

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/11

Paper 11

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

While as in previous sessions most candidates tended to perform better on prose and drama than on poetry, even in the latter section there was less of a tendency to merely rehearse technical terms and more effort to respond directly to the imagery and feeling of the poems. There was, though, a tendency to offer details of a poet's biography at the expense of commenting on the impact of the words of the *poem*. There was evidence of a rather formulaic approach to the study of poetry at times, with candidates writing out a line and then paraphrasing it, but often ignoring other aspects of the poetry in the process.

Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. 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 character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story. For example, in **Question 12** some fairly sound Don Pedros were marred by the misapprehension that he thought Hero was alive and in **Question 42** some candidates ignored the words 'before Ethan catches up with you' and recounted the whole of the conversation between Ethan and Mattie.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.



By contrast, there were a significant number of outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, informed and intelligent engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Question 1

Most candidates had a secure grasp of the context of the extract and showed understanding of some of the qualities that made this a dramatic end. Most answers demonstrated an awareness of/response to humour but only stronger answers engaged with language and the ways in which the hectic activity detailed in the stage directions made this an amusing scene, although a surprising number overlooked the contribution of Anita and Giorgio to the overall effect.

Question 2

For many candidates, this question was taken to mean 'Write about some moments where the characters behave ridiculously'; some candidates virtually ignored the word. Others responded to 'aspects of human behaviour' by simply listing moral qualities seen in characters and gave a personal response without engaging with the text. There were a few very good answers which identified some of Ayckbourn's satirical targets and offered persuasive support from the text. A few candidates opted to answer this question based solely on the extract in the passage-based question. (Teachers could assist their candidates by laying greater emphasis on the need for candidates to avoid this pitfall.)

Question 3

There were some delightfully cynical portrayals of Hough and the best answers showed a real relish to get to grips with the villainy of the character.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

There were some successful responses which showed sharp awareness of the different morals of the characters, particularly with regards to single parenthood. Some candidates showed sensitive understanding of Jackie's sorrow set against Margaret's excitement. A key word in the title was obviously 'vividly', and it proved very difficult to address this term without careful focus on details. Some answers simply outlined what happens before and after the scene, with often only a brief paragraph or two on the extract itself, and very rarely more than a slight nod towards the question asked.

Question 5

Few answers showed a real understanding of what was meant by the question, so summaries of the play were offered instead. Both here and in **Question 4** there was often a lengthy 'prepared' introductory paragraph or two about Charlotte Keatley and her feminist views, almost never made relevant to the task.

Question 6

The best answers captured the internal conflict of anger as opposed to love, the loneliness and the jealousy felt by Doris. There was some sharp awareness of the difficulties which they had experienced in their relationship, and some expressed the bitter irony of being left her own piano. There was some genuine appreciation of Doris's likely feelings of shock, grief and at times almost relief that this part of her life was over; her voice was reasonably well managed, though too often she expressed far more love for Jack than the real Doris ever does.



The Crucible

Question 7

The Crucible continued to be a particularly popular text, and candidates showed real engagement with the drama of the incident. There was some misunderstanding about the use of 'shocking' and 'absurd' in the question: often the responses referred to the characters being/feeling shocked about a situation (for instance, Cheever finding the poppet) but most were able to communicate the shocking qualities of the scene; explicit responses to 'absurd' were less common and tended to differentiate good answers, though many commented on the absurdity of the poppet being regarded as evidence. Few really got to grips with the character of Cheever, commenting more generally on the superstition which gripped Salem.

Question 8

This was not a popular option, but several of those who attempted it made a good case for sympathy developing over the course of the action as his remorse grows, and few were totally condemnatory of him. Structured and well developed argument was crucial to success.

