-writing experiences to structure this new response. They did not spend too much time on introductions but answered directly or set out the key points of their answer concisely and clearly. Discursive responses ranged confidently across the text, pulling out relevant material to support a compelling argument; passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the topic of the question.

Weaker responses did not maintain a focus on the question throughout and often relied upon prior learning which was clear in stock responses to the text with no relevance to the specific question being answered. Discursive responses often lacked a cohesive argument or clear focus on the question. Conversely responses could outline a clear argument and showed general knowledge of the text but could not support these arguments with specific, precise textual reference. Passage-based responses often drifted outside of the passage into areas that had little relevance to the question, or provided a general analysis of the whole passage rather than focusing on areas of it that were pertinent to the question.

Many candidates used line or page references instead of direct quotations. This should be seriously discouraged. Candidates must write the exact quotation they want to use to support their ideas, otherwise their intended meaning is hard for examiners to follow and in most cases lost.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without using obscure literary terminology, remains the hallmark of the strongest responses. Some candidates showed an astonishing ability to do this in considerable depth under examination conditions. While most candidates used the terminology of Greek Tragedy (such as hubris, hamartia) to good effect, there remain unnecessary comments whereby candidates pinpoint the antagonist/protagonist in the play without any relevance to the

question. Using poetic terminology such as caesura and enjambment to describe drama texts is equally misguided. Some candidates did not achieve higher marks as they wrote exclusively about stage directions without providing their context or engaging with the actual content of a scene.

Candidates who showed an accurate understanding of the class system pertaining to early twentieth century Britain and avoided simplistic labelling of ideas such as capitalism or socialism in response to *An Inspector Calls* generally wrote more successful answers. Less successful responses often expressed only a partial understanding or sometimes a complete misunderstanding of these terms. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* often wrote at some length reflecting on how an Elizabethan audience might have responded and giving background information about the Jewish Ghetto in Venice, which was often not related to the question and therefore wasted valuable time which could have been spent analysing the passage.

Too many candidates are still assuming that the discursive question on the text relates to the passage-based question above it. These questions are completely separate and candidates need a strong reminder about this.

Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still a few who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Question 7** for example as 7:1 and **Question 8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly, the importance of doing this should not be underestimated.

Although the quality of candidates' written English is not assessed on this paper, some answers were hard to follow as candidates used personal pronouns (such as he/she/him/her) interchangeably. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Most candidates were able to explain the love motif and the rationale for the impending court case, but not many responses sufficiently analysed the language given to each character, demonstrating the nervous tension between the two teachers. Most responses did address the conflict between Bert and Rachel over the moral issues at stake, the community pressure and the law, the principles of teaching and evolution. Weaker responses seemed unfamiliar with the play, writing on the passage as if it were an unseen text. Others did not place sufficient emphasis on the drama of the scene or explore what is revealed about the main characters and the situation they are in, or the hints about Hillsboro's prevailing attitudes. Few candidates mentioned the effect of Meeker's opening lines.

Question 2

Successful answers on this question balanced their response. Most candidates commented on the fact that Brady was unsympathetic in the early part of the play because of his prejudice, closed mind, arrogance and manipulation of Howard, Rachel and his followers. Sympathy was felt, however, in the scale of his downfall, the pathos of his final words and his sudden death. Strong evidence was given for the views candidates expressed, with apt use of Drummond's praise of Brady in response to Hornbeck's lack of sympathy. Weaker responses either did not know the play well enough, some even confusing Brady with Cates and using the passage in **Question 1** in their answer, or could not provide precise evidence in support of their argument.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Candidates who performed well probed Eddie's ulterior motives for criticising Rodolpho's character at this juncture in the play and his suppressed 'inappropriate' feelings for Catherine. Weaker responses appeared to be unaware of this interpretation, or were unwilling to countenance it, therefore taking what Eddie says about Rodolpho at face value. Strong answers engaged fully with the idea that the moment is striking because it marks the point where Catherine breaks away from Eddie and is angered by him. This change is fully reflected in Catherine's language, observed in stronger answers. The best responses commented on the scene foreshadowing the tragedy at the end of the play.

Question 4

There was much inappropriate and ill-advised use of the passage in **Question 3** to answer this question. It was surprising to see some responses here discussing Rodolpho's character exclusively from Eddie's biased point of view and not candidates' own. The strongest responses explored Rodolpho's charm, gentleness and generosity, whilst also discussing ideas of masculinity, the issue of his motivation for marrying Catherine and Eddie's irrational hatred for him. Strong candidates made a personal, well-evidenced evaluation.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

The distinction between very good and less successful answers was the degree to which candidates were able to go beyond merely identifying moments in the extract where tension and division exist. Successful answers understood the generational divide in relation to the reality of the Inspector, Eric's "cutting in" and Sheila's "flaring up", and the bitter and sarcastic tones of Sheila and Eric, indicating their frustration with their elders. Weaker responses simply asserted that the older Birlings refused to accept responsibility "for what they did", while the younger Birlings accepted responsibility "for what they did", without providing any indication of what "it" actually is, or the underlying issues. Some candidates made good use of Sheila's recapitulation of their "crimes" and incorporated this into their own evaluation of character and tensions. A significant number of responses however, focused exclusively on Priestley's literary techniques and devices, without any reference to the moral issues at stake. The consequence of this was that these responses were not accessing AO2 which assesses candidates' "deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes".

Question 6

Priestley's moral challenges were taken up by candidates with gusto in response to this question, who offered well-argued critiques of the men in the play, highlighting their moral turpitude. The strongest candidates showed balance and detailed knowledge. They did not only reduce the men to mere villains but also noted nuances such as Gerald's initial kindness, Eric's stealing to help Eva, the fact that she broke off the relationship with him and that Arthur Birling had done what every other factory owner would have done. They did this without losing sight of the general exploitation of working class women by wealthy men and the misuse of power that involved. The strongest answers often commented on the Inspector to counterbalance the contribution of the other male characters.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Candidates attempted to address the humorous part of the question, with a tendency to describe the ensuing comedic acts, rather than analyse Shakespeare's artistry in blending the hypocrisy, mock bravado, misunderstanding and mangled speech. Strong candidates commented on Pistol's mercenary tendencies.

Question 8

There were too few responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

While most of the responses to this task understood the general principle of appearance versus reality or the idea that appearances can be deceiving which are present in the extract, many thought that Bassanio was referring to Portia in "Look on beauty" instead of critiquing the use of cosmetics and false hair. Candidates who realised they were unaware of the context sensibly side-stepped the trap by carefully selecting less problematic aspects of Bassanio's monologue such as the allusion to Midas or the lead casket. Many misunderstood Portia's aside, thinking it to be fearful and suspenseful instead of the "shudd'ring fear" and "doubtful thoughts" being irradiated when Bassanio chooses correctly. Most were more successful at commenting on the powerful moment when Bassanio opens the lead casket. Several candidates wrote quite well about the power of the scene in the context of the plot of the play but in a passage-based answer candidates need to be confident in understanding the basic meaning of the language and in their ability to explore effects within the passage.

Question 10

The strongest responses understood the key term “disturbing” in this question and this awareness discriminated between successful and less successful answers. Another discriminator was Antonio’s part in this “disturbing” relationship; responses that fully embraced the double-sided nature of this relationship did well, while responses which concentrated almost exclusively on Shylock were less successful. Comments on the nature of Antonio’s revenge on Shylock at the end of the trial were often made in the strongest responses. The ability to support ideas with wide ranging detail from the text characterised strong answers. Less successful responses often only drew material from the early scenes of the play and did not use direct quotations.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Paper 32 Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

- The most successful responses considered the specific terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material from the relevant play in order to answer it.
- Many responses could have been improved by including explorations of language and stagecraft, without the use of jargon or irrelevant literary terminology.
- Convincing responses showed implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive questions demonstrated a strong knowledge of the entire text, using a range of direct quotations to support their answer.
- Weaker responses were characterised by merely ‘working through’ a passage chronologically and giving excessive socio-cultural or socio-historical information without a sharp focus on the question which was necessary to gain the higher marks.
- A personal engagement with the text and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers. Such responses showed a clear awareness of the intentions of the writer as playwright, writing plays to be performed on stage.

General comments

Many candidates showed a profound engagement with the characters and ideas of their set texts and the emotional impact the texts have on the audience.

The strongest responses were able to focus sharply on the question, leaving behind the essays they may have written previously, assimilating their preparatory essay-writing experiences to structure this new response. They did not spend too much time on introductions but answered directly or set out the key points of their answer concisely and clearly. Discursive responses ranged confidently across the text, pulling out relevant material to support a compelling argument; passage-based responses kept a sharp focus on the extract itself and when links were made to the wider text, these were fully focused on the topic of the question.

Weaker responses did not maintain a focus on the question throughout and often relied upon prior learning which was clear in stock responses to the text with no relevance to the specific question being answered. Discursive responses often lacked a cohesive argument or clear focus on the question. Conversely responses could outline a clear argument and showed general knowledge of the text but could not support these arguments with specific, precise textual reference. Passage-based responses often drifted outside of the passage into areas that had little relevance to the question, or provided a general analysis of the whole passage rather than focusing on areas of it that were pertinent to the question.

The ability to read closely and critically analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without using obscure literary terminology, remains the hallmark of the strongest responses. Some candidates showed an astonishing ability to do this in considerable depth under examination conditions. While most candidates used the terminology of Greek Tragedy (such as hubris, hamartia) to good effect, there remain unnecessary comments whereby candidates pinpoint the antagonist/protagonist in the play without any relevance to the question. Using poetic terminology such as caesura and enjambment to describe drama texts is equally misguided.

