

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/11

Paper 11

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language, particularly in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation as appropriate
- well-structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well-chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

As in previous sessions, some very commendable work was seen and the enthusiasm of candidates and their teachers communicated itself. Many candidates were well prepared and had a good level of understanding of the texts and their key issues. While their knowledge of the text was often comprehensive, some candidates would have benefited from organising *relevant* knowledge more selectively. Indeed the most frequent observation by Examiners was that marks would have been raised by sharper focus on the terms of the questions in many scripts. This was particularly true where the wording of a question asked for examination of a very specific aspect of the text, for example 'the passing of time seem so central to life' in Question 17. It is good practice to identify and underline the key words of the question and to construct a brief plan before starting to write. (In order to avoid digression, some candidates might find it helpful to allude briefly to the question at the beginning of each paragraph.)

All questions at this level require more than narrative and paraphrase responses, and the little word 'how', directing candidates to consideration of writers' methods, was frequently missed. Phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal' and words such as 'vivid' and 'powerful' have the same purpose, and candidates need to be aware of their importance. Many candidates had clearly been encouraged first and foremost to respond personally and to follow their own trains of thought wherever possible. This is to be applauded of course, but while no-one would want candidates simply to devour teacher notes and reproduce them slavishly, it is important that candidates use *supporting evidence* from the text at all times to support their interpretation. The most successful answers responded relevantly to the tasks set, created a convincing argument and supported it with detailed reference in the form of quotation or close echo of the text.

Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Biff and Happy for Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.

There was some 'device spotting' where candidates correctly identified a literary technique, illustrated it, but failed to explore just *how* the language/technique created its effect. There is no excuse for the absence of any quotation, given that the passage is printed on the examination paper. It should be noted too that the ends of extracts may contain important content and candidates should be sure to have read the whole passage.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, and in so doing revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

Section A: Drama

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

Question 1

The range of response was wide but, for higher marks some engagement with Miller's language and its dramatic effect was expected. It was a popular question and generally well done though some candidates spent too much time putting the extract into context.

This extract is particularly revealing of the two brothers' characteristics: both of them think big dreams without most of the qualities to translate them into any sort of reality. At times it is a truly sad spectacle of two youngish men who like children think they deserve better. At other times, particularly in regard to Happy and his philandering and misplaced conceit, the picture could be said to be a profoundly dislikeable one. The best responses focused on feelings for Biff and Happy 'at this moment' and felt the excitement Biff generated, which most felt could result in success until he comments on having to borrow the money. Biff was admired by most, with Happy coming in for much criticism especially for his treatment of women and his competitive nature. A number of candidates clearly detested Happy and felt he was not interested in anything but money and showing off, thereby being his father's son, a victim of the 'American Dream' mentality- anyone can make it but without putting in the effort, summed up by his 'The only thing is – what can you make out there?', always finding some excuse not to try to make a success of his life. Weaker responses tended to work through the extract, retelling it rather than analysing, and to focus on the importance of brotherly love and discuss that broadly, rather than exploring the depths of the scene.

Question 2

This was a totally open question and elicited different responses, though good answers attempted some balance. Some candidates thought that Willy does not amount to much, that he is in truth little more than deluded, whining and deceitful with very few of the finer human traits. Conversely, many saw him as an idealistic victim of America's love of individualism and material success, fatally unsuited to the life he has pursued and therefore fated to fail. Simple character sketches did not achieve high marks; focus on the parameters of the task was required, supported with detail. The best answers attempted a balanced response exploring Willy's failures, e.g. his lying, cheating on Linda, delusions regarding his sales and his brother, Ben, being known and liked wherever he travelled, poor parenting and unfair treatment of both Biff and Happy especially poor Happy. His suicide and being sacked by Howard rated highly amongst his failures demonstrating just how poor a salesman and judge of character/situations he was as he could not even get the insurance money for sure. These were balanced by some admiration felt for his constant travelling (though risky with his lack of concentration while driving) and appearing not to give up by at least trying to get Howard to give him an office job. A few argued that he did try to inspire his sons and initially had Biff's love and admiration. Linda's love and caring of him was also argued as an aspect to admire in him. However, most saw him as an abject failure and evidence that the 'American Dream' was just that - an unattainable dream.

Question 3

As ever with empathic questions, the quality of the voice determined the mark and the best answers produced a quite definite and moral voice rejecting Ben's macho world.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

Question 4

There were some excellent responses engaging with the scene and clearly understanding the wickedness of Don John from his opening words. The hypocrisy of Don John is breathtaking in this extract, shown by his sycophantic attitude towards his brother, whom we know he hates, and his supposed concern for Claudio, whom he also hates. Even worse is his preparedness to defame Hero, a completely innocent victim in all this. Claudio and Don Pedro are completely sucked in by his lies. Prior knowledge of the character was helpful in this question as was understanding of the change from the usual relationship between him and his brother and Claudio. There was some good understanding of the dramatic irony and impact on the audience. The language, especially the line 'Even she – Leonato's ...', was well analysed as was the implication of the word 'Plague' to describe Hero. Weaker answers worked through the extract with little focus on the question.

Question 5

This was an open question and there were different approaches, but mere narrative did not take candidates very far. Apt selection was crucial; the scenes concerning the gulling of Beatrice and Benedick and those involving Dogberry and the Watch were fruitful and obvious choices. As expected, most candidates focused on Dogberry but could choose specific 'moments' (without going through the plot) and explain why they were amusing. Favourites were the attempt to tell Leonato about the capture of Boracchio and Conrad and, indeed, any moment where Dogberry could use his malapropisms. Other moments of amusement were those between Benedick and Beatrice. Most candidates could engage with the humour and clearly savoured the moments chosen. Good answers sometimes touched on the underlying seriousness of some of the comedy.

