

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0477/01
Paper 01 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts studied
- focus explicitly on the key words of the question
- use relevant textual references to support the points made
- engage with the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- show an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- introduce irrelevant material (including extraneous background material)
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely log or describe writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than responses that address the question.

General comments

There was much evidence of outstanding work this session, where candidates showed both sensitive engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poetry and prose texts they had studied. There were very few rubric infringements, and the majority of candidates divided their time well across their two answers. There were, however, instances of some candidates relying solely on the extract printed on the question paper when answering general essay questions on the Prose texts; this approach is self-penalising as responses are subsequently drawn on the basis of insufficient material. Teachers should remind candidates to write the correct question numbers in the margin of the answer booklet.

Textual knowledge

The strongest answers showed an impressively detailed knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully integrating both concise quotation and indirect textual references to support their ideas. Many candidates took advantage of the fact that the poems and extracts are printed on the question paper to carefully select and closely probe the effects created by the writer's use of language. The strongest responses to general essay questions also showed an extensive knowledge and included much direct quotation, testimony to the close study undertaken by students. The absence of pertinent textual support inevitably led to overly assertive and explanatory responses.

Focus on the question

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question from start to finish. These responses addressed directly those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing; words such as 'moving', 'vivid', 'sad', 'memorably', 'strikingly'. There were, however, less successful responses that made only a cursory reference, and sometimes no reference, to such words. Instead a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes was given with little regard to the question. This was particularly evident in responses to both poetry and prose extract-based questions where a candidate worked through the poem or extract, often exhaustively.

There were fewer examples this session of candidates beginning their essays with extraneous background material relating to social or cultural contexts. There were, however, instances of lengthy conclusions that merely re-stated the main points of the essay.

Writers' effects

The most convincing and perceptive responses sustained a critical engagement with the effects achieved by writers' use of form, structure and language. Those with a detailed knowledge of their texts were better able to explore closely the effects of the writing. The strongest responses were able to link their comments on form, structure and language to the ideas and impressions conveyed by the writer. Less successful responses sometimes commented discretely on effects without relating them to content and meaning. In general, less confident responses were characterised by a tendency to explain rather than analyse. Nowhere was this more evident than in general comments made about semantic fields or identification of rhyme schemes (e.g. ABAB). Examiners noticed an increase in the number of general and unproductive assertions about the associations of particular colours: in responses to Browning's *Meeting at Night*, 'blue' was variously described as 'cold', 'warm', 'mournful' and 'romantic'.

Even in relatively more successful responses, there were occasions where candidates referred repeatedly to prose texts as 'the poem' or 'the play', thereby showing an insecure understanding of the importance of literary form.

Personal response

The strongest answers were characterised by informed and sensitive personal responses to texts. These focused directly on the key words of questions and explored the detail of texts in essays, with insight and individuality. Such answers are testimony to the hard work of students and teachers. There were fewer examples of answers that simply regurgitated ideas found in study guides. Less confident answers showed 'empathy' – describing a particular character and situation as relatable – but did not offer a probing critical analysis of details from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Successful responses commented perceptively on Heidi's dyeing of her hair as her way of dealing with the devastating loss of her mother; the vibrant hair style being a symbol of, and distraction from, her grief. These responses explored the implications of the central word 'shimmered' in 'your mother's death... shimmered behind the arguments'. There was generally an understanding of the use of tone in phrases such as 'as the headmistress put it', and most candidates were able to engage with the key idea of suppression of individuality. Less successful responses tended to write at length about the theme of criticising authority, as exercised by the headmistress, but did not link their observations to the question's key words 'so moving'. Some candidates mistook the voice of the poem's speaker for that of Heidi's father.

Question 2

There were many engaging explorations of the detail of the vivid atmosphere of the poem. In stronger responses there was a recognition of the change of pace as the speaker moves ever closer to his destination and the air of mystery created by the dark landscape and moonlight. The 'grey' and 'black' were commonly described as relating to not only darkness and an air of secrecy but also to the emptiness of the speaker when away from their lover. Successful responses considered the perspective of the poem's speaker in communicating impressions of the journey across sea and land. Less successful responses asserted biographical readings rather than exploring the ways in which Browning achieves his effects. There were also many pre-learned responses which led to overly assertive interpretations, often in relation to 'pushing prow' and 'slushy sand'.

Question 3

Most responses were able to communicate the sense of awe felt by the speaker at the spectacle of the snow blanketing London so completely. Many explored the religious references and went beyond the physical effects of the snowfall, considering it an act of cleansing in a spiritual sense. The strongest answers explored with confidence and sensitivity the impact of the sensuous language and related their analysis to the main thrust of the question ('vividly convey the effects of the snowfall'). Most responses included comment on the effect of the snow on the schoolboys, but fewer commented convincingly on the ways in which the 'trains of sombre men' are affected. In some cases, this appeared to be the result of candidates having worked exhaustively through the poem, line by line, which meant insufficient time to explore the poem's ending.