Candidates who showed an accurate understanding of the class system pertaining to early twentieth century Britain and avoided simplistic labelling of ideas such as capitalism or socialism in response to *An Inspector Calls* generally wrote more successful answers. Less successful responses often expressed only a partial understanding or sometimes a complete misunderstanding of these terms. Responses to *The Merchant of Venice* often wrote at some length reflecting on how an Elizabethan audience might have responded and giving background information about the Jewish Ghetto in Venice, which was often not related to the question and therefore wasted valuable time which could have been spent analysing the passage.

Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still a few who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Question 7** for example as 7:1 and **Question 8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly; the importance of doing this should not be underestimated. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Successful responses to this question evaluated Brady's behaviour by considering his dramatic playing to the crowd, his manipulation of Howard and disparaging comments on both Bert Cates and evolution. An exploration of his emotive language such as: "Evil-ution ... peddlers of poison ... filth and muck" was often the hallmark of a strong answer. Such responses commented on his prejudice and ignorance. Weaker responses could explain Brady's standpoint and relate it to the content of the scene but were less effective in assessing his behaviour or exploring his oratory. Few candidates mentioned his self-aggrandisement and the vindictiveness towards Cates who, according to Brady, should have "the full penalty of the law" meted out to him.

Question 2

This question was answered extremely well by candidates whose knowledge of the play enabled them to make detailed and wide-ranging reference to support the points made. These candidates paid careful attention to the key word in this question, "striking", and in this respect considered Hornbeck's humour, contrast to the people of Hillsboro, cynicism, hatred of Brady and shocking response to his death. Thematic points were made about his own prejudice and narrow-mindedness being revealed at the end of the play in contrast to Drummond's more open and charitable mind set. High achieving answers were impressively exhaustive, with a sophisticated overview.

Although most responses showed knowledge of Hornbeck's role in the play, less effective answers either could not provide precise supporting evidence or did not evaluate what was particularly striking about him. Many surprisingly insisted that his views on the trial were neutral, widely misquoting and misunderstanding his statement: "I am both Poles and the Equator..."

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This question elicited a wide range of varied responses, most of which showed a strong engagement with the passage and the play as a whole. The strongest responses concentrated clearly on the intensity of the scene. They showed awareness of dramatic effects, such as the airing of the as yet unspoken taboo of Eddie's feelings for Catherine, the varying tones, gestures and movement and the increasing intensity of the language. Strong answers commented concisely on Alfieri's final speech, exploring both its imagery and how his engagement with Eddie's plight and sense of fatalism contribute to the audience's appreciation of the tragedy to come. There were few weak answers. Some candidates misplaced the context or wrote about the context and ignored the passage. Other candidates made no comment on the language and omitted Alfieri's speech. Conversely some candidates wrote about the role of Alfieri in the play as a whole at some length and left little time to explore the passage in relation to the specific question.

Question 4

This question was answered well when candidates paid attention to the key terms “powerfully convey” and selected the most relevant material to explore the drama. Weaker answers explained what the rules of the community were but without any exploration of how Miller portrays them. A range of rules were considered such as the honour code, concepts of family and masculinity. Candidates were very well versed in these issues but the strongest answers looked, for example, at the placing and intensity of the Vinny Bolzano story, the vivid portrayal of the community’s reaction to Eddie’s betrayal and Eddie’s willingness to die or kill in order to maintain his honour. There were some strong answers which explored the difference between law and the community’s code, though less confident answers struggled to make this clear. Some candidates confused Eddie’s ideas about protecting Catherine and subsequent dislike of Rodolpho as a macro community rule rather than Eddie’s own personal preoccupation. The question required candidates to discuss wider rules of the community Eddie is embedded in. Some candidates were confused about the character of Vinny Bolzano and had either forgotten his name or misunderstood the significance of his character.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

Strong responses were characterised by a close focus on what the candidate found striking in the way Priestley chooses to open the play. Some examples of the material selected included: Birling’s desire to impress the higher class, Gerald indicating his social climbing, the palpable tension between Sheila and Gerald foreshadowing his affair with Eva/Daisy, hints of Eric’s drinking problem, Mrs Birling’s conventional views and an incipient generational divide. These ideas were often then connected to Priestley’s aims in the play as a whole.

Weaker responses tended towards character sketches, treating the play as a novel rather than drama. There were some unsupported assertions about the foreshadowing and misunderstandings such as Sheila being childish in her use of “Mummy”, Birling being aristocratic and Lady Croft being inferior because she comes from the country.

Question 6

An awareness of the structure of the play informed the best answers which moved beyond an analysis of the relationship to consider its dramatic impact in relation to the rest of the plot. Issues such as the relationship being the climax of the play, Eric’s dramatic entrance at the beginning of Act 3, the dramatic ironies surrounding Mrs Birling’s lack of realisation as to the identity of the father of Eva’s child, the importance of the relationship in terms of theme and the dramatic intensity of Eric’s revelations were fully explored.

Weaker responses tended to be narrative, lacked attention to how the relationship was dramatic or lacked textual support. Occasionally a candidate wrote about the wrong character in their response, such as Gerald, Mr Birling and Eric’s relationship with Sheila.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Knowing the context of the passage (that the French have just killed the unarmed baggage boys) was an advantage in exploring Henry’s powerful anger at the beginning of the scene. Confident responses understood that the king is as yet unaware that he has won the battle and commented on the powerful imagery in his first speech. The striking way in which the victory is revealed by Montjoy, the contrast with his previous demeanour, his vivid description of the horrors of war, Henry’s humility and history making were fully explored in the strongest answers.

A significant number of candidates seemed unfamiliar with the context of the scene thinking it was at the beginning of the campaign. Some digressed into other parts of the play and concentrated on the narrative rather than commenting in any detail on the power of the language in the scene.

Question 8

There were detailed and well-balanced responses to this question which understood what it was asking and ranged widely through the play in terms of evidence. Most referred to the Agincourt and Harfleur speeches, Henry's testing of morale the night before Agincourt, the greater 'inclusiveness' of the English force as compared to the French, and the ability to win against fearful odds. On the other side of the argument, candidates referred to the rejection of Falstaff, the traitors, the hanging of Bardolph, the antics of Pistol and Williams's view of the King.

The question was answered unsuccessfully when candidates wrote in a generalised fashion without giving any supporting evidence or quotations from the text to justify their argument.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

This question was answered very well when candidates paid attention to its terms. "Vividly convey" draws the candidates' attention towards the writing and asks for more than a narrative description of the passage. The question asked about Shylock's thoughts and feelings and some answers, which were strong in other respects, were constrained by an insistence on 'working through' the whole passage chronologically paying undue attention to the thoughts of Salerio and Solanio and giving extensive background information about the treatment of the Jews in seventeenth century Venice. Other answers were unfocused, writing an essay about sympathy for Shylock, sometimes making the assertion that his final speech is the greatest in the play but providing very little exploration of the ideas expressed in it or Shylock's feelings, as the question requires. The best responses explored Shylock's anger and pain at the mocking Venetians and his daughter's betrayal and how this is conveyed by the repetition ("none so well ... flesh and blood") and playing on the word "dam". Stronger responses commented on Shylock's rage at Antonio and his desire for revenge being firmly rooted in the language used. The strongest answers selected the final speech for detailed exploration, looking at the effects of literary devices such as the use of rhetorical questions, listing, antithesis, the powerful build-up of tension, with increasingly dark imagery, to "And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge". Candidates should be advised that the most successful approach is to focus on the passage itself, to use quotations from it and to avoid digressing at length into other part of the play.

Question 10

Many candidates who answered this question simply did not know enough about Launcelot to give sufficient evidence from the play to support the points made. Successful responses referred to his 'comic relief' role in the scene where he debates with himself and the farcical elements of his meeting with his blind father. They commented on the entertainment value of his role in Jessica's elopement, his relationship with Jessica and his move from Shylock to Bassanio's service and thus from Venice to Belmont. Candidates who could provide quotation and comment on his malapropisms received the highest marks.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33
Paper 33 Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

- The most successful responses considered the specific terms of the question and selected the most pertinent and significant material from the relevant play in order to answer it.
- Many responses could have been improved by including explorations of language and stagecraft, without the use of jargon or irrelevant literary terminology.
- Convincing responses showed implicit knowledge of the wider context of the play in passage-based questions and in discursive questions demonstrated a strong knowledge of the entire text, using a range of direct quotations to support their answer.
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Some rubric infringements occurred on Paper 33, specifically in **Question 4** for *A View from the Bridge*, whereby candidates failed to adhere to the instructions which stated clearly: **‘Do not use the passage in Question *3 in answering this question’**. By using the passage as one of the two moments they found moving in the play, it was difficult for candidates to achieve the higher marks. Although the message about candidates numbering their questions correctly appears to be being communicated, there are still a few who do not do this clearly or accurately. There is a tendency to label an answer to **Q7** for example as 7:1 and **Q8** as 7:2. Candidates must label their questions clearly; the importance of doing this should not be underestimated. Few candidates ran out of time and there was evidence of brief, useful planning.