Question 6

Good answers made Leonato incensed at Don Pedro and Claudio's lack of concern and their arrogance, especially since to all intents and purposes Hero is dead. It was understandable if he was feeling slightly satisfied at his own performance and thankful for the support of Benedick and his brother. Often he was reflecting on his earlier relationship with Don Pedro and Claudio and his mistaken perception of them. He was often made to speculate on how to handle the eventual revelation that Hero is alive. Successful answers were characterised by a believable voice and tone; it was not believable for him to be less than furious with the insolence of Claudio in particular.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

Question 7

The best answers probed the extract thoroughly and systematically. They did not merely paraphrase but brought out Antony's manipulativenness, his genuine emotion and the power of his effect on the crowd. Some made useful comments about the way in which he is speaking over Caesar's dead body. However, while this was a popular question, in general it was not tackled as well as expected. This must be one of the best known speeches/parts of the play, yet there were few really solid answers where the oratorical skills were fully explored and appreciated. Little more than the inclusive opening, 'Friends, Romans, countrymen...' and the repetition of 'noble Brutus' and sarcasm in describing him as 'honourable' tended to be analysed. Some commented on the dramatic effectiveness of introducing Caesar's will and the fact that he was successful as the Plebeians were won over and wanted to hear the will. Rhetorical questions were identified but little more. The 'powerfully dramatic' was seldom explored.

Question 8

There were differing responses to this question and they were assessed according to the degree of conviction with which candidates put their case. Points to consider were how solid is the evidence in the play that Caesar was 'a tyrant'? Cassius makes a telling argument but how convincing and evidence-based is it? Antony makes a very different case. Clearly, a very detailed knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare's text was crucial here if candidates were to score highly.

Question 9

Appropriate feelings attributable to Brutus were satisfaction at the way his speech has been received and lack of concern about Antony, whom he does not see as a threat. Some candidates focused on his sense of honour and made him suffer some pangs of remorse thinking about Caesar and his friendship. He was sometimes thinking about Caesar's final words, and his anguish and sleeplessness as he turned over in his mind the assassination plan. Portia's concerns also featured in some answers.

R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 10

Candidates had no difficulty in selecting shocking features in this scene, where Stanhope comes close to losing all control and Raleigh is portrayed as a young man who is still having great difficulty in coming to terms with the way human beings cope with things like the trauma of Osborne's death. But many candidates seemed to be completely unaware of the effect of this event on both characters and this obviously limited their marks on the basis that their understanding of what is going on in the scene was only partial. The words of the question 'this moment in the play' imply a connection with what has gone before and what comes after. It was impossible to answer it competently without referring to Osborne's death, which intensifies all the emotion. Candidates were able to focus on 'the moment' but to do so exclusively led to many narrative responses which sometimes discussed social and hierarchical issues such as Stanhope being annoyed at Raleigh for not attending dinner as Stanhope was in charge and he expected obedience. This missed the response of both men to the death of Osborne and how feelings of grief and shock were exhibited by both characters. The psychological motivation of the key characters in this scene was largely unexplored. The other issue which inhibited high order responses concerned candidates' understanding of some of the language involved. The dialogue involving Stanhope and Raleigh was often misinterpreted or the nuances missed. For instance some suggested the phrase 'damn prigs' was significant but were unable to discuss the impact of this language. Clearly, seeing the play in performance even if only on DVD might have helped candidates with these issues.

Question 11

This task hinged upon the choices made by the candidate. There are a number of moments in the play which would come into the category of comic as the soldiers attempt to keep the horrors of war at bay. The greater that enjoyment communicated with the text and its comic possibilities, the greater was the reward. Most of the comic moments selected involved Trotter and Mason and were well explained but very few understood the concept of black humour as a coping mechanism. What was required was some attempt to engage with the humour rather than simply to describe the episode.

Question 12

For most candidates the situation spoke for itself. Stanhope has been told to send both his right-hand man in the company and the brother of the woman he loves to their very possible deaths on a raid which is hardly likely to yield much, even if successful. There is evidence in the conversation with the Colonel that Stanhope thinks it is a pointless waste of life. However, he has not been able to reveal his personal feelings since he has his military duty to carry out and that is next to inform both Osborne and Raleigh of what they have to do. A clear sense of the situation and Stanhope's likely personal feelings were expected and in good answers his anguished voice was communicated.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems*

This text was considerably less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who had studied it showed enjoyment and enthusiasm for the poems.

Question 13

This poem was mostly understood quite well, with the exception of a few very literal-minded candidates who thought the Pilot was a real aviator. Good answers looked in detail at Tennyson's choice of extended metaphor and poetic form, and located religious faith securely in textual details. Some candidates, however, used biographical information to assert that Tennyson foresaw his own death (in specific terms rather than simply as a future certainty) when he wrote the poem.

Question 14

Many of the answers depended on limp assertions about a romanticised love narrative in the poem, or, alternatively, bold assertions about its trenchant critique of female oppression, neither of which were afforded much textual support. Better answers looked at mood and characterisation of the Lady. There was still, however, little attention to poetic form and language in general..

Question 15

This question also attracted some biographical responses, with weaker candidates who wanted to focus on the poem's origin as an elegy for Hallam choosing from its more personal and biographical stanzas, such as 7 ('Dark house, by which once more I stand'). Better answers chose 50 ('Be near me when my light is low') and some achieved a really effective analysis of how this is moving.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 3*

Question 16

There was some misunderstanding of the question and the wonder/amazement of the scene was not always interpreted. Some read the question as 'wonder/think' about the scene which made for very limited responses. There was a good deal of misreading, especially of 'A dark river of blood', 'unspilled milk' – linking this to the background knowledge of Hughes and Plath and her suicide etc. By contrast, there were some excellent, sensitive responses to the delight father and daughter experience in this magical evening where all is focused, 'shrunk' to the senses – the noise of the dog and bucket. Close detail to language ('shrunk' and 'clank') appealing to hearing, intensified by 'And you listening', were features of the best responses. These understood Hughes is directing his words to Frieda and his 'wonder' is in her attentiveness to what she could see in her surroundings. Elements analysed included the 'spider's web', 'dew' and the full pail mirroring 'a first star'. One candidate saw Frieda as her father's 'star' this evening as she cried 'Moon!'. This may not be one of her first words as many candidates tend to think but the 'wonder' she experiences was clearly understood. Nevertheless, even the best responses did not fully explore the mutual appreciation of the child and moon, or indeed the wonder the poet/father feels towards the scene.

