LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

| Paper 2010/11 |
| Paper 11 |

General comments

There was a considerable increase in the entry for the paper this session, and Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to **Questions 7** and **13**.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely form the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambment and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed. One reported: 'I do not think I saw one candidate who used the word 'audience' (it was always 'reader') and of the 150 essays I marked on Richard III's soliloquy only one candidate mentioned (and that in passing) that the audience would be able to see Richard's deformity.'

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the

characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This text had clearly been much enjoyed. It is often difficult to explain why something is funny but most candidates attacked the question with relish and showed real understanding of the incongruities and contrasts in the situation, commenting on Jack's naiveté and attempts to take a moral stand compared with the cheerful immorality and criminality of the rest of the family. The best answers commented in detail on the writing, for instance on the sinister sub-text to Orlando's comments about insurance and on his gesticulations. They also saw the inappropriateness of his showing round of the family photographs. Weaker answers tended to repeat the same point – that Jack does not understand what is going on – with reference to different parts of the extract.

Question 2

This was a less popular question but those who chose it knew the character of Anita well and appreciated her business skills.

Question 3

This question was also a minority choice but Poppy's devotion to Jack was clearly seen and candidates made a good attempt at capturing the voice of a character who is 'a bit of a mouse'.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Questions 4-6

Very few candidates offered this text. Examiners reported that those who did usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and responded in detail to the extract.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. The best answers to this question explored what Parris's words as well as his confused and extreme physical reactions reveal about his character and state of mind, and they identified the 'weasel' quality of the words that Abigail uses to excuse herself. They also explored the way in which much of the power of the extract derives from the audience being plunged into the middle of a highly fraught situation. It was a striking feature of this question that many less successful answers entirely ignored Abigail, and seemed unaware of the implications of mentions of witchcraft and unnatural events. There also seemed to be little concern for the situation of Betty except in the best answers and few made reference to the calling of Hale.

Question 8

Candidates generally made very good choices of 'moments', the 'yellow bird' incident and Proctor's tearing of his confession being favourites. Good answers adopted similar techniques as for the passage-based questions, going beyond narrative and exploring the dynamics of the situations and the implications in terms of the whole text.

Question 9

There were some excellent Danforths capturing in appropriate language the austerity and harshness of the character and his conviction that he is right, but there were also some miscalculations. Some candidates wanted to allow him the self-knowledge that he and his court were at fault but made him far too remorseful and contrite. Some candidates appeared to confuse him with Hale.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

Those candidates who attempted to take a balanced view of Leonato were most successful here. The words 'at this point in the play' give the steer to consider whether his behaviour in the extract is typical or whether it represents a departure from his normal behaviour. There was a lot of emphasis on his concern for his honour, rather than for his child, and a good deal of hostility towards him as a result. Those candidates who responded to his courage in challenging Claudio and condemned the way in which he is dismissed by Claudio and Don Pedro tended to score more highly.

Question 11

There were some very pleasing responses to this question, though most limited themselves to Dogberry alone. Even weaker answers responded to his malapropisms; better ones saw his importance to the plot and to the comic relief he provides; the best considered his crucial role in vindicating Hero.

Question 12

Answers showed that the character of Beatrice was well known, and most of these empathic responses were appropriate, though some were overly sentimental and gushing. The most successful saw that her feelings about Claudio would be conflicting and her feelings for Benedick something of a mystery to her. Those who created something of her feistiness and acerbity scored highly. There were some excellent attempts to recreate some of the word-play that she has indulged in with Benedick.

Richard III

Question 13

This was overwhelmingly the most popular question on the play. There was abundant evidence that this extract had been studied in detail. The thrust of the question was on 'memorable beginning' and candidates who ignored the invitation to respond but merely explained the passage did not score very highly. The best answers engaged with the ambiguity of the character and saw how Richard enlists the audience on his side, creating admiration and revulsion in almost equal measure. There were some superb analyses of the language and imagery, showing the sarcasm and irony and also the humour of the character. Some answers did not refer to the specific plot to set Clarence and the King against each other.