Question 4

Responses to this question were wide ranging. The strongest responses wrote sensitively about this study of the sudden and arbitrary nature of death, exploring the ways in which the buck is brought to its knees. These answers examined carefully Millay's use of language, form and structure in making it such a sad poem. Many commented on the impact of the use of repetition, sound, the single-line second stanza and the implications of the buck's blood 'scalding the snow'. There was sometimes a misreading of 'Life' and 'a mile away now', with some interpreting this as the buck having died a mile away. In the weakest responses, confusion over the meaning of the words 'buck' and 'doe' was apparent.

Question 5

Most answers showed an understanding of the unfamiliar environment, the speaker's lack of connection with the child and the contrasting descriptions of the baby while asleep and awake. There was much engaging analysis of the speaker's description of the baby's 'hot midnight rage' and comment on the implications of the baby-sitter representing 'absolute/Abandonment'. Most candidates focused at great length on the first stanza, while seemingly only casting a perfunctory glance at references to the 'lover cold in lonely/Sheets' and 'the woman... in the terminal ward'. The most successful responses, however, did explore the impact of these references in relation to the main thrust: how Clarke 'memorably conveys strong emotions'.

Question 6

In the few responses seen to this question, there was a tendency to contrast the natural with the man-made and the beautiful with the ugly without directing such comments explicitly to the question. Sometimes the key words 'so dramatic' were included almost as an afterthought in a candidate's concluding paragraph. Only a few responses focused on how Clarke makes dramatic the near-collision with the bird and the description of the extreme weather and its effect on the town and poet.

Section B

Question 7

Most responses set out the clear contrasts between the characters of Tom and Edmund and were able to set the extract in its context, explaining, for example, the significance of comments about Maria. The strongest answers explored Austen's use of language and tone in conveying the conflict between the two brothers. These answers often confidently examined the use of dialogue and the different ways in which the two brothers speak: Edmund measured; Tom impetuous. There was often mention of the humorous way in which the narrator's description of Lady Bertram ('the picture of health, wealth, ease, and tranquillity') somewhat undermined Tom's protestations of his mother's 'anxiety'. Less confident answers worked through the extract, adopting an explanatory, and in some cases, narrative approach.

Question 8

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

Successful responses explicitly addressed the two key words of the question: 'dramatic' and 'unsettling'. The strongest responses explored the dramatic nature of the setting and the sensations of a fall afternoon on the prairie. These responses showed an appreciation of the impact on the mood of phrases such as 'a lifting-up of day' and 'under that magnificence'. Many candidates were able to place the extract in its context, i.e. before the suicide of Mr Shimerda and therefore draw on the significance of his smile ('so full of sadness, of pity for things') and of the references to the gun. Less successful responses tended to work through the extract in an exhaustive way which did not directly address the question. It is important that candidates adopt a selective approach to extract-based questions, choosing the most relevant parts of the extract.

Question 10

There were far fewer responses to the general essay question than to the extract-based question on Cather's novel. Most answers expressed the view that Antonia's life is happy and satisfying in spite of the hardships. They commented on her willingness to work hard, her positive outlook on life, her relationship with her parents and siblings and her relationship with Jim. Set against these reasons for a happy and satisfying life were the limitations of her lack of a formal education, her life at the Cutters and her exploitation by some of the men she encounters. Less successful responses tended to lack the precise and pertinent textual reference needed to support the points made and, as a consequence, were often explanatory and on occasion narrative in their approach.

Question 11

Most responses were able to explore Deven's thoughts and feelings in the extract about his troubled marriage and his failed aspirations of becoming a poet. The strongest responses explored the ways in which the omniscient narrator sees life through Deven's eyes and the picture that emerges of a relationship based on mutual disappointment. These answers recognised the peevish nature of the observations of Sarla's physical appearance ('furrows...permanent as surgical scars' and her hair 'twin lines of disappointment') and considered the implications of their status as two 'victims'. Less confident responses tended to describe the state of their relationship with some acknowledgement of Deven's perspective that both had given up on expecting anything better from their life together.

Question 12

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Many candidates were able to explain how this moment is made moving through the depiction of Louisa's relationship with her mother and the sense that Mrs Gradgrind's realisation about her failures comes at a time when she cannot resolve them. The strongest responses showed a sensitive appreciation of the way in which Dickens presents the efforts of the dying mother to understand what had been missing in her household for the whole of her married life. Less successful responses lost focus on the key words 'how' and 'moving' and instead embarked on a general discussion of utilitarianism, with limited reference to specific textual detail. There were some mis-readings where candidates confused Sissy and Jane and where 'cried' was taken as 'wept' rather than 'shouted out'.

Question 14

Most responses showed an understanding of the differences between the characters of Bounderby and Louisa, the considerable and disturbing difference in age and how Louisa never shows any affection for Bounderby. Many referred to Louisa's physical reaction to Bounderby kissing her on the cheek. The strongest responses explored carefully the 'ways' Dickens makes the marriage so disturbing, probing closely his presentation of character. Less successful responses treated the characters as 'real-life' people rather than fictional creations, often producing separate character sketches for each of them. The most successful answers included an impressive range of textual reference to support their arguments; some referred convincingly to the dialogue between Louisa and her father as he realises what he has done to her.