Question 17

'Time' was a very popular choice. Most candidates tended to work through this poem explaining what they thought it meant with only tenuous links to the key words of the question. Some focused on the 'passing of time' whilst others tried to explain how it was 'central to life' – the routines of work and school etc. There were some excellent, analytical responses exploring fully the concept of Time in our lives and the religious connotations: like God, Time is the 'Beginning' and the 'End'. Or as one candidate succinctly put it, "*Time is an extended metaphor for God*". Details of the structure, number of lines per verse, verses etc. were sensibly linked to time – hours in a day, days in a week etc. Only a few wrote on Sonnet 29 and they were generally narrative in their approach.

Question 18 was generally very popular and well done. There were many 'particularly powerful' lines chosen and analysed. The key distinguishing factor was the extent to which candidates were able to assess the impact of their chosen lines. Some simply repeated the word "powerful", without really thinking about "why (they found) the lines so powerful", whilst the more able explored factors such as Cheng's direct address or use of omnipotent figures or Clarke's use of images to convey the full impact of man's actions on the environment. Close detailed attention to language was a feature of the best responses.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

Question 19

Here the reader gets a rare glimpse in the novel of a wider community and its views of the lives of the main protagonists. This is a conversation between those who serve, except that Kenneth is a vivid portrait of an independent man who can afford to speak his mind gruffly, and does. His disapproval of so much to do with the attitudes he sees in those who are his patients, his even wondering whether Linton will be that sorry to lose such a burden as Catherine speaks of a totally different and sceptical world. It is almost comic that it has to be his intelligence that alerts Nelly Dean as to what is going on with Isabella and causes yet another problem for this long suffering woman. Some grasp of this with pertinent support was enough for adequate reward but in better answers the candidate was responsive to the various tones in the writing. The question led a number of candidates to explore what was revealed about all the 'characters' mentioned (Linton, Cathy, Isabella and Heathcliff) and not just what was revealed of the 'characters of Mr Kenneth and Ellen. Best responses understood perfectly this no-nonsense approach of a country doctor and the loyal but opinionated Ellen. A number of candidates thought that Miss Linton was in fact Cathy (Mrs) and this resulted in some misreading of the passage e.g. the words about Miss Linton walking out were about Cathy's behaviour.

Question 20

Candidates had a considerable choice here, extreme and brutal emotion very often of course being associated with Heathcliff, Catherine Earnshaw and Hindley. The most popular choices were when Hindley held Hareton over the banister and the moment when Hindley tries to lock Heathcliff out. Differentiation was a matter of the degree to which the candidate managed to probe the ways in which Bronte's writing shocks the reader. This was the centre of the task.

Question 21

An acceptable approach was to portray Catherine as a touch frightened, finding herself in such strange conditions, particularly after the terror of the original incident with the dog and without her beloved companion Heathcliff. Better answers went on to portray her as on the way to being entranced by the strange comforts and pleasures of the genteel world of the Lintons and the way in which its women are pampered. The discriminator was the degree to which candidates were able to communicate in her voice something of Catherine's capacity for almost breathlessly instant feeling and enthusiasms.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

Question 22

The details which attracted candidates were not prescribed but for good marks evidence of real engagement with the hilarity was looked for and an understanding of the way Desai's words create the laughter.

Question 23

The officials in Shahkot such as the DPS, the CMO, the DC and the Brigadier, exhibit various degrees of sloth, incompetence, self-importance, fear of doing anything definite which might have consequences, self-aggrandisement and at times corruption. The inhabitants of the town clearly cannot expect much from them as is shown at the end of the novel when these people try to decide what to do about the monkeys. Differentiation came from the degree to which candidates were able to understand Desai's view of officialdom and respond to the gentle satire.

Question 24

It was expected that Mr Chawla would be portrayed as being beside himself with rage. Sampath has just ruined all his father's carefully laid plans for his future in the public services. He has been trouble right from the beginning, not at all like his father, and the family's reputation has been ruined. Good answers conveyed something of Mr Chawla's self-important, energetic voice.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.

Question 25

Thus there was much in the extract for candidates to discover. The best responses engaged fully after brief introductions to contextualise the passage, then worked through it with the question firmly in mind. Well selected references were used. Weaker candidates did not comment on Daisy at all and there was misunderstanding of Gatsby's offer to Nick. Some thought him extremely arrogant and condescending as he was 'bragging' about how rich he was and a very few launched into an attack of the wicked American society and failure of the 'American Dream' with this conman. Not surprisingly many candidates offered both the Miller and the Fitzgerald so no doubt would have spent much time on American society. The differentiator was the extent to which candidates responded to the skilful means by which the author communicates with the reader.

Question 26

Good responses explored closely the way in which Fitzgerald handles Daisy's relationships with Tom and Gatsby, how she uses them to satisfy her own selfish desires. It was essentially a straightforward question but for many candidates 'sympathy' tended to be only partially understood. The word is frequently used in these papers and candidates should be prepared for it. Most found little reason to sympathise due to her preference for money and security in staying with Tom, treatment of her daughter, failure to attend Gatsby's funeral and to take responsibility for Myrtle's death. Some did sympathise as she did try to get out of the wedding, was badly treated by Tom (her adultery was forgotten) and was browbeaten by all including Gatsby. Better answers attempted to balance their response to her and to try to find extenuating circumstances for her behaviour. The best examined the words that Fitzgerald uses to describe her.