Question 14

By contrast, relatively few responded to this task. Examiners who saw answers to it usually complimented candidates for their knowledge of and insight into the characters.

Question 15

This was also a minority choice but there were some good responses showing knowledge of the character and of events though sometimes only with reference to Richard's dream. The most successful answers demonstrated some of his sense of black irony. One or two attempted to write in iambic pentameters, but with limited success.

Journey's End

Question 16

Candidates who had studied this text generally demonstrated a great deal of engagement with the characters and their situation. There were some very careful and detailed explorations of this passage, looking not only at the situation of the naive young officer finding himself on the front line and the experienced officer trying to treat him kindly and warn him of changes to his hero, Stanhope, but also examining the subtext to the dialogue and the ways in which language and sentence structure is used.

Question 17

There were also some very good responses to this question. Good textual knowledge was in evidence and candidates had no difficulty in pulling out examples of stress-relieving techniques; but successful answers went beyond cataloguing them and were distinguished by a sense of the author's purpose and the condemnation of war that is exhibited through these techniques.

Question 18

There were fewer responses to this question but very good knowledge of the character was usually demonstrated and candidates did not seem to find it difficult to create a suitable voice, incorporating many of Hibbert's idiosyncrasies of speech. None were convinced that his neuralgia was genuine.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves **from Part 3**

Question 19

There was a great range of achievement here, from those answers which merely gave a sort of paraphrase, not addressing 'state of mind', to those that focused tightly on the terms of the question, analysing the language and imagery in a great deal of detail. Some candidates got themselves tangled up in Darwinist theories and lost focus on the task; some, rather mysteriously and not entirely convincingly, interpreted it as an anti-war poem. The important thing was to see the changing moods and the way in which the imagery reflects them. Few candidates saw that the last stanza offers some hope through personal relationships.

Question 20

There were no real problems with the understanding of *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* and *Report to Wordsworth*, though a number of candidates seemed to have no idea who Wordsworth was and therefore missed the point of the title and the opening sentence and also of the full significances of the references to Proteus, Triton and Neptune. They were generally able to focus on the descriptions of 'human destruction', however, though sometimes without bringing out the force of the poets' grief and anger, in other words without responding to 'powerfully'. A significant number tackling this question tended to give rather generalised responses.

Question 21

Similarly, responses to *Amends* and *Full Moon and Little Frieda* often overlooked the word 'memorably' though there were some sensitive responses to the imagery of *Amends* recognising the 'healing qualities' of the sounds. Relatively few saw some of the darker notes of the Hughes and some candidates only explained the poem in terms of the poet's response to the development of his child into a woman.

John Keats: *Poems*

Question 22

While there was some extremely impressive work in response to this question, it was also clear that a lot of candidates had struggled to understand this poem and indeed surprising that many never mentioned the nightingale in offering up their explanation of Keats's feelings. In weaker answers there was a tendency to digress into accounts of Keats's illness, the death of his brother, his relationship with Fanny Brawne and his own imminent demise - completely losing focus on the question. Candidates must work from the poem itself and pay close attention to the words. 'Vividly' should have provided enough of a steer.

Question 23

Since *The Eve of St Agnes* is a poem with a very strong narrative, it might have been expected that candidates would find it easier to write about, but too many did not get beyond the narrative and ignored the direction to identify its dramatic elements. In the most successful answers, the opening of the poem was used as a starting point followed by the dramatic escape of the couple and there was some detailed textual support.

Question 24

This was usually the most successful of the three Keats questions. The poem was very well known and candidates usually had no difficulty in finding plenty to say, though only the best answers explored the shifting moods of the poem.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some excellent answers. Candidates engaged with the text and the task and were able to explore Elizabeth's confused emotions with detailed analytical responses and plenty of supporting quotation. Answers were differentiated by the amount of detail and by the awareness of Austen's method, for example by the way in which she takes the reader into Elizabeth's thoughts, using rhetorical questions and exclamations.