Question 9

This was a fairly popular empathic task, and most who attempted it made a reasonable job of assuming Proctor's voice. Many responses captured Proctor's anger and his determination to free Elizabeth, along with his nagging guilt over his affair with Abigail. In some cases, the apprehension about his course of action was overstated and led to predictions about the outcome of the proceedings in court. There were some very convincing voices among the answers, skilfully weaving echoes of the text into the portrayal. Weaker attempts tended to begin with '...if I were...I would say...' and made little attempt to capture the character. Some candidates turned their answers into a direct address to Mary; not only was this twisting the demands of the question, but it led to some inappropriate comments about the adultery of which Mary is presumably unaware. There was some tendency to condemn Mary along with Abigail, almost as if both girls were equally guilty in Elizabeth's imprisonment.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

This was a popular choice. The best answers stayed focused on the on the subtleties and build up of the dramatic tensions in the early exchanges between Leonato, Claudio and the Friar. Weaker answers gave run-throughs of the scene and explanations of some of the crucial moments, but tended to avoid the difficult passages, spending far too much time on establishing the background rather than focusing firmly on what was set.

Question 11

Candidates who opted for this question often focused more on the two characters than on their relationship, thereby limiting the scope of their answers. The part played by Hero in the gulling of Beatrice and Beatrice's reaction to Hero's shaming at the wedding-that-was-not were fruitful areas for candidates who did attempt to deal with the relationship rather than offering separate character sketches. The word 'memorable' was frequently ignored.

Question 12

There were some strong answers to this question, capturing Don Pedro's voice and his concern that his half-brother's deceit had caused him to behave dishonourably. Most candidates captured his anger; a small number ranged beyond this to show understanding of his relationship with Claudio and his feelings of guilt about his treatment of Hero. Still fewer were the candidates who expressed the embarrassment that he, the Prince, had been so easily fooled. It was surprising that a large number of candidates clearly forgot that, at this stage in the play, Don Pedro still believes that Hero is dead and expressed the intention of apologising to Hero, or relief that now she and Claudio could enjoy a happy future, which rather weakened the authority of the response.

Richard III

Question 13

Candidates who attempted this generally handled capably the three voices of Richard - public, in soliloquy and to the murderers - to demonstrate his entertaining qualities. The 'dramatic' aspect of the question was often handled more implicitly.

Question 14

The question tended to trigger narrative responses which traced the trajectory of Richard's career without engaging fully (or at all, in some cases) with 'dramatically compelling'.

Question 15

Few managed to capture Hastings' character successfully (his optimism or the implicit irony of situation); but, that said, some responses were quite imaginative and showed a basic understanding of character.

Journey's End

Question 16

Responses tended to lack close reference to the passage and were usually very generalised.

Question 17

Few responses to this question were submitted, and tended to be low scoring. Vital for higher marks was focus on the dramatic qualities of the character; not only his personal attributes, but the way in which he is set against the other characters.

Question 18

This was a more popular question and produced some competent responses which captured something of the character, and appropriate thoughts but often did not quite capture the character's voice.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

This was the most popular of all the poetry questions and presented few difficulties in terms of understanding, though only the best answers showed a real engagement with the feeling. The question asked for a direct response ('What do you think makes this sonnet so sad?') and candidates who focused on the last couplet of the sonnet and made it the basis for their reading of the poem as a whole and saw the contrast between it and the rest of the poem tended to answer the question more successfully than those who adopted a somewhat detached line-by-line approach or those who commented on selected images in isolation. Some offered a reading of the poem which consisted only of a list of features (here a caesura, there some alliteration) with little consideration of meaning. Some seemed to have studied the poem thematically with poems about global warming, an approach which seemed to have led to their overlooking the idea of love completely.

Question 20

First Love was marginally a more popular choice than *Marrysong*, and was often explored more relevantly in answering the question, though in the best answers the poem chosen was addressed with some sensitivity. The extended central metaphor of Scott's poem was often very well understood and explored, though there was a tendency to explain rather than explore, while Clare's imagery was mined more fruitfully to demonstrate vividness.

Question 21

This was not a particularly popular option, and proved difficult for those who chose it. Most responses dealt with the 'meaning' rather than the 'sound' of words. Often the choice of poem was inappropriate. There was a tendency of candidates to mis-identify alliteration on the basis of spelling rather than sound.