Question 15

Most candidates were able to identify some of the ways in which Grenville conveys a pervading and ever-increasing sense of fear in the extract. The strongest responses commented closely on use of language for example, alluding to the phrase ‘catch the fear’ as if the fear were a contagious disease. Most responses explored at least some of the sensuous imagery and description of the unearthly sounds that contribute to the Thornhills’ fear. Many commented on the wider implications of increasing tension and the significance of the words ‘borrowed from Smasher’ who had previously warned Thornhill about the natives. In some responses, there was little evidence of an awareness of the wider novel as candidates worked through the extract, logging language features and simply stating that these showed the Thornhills’ fear. In these less successful responses comments on language were not linked meaningfully to content.

Question 16

Most responses acknowledged Sal’s desire to return to London and how this was at odds with her husband’s wishes. Most referred to the closeness of the couple up to this point and the sense that Will is now assuming a more dominant role. His promise to Sal that they will go back to England is increasingly seen to be one he will not fulfil in his desperation to keep Thornhill’s Point. The strongest responses confidently explored the ways in which Grenville presents their different aspirations and how they contribute to the conflict between the two characters. Less successful responses lacked the range of textual references needed both to support arguments made and to serve as a starting point for a close analysis of Grenville’s use of language. As a result, these answers relied heavily on descriptive or assertive approaches.

Question 17

Many candidates were able to place this moment of the ‘trial’ immediately prior to Finny’s fatal injury. They commented on Leper’s fragility, Gene’s profound unease and Finny’s telling silence. The most successful responses explored Knowles’s use of the first person narrative voice which enables the reader to witness the trepidation with which Gene listened to Leper’s testimony. These answers identified Leper’s dislike of Gene and used textual reference to support the idea that, though unhinged, Leper knew exactly what he was doing during Brinker’s interrogation. Less successful answers tended to explain what was happening in the extract and merely assert that particular elements of the trial were dramatic. Some weaker responses showed some uncertainty as to who was speaking: Leper’s words were sometimes erroneously attributed to Gene for example, and Gene’s interior monologue to Leper.

Question 18

There were far fewer responses to the general essay question than to the extract-based question on *A Separate Peace*. Most answers showed a sound understanding of Finny the athlete and Gene the academic, with an awareness of the admiration they have for each other in the earlier stages of the novel. There was a recognition that Finny seems to be in charge and the one who sets the pace, initially. Many answers explored the significance of the beach scene and Gene’s trying on of Finny’s shirt. The strongest responses sustained a clear focus on the question and the ways in which Knowles achieves his effects. There were some perceptive responses to the (un)reliability of the narrative voice. Less successful responses often produced character sketches or listed those moments when Gene is honest and when he is dishonest. These responses needed a wider range of precise and relevant textual reference to support the points made.

Question 19

Many responses pointed out the dramatic nature of the extract in which a wave of despair hits all three men at the same time when faced with the hopelessness of the situation. Most candidates grasped the wider symbolism of the breakdown of society where even the men of God seem to accept defeat. The strongest responses analysed how the hope present at the start of the extract, with the mention of Absalom as head-boy, is destroyed in the rest of the extract. Most picked up on the portrayal of Msimangu’s uncharacteristic bitterness by exploring the effects of the words he speaks. Some less successful answers contained evidence of confusion about who was actually speaking at various moments in the extract, with some candidates expressing shock at what they mistakenly interpreted as bitterness stemming from Kumalo rather than Msimangu.

Question 20

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Most responses demonstrated knowledge of the immediate context: the prisoner captured in the dead of night and brought into the lemon orchard, with the resulting air of menace. They commented on the brutality of the men, the dignity of the captive and the implications of what might happen to the man. The strongest answers explored with some sensitivity the presentation of violence, the use of derogatory language spoken by the captors, the sensuousness of the description and the narrative viewpoint. Many explored the powerful way in which the writer creates tension. Less confident answers tended to narrate the story and occasionally interject with an assertion about the powerful nature of a particular feature. Some responses relied heavily on extraneous historical and social context and were, as a result, insufficiently rooted in the detail of the text.

Question 22

There were far fewer responses to the general essay question on *Secrets* (by Bernard MacLaverty) than to the extract-based question on *The Lemon Orchard*. Candidates showed knowledge of the basic plot, the fact that Aunt May was unmarried, and her relationship with the priest in the distant past. They showed a general understanding of the reasons for the tensions between aunt and nephew. Only the strongest answers, however, were able to explore how MacLaverty 'powerfully conveys' these tensions. The strongest answers contained a wide range of textual reference, including much direct quotation, with which candidates could support their ideas and analyse qualities of the writing. Candidates do need to know the stories in the anthology in detail so that they have sufficient textual reference when answering questions.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0477/02
Paper 02 Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses addressed the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations, which were analysed fully.

Successful opening paragraphs were brief and referenced the question. These avoided lengthy socio-historical detail or a list of the writer's techniques. Strong conclusions were those that provided more than a reiteration of points discussed.

In passage-based questions, stronger-performing candidates briefly contextualised the passage, selected the most relevant material from across the whole of the passage including the ending, and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.