Question 26

Some candidates attacked this question with relish, constructing persuasive and convincing arguments giving a range of examples of marriages but using Elizabeth and Darcy as the exemplification of the perfect union, consisting of love, respect, knowledge of each other and themselves – and incidentally financial security. Weaker answers tended to be limited in the examples that they chose and over-general in their exploration of them.

Question 27

There were some amusing impersonations of Charlotte waiting for Elizabeth. Many caught her quiet pragmatism and her ability to send Mr Collins into the garden when she wanted to have a little peace. Her gratitude for the security that has been granted her was often clearly conveyed, and, in the best answers, sometimes the mask was allowed to slip and she revealed her dislike of her husband and his patroness.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text was rarely answered on, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. They tended to fare best on **Question 29**, which goes to the heart of the novel, and produced some wide-ranging and detailed discussions. There were very few attempts to empathise with Father Gilligan in **Question 30**.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31-33

There were very few responses to this text. Candidates seemed to find the extract in **Question 31** approachable, though the main shortcoming was to stop before the material on India. So there was plenty of material on 'frustration with his wife' but little on 'with life in India'. There were far too few responses to the other questions to make general comment appropriate.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was a very popular text. Responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the tensions and also a sense of context and of implications for the future. Weaker answers picked out only a few details from the passage and sometimes digressed into assertions about Hardy's unhappy marriage and how this is reflected in the relationship between Bathsheba and Troy.

Question 35

Many excellent answers were seen on this task. Such answers gave a balanced and sympathetic and thoughtful response supported by well selected details. In some Centres, Boldwood was give a very hard time, almost all of the candidates thinking he deserved what happened to him.

Question 36

This was a less popular question, possibly because candidates found a voice for Gabriel a little elusive, but there were some very good answers which used the text very efficiently and captured quite a few echoes.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Questions 37-39

Only a few candidates had studied this text. They fared reasonably well with the passage-based **Question 37**. It required some degree of back-reference and they showed good knowledge of the novel on the whole and seemed to enjoy pointing out why Matenge got his just desserts. Very few were able to do more than narrate the story of Makhaya and Paulina; much more focus on the 'how?' was required. There were very few attempts to create a voice for Gilbert in **Question 39**.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

This extract was central to the story and candidates explored it in detail and with understanding. The best answers understood the failed hopes and potential represented by Ethan's study and the symbolism of the piece of paper and cushion. They saw that the hopelessness of his life derives from his own inadequacies as well as from his restricted surroundings and his awful wife.

Question 41

Some candidates tended to write about Ethan's specific difficulties here, but most had a detailed knowledge of the climate, the poverty and the loneliness of Starkfield. Weaker answers relied on general assertion

Question 42

Many candidates really went to town on Zeena, producing some of the best empathic responses on the paper. Her voice was replicated very accurately with just the right note of querulousness and maliciousness.

from Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

This extract seemed very accessible and candidates usually caught the changing and contrasting emotions of Mr Wills and also those of the narrator. Better answers explored the violence of the language showing how fearsome Mr Wills is to the narrator and his father ('insane with anger', 'his teeth gripped over his lower lip') and how this contrasts so dramatically with his collapse into tears. They also commented on the effect on the narrator and on his changed perception of Mr Wills and also on his guilt in the realisation of the significance of what he had thought was merely a prank. Answers were differentiated by the extent to which they focused on the word 'dramatic'.

Question 44

Mrs Croft was the most popular of the characters but all answers showed sound knowledge of the stories even if there was little response to why the character chosen was particularly memorable.

Question 45

There were some very successful answers on John in *The Yellow Wallpaper* capturing his slightly arrogant but despairing attitude towards his wife in a suitably doctorly voice.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

General comments

Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to the Shakespeare passages.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely form the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambment and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed.

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This was the most popular of the three Ayckbourn questions. Many caught the absurdity and the cross purposes of Jack and Anita, the farcical quality of Giorgio hiding in the wardrobe, and the sharpness of her responses. What is more, in the best answers there was a clear sense of dramatic technique at work.

Question 2

There were so very few responses to this question that general comment is not appropriate.