Comments on specific questions

J.LAWRENCE & R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

To answer this question fully, candidates needed to focus on the “entertaining” aspects of the scene and show an understanding of what was amusing in this scene for the audience. Weaker candidates interpreted “entertaining” as interesting or engaging and worked through the passage at a literal level, explaining what was happening. The best candidates linked the scene to context, commenting on the reason for the trial, which is to show how insignificant the case against Cates is and as a lighter moment before the serious tone of the trial begins and before Drummond and Brady really do battle. Most candidates found comments to make related to both physical and verbal drama, for example the braces and honorary title, with the best candidates exploring the humour of the “lavender suspenders” as an example of Drummond’s scoring points off Brady by emphasising them in court by snapping them “jauntily” and stating he had bought them in Brady’s home town as though Brady were responsible for them. Some commented on the linking of Brady and God by Dunlap, indicating that he believes in both, apparently equally, which was a source of amusement for candidates. The best candidates commented on amusing dialogue, for example Drummond’s asking Dunlap a useless question, “How are you?”, because he had been told he could not reject Dunlap without asking him a question. This was linked to the wider whole text theme, which is the need to look beyond surface meaning rather than just accept it. Most candidates commented on the “Colone!” title given to Brady and then, entertainingly, because of its lack of substance, given “temporarily” to Drummond.

Question 2

Relatively few answers were submitted but they tended to be either very strong answers or brief and narrative in approach, re-telling what happened to Cates and Rachel in the play. The best answers explored the principles of “the right to think” and showed understanding of how it is explored dramatically in the play. These responses engaged with the text and explored Rachel’s role in the play from unthinking believer to timid thinker by the end of the play, and how memorable she is in contrast to Brady’s dogmatic certainty. Rachel is also memorable as the authors show her not being convinced by Darwin’s theory when she reads it, stressing the point she has “the right to think” and to decide for herself. Strong answers also focused on how “the right to think” had been removed from Hillsboro people and often considered how Hornbeck cut through the complacency of Hillsboro with his sarcasm, referencing his behaviour, for example, to buy a hotdog or bible, or to feed his stomach or soul, seeing both of equal importance.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

The AO4 requirement for candidates to make “a personal response” was explicitly addressed in this question. Most candidates, at all levels, were comfortable in addressing this personal aspect of the question which asked them what “Miller’s writing makes you feel about Eddie”, but some did not make a direct response to this, instead focusing on how the tension made them feel or what they felt about the situation,

rather than focusing on the key words of the question. Candidates were required to discuss Eddie specifically.

The best answers responded thoroughly to the drama on stage, analysing Miller's writing to show explicitly how he made them feel about Eddie. Feelings of anger, disbelief, sympathy and outrage towards Eddie were explored in relation to his jealous behaviour and bullying treatment of Rodolpho and stereotypical ideas of masculinity. Candidates expressed dismay at how Eddie could try to come between Catherine and Rodolpho and his sarcasm and put-down of the perceived talents of Rodolpho. Weaker responses misread the sarcasm in Eddie's listing of these talents indicating he was jealous as, being devoid of these, he had no choice but to work on the water front. The best responses explored the stage directions of Eddie twisting and ripping the paper, when he "has bent the rolled paper and it suddenly tears in two" which candidates used as evidence that he was losing his patience and becoming out of control, unaware of this visual manifestation of his anger and confirmed by him punching Rodolpho.

Weaker responses approached the question through the writer's methods, listing the stage directions and use of punctuation without exploring them in context of the situation and their dramatic impact. Eddie's clear intentions of opening the subject of boxing as a way to punch Rodolpho was seen by most candidates and his cunning in pretending to want to help Rodolpho defend himself was explored. It was clear to most candidates that it was likely to be Eddie who would want "to step on his foot or sump'm". Other characters' feelings towards Eddie were well used by candidates too, suggesting that Miller invites the audience to feel the same as these other characters; examples included "uneasy", "embarrassed" or "with beginning alarm". Few but the very best candidates considered the drama of the final stage directions in this scene, "MARCO rises" as threatening and foreshadowing Eddie's now inevitable death, making them feel Eddie has gone too far.

Question 4

This question reinforced the need for candidates to carefully read the terms of the question. There were clear instructions for this question stating: '**Do not use the passage in Question *3 in answering this question.**' Some candidates wrote about the passage as one of their moments which prevented them from achieving marks in the higher bands. Most candidates chose two apt moments. The most popular moments were Eddie's death, Catherine's commitment to marry Rodolpho, Marco's lifting chair challenge and Eddie's informing the Immigration Bureau. The best responses were able to use very detailed quotations and close reference to the moments and to comment on the use of language as well as dramatic features to show how Miller made them moving. Weaker responses narrated the moments they felt moved by without commenting on what was specifically moving about them.

J B PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 5

This question elicited a wide range of responses. All candidates, in varying degrees, showed some knowledge of the plot, characters, socio-political background and Priestley's methods. Most candidates understood "gripping", but many ignored this word and focused on "tension" or "suspense", which were presumably more familiar terms and were still considered acceptable although less encouraging of a personal response. The best responses focused on the drama of the passage and put this passage into context, mentioning Mrs Birling's accusations at the end of Act Two or Eric's dramatic entrance "the others are staring at him" accusingly, or the extremities of characters' emotions "distressed, bitterly, miserably, explosively" (though not always exploring them in context to show how they made this a "gripping" opening). Some candidates also commented on how, in contrast to other characters, the Inspector appeared calm. The Inspector's control, as in his contradicting Mr Birling's "No" to Eric's request for a drink, and his brief questioning of Eric, were explored. Eric's emotion, at the end of the passage, as the enormity of what he has done strikes him, and his mother, were features of the strongest responses. There were also some responses where the sensitive questioning of Eric's actual behaviour and revelations of his treatment of Eva, "threatening to make a row", were considered.

Weaker responses did not focus on "gripping", often starting with the dramatic opening in context of the previous scene and the cliff-hanger effect created by Mrs Birling, but then continuing only to explain some other irrelevant topic such as how Sheila had matured/grown up or how the older generation have not learned to accept responsibility while the younger generation have, or capitalism versus socialism. Weaker responses also tended to omit any discussion of the deeper revelations in the Inspector's interrogation of Eric, instead commenting on techniques but not the actual content of the scene.

Question 6

The strongest answers avoided the temptation to write a character study, focusing fully on the term “to what extent” and often considered the meaning of a “villain”. This meant their answers were more evaluative and balanced, showing a clear awareness of his business philosophy, errors of judgement with the Titanic and fear of war, pay-caps (which some saw as sound business practice), or his poor parenting skills, and concluding that these were not sufficient to make him a villain. Most found him at fault as the first member of the family to come into contact with Eva, starting the chain reaction which ultimately led to her suicide. Some candidates were able to compare Arthur Birling’s behaviour to the other members of the family, and Gerald’s, highlighting that what really made him a villain was more his refusal to accept any guilt or responsibility; such responses achieved the higher marks. Arthur Birling’s attitude in believing the whole incident was a “hoax” and the belief that their behaviour would not be publically revealed was also featured in these responses.

Weaker responses tended to list his interactions with characters as evidence of his villainy, while others asserted he was a villain just because he was a capitalist character and the playwright was a socialist, so he intended for the audience to view Mr Birling as the villain of the play. The weakest answers wrote character studies with little reference to the extent Arthur Birling is portrayed as a “villain” specifically and instead discussed the lighting, the Titanic and predictions of war, with no reference to Eva, thereby not answering the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

This was the more popular of the two questions on this text. Most recognised the structured and contrasting views of Henry in the passage, using supporting quotations. The irony in the unpleasant and immature Dauphin, deriding Henry for his “vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth” was not lost on candidates, many of whom argued successfully that King Henry was not the same as Prince Hal of his youth, often citing his considered reaction and verbal dexterity to the gift of the tennis balls received from the Dauphin. The best answers included the French King’s and Constable’s fear of Henry, exploring the language closely, in particular “You are too much mistaken” and “look you strongly arm to meet him”. The significance of their fears of conflict, and of the King himself, was supported further by the French King’s words of Henry being “crown’d with the golden sun” and “stem of that victorious stock”, leaving the audience, and candidates, without doubt that Henry is victorious by nature and lineage.

Weaker responses tended to retell the passage with some misreading and misunderstanding of context. Some candidates thought the battle had already taken place and quoted from the text without showing understanding or focus on the question.

Question 8

The best responses gave a thorough evaluation of Henry from young man to wise, Christian King, balancing comments on his cruelty, lack of compassion, but also his humility and sense of brotherhood with his men. The skill with which he gauges morale and makes his stirring motivational speech to his men was supported, often with brief, aptly selected phrases, for example, “band of brothers”. Weaker responses were character studies without comment on what there was to admire about King Henry.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 9

In response to this question, candidates often only worked through the passage with scant focus on the question and used Portia’s disguise to explore feminist issues during Shakespeare’s time or the homosexual implications of Bassanio and Antonio’s relationship, the latter supported by Bassanio giving away the ring as soon as Antonio “commanded” him to do so.

The strongest answers focused on the “memorable” aspect of the question and placed the passage accurately in context, following the court scene and as comic relief before the final scene at Belmont. These responses explored the humour of the passage, in the dramatic irony of Portia’s disguise and Bassanio’s comic dilemma of whether he should give the ring or not. They explored the symbolism of the ring and Bassanio’s reluctance to part with it having vowed to “neither sell, nor give, nor lose it”. They commented on

foreshadowing as a dramatic device, viewing the scene as setting up the lovers' battle to follow shortly after, when Portia questions Bassanio about his missing ring. This enhanced the drama and audience engagement as they waited to see how Bassanio would get out of it.