Question 27

Better candidates sometimes thought about how Gatsby came on the scene and about his earlier relationship with Daisy. Gatsby's corrupt money-making deals also figured strongly. The best answers conveyed the arrogance and contempt of Tom's voice.

BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather*

Question 28

This was not a very popular text this session. It was expected that there might be some reference to the earlier prickliness of the contacts between these two characters, and to the way in which the tone is much more mellow in the extract. Paulina is not sure of her ground, but she is still attracted to and intrigued by Makhaya. She does not make the mistake of presuming too close an acquaintance, however. We see a softening in Makhaya, even the suggestion that he craves 'the warmth and love' of Paulina, but there are still issues between them and his advice about selling the cattle does not go down well. She does not yet see that the advice comes out of concern for her son and is in fact very sensible. They still have a way to go. Good answers looked closely at the language of the passage and show how Head creates changes in pace and in tone.

Question 29

There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 30

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EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome*

Question 31

Differentiation resulted from the degree to which the candidate managed to probe each small detail in the extract. The more evidence there was of this close engagement with the writing, the higher the reward. As so often in Wharton's writing, the small things are what reveal significant thought. Here in a passage that is an ostensibly dry description of Ethan's working day, she shows how his mind keeps coming back to Mattie and the impending ending of their brief time on their own. Almost all saw some of the reasons for his happiness and fears about Zeena (always lurking in the background).

Question 32

The most popular choices were the meal Ethan and Mattie have together and their return from the dance that evening. A few thought there were moments of happiness sledging together before their ill-fated suicide attempt. Apt choice was clearly important for success but after that the main consideration was the extent of exploration of the vividness of the writing, as the task demands.

Question 33

Ethan is worried to distraction about the state of his finances. In the forefront of his mind without doubt will be the way his life is one continual struggle against the odds to make ends meet within a community which has seen the modern world pass it by and with it any hope of economic prosperity. On a different scale Hale is also feeling the pinch. As a proud man Ethan feels the humiliation of having asked, only to be refused. Candidates conveyed some of these points and also aspects of Ethan's dismal personal life, such as details like Zeena's medical bills. The ability to convey Ethan's gruff despair in the voice brought high reward.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

The obvious reaction expected to the passage is to the irony of an alien describing our world as alien – and in miniature. The setting is described vividly and it takes a little while to register what the detail refers to. The different perspective, for example the cat being seen as a huge monster, adds some humour, but the seriousness and dignity of the tone of the narrator makes one sympathise with the Onns and fear for them. Though there was no need for external reference, a sense of the context enhanced an answer. Some candidates misread the question as being about the Onns' emotions and their performance was therefore limited. The main focus needed to be on the vividness of the writing.

Question 35

There are two lots of powerful emotions in both stories: the fury and grief of Mr Wills and the guilt of the boy in *the Taste of Watermelon* and the repressed emotions of anger and betrayal in the Aunt and of guilt again in the boy in *Secrets*. The focus of the question is on how these emotions are transmitted, however, and viewpoint was a vital consideration. *The Taste of Watermelon* is told by one of the protagonists and the reader is carried along by his perception of events and affected very directly by his expressions of regret and remorse at the end, especially since he sees Mr Wills almost as a joke to begin with. The emotion is less direct in *Secrets*, being told in the third person. The reader has to draw inferences, which makes the description of the Aunt's fury much more powerful, perhaps. In any event more than narrative and explanation was expected; well selected references and comment on the language was essential to a good answer.

Question 36

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12

Paper 12

Key messages

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- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
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General comments

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Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Willy in Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.

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Section A: Drama

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

Question 1

It was expected that most candidates would know the basic significance of this moment, the way it shatters for all time Biff's heroic image of his father. Though not specifically required, some contextualisation was useful in order to make that clear. Differentiation came from the degree of response to the immediate drama of the moment, in the way Miller orchestrates Willy's panic turning to bluster, the coarseness of the woman and Biff's shock becoming angry contempt. Candidates might have focused more strongly on 'dramatic' and 'significant'; many answers merely traced through the passage explaining the action and leaving it at that. Often the 'stockings' were mentioned but nothing much was made of their wider significance. The discovery of the woman and the charade Willy goes through with Biff, and his changes in tone etc. – might have been addressed more fully.

Question 2

As so often with this play, the audience is given a wide range of possibilities of response, even with such a potentially moving and admirable figure as Linda. It is made clear that without her love and endurance the Loman family, and Willy in particular, would have completely disintegrated far earlier. At times in the play she receives outrageously little credit for it so that often the audience's compassion for her is overwhelming, particularly after the Boston incident. However, it is also possible to see her as almost encouraging Willy's delusions. She rarely questions his actions and she seems to allow her sons to be brought up with the same flawed view of life. For all the brutality of Biff's verbal assault on his mother, the audience might think he has a point. Some candidates took this line and repeated the idea quite frequently during their answers, but might have provided more close detailed support. Some candidates merely said that Linda was a faithful wife and Willy was totally responsible for his own failure.

Question 3

There should have been little difficulty here for candidates to find suitable content for this empathic response task. Willy is desperate. The scene with Howard shows that all too poignantly. All his illusions have been brutally exposed. He is a failure and the firm for which he has worked for so long wants rid of his embarrassing presence. It was expected that Willy might swing from whining self-pity to anger that he has been so treated. Importantly candidates needed to recognise that he never entirely escapes from his dream even here. Some convincing grasp of his state of mind was enough for reasonable reward but those candidates who authentically captured his voice achieved very good marks

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

Question 4

While it was very difficult for candidates to answer successfully without referring to Claudio's outburst immediately preceding this and to the famous 'rotten orange' accusation of Hero, some candidates' answers suffered by spending a long time discussing the general situation and delaying starting on the printed passage. Good answers examined the words in some detail and considered the pace and tone. Some responses were under-focused on 'dramatic'.