Question 3

Most candidates wrote fairly successfully as Jack, though weaker answers failed to capture all the detail that is indicated by Ayckbourn. More successful one showed a good understanding of him and there was much foreshadowing of what he was about to find out. Candidates clearly understood the ironies. The voice seemed reasonably easy to assume.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

Only a small number of Centres offered this text. Candidates usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and they responded in detail to the extract.

Question 5

Overall, this was not quite as successfully attempted as Question 4. Most, however, found plenty of detail to draw on and wrote with insight and understanding.

Question 6

The small number of candidates tackling this empathic task had internalised Doris's problems and wrote convincingly in her voice.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. Most candidates were able to identify the tensions and hatreds but there was a tendency to rely on stage directions rather than examine the scene as drama.

Question 8

This was a popular question which drew out some very sympathetic responses to Elizabeth seeing her as 'a loyal and loving wife' though the best answers showed why a less complimentary view of her might be taken. There were some very well argued and supported answers.

Question 9

This was not a particularly popular question as candidates seemed to have a less than clear view of the character. There was some confusion between Parris, Hale and Danforth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. It is a central moment in the play and a very dramatic one and good answers explored it in detail, analysing the language and seeing the subtleties. Weaker answers merely told the story or paraphrased, not homing in on and analysing the detail.

Question 11

Weaker answers to this question produced flat character sketches. Though candidates knew a lot about Benedick, unless they focused on the key words here 'loveable' and 'hero', both requiring strong personal response, they were unlikely to do well.

Question 12

Those who got the character and the time right did well. Too many candidates made him too and also in possession of knowledge of events that had not yet happened. A surprising number did not refer to Dogberry and the Watch.

Richard III

Question 13

This question may have deterred less confident candidates since it is directed to a specific characteristic of the writing, but those who attempted it had no difficulty in identifying the difference between the surface dialogue and what is really going on. Richard and Buckingham are both acting parts to the Mayor and ultimately to each other. With the benefit of hindsight, another layer of irony emerges.

Question 14

Examiners reported that generally this question was not answered well, possibly because candidates did not have sufficient detailed knowledge of the two characters. Some candidates ignored Hastings altogether.

Question 15

Candidates took on the role of Clarence with some relish showing how little understanding he has of his brothers and making some deliciously ironic observations. Though Clarence does not have a particularly distinctive voice in the play they were generally able to create the right notes of outrage and disappointment as well as admiration for Richard; some did this very well.

Journey's End

Question 16

Some candidates focused more on the printed word (i.e. the stage directions as written) rather than on the highly dramatic stage action and its likely effect on the audience, but there were some very engaged and sensitive responses to the situation.

Question 17

This was a less popular question on the text, but there were some good balanced responses showing a sound understanding of the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh.

Question 18

Many candidates wrote in a suitable voice for Raleigh but seemed unsure as to whether or not he was angry about Stanhope's seizure of his letter. The best answers showed an awareness of the ironies of the situation.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves **from Part 3**

Question 19

This was an extremely popular question and the poem was well understood, though here was a prime example of many candidates being diverted into assertions about the unhappiness of Hardy's marriage instead of focusing on the words of the poem. The best answers responded extremely sensitively to the bleakness of the imagery and to the music of the words.

Questions 20 and 21

These questions were answered by only a few candidates. *On The Grasshopper and the Cricket* was perhaps the most usual choice, though candidates found it difficult to focus on the 'delight in nature' part of the question and merely offloaded more general learnt interpretations.

John Keats: *Poems*

Question 22

This question was very popular and did not seem to present any particular difficulties to those who attempted it. Most candidates were able to comment on the sounds and silences, on the 'sleeping dragons' and on the ghostly imagery in stanza 41. The better answers picked up the deathly allusions in the final stanza in particular.

Question 23

Ode on Melancholy was quite well understood, though candidates had difficulty in making more than one general point that pleasure and pain are inextricably linked. As always, they fared best when they focused on the quality of the imagery and there were some superb responses showing full engagement with the words and the feelings – with the poetry itself.