Weaker responses wrote what appeared to be adapted answers to this question. Portia was seen as cruel and heartless, demonstrating her true qualities, and Bassanio as breaking their marriage vow by giving away the ring and thereby proving that he really loved Antonio and only married Portia for her money. Candidates frequently misread the passage, thinking that Bassanio and Antonio's first speeches were to each other so Antonio was "indebted" to him and pledged "love and service...evermore", therefore declaring his love for Bassanio. In addition, weaker responses misread that the ring was deemed worthless as it was "a trifle", while others simplistically commented on the fact that it was "the dearest ring in Venice" therefore Bassanio could not give it away, without any deeper understanding of what the ring signifies.

Question 10

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates could select appropriate material and were able to use very detailed references to support their comments. The best responses addressed the "striking" aspect of the question and evaluated the risks and their dramatic impact on other characters and the audience, understanding that risks have consequences. The greatest risk chosen was Antonio risking his life against his ships returning to port, for Bassanio, a spendthrift and undeserving recipient of the money. Other risks explored included the caskets, Portia's disguising herself as Balthazar, Jessica risking losing her people to marry a Christian and Shylock's risk of being further ostracised in refusing to accept anything less than his "bond" from Antonio. The most successful answers were able to explore these risks and their "striking part" in the play to understand, for example, that without the caskets, Bassanio would not have needed the money or Antonio the loan. Some candidates commented on Jessica's escape with Lorenzo, a Christian, which incited further hatred and determination in Shylock to obtain his "pound of flesh". Weaker responses were narrative in approach, re-telling the plot and listing risks without consideration of the outcomes of the risk-taking.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41
Paper 41 Unseen

Key messages

- Candidates should spend twenty minutes reading, noting and planning in order to ensure the text is fully understood before beginning their response.
- The question is designed to help candidates to address the assessment objectives. Key terms in the question should be identified in order to meet its specific demands.
- All the Assessment Objectives are addressed in the paper: candidates need to ensure that textual reference and comment on features of language does not prevent personal response and the development of deeper understanding.
- No answer is expected to be exhaustive, but candidates should base their response on a selection of material from the whole text, including its ending.
- The final bullet point will often encourage a personal and evaluative response to the whole text and the strongest responses reflect on their findings and draw their own conclusions.

General comments

The standard of responses across all papers this summer was high. Most rose to the challenge of demanding and varied texts, and the quality of performance continues to rise. There were few very weak answers in this paper, and some responses were exceptional in their range, quality of engagement and analytical sensitivity to language and form. As most are well aware of what is looked for in a literary response to unseen poetry and prose, this advice is aimed to make good responses even better.

Some candidates are still providing unnecessarily lengthy responses; they would benefit from more planning and a greater emphasis on quality of argument. Many still try to guess the meaning of a text as they go along. An exploratory approach can work on texts with the complexity and ambiguity present in the paper, but responses would often be improved by better use of the reading time to ensure that candidates have something to say about the way a text ends before writing about its starting point. Some never reached the end of their texts, or had very little to say about it. Others reached the end and then felt they needed to add an extra paragraph about verse, form or punctuation which rarely added anything to the response. A list of literary devices or copying out the question, bullet points and any rubric is not an effective opening paragraph. Good openings give an overview of the meaning of the whole text, perhaps including a quotation from later in the text to support an overall interpretation. These introductions give evidence of thought and planning, and they lead into an effective argument.

Arguments should answer the question. The question is not 'write a commentary' or 'write what you think about this text'. It always has a specific focus and it is written in a way which allows candidates to address all of the Assessment Objectives: there is an emphasis on 'how' not 'what', on the writer's conscious craft and on details which make the text moving or memorable. There is usually a specific focus on particular characters or ideas in order to guide deeper understanding, and an encouragement of personal reflection on the meaning of the text. All these strands are further developed in the bullet points, which guide candidates to parts of the text which will help them organise their response. Some candidates choose to use the bullet points as a framework for their essay. That is quite acceptable, but it is not necessary, and some of the strongest answers do not use them at all, but maintain a very strong focus on the stem question in bold, and ensure that they answer it.

All the assessment objectives are equally weighted. Too many candidates approach this paper as if it only tests AO1 and AO3. Some overwhelm their answer with extensive, and often over-long quotation from the text and follow these with comments that are close paraphrase or description, not analysis. Other, stronger, answers show good analytical skills and extensive knowledge of literary effects, but treat analysis as an end in itself. Observations need to drive argument and interpretation. AO2 and AO4 can get neglected. Understanding needs to be deeper than surface narrative, and the wider implications of a text extend beyond the choice of words. Commentary on detail needs to be connected to the meaning of the text as a whole. There should be some understanding of why the writer wrote the text. This applies especially to poetry, but prose analysis also gains from analysis of the narrative perspective and the authorial choices behind that. Personal response means a developed and convincing argument in response to the question and the text. Quality of argument therefore matters. The best responses show impressive engagement and evaluation of the effect of the development of the whole text on the reader.

The texts are long and detailed enough to require some selection of detail, which needs to be part of the planning process. More successful candidates usually spend time underlining or highlighting particular details from the text. Thinking about the effect, significance and meaning of particular phrases and images can help to structure an argued response. Selection of brief quotations, which can be integrated within an argument about them, will keep the answer concise and focused. It is not necessary, or even possible for a response to be completely exhaustive, and judicious, thoughtful selection of details to concentrate on is often a feature of the best answers. Weaker responses too often write at excessive length and to little purpose about small but not very significant details of the first stanza or paragraph and have little, or nothing, to say about how texts end. The most revealing and exciting language is likely to come at the end of a selected passage or the close of a poem. Nor should the middle of a text be neglected, as there will be key details which demonstrate its structure and development.

Candidates who use the bullet points realise that they are designed to take them through the text chronologically. Responses which do not look at the text sequentially, from beginning to end, often miss or misread crucial details and developments. However, the final bullet point, while often drawing attention to how a text ends, also encourages candidates to step back and draw conclusions from their observations. Writing excessively detailed paragraphs which merely repeat what they have already said, or make an irrelevant personal or moralistic response to what they think the text means rather than what it actually says, does not enable access to the higher bands. This is another sign of poor planning. A succinct conclusion can draw different strands of analysis together, evaluate the author's purpose and make a personal judgement on the effectiveness of the writing. The best responses need few words to do this, but enable candidates to demonstrate the higher band descriptors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem was *An Abandoned Factory, Detroit* by the American poet Philip Levine. Levine has been US Poet Laureate and often writes about working-class Detroit in his poems. A few thought Detroit was the name of the poet. Some candidates were pleased to recognise the description as an elegy for a way of life which has been lost, as well as a factory, and knew about the industrial decline of Detroit. However, such knowledge was not necessarily an advantage, and was occasionally a distraction. Some were aware that the factory was likely to have been involved in the manufacture of automobiles, adding poignancy to the last two lines beginning 'Nothing they forged outlived the rusted gears...' pointing out the persistence of the equipment of this foundry compared to the ephemerality of the material products. Most candidates showed the views of their generation in seeing the factory as an evil place of mechanised servitude for those employed there; there was little sense of the dignity of labour. Many felt the factory's closure was an inevitable result of the march of technology and globalisation. Nevertheless, there was strong appreciation of the notion that the factory is haunted by its past history, and that the building tells a story. There was quite a difference of opinion about what that story was. Some thought the factory was literally haunted by an evil spirit, and read the text as a Gothic account of an industrial accident. More read it as a history of exploitation and protest. Most appreciated the idea that men (but curiously no women) had devoted their lives to this place ('men lived within these foundries') but that it is nothing now but a grim 'grey monument'.

As is often the case, candidates spent a disproportionate amount of their time on the first stanza, when understanding of the final stanza is crucial to a clear understanding of the whole poem. A discriminator for strong response to language and verse form proved to be their ability to respond to the imagery of the second stanza, which describes the machinery itself, suspended in time. A number of candidates thought the poem did not rhyme, while others had difficulty in making meaning out of lines whose sense extended over

the end of the line into the next. However, there were also many who were able to make sense of patterns of end-stopping and enjambment, picking up how the first stanza has a static, monumental rhythm, while the second suggests the ghost of past movement, now stopped and 'caught/In the sure margin of eternity'.

The majority of candidates were immediately fascinated by the 'chained' gates, which were personified and so appeared to be live and charged, had 'iron authority' and communicated a sense of resistance. They appeared to enjoy the symbolism of the work of men trying to hold back nature. Most wondered what this 'monument' actually memorialised, and realised that the factory was a kind of museum to a past way of life. Fewer wrote about it as a 'monument to common sense' and those that did were puzzled by the phrase, as they could not quite see what was sensible about factories or what might be good about the 'common' life within them. Many saw factories as sweatshops and relics of a less developed way of working, based around exploitation of the labour force, rather than 'dignity'. They therefore tended to see the references to 'protest, men in league' as protests against the factory, rather than against its closure, and assumed the workers were impoverished rather than keen to preserve their jobs. A few thought there had been an industrial accident in the factory, or (not inaccurately) that it was responsible for ecological damage. These readings still allowed candidates to write in detail about the kind of authority represented by the gates, and to wonder if the 'barbed-wire fencing' was to keep people out or to keep them in. They saw the imagery as akin to a prison, and that factories were guilty of 'the slow/Corrosion' of its workers minds. Most saw the factory as an unhealthy place, where they would certainly not want to work. Some good responses pointed out that the fence still had a 'charge', not of electricity but of the unhappy history and 'fears of idle hands' which it commemorates.