An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was evident in the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of their set texts. They showed an engagement with the characters and themes, and an apparent enjoyment of the texts studied. The most popular texts were *A View from the Bridge* and *Macbeth*. Very few candidates answered on *The Winslow Boy*, and among those that did, knowledge and understanding of the text was often less secure. There were two new texts this session, *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Few candidates studied the former but a number of candidates chose *Romeo and Juliet*.

The strongest responses deconstructed the question using the adverbs, for example, 'strikingly' or 'vividly' to inform a judicious selection of reference material. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without exclusively citing literary terminology, is key to a successful response. While most candidates understood and used terminology such as foreshadowing and dramatic irony correctly, some candidates discussed terms that did not relate to the question or help to develop their argument constructively, for example, peripeteia and anagnorisis. Weaker candidates would benefit from drafting a brief plan to help them to maintain focus and to be more selective in their choice of reference material thereby avoiding a quotation-driven response particularly with regard to the passage-based question.

Strong responses demonstrated an accurate understanding of the social, cultural and historical context of a text, such as the difference between American law and the Sicilian code of honour in the Red Hook community in *A View from a Bridge*, or the Jacobean concept of kingship to explore the heinous crime of regicide and its effects on the perpetrators in *Macbeth*. Less successful answers wrote about the treatment of women and their low status in Elizabethan England to comment on Lady Macbeth, or 1950s America, to show Beatrice breaking out of her role as 'housewife', frequently losing sight of the question. A number of candidates expressed a feeling of pity for both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, citing mental health issues as justification for their behaviour neglecting to explore how their subsequent guilt and fear of discovery impacted on their 'thoughts and feelings' and ultimately their mental state.

When Beatrice challenges Eddie about his feeling for Catherine, Miller makes it clear in Eddie's reply that he hasn't had *'such a thought'* regarding Catherine. Candidates who asserted Eddie's culpability to such an extent that – in their view – he consciously groomed Catherine for a sexual relationship, were perhaps overstating the case. Likewise, the extract makes clear Catherine's innocence in her child-like behaviour with Eddie, so to state that she is deliberately encouraging Eddie's sexual overtures is also overstating her responsibility. Some candidates claimed Eddie was 'sick', 'toxic' with 'incestuous' desires with some commenting on the 'love triangle' implying that Catherine was in a romantic or even sexual relationship with Eddie. The key to successful answers and interpretations is in a candidate's ability to support ideas with apt textual reference and quotation, tightly linked to the terms of the question and rooted firmly in the text.

There were very few rubric infringements on Paper 2 this session where candidates answered two passage-based questions or two discursive questions. Candidates on both Papers endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly. They used their time successfully and there were very few brief responses or instances of candidates who ran out of time reported. The increased evidence of brief, useful planning was a feature of well-structured and more effective responses.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

This proved to be challenging for candidates, many of whom struggled to show a secure knowledge of the text. To answer the question fully, a focus on how the writing makes 'you feel' as a member of the audience (AO4: a personal response) is essential. The most successful responses conveyed a personal judgement and expressed both sympathy and disapproval of Walter's actions and words. These responses showed empathy with Walter's hurt pride at George's cold disdain and indifference, relating the extract to the root of his frustrations and touching on issues of race and aspiration. There were some sensitive responses to the fact that he feels he has neither the support of his wife, nor of his mother in the pathos conveyed by his words, *'Not even my own mother!'* Strong responses also commented on the language, 'giant', 'ants' and 'volcano'. Less successful responses simply worked through the passage, paraphrasing or explaining Walter's behaviour, with little focus on the question or apparent understanding of his desire for a better life. There was some misinterpretation of Walter's attitude towards George and college education.

Question 2

Less successful responses tended to underplay the significance of the generation gap focusing instead on differences between characters. Weaker responses also displayed a tendency to lapse into character study, describing Mama's strength in the face of poverty, her strength in holding the family together, her strong views on liquor stores and her determination to buy a house. More successful responses contrasted Mama's and Ruth's attitudes to abortion, discussed Mama's strict religious views, and explored her striking of Beneatha and her later beating of Walter when the loss of the money is revealed.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Many candidates successfully explored content and dramatic techniques. Stronger answers provided the relevant context: Catherine is upset as Eddie has accused Rodolpho of wanting to marry her to gain American citizenship; and Beatrice is angry that Eddie is *'going to start something'*. Successful responses also included comment on Beatrice's skilful and increasingly determined approach, her jealousy and desire to save her marriage, as well as her genuine concern for Catherine. A discussion of stage directions and was also a feature of strong responses, for example the significance of the pauses in the dialogue. Catherine's naiveté was usually understood but only the strongest responses demonstrated an understanding of her distress at the end as she realises what Beatrice is telling her. Some blamed Catherine for Eddie's feelings, judging her behaviour towards him to be deliberately provocative. A few mistakenly accused her of having a relationship with Eddie. Stronger-performing candidates wrote more perceptively recognising that Beatrice's *'imperious demand'* that Catherine leaves is because she knows she cannot change Eddie's behaviour.