Keats, Poems

This text was significantly less popular than *Songs of Ourselves* but in the relatively few answers submitted there were some very detailed and sensitive responses to the poems. There was no doubt of candidates' knowledge, and in most cases there was evident understanding of the poems and of the questions. Lower scoring answers tended to merely describe or paraphrase, and/or to become bogged down in biographical detail at the expense of engagement with the poetry.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

Question 25

This question provided opportunities for candidates to explore Austen's presentation of the two characters' contrasting attitudes to marriage which were well taken in many cases. This question produced some of the best answers seen on the paper as a whole when candidates worked on the language and tone of the opposing arguments. However, a significant minority of candidates chose to write about these attitudes in very general terms, with little or no attention to the extract itself. Others merely identified differences between the characters with no reference to their attitudes to marriage, for example, 'Charlotte is outspoken and Elizabeth is more lively'. Although these answers demonstrated knowledge of the novel as a whole, the knowledge lacked sufficient relevance to the question to score very highly.

Question 26

While there were some very good answers, a number of candidates ignored the phrase 'prejudice about social class'. There was sometimes difficulty with the word 'ridicules' and Examiners treated this sympathetically, but answers which did not respond even implicitly to the satire were disadvantaged since it is so crucial an element of Austen's writing. In view of the evident enjoyment of the novel that lay behind so many answers, it was especially disappointing that lack of relevance had to limit the reward some answers could receive.

Question 27

Some very convincing empathic responses were made here, capturing Wickham's self-interested eye to the main chance. Some candidates seemed to think Wickham was still 'in love' with Elizabeth and tried to convey feelings of heartbreak. Most at least understood his envy of Darcy and sense of his own feelings of being hard-done-by. As in other empathic tasks, weaker answers tended to identify the moment in the novel inaccurately; here a common omission was that Wickham was married to Lydia.

The God Boy

Very few offered questions on this text and for **Question 28** far too few answers were seen to make general comment appropriate.

Question 29

Candidates supported the opposite view from that anticipated, and made little reference, if any, to Mr Sullivan's negative qualities. Little sympathy was shown to his wife.

Question 30

This was a slightly more popular choice. There were some poignant portrayals of Mrs Sullivan, candidates generally had difficulty in pinning down her voice.

Games at Twilight

Question 31

The extract seemed to divide opinion almost equally between those who sympathised more or less completely with the old man and those who saw him as a fairly contemptible attention-seeker whose devoted son was selflessly seeking to prolong his life with a genuine concern for his well-being.

Question 32

This question tended to elicit what appeared to be prepared answers on a chosen theme, the success of which depended on the degree to which the theme could be taken to be an aspect of 'life in India'. In many cases, the theme of needing to work for a living was chosen. Such answers did not always make clear how this was peculiar to life in India.

Question 33

Candidates generally succeeded in capturing Sheila's sense of shame and defeat as she tries to understand what has happened to her husband and her marriage, most realising that she is probably beyond anger at this stage.

Far from the Madding Crowd

Question 34

The very few responses to this task were generally well-handled.

Question 35

Most answers were strongly condemnatory of Troy, with few even acknowledging his attractive and exciting qualities. Interestingly, a number of candidates added to their indictment of his treatment of Bathsheba (and often Fanny) his behaviour towards Boldwood.

Question 36

Boldwood's bewilderment was convincingly captured by many, but a significant minority weakened their answers by assuming that he knew that the Valentine card had been sent by Bathsheba.

When Rain clouds Gather

Question 37

Candidates identified very strongly with the characters in this novel and wrote with engagement about Makhaya and Mma-Millipede. The passage-based task was a popular choice, and candidates were generally able to recognise some of the features of the writing.

Question 38

There was a very wide range of thoughts about the women in the book: some candidates perceived them as downtrodden, promiscuous and subservient. Many of these missed the opportunity to write about the strengths of Paulina, Maria and Mma-Millipede. Others saw the strengths in these women and wrote with insight about the role of women.

Question 39

The empathic question was not quite as popular. Only the best answers showed an understanding of Appleby-Smith's cynical, colonial nature. Weaker answers did not use the first person and there was a tendency to narrative.