Question 5

The focus here is on 'admirable' so a strong personal response was looked for supported by close consideration of the ways in which Shakespeare presents Beatrice, not merely a prepared character sketch. Most candidates were aware of Beatrice's feisty nature and her wordplay, though they might have made it more relevant to her being, because of this, an 'admirable' heroine. Usually answers made general remarks about her character and some compared her favourably with Hero.

Question 6

By this stage Leonato has changed his tune and is convinced of Hero's innocence. He is also enmeshed in the strategy of keeping her existence a secret. He has been humiliated by Claudio and Don Pedro and Dogberry has given him the news of the flight of Don John and the capture of Borachio. He will be enraged, relieved, self-righteous. He may also be thankful that his honour is now untarnished as his concern for his good name has seemed at time to be his prime consideration. Candidates had a rich seam of emotions to draw on. The voice of Leonato proved elusive for some and this effectively restricted the quality of response.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

Question 7

This passage-based question was popular but candidates were too often intent on describing the action of the passage at the expense of exploring how Shakespeare makes it powerfully dramatic. Few so much as remarked that a brutal multiple stabbing was powerful or dramatic. Most commented on the ending of the scene and better answers were able to illustrate the drama of the betrayal as presented. Many were able to discuss Caesar's god-like utterances but only the best of these answers discussed or implied the dramatic irony of the situation.

Question 8

There was some detailed knowledge of the part played in the text particularly by Portia and some good close reference, but sometimes this was let down by the level of emotional response offered. Many candidates wrote of how they pitied Calphurnia's shabby treatment by Caesar in the opening scene where her barrenness is insensitively broadcast to all, but the details of her dream and the desperation she shows to prevent her husband from walking to his death were barely discussed. Often Portia, who was mostly the more pitied, was pitied for her husband not treating her as an equal in the marriage, ignoring the later material, and sometimes missing her tragic end altogether. Indeed, some candidates expressed sympathy for Portia because Brutus's suicide made her a widow. Again, the irony of Portia's desire to be treated as a strong woman but ending up consumed by anxiety and fear was something which a good answer might have looked at in some detail. Sometimes answers, ostensibly about Calphurnia or Portia, got side-tracked and spent most of the time discussing Caesar or Brutus, with self-limiting consequences.

Question 9

The voice of Cassius was sometimes difficult to find for candidates, but overall most answers were successful. Candidates knew well enough Cassius's feelings about Antony, and – indeed – about Brutus's tolerance of his presence at the funeral, let alone his willingness to allow Antony access to the volatile crowd, and so forth. Better answers were able to range over a wealth of relevant textual detail and incorporate it using a little textual echo into the thoughts of the character here.

R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 10

As so often in this play the writing exists on a number of levels. Through the extract there is a layer of the mundane detail of life and soldiers' preoccupations in the trenches. Here it is food, culminating in Mason being admonished for failing to pack the pepper. However, this serves to heighten the contrast with the drama of Stanhope's tense and shocked reaction to the arrival of Raleigh. Some awareness of the audience's ignorance of much this early in the play was expected and some attempt to bring out how Sherriff makes the audience aware that there is a great deal to be explained. Stage directions are revealing here and candidates rarely made sufficient comment on how they support the tense atmosphere which is at the heart of the drama.

Question 11

There is ample evidence for either proposition. There are moments, particularly in regard to Raleigh and perhaps Hibbert, where Stanhope's ingrained habits of command tip into something profoundly cruel and bullying. However, since much of the play is about the terrible pressures of command in war, many answers were expected to qualify such a judgment. There are a number of moments when he shows quite clearly why he is in command. Good answers were able to see the harshness of treatment (the threat to 'accidentally' shoot Hibbert between the eyes, for instance), yet also realised that Stanhope was able to galvanise him, and were able to quote sensible material to illustrate Stanhope's far from bullying team ethic. The weakest answers merely argued Stanhope was an excellent and inspiring leader who did not bully anyone (and conveniently forgot episodes such as that with the revolver and Hibbert).

Question 12

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems*

The Tennyson selection was less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who offered it, frequently showed strong engagement with the poems; they had clearly enjoyed them.

Question 13

Some responses to this traced through the extract but were largely explanatory. 'In what ways' is a classic opening to a question and requires the candidate to discuss language and technique. Most could see the change in attitude, the new and the old, but struggled to get beyond that. Some candidates repeated the ideas in the poem without understanding what they were. All knew about Hallam.

Question 14

The Lady of Shallott was the more popular and there were a few excellent answers, thoroughly immersed in myth, and a few very weak answers, not mentioning Lancelot. There was a tendency for narrative to feature heavily in answers to this question; the words 'how' and 'so intriguing' were often missed or addressed in cursory fashion.

Question 15

There were some excellent responses, showing detailed understanding of Ulysses' strengths and desires. Some candidates found giving their own feelings difficult and though they knew the poem, they did not explore deeper meanings. Occasionally there were indications of lack of clear understanding of the poem.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: From Part 3

Question 16

This poem was clearly popular and much enjoyed. Candidates were keen to explain about the moon making amends for the damage done in various ways during the day but often there was little focus on 'how' the words used 'convey the power of the moonlight to penetrate...' In other words, answers tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. However, better answers were able to select some of the language and make an attempt to evaluate how it helps to create an effect.