Those who appreciated the factory as a memorial to a past way of working were able to pick up the elegiac tone of the second stanza. This was also where stronger candidates wrote most about language and imagery. There was appreciation that the writer's use of personification makes the factory seem alive even when the work within it is dead. Many liked the idea of a place 'frozen in time'. While some thought the windows were 'broken' by protestors, most identified the atmosphere of decay, and the notion that work had literally been paused in mid-stroke. While the line 'the struts inertia fought' is not easy, many were able to see that this had once been a place of continuous movement and had now stopped for ever. Work was 'suspended' but for eternity. There were some sensitive and perceptive ideas about what 'the sure margin of eternity' might mean. Some felt it is where we are all heading. There was certainly a strong understanding among those who commented on it that while manufacturing and manual labour had once been central to human lives, it was now pushed to the margins, and has become part of history.

Weaker candidates tended to avoid the second stanza altogether. Not only did they miss opportunities to comment on its alliteration ('the great presses paused') and dramatic use of enjambment, suspension and caesura, as well as imagery, but the meaning of the third stanza depends on the second. One stanza runs into the next in order to demonstrate the mutual dependency of the machines and the 'human power' that manned them. Nevertheless, there was general understanding that this is what manual labour is about, and that the men who had worked there had lost their livelihoods. Equally there was strong appreciation of the pointlessness of machinery without a workforce, even if many thought it inevitable that workers would be replaced by robotics. Some thought the repetition of 'the loss' indicated that men had wasted their lives in these factories, and the 'decay of dignity' was related to the 'corrosion of their minds': they were little more than rusted machines themselves. This was a valid reading, supported by quotation. A few felt there was something literally diseased about this existence, and that the factory must have been making something toxic, hence the hands raised in ecological protest. Again this could be seen as fair comment on the internal combustion engine. Many picked up the idea that, although the wheels and presses had stopped suddenly, the decline had been long, 'gradual' and 'slow'. There was uncertainty about whether the final 'eulogy' was for the men who had worked in the factory, the machinery, the factory itself or the working life within it. All of these readings actually work, and show the subtlety of the poet's imagery. There was understanding that the 'experienced' would no longer receive a 'eulogy' as their work had slowly declined, would not last, was 'forged' rather than real, and now seemed pointless. While most candidates seemed to regard the poem as an elegy for a world well lost, they did show a detailed and careful appreciation of the kind of past which the abandoned factory, and this poem, memorialise.

Question 2

The prose extract was from *His for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald, a memoir of the author training a goshawk after the death of her father. Candidates appeared to enjoy the moment of first encounter between the writer and the hawk, from the tension and anticipation to the surprise and revelation of its size and beauty. Those who went on to tackle the more difficult final section appreciated the way the writer imagines what the hawk sees for the first time, freed from the confines of cage and aviary. A few appreciated that this was changing the writer's own perspective on life: as she sees with a hawk's eye view, her own picture of life is altered. These candidates had a strong sense not only that the writer is bonding with the hawk, but also that it might make a difference to the way she sees the world.

Most candidates treated the passage sequentially, and as a straightforward narrative, although a number realised that the prose style changes quite dramatically at times. There is plenty of descriptive writing, which afforded good opportunities for analysis. The question and bullet points ask for an analytical response and most candidates were able to achieve this. Good responses used a lot of brief quotation to engage with and explain the effects of unusual choices of words, imagery, repetition and short sentences. For a response to show 'critical understanding' there must be appreciation of the writer's conscious craft, and not just description of what happens. Stronger answers addressed the third bullet point throughout, aware that the author uses the first person in order to convey the strength of her own feelings at each stage of the narrative, engaging the reader with her powerful emotions.

Most appreciated that the first paragraph communicates suspense and suppressed excitement and worry. Some noticed a heightened and poetic style of description from the beginning: 'brightness moved in from the sea'. Almost all wrote about the suitcases, 'oversized' and 'strangely alien', and the suspense they create: the secret inside them is also large and other-worldly. The unpredictable movements were often linked to the 'long talon scratch' across the handler's wrist, and rightly felt to communicate a sense of danger. A few noticed that the suitcases 'don't obey the laws of physics' and 'gravity' so what is in them might be risky or transgressive. Many noticed the 'little thump' of the narrator's heart. Some confused this later with the 'thump' of the bird's wings against its box in paragraph two, but several explained this as a deliberate confusion, and a sign that the writer has linked her own emotions to the movements of the bird, and that they are already developing empathy. In the first paragraph, however, most felt that the bird is seen as alien and dangerous, and that attachment is delayed by paperwork and officialdom.

The slow and careful noting of numbers, and of the details of the box, in the second paragraph were seen as further prolonging the suspense, while the knowledge that the hawk had lost her hood was seen as increasing the feeling of risk. Some noticed the 'dark interior' of the box, and the violence of the bird's *thump*, compared to a punch, and appreciated that these increase both the writer's and reader's apprehension. Plenty saw the bird as potentially violent and understood that it was a predatory and unpredictable creature. A few also felt that there was a whiff of evil about the creature at this point, later picked up when it is described as a 'fallen angel'. Several noticed the contribution of short phrases – 'hard' – and sentences 'Like us' to the increase of tension. This is a bird of prey and a killer.

Candidates discussed successfully the drama of the long paragraph which follows and the excitement and empathy of the writer, as she begins to bond with this bird for the first time. They commented on how the repeated 'thumps' and short sentences draw out the agony of waiting, and appreciated the comparison to 'the last few second before a battle'. They then enjoyed the vigour of the hawk's bid for freedom, with plenty of comment on how the sound effects of 'whirring' and 'twittering' capture the moment, while that alliteration of 'chaotic clatter' evokes the noise and panic. Nearly all candidates mentioned the repetition of 'enormous, enormous', with many noting how italics add stress and emphasis. A few noticed the 'great flood of sunlight' and even linked it to the 'brightness' in the first sentence. These candidates were able to develop the idea of some kind of supernatural harmony between the liberation of the hawk and the natural world beyond his box. There was excellent commentary on the wildness and extremity of expression here: 'drenches', 'brilliance and fury', 'barred and beating', 'sharp' and 'dark-tipped'. Connotations of power and hints of violence and danger were noted. Those candidates who connected or confused the thumping noises also enjoyed the imagery of 'my hear jumps sideways', although fewer noted the subtle switch to the present tense. Almost all candidates had something to say about the effects of comparisons to 'a conjuring trick', a 'reptile', 'a fallen angel' 'a griffon', 'like gold falling through water', 'a broken marionette', 'like a turkey in a butcher's shop' and 'like the scattered quills of a fretful porpentine'. Unsurprisingly no candidate recognised the allusion in this final comparison, but nearly all made some sense of the simile, and were able to respond to the visual image. The same applied to other similes and metaphors. Some read these rather too literally, and thought there was genuinely something broken about the hawk. The stronger responses were those which saw an element of ambiguity in the images: it is a fallen angel, in other words Lucifer and not just something sweet, and a griffon from a bestiary is meant to be frightening as well as beautiful. Likewise the comparisons to a

reptile or a conjuring trick suggest that the writer still finds something alien, slightly threatening and magical but possibly deceptive about this bird. Better answers responded to these ambivalent feelings, and to the way the indignity of such a bird in captivity is portrayed.

Candidates especially appreciated the moment of the bird's liberation in the final sentences, while also appreciating that this is at present only an imagined liberation, as the writer pretends that she can see what the bird sees, even while handing from the handler's hand, still attached by 'jesses'. The writer tells us she sees '*everything*', and many noticed that this is emphasised by the italics and later repetition. Some also noticed how the panoramic view is mirrored by the long set of phrases which follow the colon after *everything*. The beauty and colour of the natural world around them is in harmony with the hawk's eye view. The best answers were also sensitive to the way the rhythm of the prose here conveys the growing harmony and empathy between the bird and the writer. She wants to feel what he sees, and a strong emotional bond is developing. Answers which show such sensitivity of response and insight into language and form make the exercise of unseen critical appreciation especially worthwhile. Nevertheless, weaker responses also showed understanding of, and personal response to, the growing affection of the writer and the creature.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42
Paper 42 Unseen

Key messages

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- All the Assessment Objectives are addressed in the paper: candidates need to ensure that textual reference and comment on features of language does not prevent personal response and the development of deeper understanding.
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- The final bullet point will often encourage a personal and evaluative response to the whole text and the strongest responses reflect on their findings and draw their own conclusions.

General comments

The standard of responses across all papers this summer was high. Most rose to the challenge of demanding and varied texts, and the quality of performance continues to rise. There were few very weak answers in this paper, and some responses were exceptional in their range, quality of engagement and analytical sensitivity to language and form. As most are well aware of what is looked for in a literary response to unseen poetry and prose, this advice is aimed to make good responses even better.

Some candidates are still providing unnecessarily lengthy responses; they would benefit from more planning and a greater emphasis on quality of argument. Many still try to guess the meaning of a text as they go along. An exploratory approach can work on texts with the complexity and ambiguity present in the paper, but responses would often be improved by better use of the reading time to ensure that candidates have something to say about the way a text ends before writing about its starting point. Some never reached the end of their texts, or had very little to say about it. Others reached the end and then felt they needed to add an extra paragraph about verse, form or punctuation which rarely added anything to the response. A list of literary devices or copying out the question, bullet points and any rubric is not an effective opening paragraph. Good openings give an overview of the meaning of the whole text, perhaps including a quotation from later in the text to support an overall interpretation. These introductions give evidence of thought and planning, and they lead into an effective argument.