Ethan Frome

Question 40

Responses here ranged from the straightforward narrative to sensitive and detailed understanding. The most sophisticated embraced the ambiguity of Zeena's character here, clearly aware of her malicious wish to make Mattie suffer, but also perceptive to the concept that she is genuinely hurt by the breaking of the dish. Many candidates understood the metaphor within the dish. Some even wrote about the idea that Zeena's feelings towards her marriage and Ethan were in fact very similar to her attitude to the dish – hidden from view and never intended for use.

Question 41

Relatively few answers were seen, and they tended not to score highly. Clearer focus on the word 'compelling' and therefore a strong personal response was essential to success. A mere character sketch did not fulfil the demands of the question.

Question 42

Some candidates were sensitive to the delicacy and tact of Mattie's nature, showing the reluctance to voice (even to herself) her feelings for Ethan and her sense of obligation to Zeena. Others presented a much less convincing, calculating character, who was clearly searching for ways to escape Zeena in order to enjoy life with Ethan. Relatively little attention was paid to Denis Eady; this ranged from a fairly dismissive attitude to (unconvincing) deep-seated love.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

The tendency was for answers to give an account of the content of the extract (or the story as a whole) without very much close attention to the language. The wording of the question ('build up a sense of mystery') provided a strong hint of a useful approach which was taken by regrettably few candidates. Often candidates simply retold story or explained meaning.

Question 44

All three of the stories proved more or less equally popular, but there was a strong tendency to narration, particularly in treatments of *How It Happened*, with little attention to narrative techniques and frequently little response made to the chosen story's 'ending'.

Question 45

Most candidates were able to capture Maia's apprehensiveness as she embarks on her arranged marriage. Some found it difficult to locate the moment precisely, and dealt with events which happened after her arrival.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12

Paper 12

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have enjoyed the texts they had studied and to have derived considerable satisfaction from engaging not only with narrative and character but also to a greater or lesser extent with the writers' purposes and techniques.

While there was a wide range of quality in the answers offered, most Examiners commented that they saw fewer scripts this session where candidates offered little evidence of understanding of texts and tasks than in previous sessions. Answers were on the whole tightly focused, and candidates had been taught to make good use of keywords. Familiarity with texts was, as ever, commendable.

As always, the importance of studying the terms of the questions closely cannot be understated; sometimes lower scores resulted a careless reading of a question missed the more subtle points required.

In some whole Centres there was a tendency for candidates to write out a rough version of their answers first and then to copy it out again 'in neat'. This was almost always a waste of valuable examination time. Planning is essential, but it would have been much more useful to do it by way of, say, bullet points.

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Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. 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 character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support; some provided an unduly broad context, tending to succumb to narrative. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

Some common reasons why marks for answers had to be restricted to the lower mark band ranges:

- responses to passage-based (asterisked) tasks which did not focus on the extract, spending too long on contextualizing;
- not identifying key words in the question, e.g. 'dramatic', 'compelling', 'vividly', or which misunderstood key terms, e.g. 'amusing', 'ridicule';
- very elastic definitions of terms such as 'moment'
- empathic answers which misinterpreted the particular moment specified in the question, or which assumed that the character knew more than would have been the case *at that moment*;
- the hypothetical voiced empathic approach (If I were X, I would think...);
- spending too much time on writers' biographies rather than on the texts themselves.

By contrast, there were some outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, informed and intelligent engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

There was a very limited take-up of some of the text options on this time zone's paper. Far too few answers were seen on *A Small Family Business*, *My Mother Said I Never Should*, *Richard III*, *Keats*, *The God Boy*, *Games at Twilight* and *Ethan Frome* to make general comment appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

The Crucible

Question 7

This question was generally well-handled and candidates responded with a good sense of what made the passage moving and dramatic. Better answers showed sensitivity to the extremes of emotion involved here and found plenty of textual evidence to support their observations. Others simply repeated that it was moving and dramatic at various points but could not define why. The description of Corey's death and its impact on Proctor was often entirely ignored.