Question 17

Most answers looked at Hardy. There always seemed to be a clear understanding of the poem, but rarely a genuine response to what the actual question asked for: how a 'vivid feeling of sorrow' is created by the poet's words. Answers very often asserted things were 'vivid', e.g. 'much' in 'much missed' without in any way arguing how and why they were so. Often really striking language was either paraphrased (translated, almost) or merely ignored. This approach was equally apparent in the responses to Arnold, where candidates spent quite a lot of time saying what they thought the poet was 'saying'.

Question 18

The poems that featured most were *Lament*, *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes*, *Report To Wordsworth*, *Marrysong* and *Sonnet 43*. There tended to be little focus on why the words of the poets were 'memorable' and far more insistence on telling what the poet was 'saying'. There was also a tendency to write on the whole of the poems not merely on the openings.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights*

Question 19

Candidates were generally able to enter into the way the writing is full of the most violent images and probe what these images show of Catherine and Heathcliff's emotions.

Question 20

Candidates were asked at least to consider both views of Nelly Dean. Successful answers went beyond a character sketch and kept in mind the parameters of the task. After that the balance of the argument was up to the candidate, although it was expected that most would lean quite reasonably towards the first description. There were many testimonies to Nelly as a loyal, loving (and long-service) servant and the names of those she 'was there for' were often listed, but there was little detail, and less still when candidates tried to discuss Nelly as 'an interfering gossip'. They sometimes found some instances of interfering, but were never at all convincing on 'gossip'.

Question 21

Most candidates got a little way to producing something like an appropriate voice once they got into their memories of how Heathcliff supplanted him in his father's affections. Better answers mentioned Frances, his wife. A few mentioned his feelings for Catherine. The more one was made to feel Hindley's rough and unpleasant tones in the voice, the more successful the answer.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

Question 22

Candidates tended to respond in general terms to the amusing qualities of the extract, conveying their enjoyment of the text, but often not attending to the details of the writing.

Question 23

Both these propositions were arguable. The task does encourage both judgments to be examined but it should have been perfectly possible to write a good answer coming down firmly one side or the other. Probably the easier option was to highlight how Sampath's fame as a holy man is so easily achieved in such a gullible society, where Desai suggests that anyone plainly eccentric or odd can make the leap to the status of a guru whose most meaningless statements then take on the aura of the profoundly philosophical. However, there is also a strand of imaginative fantasy in the novel which never quite allows that satire full rein and perhaps proposes that there are more things in heaven and earth. Answers which attempted to weigh that possibility in relation to Sampath and advanced detailed support for it received high reward.

Question 24

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.

Question 25

Successful candidates saw the grotesque nature of the situation and explored thoroughly Fitzgerald's writing to bring out the reactions of the rivals.

Question 26

There were strong responses to this question, based on a thorough knowledge of the text and the place Fitzgerald assigns to Miss Baker in this pleasure-seeking society.

Question 27

Many candidates conveyed their understanding of the immediate situation, although Gatsby the dreamer was not particularly evident in many responses, and Gatsby's voice proved surprisingly elusive for some. Candidates sometimes made Gatsby appear more hysterical than is warranted, to judge by his conversation with Nick.

BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather*

Question 28

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 29

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 30

Generally the fact that Makhaya and Gilbert were on friendly terms was made clear, and there was evidence of some understanding of the situation which had led to Gilbert's hasty marriage-proposal. Some thoughtful and extended responses revealed the yearning within Makhaya, the possible tinge of jealousy, and the hopes for a brighter future involving a wife and family of his own.

EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome*

Question 31

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 32

Answers showed strong engagement with the way the writing conveys her personality so powerfully.

Question 33

There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

The descriptive qualities of the writing were central to a successful answer and candidates did not achieve the higher bands unless they explored the imagery and diction carefully. Many answers showed an ability to comment on how the atmosphere created is sinister, and some commented on how the description is symbolic of the situation that the captive is in. Answers also covered the anonymity of the characters and both the overt and suggested violence. The passage drew out some very sensitive responses.

Question 35

This was a significantly less popular task, and answers seemed to find little to say. Very little interesting was found about Victor in *On Her Knees*; the narrator of *The Taste of Watermelon* was interesting because he was a typical teenager, or – sometimes, a little better – because he matured during the story; the narrator of *The Signalman* was interesting but it was never really made clear why. A few answers misidentified the narrators of the stories altogether.

Question 36

Good answers brought out the boy's fascination with his Aunt, and also with her story. Other candidates often did not see or take enough heed of the 'moment' at which they were supposed to be writing. Hence some wrote from the time they started visiting Aunt Mary, and some wrote at the point Aunt Mary returns and catches him having read a number of letters. There was little close reference to the letter candidates should have just read.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13

Paper 13

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language, particularly in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, and characterisation as appropriate
- well-structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well-chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

As in previous sessions, some very commendable work was seen and the enthusiasm of candidates and their teachers communicated itself. Many candidates were well prepared and had a good level of understanding of the texts and their key issues. While their knowledge of the text was often comprehensive, some candidates would have benefited from organising *relevant* knowledge more selectively. Indeed the most frequent observation by Examiners was that marks would have been raised by sharper focus on the terms of the questions in many scripts. This was particularly true where the wording of a question asked for examination of a very specific aspect of the text, for example 'the passing of time seem so central to life' in Question 17. It is good practice to identify and underline the key words of the question and to construct a brief plan before starting to write. (In order to avoid digression, some candidates might find it helpful to allude briefly to the question at the beginning of each paragraph.)

All questions at this level require more than narrative and paraphrase responses, and the little word 'how', directing candidates to consideration of writers' methods, was frequently missed. Phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal' and words such as 'vivid' and 'powerful' have the same purpose, and candidates need to be aware of their importance. Many candidates had clearly been encouraged first and foremost to respond personally and to follow their own trains of thought wherever possible. This is to be applauded of course, but while no-one would want candidates simply to devour teacher notes and reproduce them slavishly, it is important that candidates use *supporting evidence* from the text at all times to support their interpretation. The most successful answers responded relevantly to the tasks set, created a convincing argument and supported it with detailed reference in the form of quotation or close echo of the text.