Question 24

This was not such a popular question, but the poem was generally well known and the knight's story sympathetically discussed.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was by far the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some highly accomplished answers. Candidates gave lively responses to the ridiculousness of Mr Collins' proposal, the more sophisticated also seeing the nastiness of his veiled comments about the entailment. The best answers commented on the way in which Austen makes us empathise with Elizabeth and on the unwitting self-ridicule of some of Collins's assertions ('Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!)). Many answers showed excellent appreciation of the writer's technique.

Question 26

This proved far less popular than **Question 25**. Weaker candidates merely offloaded 'my Elizabeth Bennet essay', while more successful ones focused on the phrase 'appealing and lively' and constructed an argument around it.

Question 27

There were some very convincing Mr Bennets, capturing just the right amount of pride in his two favourite daughters and exasperation with his wife and the younger ones in a suitable wry and humorous tone, but there were quite a few overly sentimental responses showing very little appreciation of the character. It was also surprising that at this particular moment many answers made no reference to the shame over Lydia and gratitude to Darcy.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text studied in very few Centres, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. The passage-based **Question 28** was usually well answered as was the empathic **Question 30**, though on the surface it might have appeared a more demanding task. **Question 29** produced the best answers with candidates writing well about Jimmy's dysfunctional family and the causes of his (at times appalling) behaviour.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31

The questions on this text were popular, though in response to this question a significant number of candidates contented themselves with a run-through of the passage. Tighter focus on the phrase 'boredom and frustrations' was needed and closer examination of the words; there is some extremely sensuous writing in the extract, particularly in the first paragraph: 'there was no breeze: it was hot, the air hung upon them like a damp towel, gagging him…'.

Question 32

Many candidates did little more than identify the distractions faced by Suno. Most responses were very general nature and did not address the question with any specificity.

Question 33

This produced answers of varying quality: while many caught the artist's mixture of desperation and annoyance well, others used the task as a mouthpiece for thinly veiled regurgitation of plot.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was another very popular text and responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the character of Troy and the way in which he manipulates the helpless Bathsheba here.

Question 35

This question required candidates to range widely through the novel and the amount of textual knowledge that they brought to it was very impressive. The phrasing of this type of question gave a clear structure for their arguments and there were some very balanced and thoughtful responses. As ever, answers which merely trotted out a character sketch of Bathsheba were not very successful.

Question 36

This was a less popular question, though many candidates managed to capture Boldwood's complex feelings and the sense of a man 'on the edge' here through their own use of language

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This was the least popular of the three questions. Candidates who chose this question performed reasonably well, though the key word in the question 'sad' was sometimes not adequately addressed.

Question 38

This question elicited some good responses as candidates recognised the crucial role that women played in tending to crops and live-stock in an assiduous and dependable way.

Question 39

Sensitive answers captured Paulina's disheartened mood as she worries that her dream of finding a husband with a man she is clearly taken with may not be fulfilled.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Those who chose the passage-based question had some difficulty in dealing with the key words 'intriguing' and 'gripping'. A full knowledge of the novel was required in order to show the appropriateness of these two concepts.

Question 41

Very few attempted this. Answers were not impressive as focused details in support were often lacking.

Question 42

Most opting for this task made a very creditable attempt at Ethan, as they incorporated into their portrayal the stark contrast of the early flush of marriage with the later reality as Zeena turns into something of a dragon.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 43

Most answers responded sensitively to La Guma's presentation of violence and racism, and many mined the passage well in terms of language and method.

Question 44

Some candidates struggled to go beyond general and vague observations here and there was a tendency to comment on contemporary events rather than on the story. The word 'striking' should have directed them to the quality of the description and the language, and a sound approach would have been to select a few relevant parts of the story and to have commented on them in detail.

Question 45

This was generally handled competently, though most candidates restricted themselves to a diatribe against the boy. It was surprising how many did not refer to her lost love or try to proble the reasons for the violence of her reactions against the boy.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

| Paper 2010/13 |
| Paper 13 |

General comments

Examiners commented on the high quality of a great number of the papers that they saw. There was some outstanding work showing a great deal of engagement with and enjoyment of the texts studied and an understanding of not only their content but also of the writers' purposes and techniques.