Question 8

Candidates generally captured the hysterical madness of Salem quite tellingly, but relatively few were as successful in dealing with the process implied by the word 'descent'. There was a tendency for candidates to make general assertions such as 'they are hypocritical and un-Christian' without fully explaining the effect on events.

Question 9

There were far fewer responses to this task. Most were quite powerful, but some were rather far-fetched even for Abigail: kidnap and elopement would surely have been beyond even her at this juncture. Abigail was often far too obsessed still with Proctor to be giving consideration to her own position.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

As this is a passage-based question, Examiners were looking for considerable reference to and exploration of the text. The reference in the question to Shakespeare should have given a clear indication that the writing was to be taken into account. While weaker answers resorted to telling the story, there were some very good, comprehensive responses showing quite a sophisticated awareness of sources of tension and drama and of the effect of the scene on an audience and on the way in which the play develops.

Question 11

Very few responses to this question were seen. This was a question best answered with a secure sense of appropriate moments. Some candidates stretched the definition of 'moment' to breaking point dealing with entire sub-plots. 'Amusing' too was sometimes treated rather loosely, the second wedding of Hero/Claudio being offered as one example.

Question 12

Relatively few responses were seen to this empathic task, but of these the best demonstrated a sensitive understanding of how Leonato might have felt guilt for his behaviour towards Hero in Act 4 Scene 1. Some candidates ignored everything that had gone before apart from the second wedding.



Journey's End

Question 16

The majority of those who wrote on this text chose the passage-based question. They had no trouble in identifying the drama of the situation and the most successful gave a strong personal response to what is moving. As always, the extent to which candidates focused on the details of the passage proved the main differentiator. Some concentrated on defining the differences in the two characters at the expense of looking at their interaction.

Question 17

Those who chose this question responded well, looking at both sides of the question and coming to their own conclusions on the basis of sound textual evidence.

Question 18

Few chose this and those who did often found it difficult to establish a convincing tone for Stanhope.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

The poem was well known and the feelings understood but there was a lack of attention to the language and form in many answers. Success depended on how much attention was given to the word 'memorably'. In the best answers there was a sensitive and developed response to the sounds of words as well as to the ideas expressed.

Question 20

The Voice was the more popular choice here. Most answers demonstrated an attempt to engage with language but sometimes they had difficulty relating to the expression of the idea of how love is 'short-lived'. All too often less successful answers resorted to recounting the story of Hardy's unhappy marriage. Those who chose the Byron poem often found it easier to relate to the terms of the question.

Question 21

This was the least popular of the three questions on *Songs* and very few examples were seen. The briefness of moments chosen often led to extremely brief answers which were little more than paraphrase. This question was looking for detailed exploration of words and their effects, through not only meaning but sound and the other senses and emotion and mood.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

Question 25

This again proved to be a popular text and candidates opting for it tended to go for passage-based task on it. They were able to write a good deal about the relationship of Mr and Mrs Bennet, but often had difficulty in explaining *how* Austen depicts it 'amusingly'. There was a tendency to retell or describe rather than show how Austen uses her skills as a writer and the weakest responses tended to move beyond the extract and in some cases to almost ignore it.

Question 26

There were fewer answers to this question. Success depended on the appropriateness of the choices. There were some rather loose interpretations of the word 'moments'; some candidates considered the whole of the story of the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy, for example.

Question 27

This question was often well done with plenty of relevant detail and most candidates managed to capture something of Lydia's voice. The best caught her vapid optimism and incorrigibility very accurately.

Far From the Madding Crowd

Question 34

There were some very detailed and analytical responses to this extract with sharp focus on the dramatic qualities of the incident. Though the text was not offered by many Centres, it had clearly been enjoyed and found very stimulating.

Question 35

This question produced some thoughtful and well-balanced assessments of the thoughtful and well-balanced Gabriel. Candidates clearly found him a character to whom they could relate.

Question 36

There were some very touching and convincing recreations of Fanny. Though she says little in the novel, her character was well understood and candidates had little difficulty in creating a suitable voice for her.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 37

This produced some well focused and very individual responses, conveying a real sense of personal engagement and enjoyment of Head's description.