Some quite able candidates could probably have been better prepared to tackle passage-based questions on their drama and prose texts. The problem in most cases here was that they did not distinguish between this type of question and the other essay questions in terms of approach. Often, the passage became merely a springboard for quite general commentary on character - most notably Willy in Question 1 - with little or no detailed consideration of the language in the passage itself. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the essay question (marked with a dagger symbol) and this, though not prohibited, was obviously self-limiting. In answers to these general essay questions for drama and prose, less focused exploration of language is expected than in the passage-based questions since an answer will probably range much more widely over a set text, but for the latter it is essential to answer the question that has been set and *use* the passage. Quite often, candidates gave an off-focus introduction about the text in general, unrelated to the passage. As always, the best answers were focused on the task and were able to integrate aptly chosen textual support to prove their points, support that demonstrated that candidates could appreciate how the writer's use of language created the effect they were describing and how that effect helped them to understand what the writer was conveying.

here was some 'device spotting' where candidates correctly identified a literary technique, illustrated it, but failed to explore just *how* the language/technique created its effect. There is no excuse for the absence of any quotation, given that the passage is printed on the examination paper. It should be noted too that the ends of extracts may contain important content and candidates should be sure to have read the whole passage.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, and in so doing revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

Question 1

The crucial words here were *disturbing and moving*. It should have presented no problem to most candidates to explain some of the significances of this extract, the way in which it reveals Willy's delusional state of mind and his misplaced values which he is desperately trying to convince himself have been proved the right ones. He is a man on the brink of disintegration, desperately seeking a solace that nobody in the real world, not even Linda, can give him. What was needed was some personal response to the way Miller makes this such powerful and poignant drama, with some grasp, for instance, of such things as the way the rapid changes of time and between reality and illusion convey Willy's unbearable confusion. Candidates were generally happier discussing 'disturbing' rather than 'moving' and so a lot of responses were quite imbalanced. The best were able to understand how the structure of the play and the flashback worked, the less successful simply retold what happened with a little comment. Willy's relationship with Ben seemed understood by most but few candidates commented on the combined moving/disturbing effect of the closing lines of the extract – Biff's questioning of his mother and her responses.

Question 2

One hardly needs here to rehearse the material beloved of study aids regarding Miller's attack in this play on the American Dream. Such a rehearsal of the well-known features of this attack, on the way American society has seemed to laud entrepreneurial success even at the expense of moral conduct, should set the candidate on the path of tackling the task. However, the key word in the question was *memorable*, in conjunction with the requirement to make contact with the writing. This is a highly effective drama and not a tract, even if once or twice it might be thought to get perilously close to becoming one. Evidence of engagement with the power of the drama was therefore expected in the best answers. It was quite a popular question and most answers showed some general knowledge and understanding of the American Dream but for higher reward many needed to focus specifically on how the play was a 'memorable attack' – strong words which were often ignored.

Question 3

For the highest marks the voice was expected to reveal moments of the old confident assertive Biff and the present rather defeated man who is still at the age of 34 unsure of who he is or what he should be. Some candidates captured Biff's voice extremely well, but a significant number ignored the rift between him and Willy, instead believing that it would be a happy family reunion.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

Question 4

This question was a popular choice, and usually tackled well or fairly well. Good responses understood Beatrice's feisty and unconventional attitudes and banter on marriage and men, and the ways she challenged contemporary views on men and women's lives. They could respond to the tone and humour, as well as the irony of all she says in the light of future outcomes in the play. Most managed to comment on both Beatrice's liveliness as well as her attractiveness, and the best engaged with Shakespeare's use of witty language and her dominance.

Question 5

This was generally less well tackled than Question 4. Success depended on suitability of choice. Some candidates chose inappropriate 'moments' or merged generalised moments together. Scenes involving Dogberry, especially the questioning of Borachio, were popular but the comedy was sometimes asserted or outlined, without being fully understood. It was rare for 'serious' to be fully understood or developed. Some candidates relied heavily on the passage printed in Question 4, which though permissible was self-limiting.

Question 6

This was generally done well. The situation and overall reasons for outrage were grasped but there was a tendency to drift into caring psychotherapeutic support of Claudio which jarred with era and character. Some weaker answers did not address Don Pedro's social standing so his reaction was not fully in keeping with his rank or his relationship with Claudio.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

Question 7

Most candidates could reveal something about the weather and the unnatural happenings. Not all related these to the context of Caesar's imminent assassination, but where this was the case they often went on to explore the striking and violent language, and the effects Shakespeare intended for the audience. The use of the supernatural, involvement of gods and all implications of these were there for the picking. Some were unclear about the role of Cicero and his allegiances, but candidates who considered the different reactions of the three characters involved in this part of the scene were able to deepen their responses. There were, however a significant number of answers which retold or paraphrased the extract with limited explanation of *how* Shakespeare made this so 'strikingly dramatic'.

Question 8

This was a very popular choice. It produced a wide range of answers and reactions to the character. Generally the task was well approached, and most seemed to have a grasp of the ambivalence in Shakespeare's portrayal. Better responses developed a balanced answer, and addressed both propositions. They also moved on through the play to comment on Antony's later actions, either to support a chosen view or to develop a different one. Less successful answers took a generalised approach. The play and Mark Antony's role were known and understood but more detailed supporting evidence was needed in these.

Question 9

Those who captured the voice of 'the noblest Roman of them all' and whose responses show a detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant sections of Shakespeare's text in support merited the highest reward. Some candidates found the voice difficult to really pin down, it seemed, but there were others who captured a reflective and regretful tone, balanced with some justifications of actions and references to honour, and then resigned themselves to the brutal truth and ending.