It was very pleasing to see so many excellent responses to the passage-based questions with real focus on the actual words. The most successful answers tended to identify key points and then to develop their arguments by reference to details from the extracts, rather than to trawl through the extracts in a line by line fashion. Sometimes when candidates took the latter approach, they ran out of time and did not deal with some key issues. (This was particularly evident in responses to the Shakespeare passages.) It is quite surprising, however, that some candidates do not quote freely form the extract when it is in front of them.

The distinguishing mark of a really good response is what is referred to in the Mark Scheme as 'clear critical understanding', i.e. a sense of why a writer chooses a particular word or image in order to create a particular effect. It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to look at language analytically and not only identify a particular technique or figure of speech but also comment on the effect created for the reader or audience. Every year Examiners make the point that it is not necessary for candidates to have a vast vocabulary of (sometimes abstruse) technical terms to secure a mark in a high band; for example a statement such as 'The Duke uses a tricolon to describe himself "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time"' merely identifies a figure of speech, it does not *explore* its *effect*, whereas a simple statement such as 'the listing of his disadvantages emphasises Richard's ugliness and disabilities' makes the point very clearly. 'Repetition' often serves the purpose just as well, in fact sometimes more clearly than 'anaphora'; 'listing' just as well as 'polysyndeton' or 'asyndeton'. This is not to say that candidates who can use technical terms correctly and confidently will not impress, just that there are no marks assigned for this specifically and answers which are expressed in less sophisticated terms may do just as well. It is always rather disheartening to come across a response to a poem which is based entirely on identifying the poet's use of caesura and enjambment and ignoring what s/he is communicating.

Some clearly able and knowledgeable candidates failed to do themselves full justice in that they seemed to understand the specific requirements of the questions but assumed that the Examiner would infer that they were focused by implication. They would gain greater credit by explicitly referring to and engaging with key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', during the course of their responses. The central consideration when assessing any answer must be relevance to the task. Words like 'powerfully' and 'memorably' are there for the purpose of eliciting a particular response and should not be ignored. The risks of ignoring them were most marked with the poetry questions; a significant number of candidates were determined to give their particular interpretations while overlooking the slant indicated by the questions.

Digressions into writers' biographical details (a particular problem with some responses to Hardy and Keats) generally have little bearing on the question. Examiners are looking for focus on the task and 'informed personal response', i.e. an opinion or direct response which is supportable from the text.

Several Examiners commented that some candidates ignore the fact that a play is designed to be performed.

The empathic questions were popular, though it was clear that some Centres had advised their candidates to avoid them. The best examples were impressive, capturing the voice and the thoughts of a particular character in language which echoed the writer's style very precisely. Weaker answers often captured the characters' thoughts and feeling but without sufficient detailed support. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the text in these questions, not necessarily in great detail, but with enough to demonstrate that the answer is securely rooted in the text. The least successful answers to these questions tended to be almost entirely narrative, however.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality. There was relatively little evidence of mismanagement of time, and there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

This was the most popular of the three Ayckbourn questions. Many caught the absurdity and the cross purposes of Jack and Anita, the farcical quality of Giorgio hiding in the wardrobe, and the sharpness of her responses. What is more, in the best answers there was a clear sense of dramatic technique at work.

Question 2

There were so very few responses to this question that general comment is not appropriate.

Question 3

Most candidates wrote fairly successfully as Jack, though weaker answers failed to capture all the detail that is indicated by Ayckbourn. More successful one showed a good understanding of him and there was much foreshadowing of what he was about to find out. Candidates clearly understood the ironies. The voice seemed reasonably easy to assume.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

Only a small number of Centres offered this text. Candidates usually showed a pleasing knowledge of characters and events and they responded in detail to the extract.

Question 5

Overall, this was not quite as successfully attempted as Question 4. Most, however, found plenty of detail to draw on and wrote with insight and understanding.