Most candidates linked Eddie's patriarchal power and authority in the family to his protective care of Catherine, observing that this created a suffocating family dynamic that would become increasingly problematic as Catherine grew up. The most successful responses showed an understanding of how this scene represents a turning point in the play, with Beatrice trying to avert the tragedy but being unable to do so, as the audience had been forewarned by Alfieri. A few responses did not address the question directly, writing instead about Eddie's 'thoughts and feelings'. Weaker responses were also characterised by a simple listing of stage directions such as '*slowly turns her head*' or '*astonished*' without comment, and as such did not show an understanding of how these serve to reveal characters' 'thoughts and feelings'.

Question 4

Strong responses often explored the increasing pressure on Eddie to stop Rodolpho, leading to his central betrayal of Rodolpho and Marco, when he reports them to the Immigration Bureau. Candidates often pointed out how this was foreshadowed by the Vinny Bolzano story which emphasised the social codes defining the Red Hook community. The most successful answers considered the dramatic impact of the telephone booth on stage as a visible symbol of Eddie's act and of the intensity of Eddie's words to Catherine and Beatrice on Vinny's treatment by both his family and the community. Parallels were drawn between Vinny's and Eddie's treatment in the final scene. Many responses considered a range of betrayals in the text, including Eddie's betrayal of Beatrice and Catherine. Some considered Alfieri to have betrayed Eddie by facilitating Marco's release from jail, when he knew violence would ensue.

Some candidates tried to argue that Catherine betrays Eddie by wanting to leave him for Rodolpho, without any textual support. Other less successful responses were narrative in approach, identifying examples of betrayal, without addressing 'powerful'.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Responses to the passage needed to focus on what made the scene 'dramatic' rather than just describing what happened in it. Successful responses demonstrated an awareness of the conversation between Catherine and John and of the fear of 'Father', the sudden unexpected appearance of Ronnie and his 'bedraggled' state, and the confusion and shock as Catherine read the letter in silence. The use of the letter as a dramatic device – particularly dramatic as the audience is unaware of its content – was often undeveloped. Some responses successfully alluded to the tonal shifts in conversation when Ronnie appears with his fragmented and repetitive speech and Catherine's concern for him.

Question 6

Responses to this question were generally weak with candidates adopting too narrative an approach or simply providing a character profile of Sir Robert. More successful responses demonstrated a clear grasp of Sir Robert's part in the play, his interrogation of Ronnie and his commitment to the Winslow Case and to the changes this meant for his relationship with Catherine.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

Most candidates were able to identify some of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's 'troubled thoughts and feelings'. Stronger responses gave the context: unknown to Lady Macbeth, Macbeth has already ordered the murder of Banquo and his son. The most successful responses considered Lady Macbeth's regret for Duncan's murder as expressed in her opening soliloquy, '*Naught's had, all's spent*', and also in her attempts to reassure her husband with '*What's done is done*', when she can't stop thinking of Duncan's murder herself. Most responses showed that candidates had understood that feelings of guilt and regret caused the nightmares experienced by the couple and their inability to sleep, leading to Macbeth's extraordinary claim that he envied Duncan's peace. Stronger answers focused more on the couple's fear of discovery and their sense of insecurity, as well as on the changing dynamics of their relationship, with Macbeth clearly more confident in how to secure the throne than Lady Macbeth who asks, '*What's to be done*'. There was some close analysis of imagery for example '*scotch'd the snake*' and Macbeth's feelings that he can only still the '*scorpions*' in his mind with a '*deed of dreadful note*'.

Less successful responses quoted from the text without exploring the effects created. Some candidates identified language and images which mirror those used earlier in the play, but these needed to directly address the question. Semantic fields of words showing 'evil', for example 'bat', 'beetle' and 'crow' also needed to be related to the question: this could have been achieved with consideration of what they reveal about Macbeth's thoughts. Several candidates expressed sympathy for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth due to their deteriorating mental state, overlooking the fact that they deliberately killed Duncan in cold blood, and that Macbeth had already hired murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance.

Question 8

The most successful responses showed an understanding that the key words, 'To what extent', encouraged both a personal and balanced view of Macbeth as to his fitting the description of 'butcher'. These also displayed an ability to differentiate between Macbeth's brutality on the battlefield and the cold-blooded murders he commits later in the play. Some saw a progression from killing for a 'good' reason, i.e. to be king, to killing anyone who posed a threat, i.e. Banquo, to then killing indiscriminately – even the innocent Lady Macduff and her son. It was at this point in killing the innocent that many candidates argued he had become a 'butcher'. Candidates with an understanding of this tragic hero, with a fatal flaw, considered his sense of conscience and initial reluctance to kill Duncan as evidence that he was not a 'butcher', arguing he was a man manipulated by both an ambitious and fiendish wife, and fate and the witches. Some argued that though he ordered the later murders of Banquo and Macduff's wife and family, he did not kill them himself and this, along with his troubled conscience reveals some humanity on his part. Though there was a wide range of relevant textual detail and quotation used to support ideas, the violence, horror of the bloodshed and evidence from the final scene was rarely explored.