R.C. SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 10

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 11

This was the question that the vast majority of candidates who prepared this play chose. Some provided a generalised character study of Osborne and his role but most managed a reasonably well-focused attempt. All understood his caring relationship with everyone, and the best showed a very good knowledge of the events immediately afterwards and the impact his death had on Stanhope.

Question 12

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Poems*

The Tennyson selection was less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who offered it, frequently showed strong engagement with the poems; they had clearly enjoyed them.

Question 13

This question was generally well done. Candidates who were insecure on the context, or did not comment on it put themselves at a disadvantage, although those who focused on the language closely could still achieve a reasonable mark. There were some good responses to the flower and nature imagery and its implications of renewal, life and hope. Candidates generally found it easy to identify the use of language though there were those who gave a run-through of the poem's ideas and ignored the actual focus of the question: how Tennyson 'at last finds hope'.

Question 14

Some candidates described those qualities they admired (with some textual support) but did not necessarily explore how the writing made them admire him. However, most were able to write something that was relevant.

Question 15

Most of the responses were able to tap into the richness of the descriptions of the setting and background to the poem. Some merely retold the poem, picking up on the descriptions of the characters (especially Lancelot) without mentioning the 'setting'.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 3*

Question 16

A number of candidates found it difficult to express themselves clearly in writing about this poem, but those who read it carefully and attended to the language could and did achieve good marks. By supporting ideas carefully, they could offer a variety of interpretations and there were some very perceptive responses, though there were some odd interpretations, some focusing entirely on its being an anti-war or anti-industrialization poem. Some interpretations focused on the 'collapse of the English Empire'. All too often the last stanza was totally ignored and so the importance of Arnold's appeal to his wife 'to be true /To one another' was not understood or commented on.

Question 17

This question prompted some very good answers. With regard to Scott's poem, many were able to capture the way the use of imagery and tone contribute to the poem's portrayal of human love. There were some sensitive and engaged answers that were a pleasure to read. Those who chose Byron struggled more to understand the meaning and tone of the poem, and to identify with the voice. There were some competent answers, getting the main gist of the ideas, but very few good ones. Most just found one main point and reiterated it.

Question 18

This was a much less popular choice. Some candidates selected appropriate poems and wrote convincing personal responses to the uses of sounds in both chosen poems. These included *The Voice* and *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* among others, where the sounds were effectively linked with interpretation of meanings. In general, many candidates this session did pay more close attention to the way language is used to form the music of the poetry, and the quality of answers was thereby improved.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights*

Question 19

It was hoped that most candidates would detect in this passage how much Heathcliff's temperament as an adult is already revealed in the child. The prompt to 'suggest the course of events in the novel' worked well in enabling candidates to spring from phrases/hints in the passage to expand on their understanding of Heathcliff. There were many good and varied responses.

Question 20

Differentiation came from how well the candidate ranged over the detail of the novel. The question seemed to encourage candidates to take a fresh look at the two characters and avoid a more standard character assessment. There were interesting answers arguing both likenesses and dissimilarities with a variety of justifications and reasoning, all acceptable with the right support.

Question 21

The voice of Nelly did not seem too difficult to identify, though the moment challenged a few candidates.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

Question 22

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 23

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 24

Those answers that caught the woman's new found fierce energy in the voice and even touched upon the fantasy associated increasingly with the character achieved high reward.

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*.

Question 25

There were many very good answers where it was understood how the writer developed the tension through the episode from grief and shock, through brooding and speculating, to menacingly arriving at the accusations and intention for revenge. Explorations of the language were well developed in many answers.

Question 26

The best answers appreciated Nick's dual role and showed how Fitzgerald makes him stand out like a beacon of sanity amongst the other characters. Not all candidates focused on his being a 'likeable' character but all had something to say about him. The strongest answers were able to back up views on him as both a character and the narrator with specific textual details. Weaker answers made a few generalised points, such as his being a loyal friend who organized/went to Gatsby's funeral, but this was as far as they got in terms of detailed support.

Question 27

Although it seemed hard for some to pin down Daisy's voice exactly, better answers achieved this and conveyed some of her carelessness, and unbelievable ability to justify her thoughts and actions though some made her too guilty/grief-stricken/lovelorn to be credible, even though most conveyed some knowledge of her character.

BESSIE HEAD: *When Rain Clouds Gather*

Questions 28, 29, 30

There were too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate..

EDITH WHARTON: *Ethan Frome*

Question 31, 32, 33

There were too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate..

Question 32

There were too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate..

Stories of Ourselves

Question 34

The most successful answers commented on the structure of the story and showed an awareness of the power of the extract in relation to the pathos of the actual death of this formerly dignified and loved woman. Those who really focused on what exactly makes it moving - the impossibility of ever being given forgiveness - did better than those who just explained the outcome. Most candidates were able to comment on why and how the ending was moving. The best commented on how the mother's ignorance of what had happened, combined with her almost careless sorting/burning of the cards, reducing them to ashes contrasted so movingly with their significance to the boy and his aunt. Less successful answers retold the extract but still managed to make something of the boy's tears, and his failure to be forgiven.

Question 35

This was a very open question and allowance was made for whatever warning candidates liked to identify. It was not an excuse for generalised polemic on the evils of modern society, however. Arguments needed to be carefully developed and well supported from the chosen story. Some candidates were not really secure on these stories, however. Those who chose the Bradbury tended to fare better, understanding something of his purpose, though often restricting their answers to showing how nature will outlive technology. Few really understood the Wyndham – surprisingly, candidates seemed to believe the warning was about the dangers of space travel. Very few really understood the writer's use of irony.

Question 36

There were some very good, suitably arrogant, chauvinistic voices but quite a few candidates thought John would be guilt-ridden and had him begging his wife for her forgiveness.