Question 38

This was a less popular question but was usually answered well. The better responses supported their answers with thorough detail, the weaker responses were often generalized.

Question 39

Only a very few responses to the empathic task on this novel were seen. There were some fair attempts to establish a voice here.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 43

Most candidates chose the extract and though there were some careful assessments, the term 'sad' was often not as fully addressed as it might have been. Many seemed to think that John had died in the war and made little connection between the letters and the rest of the extract beyond saying it was all very sad.

Question 44

There were some sensitive and well argued responses pointing out the irony of the aliens' destruction at the end of the story when they have come in peace to a so-called civilized world and in fact represent the values that the humans value.

Question 45

Though candidates did not generally produce particularly distinctive voices, they knew and understood the character well and conveyed her determination not to be ground down by the behaviour of the employer and to retain her dignity and set a good example to her son.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13

Paper 13

General comments

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Some candidates embraced the empathic questions enthusiastically, with variable success. 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 character's thoughts and feelings but without sufficient detailed support. In empathic responses, it is vital to locate the answer precisely in the moment specified and not merely to narrate the whole of the particular character's story. For example, in **Question 12** many candidates attributed knowledge to Hero which she did not have at the point in the play given in the task.

Most candidates had planned carefully and produced three answers of fairly consistent length and quality; there was little evidence of mismanagement of time. There were some rubric errors – the most common being the offering of more than the requisite three questions under the misapprehension that quantity may count for as much as quality – but they were relatively few. Some candidates used inappropriately colloquial language in their essays.

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By contrast, there were some outstanding scripts which showed a detailed, informed and intelligent engagement with the works studied and the tasks set.

There was a very limited take-up of some of the texts on this time zone's paper. Far too few answers (in some cases none) were seen on *My Mother Said I Never Should*, *Journey's End*, *Keats's Poems*, *Games at Twilight*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *Ethan Frome* to make general comment appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

A Small Family Business

Only **Question 1** on this text, the passage-based option, had more than a very few responses. It was generally dealt with competently, though there was a tendency to re-tell or explain the passage in weaker answers.

The Crucible

Question 7

This question was generally well-handled though many candidates took a fairly narrative approach. There was at least a reasonable understanding of the relative innocence of Proctor and Elizabeth, compared to the suspicion felt by the other characters. Hale was often entirely ignored, whereas those who tracked the shifts in his mood and attitude in response to what the Proctors say were often the most successful. Most candidates were fairly successful in bringing in relevant contextual knowledge and understanding, whilst still focusing on the extract but some found difficulty in focusing closely on the precise extract, dealing with the earlier moments of the scene, and in particular John's inability to remember the commandments, to the exclusion of the extract itself. Generally, however, the question was well done, with most candidates able to identify several relevant points from the passage and many exploring various facets of the characters' motives. Less successful answers tended to become 'bogged down' in detail and to run through the passage trying to identify every point. Some essays were over-long, and points were not carefully selected.

Question 8

Mary Warren's evidence and Elizabeth's lie were the most often chosen moments, although there were others, for example, the point in Act 4 where Proctor signs his confession. This proved particularly fruitful for the most able candidates, who explored the concepts of good and evil in the context of the play; such candidates actively questioned which could be termed the 'good' outcome – Proctor's survival or his moral integrity. Some candidates stretched the definition of 'moment', and in some cases, more than two such moments were offered.

Question 9

There were some excellent responses to this question, which fluently incorporated Miller's adopted Salem dialect into their writing. Besides this, there was a wealth of ideas from which to draw. The most sophisticated answers balanced Proctor's love for Elizabeth and his wish to make amends against his awareness that she was finding forgiveness very difficult. The guilt of his affair was obviously a key factor, but, in order to address the question, it was helpful to refer to the day spent working on the farm, the awareness which Proctor would have at this stage of the town's 'hysteria', Elizabeth's cooking, the flowers. Some less successful answers went beyond the moment to convey his likely thoughts after his conversation with Elizabeth.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 10

Candidates' knowledge of the play was often very good. Many, however, took the opportunity simply to narrate large parts of the play, often virtually all of it, without addressing exactly what was asked. Many saw

the humour here, and showed an implicit or explicit awareness of the theatricality, but too often they were unable to describe the effects of the humour.