Less successful responses took the term 'butcher' literally and draw comparisons between Macbeth's slaughter on the battlefield, his use of knives, and his being 'steeped in blood', with the work of a 'butcher', who is a merciless killer of animals. There was also some basic re-telling of the plot with little, if any, reference to the key words in the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

Many candidates found it difficult to comment on both 'dramatic' and 'entertaining', and to accurately place the scene in the play. Stronger responses showed an awareness that the Nurse had spoken to Romeo and an understanding of the dramatic irony as Juliet waits, patiently at first, before becoming increasingly agitated by the Nurse's digressions and moans about her aches and pains, whilst the audience already knows plans are afoot for the couple to marry. There was an awareness of the comic relief that this provides, but responses would have benefited from greater exploration of how the language made this scene entertaining. A few candidates commented on the Nurse's playfulness but many responses made generalised and repeated points on Juliet's anxiety and the Nurse's delay.

Question 10

Many candidates were seemingly unsure of the meaning of the word 'compelling'. Strong responses saw Mercutio's function: as the provider of 'comic relief' in a tragedy; as a reminder of the feud between the Capulets and Montagues; or as a point of contrast with Romeo. The most successful answers engaged with Mercutio's language and wit, as well as with the mockery of Petrarchan conventions. Relevant quotation supported these comments along with some insightful analysis. Many candidates had clearly seen Mercutio's death as a catalyst, shifting the play into tragedy with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Those who chose the Queen Mab speech tended to falter on their knowledge of the speech or found it difficult to link it to how it made him 'compelling'. Most candidates commented on his friendly character, his loyalty and bawdy jokes, and though he was only in the play for a short time, on how all the comedy disappeared from the play with his death. Less successful responses provided a character study with little or no reference to the question, lapsing into generalisation and narrative. There were some rather generalised responses about 'comic relief' and 'innuendo' for example, with insufficient explanation or textual support.

ENGLISH LITERATURE (9–1)

Paper 0477/03
Paper 3 Unseen Comparison

Key messages

- There is evidence of an imbalance between candidates' preparedness for poetry and prose.
- Candidates' choices of textual references and their juxtaposition indicate a clear understanding of context, which is addressed by focusing on the question.
- Comparison is the key element of AO4 in this task, and comparative interpretation should be interwoven throughout the response.
- AO5 tests the effectiveness of language choices as well as their accuracy: most of the responses were strong in this regard, although handwriting and presentation did on occasion impose a strain on the reader.

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of both texts, although often clearer on one than the other, and addressed each of the Assessment Objectives and skills assessed. Strong responses revealed clarity of understanding, a critical appreciation of the writers' perspectives and purposes in response to context, and sensitive and detailed attention to the writer's craft.

Only a minority of candidates chose to write about prose texts. Although prose passages are of course longer, they are chosen at a level of language, tone and intensity which is comparable to the poetry and meaning is often expressed less elliptically. Prose-based tasks will therefore suit many candidates who struggle with the syntax of poetry. The length of prose passages means that an astute selection of details is rewarded in addition to comprehension. Work on poetry tends to be more successful when carefully planned and where candidates are selective, instead of attempting an exhaustive line-by-line reading of each poem.

Unseen papers are intended to encourage a range of study across genres, cultures and historical periods, exploring writers' techniques and their effect on the reader. Preparation should encourage candidates to move fluently between the part and the whole, and to see the importance of close reading of textual detail for assured interpretation of the impact of the entire text.

The contextual element of this paper now appears to be well understood by candidates. In this paper, context was explicit in the questions themselves, as vulnerability to an attack and to a sense of entrapment respectively, informs the emotions portrayed in the texts. Context in this syllabus is seen as intrinsic to the texts themselves and any extrinsic knowledge is not required. Context is also internal to the process of juxtaposition: looking at the texts alongside each other will allow different contexts to emerge as influences on the perspectives of writers, speakers and characters. The influence of context on literary expression, and perhaps the reader's response and understanding, are fundamental literary skills.

The command word at the beginning of the task is 'compare' so it is understood that comparison should be interwoven throughout the response. That does not mean that comparative criticism should resemble a tennis match, with each rally concluding with a 'winning point'. It is also important to give each text enough space for its meaning to emerge clearly and for its individual voice to be appreciated, and, to contrast with another text's treatment of a similar theme. Some responses lacked cohesion and consistency because they moved so frequently between texts, and looked for every possible point of comparison instead of considering an overall cohesive argument. Similarly, the process of evaluation and personal engagement or judgement is something to keep in suspense until each text is fully understood, and is best reserved for the conclusion of an essay.

The inclusion of AO5 in the assessment of this paper should have encouraged well-planned and carefully considered responses, and the amount of time provided for the task allows for this. There was indeed plenty

of evidence of careful planning, including key quotations, and of effective paragraph planning. As reflected in the mark scheme the effectiveness of communication and the range of vocabulary candidates use is more important than mere accuracy, so it was good to see linguistic ambition in many answers. Nevertheless, the temptation to write as much as possible in the time provided was hard to resist for many candidates. Research by Tom Benton at Cambridge Assessment has shown that at GCSE level responses over 1300 words are unlikely to gain reward commensurate with their length. Although handwriting and presentation are not assessed in this paper, legibility can pose a problem.