Question 6

The small number of candidates tackling this empathic task had internalised Doris's problems and wrote convincingly in her voice.

The Crucible

This was a very popular text and produced some excellent work.

Question 7

In a sense one of the difficulties in writing about the dramatic qualities of an extract from this play is that the stage directions spell out the reactions and movements of the characters and candidates tend to overlook the dialogue, forgetting that an audience only has that on which to base its response. Most candidates were able to identify the tensions and hatreds but there was a tendency to rely on stage directions rather than examine the scene as drama.

Question 8

This was a popular question which drew out some very sympathetic responses to Elizabeth seeing her as 'a loyal and loving wife' though the best answers showed why a less complimentary view of her might be taken. There were some very well argued and supported answers.

Question 9

This was not a particularly popular question as candidates seemed to have a less than clear view of the character. There was some confusion between Parris, Hale and Danforth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. It is a central moment in the play and a very dramatic one and good answers explored it in detail, analysing the language and seeing the subtleties. Weaker answers merely told the story or paraphrased, not homing in on and analysing the detail.

Question 11

Weaker answers to this question produced flat character sketches. Though candidates knew a lot about Benedick, unless they focused on the key words here 'loveable' and 'hero', both requiring strong personal response, they were unlikely to do well.

Question 12

Those who got the character and the time right did well. Too many candidates made him too and also in possession of knowledge of events that had not yet happened. A surprising number did not refer to Dogberry and the Watch.

Richard III

Question 13

This question may have deterred less confident candidates since it is directed to a specific characteristic of the writing, but those who attempted it had no difficulty in identifying the difference between the surface dialogue and what is really going on. Richard and Buckingham are both acting parts to the Mayor and ultimately to each other. With the benefit of hindsight, another layer of irony emerges.

Question 14

Examiners reported that generally this question was not answered well, possibly because candidates did not have sufficient detailed knowledge of the two characters. Some candidates ignored Hastings altogether.

Question 15

Candidates took on the role of Clarence with some relish showing how little understanding he has of his brothers and making some deliciously ironic observations. Though Clarence does not have a particularly distinctive voice in the play they were generally able to create the right notes of outrage and disappointment as well as admiration for Richard; some did this very well.

Journey's End

Question 16

Some candidates focused more on the printed word (i.e. the stage directions as written) rather than on the highly dramatic stage action and its likely effect on the audience, but there were some very engaged and sensitive responses to the situation.

Question 17

This was a less popular question on the text, but there were some good balanced responses showing a sound understanding of the relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh.

Question 18

Many candidates wrote in a suitable voice for Raleigh but seemed unsure as to whether or not he was angry about Stanhope's seizure of his letter. The best answers showed an awareness of the ironies of the situation.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves **from Part 3**

Question 19

This was an extremely popular question and the poem was well understood, though here was a prime example of many candidates being diverted into assertions about the unhappiness of Hardy's marriage instead of focusing on the words of the poem. The best answers responded extremely sensitively to the bleakness of the imagery and to the music of the words.

Questions 20 and 21

These questions were answered by only a few candidates. *On The Grasshopper and the Cricket* was perhaps the most usual choice, though candidates found it difficult to focus on the 'delight in nature' part of the question and merely offloaded more general learnt interpretations.

John Keats: *Poems*

Question 22

This question was very popular and did not seem to present any particular difficulties to those who attempted it. Most candidates were able to comment on the sounds and silences, on the 'sleeping dragons' and on the ghostly imagery in stanza 41. The better answers picked up the deathly allusions in the final stanza in particular.

Question 23

Ode on Melancholy was quite well understood, though candidates had difficulty in making more than one general point that pleasure and pain are inextricably linked. As always, they fared best when they focused on the quality of the imagery and there were some superb responses showing full engagement with the words and the feelings – with the poetry itself.

Question 24

This was not such a popular question, but the poem was generally well known and the knight's story sympathetically discussed.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

This continues to be perhaps the most popular text on the syllabus and answers invariably demonstrate real engagement and enjoyment and understanding of Austen's purposes and technique.