Arguments should answer the question. The question is not 'write a commentary' or 'write what you think about this text'. It always has a specific focus and it is written in a way which allows candidates to address all of the Assessment Objectives: there is an emphasis on 'how' not 'what', on the writer's conscious craft and on details which make the text moving or memorable. There is usually a specific focus on particular characters or ideas in order to guide deeper understanding, and an encouragement of personal reflection on the meaning of the text. All these strands are further developed in the bullet points, which guide candidates to parts of the text which will help them organise their response. Some candidates choose to use the bullet points as a framework for their essay. That is quite acceptable, but it is not necessary, and some of the strongest answers do not use them at all, but maintain a very strong focus on the stem question in bold, and ensure that they answer it.

All the assessment objectives are equally weighted. Too many candidates approach this paper as if it only tests AO1 and AO3. Some overwhelm their answer with extensive, and often over-long quotation from the text and follow these with comments that are close paraphrase or description, not analysis. Other, stronger, answers show good analytical skills and extensive knowledge of literary effects, but treat analysis as an end in itself. Observations need to drive argument and interpretation. AO2 and AO4 can get neglected. Understanding needs to be deeper than surface narrative, and the wider implications of a text extend beyond the choice of words. Commentary on detail needs to be connected to the meaning of the text as a whole. There should be some understanding of why the writer wrote the text. This applies especially to poetry, but prose analysis also gains from analysis of the narrative perspective and the authorial choices behind that. Personal response means a developed and convincing argument in response to the question and the text. Quality of argument therefore matters. The best responses show impressive engagement and evaluation of the effect of the development of the whole text on the reader.

The texts are long and detailed enough to require some selection of detail, which needs to be part of the planning process. More successful candidates usually spend time underlining or highlighting particular details from the text. Thinking about the effect, significance and meaning of particular phrases and images can help to structure an argued response. Selection of brief quotations, which can be integrated within an argument about them, will keep the answer concise and focused. It is not necessary, or even possible for a response to be completely exhaustive, and judicious, thoughtful selection of details to concentrate on is often a feature of the best answers. Weaker responses too often write at excessive length and to little purpose about small but not very significant details of the first stanza or paragraph and have little, or nothing, to say about how texts end. The most revealing and exciting language is likely to come at the end of a selected passage or the close of a poem. Nor should the middle of a text be neglected, as there will be key details which demonstrate its structure and development.

Candidates who use the bullet points realise that they are designed to take them through the text chronologically. Responses which do not look at the text sequentially, from beginning to end, often miss or misread crucial details and developments. However, the final bullet point, while often drawing attention to how a text ends, also encourages candidates to step back and draw conclusions from their observations. Writing excessively detailed paragraphs which merely repeat what they have already said, or make an irrelevant personal or moralistic response to what they think the text means rather than what it actually says, does not enable access to the higher bands. This is another sign of poor planning. A succinct conclusion can draw different strands of analysis together, evaluate the author's purpose and make a personal judgement on the effectiveness of the writing. The best responses need few words to do this, but enable candidates to demonstrate the higher band descriptors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

'The Boy Tiresias' by Kate Tempest attracted the full range of achievement and although its qualities as poetry were not always explored in great depth, many candidates found the perceived theme of 'ageing' accessible and worthy of attention. Many clearly engaged nostalgically with the images of the young boy in the first two stanzas 'sucking on sherbet' and 'playing with fate', enjoying these images of innocence and control. Some were so horrified by the transition to old age 'hunch-backed, riddled with pain' that they felt only a personal catastrophe could explain it, and unfortunately felt they had to look outside the text to construct a narrative of fatal disease or disaster. More engaged with the idea of youth giving way to age as an inevitable occurrence and while not all recognised the allusion to Tiresias, the blind seer and commentator in so many Greek tragedies, most recognised something other-worldly about the boy that we were commanded three times to 'watch'. They nevertheless saw him as a representative figure, and some were very interested in the idea that we are less in control of the path of our lives than we think, or realised that if he had the gift to see into the future it would be unlikely to do him, or anyone else, much good.

As always, the discriminator was the candidates' ability to explore the language and structure and to go beyond simple paraphrase to offer a more developed interpretation of text. Kate Tempest is a young performance poet who raps her verse. Most candidates noted the irregular form of the poem, but only strong candidates attempted to glean meaning from its shift from free-verse to occasional rhyme and/or from the irregularity of stanza and line-lengths. Many candidates attempted to identify the irregular rhyme scheme and pointed out the unusual use of single lines, but far fewer were able convincingly to suggest ways in which these technical features contributed to tone or to the development of meaning.

Many candidates worked their way through the poem in a methodical way, but better candidates did not start to write until they had worked out the persona's intentions in focusing on the present and future of the Tiresias, as guided by the bullet points. Some made perceptive reference to the changes of tense yet tone proved elusive to some candidates who insisted on seeing the poem as ultimately 'depressing' or 'sombre', ignoring the more stoic or consolatory turn in the lines 'But for now, he is young still, and everything's his'. Many youthful perspectives on the ageing process were occasionally linked too personally to candidates' own lives, family and acquaintances. The title of the poem was often ignored. However, most candidates were able to recognise the persona's involvement in the life of Tiresias, who many insisted was a mythical 'creature' rather than a 'figure' from myth. Some candidates cast the persona in the role of Tiresias' mother or lover and many suggested that the poet's admiration of the boy was a form of jealousy.

Many candidates responded to the poet's use of repetition as a device to draw in the reader; including reference to the repetition of 'Watch him' as well as the shift to first person plural as 'we' are invited to consider our own adult lives. There was plenty of understanding of the 'journey' of the boy Tiresias from perfect happiness to certain misery and better candidates appreciated the subtlety of the return to the boy Tiresias, at the end of the poem. Comment on the choric element of stanzas 4 and 5 was more rare, with some commenting that these stanzas seemed disconnected from the rest of the poem, or treating it as a 'philosophical monologue' detached from the story of the boy. Those who looked at its role in universalising the narrative usually did well. One expressed the future of Tiresias as symbolising the 'quiet terror of being alive'.

Most candidates were most confident with the simplicity of the diction in the opening stanzas, only occasionally commenting on the more cryptic style of the later stanzas. Stronger answers always engaged with the meaning of the final images. They enjoyed the idea of the young boy as a sun at the centre of his solar system, with worlds revolving around him, and the return of ideas of innocence and control. Those reluctant to confront the darker truths of the poem tended to read the idea of 'destiny calling' or the boy's future as 'dressing to a wound' rather blithely feeling that he could be easily healed from the vision of future heartbreak unravelled in the poem's central stanzas. Those who felt he was trying to heal a wound to his heart tended to do most to unlock this image.

Stronger answers picked up the ominous notes even in the 'perfect' early stanzas. They noticed that the personal pronoun 'his' before the word 'leaves' makes the boy even more a fantasy of omnipotence than the interesting portmanteau-word 'Godcub'. Interestingly most candidates read the adjective 'filmic' as hinting at something fake, and felt that real life is never like the movies. The strongest answers saw the difference between the boy's fantasy of God-like power and the reality of God-like knowledge. They did not shy away from the central stanzas and realised they were introduced by the words which the older Tiresias seems to mumble at strangers '*how strange that when we have youth we're so keen to destroy it.*' Many wanted to read the voice of the poet intervening directly here, which at least helpfully set up the lines which follow. Some read this as the voice of an embittered elderly person unfairly jealous of youthful pleasures.

The best responses were distinguished by their willingness to engage with the presentation of destiny. Some saw this as pointing inevitably to death, and made much of the rhymes of 'undertake' and 'wake' and the alliterative 'the days are all dust'. The reference to 'rust in their kiss' was also interpreted in a wide variety of plausible and interesting ways. The strongest were always able to link their close reading of language to meaning and effect on the reader as in this strong example: '*The rhyme between 'dust', trust' and 'rust' creates a link between the optimistic message and hope of 'trust' and the forgotten 'rust' implying that human are so foolish as to love and cherish the things that have the ability to and the inevitability to hurt us as we realise the hopelessness of loving another equally lost human being.*'

Question 2

The prose extract is from *The Reef* by the Sri Lankan-born novelist Romesh Guneseekara. The passage is from early on in the novel, when Kolla, the narrator, has just arrived at Mr Salgado's house as a junior servant. Shortly after this passage Joseph is sacked and Kolla takes his place.

Responses to this prose passage covered the whole range of achievement. Joseph's devil-like, spoony-jawed appearance drew lively responses from candidates. Most of the better answers realised that Kolla's depiction of Joseph as a monstrous or deformed tormentor is shaped by an 11-year-old's childish and over-active imagination. There was some disagreement about whether the threat Joseph poses to Kolla is real or perceived. The discriminator in this question was again to move beyond the initial part of the text, in this case the first three paragraphs, and to read them in the light of how the passage ends. Some found the religious preoccupations of Kolla and his prayers for Joseph's destruction disturbing, while others discovered comedy in their hyperbole and in the way in which his 'gods' fail to heed his prayers. Some saw the improbability of

his fantasies. More common were responses which saw Gothic elements in the pathetic fallacy, the invocation of the supernatural and the implicit clash between good and evil. There was some disagreement about whether the one-sided dialogue with the real Joseph ('Here, eat this' and 'Sleep inside') showed some care or even kindness towards Kolla or whether his abrupt imperative confirms he is as rude, threatening and oppressive as Kolla paints him.