The quality of responses for this paper was very impressive indeed. The best essays were powerful and demonstrated high order skills, as well as a strong level of engagement with some very mature, complex and demanding content.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates engaged thoroughly and in great detail with the two war poems; showing good understanding. The trenches of the Western Front appeared to provide a recognisable context for candidates, although Rosenberg's very individual perspective was more unusual, and some candidates wanted to turn the 'queer sardonic rat' into an allegorical representation of First World War generals, or Germans, rather than a reflection, perhaps, of the poet's own more 'cosmopolitan sympathies and awareness of irony'. The solitude and isolation of both speakers, with their stress on waiting rather than combat, received some sustained attention. All responses showed an appreciation of the fact that Douglas's poem is set during a later war, and some responses suggested that its preoccupations were very contemporary, portraying him as a victim of PTSD and the mechanical attenuation of modern warfare, surrounded by a hostile but unseen presence. Surprisingly, candidates seemed to struggle more with clarity of literal and situational understanding when writing about Rosenberg. This possibly related to a misreading of line endings and syntax: many candidates thought the rat had 'strong eyes' and 'fine limbs' and missed the irony that the 'haughty athletes' were less 'chanced for life' than him. There was a tendency to get bogged down in details without understanding the structure of the whole poem; the poet asks what the war looks like from the rat's perspective and makes a dark joke about the poppies and his own hope for survival.

Comparisons tended to begin with the occluded presence of the sun in both poems. 'Break of Day in the Trenches' brings no light but only crumbling darkness and the 'same old druid Time as ever'. Candidates, especially those familiar with Owen's 'Exposure', enjoyed the idea that the real enemy is an abstraction rather than the physical presence of the Germans a few yards away, and this prepared them for the rat's imagined journey across the 'sleeping green' toward the enemy trenches. Many noticed that pastoral idylls in Douglas are equally delusive: the wood 'warm and full of the sun's patience' is *not* what the silence in this poem alludes to, and it is not the arrival of a god which he awaits but the swarm of devils: 'demons talking in the air'. Some associated the vision of the god with the prospect of death and several noted that the paganism of this allusion suggested there was no place for conventional Christianity in the soldier's situation. Quite a few noticed that silence is important in both poems, but that both it and the waiting will inevitably end, and the cycle of destruction will return, with 'shrieking iron and flames/Hurled through still heavens'. These lines were compared very effectively with the 'black air alive with evils' in Douglas.

Most responses addressed the bullet points well. This allowed comparison of the experiences of waiting, while exposed on the front line, not just to enemy action, but also to the disturbance of one's own mind. Attention was paid to the hints of derangement in both combatants, and the first-person perspective of each poet. The 'deceptive' quiet and 'darkness crumbles' were seen as signs of disturbance. Many responses highlighted the fact that the first poet's only companions are the rat and the buried dead whose veins feed the poppies, while a number mentioned alarm at Douglas' portrayal of the 'idiot crew'. Some responses referred rather literally to the others in his armoured vehicle – seeing this as evidence of the poet's arrogance and isolation. Others, probably more accurately, indicated that this was a reference to the thoughts that cry out and disturb his sleep. Some candidates noticed that night is not a time of rest for either man. Many expressed a liking of the image of 'the fastening of a soundproof trap' and of the suggestion that an armoured vehicle provides only an illusion of protection, and is not much safer than hiding behind the parapet of a trench. Others pointed out that both men resort to superstition – the 'parapet's poppy' and the arrival of a god – to give them a chance of survival greater than the protection of an 'unsubstantial wall' or 'the bowels of the earth'. Sensitivity to sound effects often reinforced observations about the physicality of the poet's descriptions.

The steer towards comparing the rat and the devils was willingly accepted by candidates, who thus found access to the metaphorical fantasies of the poets (often seen as further evidence of post-traumatic stress) and also their ironies. Several candidates commented poignantly on the humiliation of seeing a rat – an animal normally despised as a pest – as in a better situation than oneself. Focus on the specifics of warfare, such as young men becoming ‘bonds to the whims of murder’ was always more successful than more generalised comments on the horrors of war. Most candidates tended to see the ‘devils’ of Douglas’s poem as the enemy outside, but many also identified them as his own internal demons, and the threat to his mental stability. The most perceptive answers realised that they are both, and were thus able to explain the ‘alliance of devils’ which threatens the fall of Douglas’s mind. There was effective commentary on their activity, represented by the participles ‘flying...running...spinning’ and the contrast with the poet in his ‘soundproof trap’. Some compared the free movement of the devils with the way Rosenberg’s rat is free to roam between the lines, and explored how both poets mock the fact that the soldiers are trapped, both by their situation and by their own thoughts.

The final bullet point referenced desperation, and the hopelessness of addressing questions to the rat, and asking what he sees in their eyes and expressions – ‘what quaver – what heart aghast?’. Such questioning seemed to many candidates an indication of breakdown. However, others noted the more jaunty tone of Rosenberg’s final lines, as if he found macabre humour in his own survival, if ‘just a little white with the dust’. They contrasted this with Douglas’s prophecy of defeat, and his battle with ‘these idiots of the mind’. Candidates felt that both soldiers were not valued by their own, or by their enemies, and their only hope came from symbols of remembrance. Most felt there was little hope for the sleepless poet of Douglas’s ‘Devils’ who would soon fall victim to his internal and external demons, but some perceptively noticed that his mind is not as ‘void’ as the devils think, and that he is desperately holding on to his sanity. The finality of his concluding couplet excited interest, alongside the return of the poppy at the end of Rosenberg’s poem as a metaphor for men who also ‘drop, and are for ever dropping’.