Question 11

There were very few answers about Borachio. Those who did attempt the question focused almost exclusively on his role in Don John's Hero/Claudio plot.

Question 12

The empathic question was more popular, and fairly well done. There was quite a wide range of possible thoughts and feelings that Hero might have experienced, with many strongly-felt pleas for understanding and sympathy. Although most were able to communicate some of her personality, often they moved quite significantly beyond the exact moment, and allowed her to know things that happen later which she could not possibly know at this point. Her voice was generally quite well managed.

Richard III

Question 13

The extract proved popular although many ignored the Queen's opening; having prepared the ground by explaining what the audience already knows of Richard's villainy, they plunged straight into his announcement of Clarence's death and the irony of his subsequent comments. Better candidates picked up well on the irony of the pardon of Derby's servant and Richard's final shot at the Queen. Some less successful answers focused on Richard exclusively and ignored Derby/Edward's speech. Gloucester's part was generally well understood, as was the irony of Edward's guilt. The more sophisticated candidates focused on the painful irony of small details, such as the opening declaration that this would be thought a 'holy day...hereafter'.

Question 14

Some candidates chose memorable moments, without squarely addressing the term 'amusing'. Some took the valid approach of focusing instead on irony. However, some successful responses analysed the black comedy behind Richard's presence on stage, exploring, for example, his opening speech, his audacity in wooing Anne or his staged refusal of the crown. In the best responses there was some implicit awareness of the character's relationship with the audience, but this was rarely fully articulated.

Question 15

Queen Elizabeth was a popular and generally successful choice for empathetic treatment. Many captured her feelings of anger and outrage initially before going on to show her awareness of the various possibilities in the current situation. Some candidates simply expressed hatred of Richard, along with a determination not to let the daughter marry him. More complex responses utilised references to Margaret's curses, the ease with which he had won Anne's hand and the notion of Richard's poison. Most candidates looked forward to the rise of Richmond. There was often a convincing tone of horror at the thought of losing her last child, mixed with a little pragmatic indecision showing detailed knowledge of the text.

Section B: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

Lindsay's poem (**Question 19**) was addressed by the great majority, with a lot of confident and often very sensitive appreciation of its themes and its writing; many were able to make some thoughtful and apt comments about the poem's language and form. Personal response frequently took the form of anger at man's determination to spread industrial farming methods, and/or the racist destruction of the native Blackfeet and Pawnees. The poet's clear affection for the pre-locomotive wild prairies, and even for the ugly buffaloes, was frequently mentioned, with special note of the curiously emotive and effective verb in line 12. A few candidates expressed pleasure at the spread of the locomotives – otherwise why do they 'sing'? – and several also saw the buffaloes and the Red Indian tribes as waiting their time to gain revenge – 'lying low'. Success of responses tended to vary according to the degree to which candidates addressed their 'feelings

as [they] read this poem.’ A relatively large number of responses simply offered a linear explanation of the text, whereas some candidates embraced the range of the emotive appeal of the poem, exploring the implications of the ‘tossing, blooming perfumed grass’ alongside the mournful repetition of ‘no more’ and ‘lying low’.

Question 20

Candidates who chose the Arnold poem tended to be more successful than those who opted for Millay, who were often unable or unwilling to move beyond the personal situation of the poetic voice. Many who chose this found it quite difficult to accurately nail down the meaning of the poem and wrote general comments without support

Question 21

Success here was very dependent on the suitability of the choice of poem. Candidates tended to write about their chosen poem with little or no attempt to deal with the narrative aspect of the question, or to address the term ‘compelling’. The idea of ‘a story’ was stretched beyond reasonable breaking point by many, who appeared simply to relate their favourite poem regardless of the question. Many candidates chose *Full Moon and Little Frieda*. Whilst this was potentially a valid choice, it relates such a brief incident that in many cases it proved difficult to analyse with real attention to the question. However, some very successful responses focused sensitively on the narrative tone of the poem, looking at the traditional ways in which it sets a scene, introduces characters, and shows development. More immediately accessible choices in response to this question, which proved more successfully generally, were *First Love* and *Marrysong*.