It did not matter which interpretative line candidates took: what was important was that they had one. Not all candidates who tackled this question appeared to have read the question and the associated information/bullets with sufficient care and many answers did not make adequate use of the guidance offered. Nor had they thought enough about how the passage ends before tackling the start. Confusions such as thinking that Kolla was a girl, or Joseph another boy, should not have occurred, as the rubric always provides candidates with enough information to work out who is who. Responses which were less successful tended to narrate the contents with little comment or basic descriptive explanation. Sometimes the PEE acronym does not help as it is not enough to simply explain. Analysis of techniques and a link back to the point the candidate is making or the original question are both necessary for higher marks. Often a focus on an individual word within a quotation, and its effect, works well.

In this paper, candidates get no reward for simply identifying devices rather than commenting on their effect. Nevertheless, candidates who have acquired a technical vocabulary for the analysis of prose are likely to do better, as this will help them to steer away from close paraphrase of the narrative. In this case, awareness of the convention of the 'unreliable narrator' is especially helpful, and candidates who are taught about different kinds of narrative viewpoint are much better equipped not only for this paper but for further study. Each year examiners report that candidates are more confident in applying technical language to poetry than to prose, but the paper gives them a genuine choice and they should be prepared for both. Study of genre can also be helpful. Those who were aware of the characteristics of Gothic prose were better able to deal with heightened language and imagery in Kolla's descriptions, not least the pathetic fallacy associated with the storm. Imagery is present in prose too, and surprisingly few realised that the 'silver spears' of Kolla's gods are actually shafts of lightning. Those steeped in Gothic convention realised that these descriptions are also evidence of Kolla's psychological state.

The question was about Kolla's thoughts and feelings, rather than about Joseph. Therefore candidates who focused too much on the opening paragraphs of the passage and on Kolla's descriptions of Joseph found they did not have the time to deal with the very rich descriptive and figurative language in paragraphs three and four, let alone with the arrival of Joseph himself. They also tended to take Kolla's view of Joseph at face value and to see Joseph as an incarnation of Frankenstein's monster or the devil himself. Others thought he was a zombie or a vampire, and cited the evidence that Kolla is using raw onion to protect himself, just as vampire hunters use garlic. There were some thoughtful responses to how frightened an 11-year-old boy might be to see him this way. They realised that Joseph's nails were less a tribute to the manicurist's art than a potential weapon, and found evidence that Kolla is in fear of physical violence, as well as Joseph's 'sullen heart', 'big hands' and strangely disembodied head.

Candidates who planned their time more effectively were able to comment upon the violent imagery used to describe the junk and broken domestic appliances that cluttered the servants' quarters. They saw the implicit violence of 'battle-worn' chairs, 'blistered' and 'mangled' equipment and a radio which disturbingly looked as if it had 'its face punched in'. Some felt this violence came from Joseph and a few from Kolla, and there was clear understanding that all is not well below stairs. Some explored the ultra-sadistic descriptions of Kolla's prayers wishing to see Joseph 'pierced' 'drenched' and 'drowned' and claimed that it was Kolla who was the real monster in this piece. Others felt that his malevolence was another indicator of his youth and vulnerability, and that such casual references to death and destruction were proof of his childish innocence. Once again, it did not matter how candidates interpreted these details: what was important was to see they were engaging in making meaning out of description instead of merely commenting on it.

Although there were candidates who wrote very short answers, there were many painstaking explorations of the writer's methods to be seen. The stronger answers left plenty of time for the way the passage ends, with different readings of the moment when Joseph appears, detailed exploration of Kolla's prayers, and especially the ways in which the storm and torrential rain, signalled in the second paragraph, add to the menace of the scene and lead the reader to expect a climatic denouement as 'the sound rose to a crescendo'. The best, however, realised that this climax never quite happens, and there might be something anti-climactic or even comic about the failure of Kolla's prayers here. Those who could respond in interesting ways to the hyperbole of this exaggerated passage were candidates capable of identifying devices and then exploring their impact on the reader. While some candidates struggled to write effectively about syntax, punctuation and sentence length, others did so in sophisticated and mature ways, thereby demonstrating a strong understanding of *how* writers create effects.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43
Paper 43 Unseen

Key messages

- Candidates should spend twenty minutes reading, noting and planning in order to ensure the text is fully understood before beginning their response.
- The question is designed to help candidates to address the assessment objectives. Key terms in the question should be identified in order to meet its specific demands.
- All the Assessment Objectives are addressed in the paper: candidates need to ensure that textual reference and comment on features of language does not prevent personal response and the development of deeper understanding.
- No answer is expected to be exhaustive, but candidates should base their response on a selection of material from the whole text, including its ending.
- The final bullet point will often encourage a personal and evaluative response to the whole text and the strongest responses reflect on their findings and draw their own conclusions.

General comments

The standard of responses across all papers this summer was high. Most rose to the challenge of demanding and varied texts, and the quality of performance continues to rise. There were few very weak answers in this paper, and some responses were exceptional in their range, quality of engagement and analytical sensitivity to language and form. As most are well aware of what is looked for in a literary response to unseen poetry and prose, this advice is aimed to make good responses even better.

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text and follow these with comments that are close paraphrase or description, not analysis. Other, stronger, answers show good analytical skills and extensive knowledge of literary effects, but treat analysis as an end in itself. Observations need to drive argument and interpretation. AO2 and AO4 can get neglected. Understanding needs to be deeper than surface narrative, and the wider implications of a text extend beyond the choice of words. Commentary on detail needs to be connected to the meaning of the text as a whole. There should be some understanding of why the writer wrote the text. This applies especially to poetry, but prose analysis also gains from analysis of the narrative perspective and the authorial choices behind that. Personal response means a developed and convincing argument in response to the question and the text. Quality of argument therefore matters. The best responses show impressive engagement and evaluation of the effect of the development of the whole text on the reader.

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Candidates who use the bullet points realise that they are designed to take them through the text chronologically. Responses which do not look at the text sequentially, from beginning to end, often miss or misread crucial details and developments. However, the final bullet point, while often drawing attention to how a text ends, also encourages candidates to step back and draw conclusions from their observations. Writing excessively detailed paragraphs which merely repeat what they have already said, or make an irrelevant personal or moralistic response to what they think the text means rather than what it actually says, does not enable access to the higher bands. This is another sign of poor planning. A succinct conclusion can draw different strands of analysis together, evaluate the author's purpose and make a personal judgement on the effectiveness of the writing. The best responses need few words to do this, but enable candidates to demonstrate the higher band descriptors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The question based on Seamus Heaney's poem 'Field of Vision' encouraged a high degree of engagement and responsiveness from candidates. The text and task was handled well overall and there were some superb responses from a number of candidates showing tremendous sensitivity, insight and deftness of judgement. Elements of ambiguity and ambivalence in the poem created an openness of interpretation which resulted in a wide variety of lines of reading and points of view. It is true that at times some responses were overly speculative and hypothetical in nature but even here there was evidence of much valid personal engagement and thoughtful reading.

The great majority of candidates responded very well to the first bullet point which prompted them to focus on the presentation of the woman in relation to her surroundings. They responded, for instance, to the implications of how the repetitions of 'straight' and 'the same' conveyed the nature of the woman's life, most feeling that this suggested a boring or at the very least monotonous quality to her existence. Top end responses, while not necessarily excluding such readings, began to develop ideas of stoicism and equanimity in the face of adversity. While acknowledging the limited, restricted nature of her life, particularly in physical terms, they identified the sense of strength gained from an intimate and long-developed relationship with the natural world. Much strong work was done in unpicking the image of the sycamore trees 'unleafing/And leafing at the far end of the lane', leading to a recognition of the cyclical movement of the seasons in contrast to the outwardly static quality of the woman's existence. While some candidates saw this as a negative contrast reinforcing a depressing and pessimistic sense of inertia and deadness in relation to the woman's life, others used it as a starting point to develop a reading of the poem which was strongly positive and life-affirming, particularly in terms of the woman's affinity with nature. There were many sensitive and insightful meditations here on, variously, the restorative, sustaining powers of the natural world, on the complexity of time and the nature of its passing and on mortality and the individual's response to the approach of the end of life. Likewise, much careful work was done with the poet's depiction of the harshness of the external environment viewed from the woman's window, leading to an exploration of the

suggestiveness behind the personification of the 'agitated' hawthorn bush or the resilience and powers of endurance implied by the calves with 'their backs to the wind and rain.' It was interesting also to read the variety of responses to the description of the woman's gaze extending 'straight past the TV in the corner'. For many candidates, this suggested the profundity and moral seriousness of her outlook which ignored the superficial concerns and fripperies of the contemporary modern world and its media, while others saw this detail as further evidence of the blank and benighted nature of her depressively introverted, colourless existence.

The great majority of candidates commented on the poet's use of simile in the third stanza, although the quality of analysis at this point proved something of a discriminator. While some candidates struggled here, strong answers understood the meaning behind 'steadfast' and used this image and the succeeding one centred on the comparison of the woman's brow to the 'chrome' of the wheelchair to develop a reading of the poem centred on ideas of serenity and poise, strength and clarity of vision. Less strong answers perhaps tended to take this second image more literally, a number seeing it simply as a reference to the silver colour of the woman's hair or eyebrows, and thus as another indication of her decrepitude and nearness to death. While some candidates saw the final two lines of this stanza as further evidence of a dislikable emotional coldness or misanthropy, most chose to emphasise the sense of the poet's admiration for the woman's lack of self-pity and her undemonstrative, selfless stoicism. Here there was a developed response to the impact of such words as 'lamented' or the metaphorical implications of her not carrying 'a spare ounce of emotional weight.'