The parallels between the poems allowed for many pertinent comparisons despite their slightly different contexts, as well as some thoughtful reflection on the place of human beings in mechanised conflict. There was also much sensitive interpretation of tone and mood, with acknowledgement of displaced anger in both texts, and sympathetic appreciation of how the listener engages with the realities of modern conflict, where the theatre of warfare is as much mental as physical.

Question 2

There were fewer answers on the prose than on the poetry texts. Nevertheless, while some weaker answers tended to narrate and to paraphrase at times, the best responses were highly sensitive to detail and what it reveals. Critical understanding generally depended on appreciation of the perspective from which each passage was told. Although the extract from *Wide Sargasso Sea* is narrated in the first person and *The Awakening* in the third, both writers enter into the perspective of the main character and convey their own alienated and disturbed images of the world: Jean Rhys lets us see Thornfield as it looks to Antoinette/Bertha and Kate Chopin uses the free indirect style to present us with Edna’s perspective and desire for release. While many candidates began by contrasting Antoinette’s entrapment as physical and Edna’s as mental, the more perceptive gradually realised that Antoinette is trapped just as much by her own thoughts, while Edna needs the physical release of the beach, her nakedness and the embrace of the waters to free herself from the ways in which society has trapped her within the cage of its expectations of women. Responses to prose tended to polarise a little more: there were some quite basic and confused answers which revealed a misreading of some of the details of Edna’s unhappy life. Some candidates confused her husband with Robert, were horrified that she should see her children as ‘like antagonists’ and wondered why she should not simply get a divorce, showing misreading of the rubric provided and/or limited understanding of the social context of past centuries. Weaker answers tended to see her, legitimately in the context of the extract, as moving from entrapment to freedom, while suggesting that Antoinette’s situation appeared to have no prospect of a happy resolution and that she was as ‘lost’ at the beginning of her narrative as at its end. Stronger answers engaged much more with the language, individual images and overall tone and realised the extremity of Edna’s situation. She is ‘absolutely alone’ and the ending is both ‘delicious’ and ‘awful’ and hence profoundly ambiguous.

There were some strong personal responses showing a depth of engagement with the mental isolation of both female protagonists, rightly seeing them as victims of male oppression and the constraints on women in traditional societies. Such responses also explored in detail the ways in which settings and images are used to illustrate these extreme mental states, including comment on the protagonists’ wakeful nights when others are asleep, the ‘white beach’, the high window, the voice of the sea, the lure of the looking glass, the ‘bird with a broken wing’ (rightly seen as representing Edna herself), the locked door to the passage (symbolising Antoinette’s entrapment), the bath-house and bathing costume, and ‘the cardboard world’ where everyone

else lives. Those who looked more closely realised that physical escape was not going to be enough for either woman: their desires were to go ‘behind the cardboard’ and be new-born into ‘a familiar world’ that they had paradoxically ‘never known’. A willingness to explore contradictions was necessary to understand the flashbacks, memories and self-alienation clearly present on the surface of Antoinette’s narrative and implicit in Edna’s desire to escape: ‘the soul’s slavery for the rest of her days’. Both hear voices which combine their pasts with an alarming alternative future. Those responses which acknowledged the fact that both texts are extracts from the end of short novels showed a realisation that these narratives were unlikely to end happily, as both the situations and the states of mind portrayed are so extreme.

Some responses included effective contrasts between the spare description and taut narrative voice in the Rhys and the more extravagant, exclamatory and poetic voice in Chopin. In the case of Chopin, this was sometimes correctly identified as the voice of Edna’s soul, willing itself to be free of all social ties and obligations and to ‘wander in abysses of solitude’. Rhys’s Antoinette sees things more starkly, using blunt language to convey her mental distress and confusion. The strongest answers understood that both are facing a crisis of identity. This is explicit in Edna’s struggles as wife, mother and abandoned lover, but more profound and even more troubling in Antoinette’s case as her identity is not just a social construct but has radically split. Particularly perceptive responses noticed that she is unsure about all names and places: Grace, Leah, her mother, herself and England. Some candidates wrote movingly about her mother’s detachment (‘she looked away from me, over her head, just as she used to do’) or about how her husband refused to call Antoinette by her name, so that she ‘saw Antoinette drifting out of the window’. Strong analysis of this passage led to understanding of why she has now has no window or looking glass. The eeriness of her encounter with herself in ‘the glass’ was often sensitively explored, as were her sense of loss, and her sensory and emotional deprivation or disorientation. In contrast, Edna’s senses were perceived as heightened by her encounter with the elements, but dangerously detached from the rest of humanity.

The strongest answers to this question were very carefully and effectively planned, with comparative commentary on each stage of the narratives, showing sensitivity to language and its deeper implications and a profound sympathy with the plight of the narrators and their desire for release.