Question 25

This was by far the most popular of the three Austen questions and there were some highly accomplished answers. Candidates gave lively responses to the ridiculousness of Mr Collins' proposal, the more sophisticated also seeing the nastiness of his veiled comments about the entailment. The best answers commented on the way in which Austen makes us empathise with Elizabeth and on the unwitting self-ridicule of some of Collins's assertions ('Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!)). Many answers showed excellent appreciation of the writer's technique.

Question 26

This proved far less popular than Question 25. Weaker candidates merely offloaded 'my Elizabeth Bennet essay', while more successful ones focused on the phrase 'appealing and lively' and constructed an argument around it.

Question 27

There were some very convincing Mr Bennets, capturing just the right amount of pride in his two favourite daughters and exasperation with his wife and the younger ones in a suitable wry and humorous tone, but there were quite a few overly sentimental responses showing very little appreciation of the character. It was also surprising that at this particular moment many answers made no reference to the shame over Lydia and gratitude to Darcy.

The God Boy

Questions 28-30

This text studied in very few Centres, but those candidates who had worked on it had clearly enjoyed it. The passage-based **Question 28** was usually well answered as was the empathic **Question 30**, though on the surface it might have appeared a more demanding task. **Question 29** produced the best answers with candidates writing well about Jimmy's dysfunctional family and the causes of his (at times appalling) behaviour.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Questions 31

The questions on this text were popular, though in response to this question a significant number of candidates contented themselves with a run-through of the passage. Tighter focus on the phrase 'boredom and frustrations' was needed and closer examination of the words; there is some extremely sensuous writing in the extract, particularly in the first paragraph: 'there was no breeze: it was hot, the air hung upon them like a damp towel, gagging him…'.

Question 32

Many candidates did little more than identify the distractions faced by Suno. Most responses were very general nature and did not address the question with any specificity.

Question 33

This produced answers of varying quality: while many caught the artist's mixture of desperation and annoyance well, others used the task as a mouthpiece for thinly veiled regurgitation of plot.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Questions 34

This was another very popular text and responses to this question were often full of insight and critical understanding. The best answers gave very close and detailed readings showing great sensitivity to the character of Troy and the way in which he manipulates the helpless Bathsheba here.

Question 35

This question required candidates to range widely through the novel and the amount of textual knowledge that they brought to it was very impressive. The phrasing of this type of question gave a clear structure for their arguments and there were some very balanced and thoughtful responses. As ever, answers which merely trotted out a character sketch of Bathsheba were not very successful.

Question 36

This was a less popular question, though many candidates managed to capture Boldwood's complex feelings and the sense of a man 'on the edge' here through their own use of language

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This was the least popular of the three questions. Candidates who chose this question performed reasonably well, though the key word in the question 'sad' was sometimes not adequately addressed.

Question 38

This question elicited some good responses as candidates recognised the crucial role that women played in tending to crops and live-stock in an assiduous and dependable way.

Question 39

Sensitive answers captured Paulina's disheartened mood as she worries that her dream of finding a husband with a man she is clearly taken with may not be fulfilled.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Those who chose the passage-based question had some difficulty in dealing with the key words 'intriguing' and 'gripping'. A full knowledge of the novel was required in order to show the appropriateness of these two concepts.

Question 41

Very few attempted this. Answers were not impressive as focused details in support were often lacking.

Question 42

Most opting for this task made a very creditable attempt at Ethan, as they incorporated into their portrayal the stark contrast of the early flush of marriage with the later reality as Zeena turns into something of a dragon.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 43

Most answers responded sensitively to La Guma's presentation of violence and racism, and many mined the passage well in terms of language and method.

Question 44

Some candidates struggled to go beyond general and vague observations here and there was a tendency to comment on contemporary events rather than on the story. The word 'striking' should have directed them to the quality of the description and the language, and a sound approach would have been to select a few relevant parts of the story and to have commented on them in detail.

Question 45

This was generally handled competently, though most candidates restricted themselves to a diatribe against the boy. It was surprising how many did not refer to her lost love or try to proble the reasons for the violence of her reactions against the boy.