Indeed, a key discriminator throughout was the ability to work carefully and thoughtfully with the various elements of diction and imagery in the poem, tempering an imaginative response to their suggestiveness with good judgement and good sense. Candidates should be encouraged to be flexible and not overly dogmatic. While having a strong, clear overview of the text is so often the mark of a high-scoring answer, that does not mean that candidates should not be encouraged to recognise the open-endedness of texts, particularly poetic ones, and to recognise the likelihood of the co-existence of multiple readings and responses. It was striking in this case how many candidates began by discussing the poem in terms of a fundamentally negative portrayal of the woman and then at some point in the course of the essay came round to see her positive attributes and the admiring, even awed tone of the poet in relation to her and the virtues she seemed to embody. While such inconsistencies or incoherencies are not perhaps ideal, they are often part of an 'organic' reading which grows strongly through the course of the candidate's thinking, re-reading and writing and are certainly preferable to responses which begin with a fixed line of interpretation and which continue to impose this on the text despite at times the contradictory evidence of the words on the page. In this case, preconceived ideas of disability and/or old age (although nowhere in the poem does it specifically indicate the latter) often took candidates down a route from which they were reluctant to turn, usually leading to skewed and unconvincing interpretation.

A central aim for candidates, then, ought to be the development of a sustained and deepening interpretative response to the specifics of the text and, crucially, an accurate recognition of its shifting tones. In order to access the higher end of the mark scheme, such a reading will be fused with a detailed analysis of the writing and a variety of its significant features. Of considerable importance in this case, of course, was the exploration of the 'education' experienced by the poet in meeting with the woman through a tracing of the extended metaphor of the gate and the field behind. Candidates who didn't reach this point in the poem or who omitted to focus on the imagery and the possible symbolic implications here obviously limited themselves in terms of a discussion of the 'impression' made on the poet by the woman and her significance for him.

As already indicated, there was much scope to discuss how such features as repetition, personification, simile and so forth helped shape the poem's meaning for the reader. Sometimes a close examination of form can be highly productive but this isn't always the case and here attempts to comment on the lack of a rhyme scheme, for instance, were not usually particularly helpful. Likewise, the regularity of the stanza structure elicited some entirely valid but not especially insightful comment: some candidates saw it as underscoring the dreary monotony of the woman's existence, others as suggesting the lucid, rational order of her mind and her inner strength – a comparison with the sturdiness of the 'two whitewashed pillars' was quite a nice touch, though, admittedly. Similarly, when it comes down to the details of punctuation, comment can also be a little strained, an example being the idea that the comma placed immediately after the word 'wheelchair' reinforced the idea of the woman's immobility and her being 'stuck'. A recognition that the entirety of the last two stanzas is comprised of one single sentence, on the other hand, was quite powerful if integrated into a developed reading of the gathering, climactic movement towards an epiphany of sorts, even if it is one which is characteristically understated and one destined to remain mysterious, enigmatic and 'distinctly strange'. Sometimes perhaps a little too much can be made of the effects of enjambment but the run-on between the penultimate and the final stanza could be argued as suggesting the widening out of what is seen, and the

movement from an enclosed interior space to one of expansiveness and freedom, as some of the very best answers observed. These responses also tended to link the image back to the title and throughout explored the poem in terms of its sustained focus on 'seeing', on different perspectives and points of view (of the woman, the poet, the reader and society in general), on 'fields of vision' both literal and metaphorical, and, as a corollary, on physical and transcendental modes of being.

Question 2

The question based on the extract from Olivia Manning's novel *The Great Fortune* proved a popular choice for candidates and responses were consistently competent or better with a number of outstanding examples of highly-skilled narrative analysis. More or less all candidates appeared comfortable with both the text and the task. Most were able to engage with all three bullet points in some detail and there were fewer responses which took a simple narrative approach or which tended towards an illustrated paraphrase of the text than has been the case at times in previous years. Most candidates attempted to engage with the language of the text and often grouped features for exploration with greater focus on technique and the writer's craft.

Most candidates understandably opted to address each of the bullet points in turn although the most successful answers consistently linked the points to the overarching question and picked up the threads throughout their response. The first bullet relating to the description of the market place was almost always competently addressed with most candidates choosing to focus initially on the connotations of word choice: 'primitive', 'bug-ridden', 'brutal', 'crowded' and so on. Discrimination manifested itself between those candidates who tended to work on a rather literal level and who observed how backward, dirty, unpleasant or dangerous the place was as opposed to those who analysed with precision how the writing worked here to create a sinister, ominous atmosphere from the outset with a strong sense of foreboding as to what might follow. Many good answers commented on how the 'greenish glow' suggested a sense of nausea or sickness, of an unnatural or alien world, while the fact that the windows 'threw' out this light indicated for some an aggressively hostile mood. Strong responses also often identified a sense of oppressive claustrophobia and saw in the description of the locals 'wrapped to the eyes in woollen scarves' not just an indication of the cold but a furtive, clandestine and vaguely menacing quality. The very best responses sometimes recognised here a sense of profound 'otherness' in the presentation of the inhabitants and their world from Harriet's perspective, a concept which was developed and deepened throughout the essay to tremendously productive effect.

The portrayal of the beggars likewise produced much good work and there was a strong sense of personal engagement with the shocking nature of their physical deprivation and the powerful manner in which this is described by the writer. The depiction of the practised nature of their begging and their 'professional and remorseless piteousness' elicited much lively comment ranging from moral distaste and repulsion at such artifice to an outraged sense of sympathy and a condemnation of the social conditions which had led to such a perversion of natural instincts and the corruption of childhood innocence. While some of these latter responses began to rather detach themselves from the text and to become more sociological than literary critical in nature, such moral and political engagement with the text is entirely valid and certainly part of an exploration of its 'deeper implications'. Good answers tended to identify the dehumanisation of the beggars in the description of them 'rummaging for food under the stalls', the manner in which they 'whined and whimpered' and the vivid simile which compared their clinging hold on Harriet to that of 'lice'. The depiction of young children as mere parasites and especially of them being 'struck' off the carriage by its driver drew much strong comment.

The third bullet point prompted candidates to analyse how the writer conveyed Harriet's feelings of isolation and fear. The final prompt is often designed to push candidates to move beyond surface readings and more into what is implicit in the text. In this sense, it can function as quite a powerful discriminator and this was certainly the case here. Most candidates were able to recognise why someone and especially a foreigner would be upset by the experience and why she might feel alone and frightened. Again, there was much competent point-making and textual illustration in relation to the description of her plight. Good answers began to go a little further and explored Harriet's feelings of fury and desperation and how these were suggested by the writing. While many candidates were straight-forwardly sympathetic to the nature of her response, a number began to explore the depiction of her feelings and actions in a more critical vein. Some strong answers, for instance, focused closely on how the protagonist's anger 'subsided' progressively as the child beggars were whipped off from the carriage and, insect-like, 'dropped down, one by one.' Many candidates were appalled by details such as this and the virulence of Harriet's antipathy and what was seen as a profound lack of humane empathy. Responses which read the extract at least in part in the context of western imperialistic attitudes which tended towards a demonising or dehumanising of 'The Other', gained in power and credibility when rooted in close textual analysis of this kind. On the other hand, a number of

candidates commented perceptively on how Harriet herself is dehumanised or objectified in the eyes of the beggars as being nothing more than 'the dispenser of hundred-lei notes'.

Reports have often advised Centres that candidates be trained in being able to analyse the different ways narratives are constructed and particularly how writers employ different narrative perspectives and points of view. In this case, while many candidates assumed a direct equivalence between the attitudes and feelings of the protagonist and those of the writer/narrator, more sophisticated answers recognised Harriet as a character with whom the writer might not be entirely in uncritical sympathy. Some candidates identified satirical elements in the presentation of the character. The very best responses traced with perceptive insight how through the course of the passage the writer subtly manipulates the reader's potentially increasingly ambivalent reaction to Harriet, a young woman possessing only a narrow experience of the world and herself shaped by the prejudices and assumptions of her social class and upbringing.

Another oft-repeated piece of advice has been to encourage candidates to focus attention on the endings to texts as presented to them. While it is perhaps understandable that some candidates struggle to sustain an analysis to the end of a relatively extended prose extract, they should be advised not to short-change the final lines which may often strike the defining note of the passage. The last paragraph in this case was certainly rich in possibilities for close analysis and discussion. Many candidates did some work, for instance, on the use of the word 'alien' either to underscore the utter sense of isolation and alienation felt by Harriet – not just from the local inhabitants but also her friends and even her husband – or to suggest that the world in which she finds herself is not simply a foreign one but one almost from a different planet or universe entirely. With the wind being described as 'harsher than any wind she had ever ever known', even nature is seen to be both hostile and estranging. Continuing this idea, many responses focused on the movement of her thoughts out into the mountains and the forests. While some answers commented on how the references to the wolves and bears suggested her sense of ever-present danger all around her, others went further to suggest an equivalence between the bestial predators of the wild and the human predators of the market place. The strongest responses focused on the disturbed quality of Harriet's imagination and the bringing to the surface of primal fears of blood and violence rooted in her sub-consciousness. The word 'haunted' seemed for some candidates to aptly suggest the nature of Harriet's experience more generally and some strong scripts drew together the macabre and nightmarish elements of the whole piece from the surreal light and atmosphere of the market-place to the violent, whip-wielding carriage-driver to the 'ancient female dwarf' and her 'thrusting stump of an arm', a sinister figure drawn from some darkly twisted fairy tale.