Section C: Prose

Pride and Prejudice

All three questions were attempted in roughly equal measure. Knowledge and enjoyment came across in almost all, and for this text more than any other on the paper candidates really did seem aware that they should answer the question rather than just tell the story. Responses to the passage- and essay-based tasks here were significantly better than those to the empathic task.

Question 25 led to much entertainment and satisfaction as Lady Catherine loses her battle with Elizabeth; irony was rarely tackled well, but satisfaction very frequently.

Question 26 was the most successful of the three Austen tasks, with much more than just character studies being the norm. A good deal of quite unexpected sympathy was shown for Mrs Bennet, given her positively unhelpful husband, the family’s financial situation, and the social pressures that she is under.

Question 27

The empathic task generally proved less successful, with Darcy often stepping straight out of some kind of Regency Mills and Boon novelette, and saying romantic and sentimental things that no self-respecting Austen character, male or female, would even dream of, let alone utter.

The God Boy

Question 28

Almost all answers were able to identify key features in the passage that conveyed Jimmy’s stress and there were several answers showing deep insight and an emotional response to the writing. Better answers went beyond identifying his various strategies to analyse how and why they showed his state of mind, often incorporating into the response the effect of the narrative voice on the impact of the extract. A distinguishing factor was the extent to which they focused on the word ‘vividly’. A fair number of candidates showed some sensitive engagement with the child’s voice, drawing on details such as the sharp detail of the memory and the appeal to the sense of touch. Such candidates also showed clear understanding of the way in which emotional pain is converted into physical symptoms. A very useful detail was the description of Jimmy’s mother, staring at his father ‘in a way that would frighten [him]’; several candidates drew attention to the sense of wrong when a child has such a memory of his mother.

Question 29

There were very variable responses to Molly. The best selected evidence very effectively, commenting on her relatively infrequent appearances and observing the disparity between Jimmy's view of Molly's reactions to her parents' relationship and the true state of her mind though curiously almost no mention was made of the 'suicide' swimming scene. Although almost all responses showed at least a general understanding of Molly's character, the concept of what she contributes to the power of the novel proved a key distinguishing factor. More able candidates wrote more about her role than her character, exploring the ways in which she helps a reader to understand Jimmy's character and in which she provides a more adult, conscious view of the suffering which is presented almost exclusively through a child's mind.

Question 30

This was a popular option, often well handled. All candidates captured the anger felt towards Mr Sullivan, although a few ignored the precise point specified in the novel, making no reference to Mrs Sullivan's fall. More able candidates referred fruitfully to the Sullivans' Catholic faith, expressing the impossibility of escape through divorce. Less convincing were the answers which expressed a very conscious and deliberate plan to kill Mr Sullivan. Whilst it was possible to incorporate murderous thoughts into the response, it was difficult to believe in Mrs Sullivan's cold-blooded plotting.

Stories of Ourselves:

Question 43

Responses to this question showed that candidates knew the whole story well, but very few focused on the ending alone, with many leading up to it with prolonged narration of the whole tale, in one or two cases even ignoring the ending almost entirely; too much time was spent on explaining and justifying the double narrative structure of the tale – very interesting and worthwhile, certainly, but not relevant here. There was also much – often too much – individual criticism of mankind's arrogance and ignorance about the possibility of extra-terrestrial life.

Question 44

This question also led to a great deal of whole-story narration, with very few answers actually identifying two moments, or even implicitly doing so by the focus of their approach; suspense was far too often simply asserted, or just assumed, and rarely explained or explored.

Question 45

By contrast, this question was generally quite well done, and although Willadean is a fairly peripheral character in the story her likely feelings of fascination and puzzlement, combined with the incipient stirrings of sexuality, were often quite well captured; she generally understood her father very well, too!