

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31 Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

All questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding; answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.

For high marks, candidates need to know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.

Answers should always focus on the writing and the author's language and literary methods.

Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.

General Comments

Although there were differences across the variant papers, Examiners saw a good range of answers on all texts. *Half of a Yellow Sun* has proved immediately popular and has prompted some excellent, informed answers, with candidates clearly stimulated by the novel, while *A Passage to India* is perennially popular and discriminates well between levels of ability. Answers on Thomas Hardy are still often obscured by unhelpful biographical discussion and hypothesis, which means that those candidates who concentrate on writing about the poetry emerge strongly and do well. Of the drama texts on the Language and Literature papers, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the most popular text by a clear margin, and often provokes interesting, personal answers.

During this session, Examiners have had the privilege of reading some excellent, detailed and focused answers which have shown a sophisticated understanding of ways in which writers present their ideas in literature, alongside work that may be more modest in attainment, but which nevertheless demonstrates candidates' thoughtful grasp of texts and interest and imaginations stimulated by what they have read.

Question Specific Comments 9695/31

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Weaker answers to this question relied on paraphrase of chosen poems, often relating them to Hardy's biography; this was usually an unhelpful approach to the essay. Stronger answers used the prompts in the cue quotation, particularly 'sees', 'hears' and 'feels', to consider ways in which Hardy's choices of language and imagery evoke particular places, events and sights for the reader. Such responses looked carefully at visual and auditory detail in the poems, reflected in both subject matter and choice of diction. 'The Voice' and 'Beeny Cliff' were popular choices here, while others looked at 'The Darkling Thrush' and 'The Man He Killed', 'At Castle Boterel', 'After a Journey' and 'The Going'. When approached appropriately, candidates were able to write about a wide range of Hardy's poems. Some candidates expanded the focus of the question, discriminating between Hardy's private world and the 'real' world – the wider public world, which allowed particularly fruitful discussion of 'The Man He Killed' and 'The Convergence of the Twain'.
- (b) This poem caused problems for a number of candidates, some of whom seemed to be responding to it for the first time, without much evidence of prior study, which led to misunderstandings and uncertainties. It was, though, a popular option and attracted some strong vigorous responses. The most confident candidates developed their understanding of Hardy's methods with analysis of the structure, rhyme scheme and use of enjambement. There was useful discussion of the foreboding

tone that is established in the opening line; the negativity conveyed by the repetition of 'none', 'no' and 'not' and through diction such as 'pain', 'harrow', 'dread', 'death' and 'unhope'; the symbolic use of black; the progression from first person 'my', 'me' and 'I' through third person 'him' to the detached and anonymous 'one' in the final stanza'. There was successful discussion of the imagery of winter decay, often treated in careful and discriminating detail.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, with candidates choosing appropriate poems and characters such as Mick Joyce, Bobby Breen, Barney Devlin, the blacksmith, Heaney's own father. The most successful answers were based on detailed knowledge and showed a thorough understanding of Heaney's choices of language, imagery and form.
- (b) There were some impressive responses to this poem which engaged closely with how language and technique shape meaning in relation to the idea of physical action. There was analysis of syntax, alliteration and enjambement in responses which showed a clear and sustained awareness of genre as well as meaning. Most candidates had noted the intensity, precision, agility, stability as well as delicacy and elegance required in one simple physical action for the unique and complex skill of swinging the sledge, thus creating a strong sense of physical movement and rhythm. Stronger answers showed a more nuanced understanding of both the praise-worthy, awe-inspiring and admirable qualities of the sledge but also of its dark potential as a dangerous, destructive and menacing force ('long-nursing rage') capable of obliterating things completely and cleanly ('make air of a wall'). Subtle answers recognised the point half-way through l.9 where Heaney's perspective switches from one man with a sledgehammer to a consideration of the use and abuse of power on a global scale, with particular focus on the powerful personification used in the last line.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) A number of poems were suitable for this question, with 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death', 'Follower' and 'Tears, Idle Tears' being particularly popular. Some candidates tended to struggle to compare poetic techniques, which was the key to success in this question, but many managed to focus on the tone of the chosen poems, considering, for example, how the stoical acceptance of the passing of time is shown in 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death' or 'A Quoi Bon Dire', whereas the writers of 'Childhood' and 'One Art' seem to find that acceptance more troubling and difficult. Some successful responses considered the role of perspective, with narrators looking back in, for example, 'Childhood' and 'Country School', while others looked at ways in which changes in relationships are handled in 'Because I like You Better' and 'Cold in the Earth'.
- (b) This was an overwhelmingly popular question, and even less confident candidates found it difficult to rely entirely on narration – though a number took the poem literally, rather than recognising the narrator as a representative of humanity as a whole. Successful candidates read the question very carefully and dealt clearly with 'close commentary', 'ways' and 'the nature of humanity'. The form and structure were discussed particularly well, with most candidates recognising the development in the three stanzas and the subtle changes in language. They picked out the repeated use of the first person suggesting egotism, the wolf and forest images suggesting the primal nature of humanity and the verbs 'seized' 'tore' and 'licked' emphasising the animal nature of man. Such answers recognised the violence implied in the 'little new born child' being torn apart, while the image of running wild for centuries was used to support readings of evolution. Some candidates linked 'immemorial trees with the Garden of Eden. Many saw the shift in tone when 'the spring broke in' and commented that the seasonal imagery signifies a new beginning. Candidates could see the religious implications of the poem and commented on the idea of redemption, noting the shift from 'A wolf I am' to 'A man I am'. This was a poem where most candidates responded well to form and structure.

4. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) It was clear that this new text on the paper had proved both popular and engaging, attracting some vigorous and enthusiastic responses. As is often the case, however, assertion and narrative summary were frequent problems with less assured candidates. It tended to be those who made fuller use of the cue quotation, picking up the words 'harrowing' and 'engaging', that wrote more subtle responses. A key discriminator was the ability to use supporting textual quotations or references. Strong candidates examined key moments, such as Olanna seeing the child's head on

the train, Ugwu taking part in the gang-rape in the bar, or the paralleling of Odenigbo's decline to that of Biafra, and explored how these moments brought the abstract horror of war vividly to life involving as they did, characters the reader has come to care about. Ugwu was a crucial character in this sense, with the rape proving particularly shocking, while some candidates were also able to make telling points about the structure of the novel, with sections concentrating on particular characters' perspectives. Such answers argued that Adichie uses Ugwu to show the insider's view of the war and how, in contrast, Richard is used to present the perspective of the white outsider who wants to be involved. They went on to show that Olanna is used to demonstrate that no-one, regardless of social class or background, is immune to the horrors of war. These candidates were also comfortable in using relevant evidence from the text to show how the personal lives of the characters become entangled with each other and with the events of the war.

- (b) There was much to discuss in the passage, though less confident candidates relied on summary and paraphrase without enough attention to the requirement to 'comment on ways', which is common to all passage-based questions. Several candidates also misunderstood or misread that Odenigbo's words to Richard were a flashback – he is remembering them – and they were not being spoken in Kainene's house. More focused answers commented on the imagery of the weather setting the mood and sharp candidates engaged with narrative perspective, noting the way in which the reader only sees Richard's perspective despite the third person narrative. Such responses noted the contrast between Kainene's control contrasted with her 'swollen and raw' eyes, while Richard becomes childlike in his guilt. Some answers related his emotional impotence here to his physical impotence earlier in the novel. The symbolic value of the burning of the manuscript by Kainene to get even and Richard's ultimate sacrifice of choosing love over art or personal ambition were also noted in most answers.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Candidates who approached this question as a 'character study' were not successful, as the question was quite specific. Successful answers looked carefully at both why a reader might feel sympathetic and unsympathetic towards Adela, providing a balanced analysis of ways in which Forster presents her character. Nuanced and balanced discussions were more successful than outright judgements on either side of the question; in these answers, the Marabar Caves incident was handled thoughtfully with candidates responding sensitively to Adela's distress and confusion; her accusation against Aziz was not used as a way of ending all discussion about whether she deserved sympathy. Candidates often noted that Adela is shown to be alienated by both the communities after the trial and argued that she is deserving of readers' sympathy for her moral courage and integrity. Others argued that despite her free-spirited and non-judgemental characterisation, she fails to engage with both communities, allowing herself to be manipulated and is responsible for ruining an innocent man's life, betraying his trust and friendship and contributing to the end of friendship between Fielding and Aziz. Looking at these alternatives, many saw Fielding's sympathy for her as a significant means of arousing the reader's sympathy.
- (b) Candidates usually showed a good knowledge of the text in lively answers and the extract prompted many developed responses addressing Forster's methods of characterisation here, while even less confident candidates were able to show an awareness of the significance of this meeting in relation to the novel as a whole. Many candidates were able to identify ways in which differences between the two are presented – Aziz's impulsiveness and Fielding's calm openness. Some stronger answers identified stereotyping and stereotypical expectations on both sides, arguing that both represent their nations but yet are different from most of their compatriots. Fielding's impatience with social restraint was noted, as well as Aziz's freedom with sitting on the bed and suggesting his game, while candidates often linked his offer of his collar stud with Ronny's reference to it later in the novel. Most candidates considered the extract's big question about friendship between Indians and British characters – some drew a comparison with the end of novel and the 'not yet' – and these consideration were very successful when drawn from a detailed consideration of the writing of the passage.

6. Stories of Ourselves

- (a) A wide range of stories was used for this question as candidates interpreted change and progress in human society in a range of different ways, from developments in society as a whole to individual, personal change. While the latter area was not the intended target of the question, Examiners gave credit to sensible answers which were supported and aimed at the question. *The Hollow of the Three Hills*, *The Moving Finger*, *The Lady in the Looking Glass*, *Billennium*, *Report on the Threatened City*, *The Prison* and *Elephant* were among the stories chosen by candidates. A greater problem was the number of candidates who attempted to answer the question by retelling the stories of their chosen stories, ignoring literary considerations of ways in which change is explored. Simple narrative recall is not an aim of the syllabus and so cannot be rewarded – candidates need to demonstrate understanding of writers' choices of form, structure and language. Too many answers showed insufficient textual knowledge with very few supporting quotations or direct references evident. The most successful responses tended to be those which looked at the science fiction stories, considering the importance of the narrative point of view in *Report on the Threatened City*, for example, or the structured sequence of events and increasing constriction in *Billennium*. Point of view was often an important part of successful exploration of *The Prison* and *Elephant*, suggesting that continual change is presented as pessimistic development for society within which individuals are helpless or seek escape.
- (b) Candidates often find it challenging to write about humour and so it proved with this question, though happily there were many examples of candidates writing enthusiastically and even delightedly about Proulx's writing in this passage, which offered rich opportunities. The contrast between the book Amanda brings in and the Pee Wee regulars themselves was fruitfully examined, as were the imaginative ways of promoting beard growth. Many candidates responded well to Proulx's ridicule of her characters' bizarre behaviour, desperate actions, outrageous dialogue, absurd obsession, ridiculous colloquial names, pointless conflicts and the absurdity of the situation and location. Most answers also acknowledge Proulx's means of achieving humorous effects through the use of hyperbole, language, innuendoes, puns, characterisation, while candidates often found as much relish in the strange words in the book as the Pee Wee regulars themselves. Examiners saw some very subtle answers which explored the humour created by using elevated or educated language (polysyllabic words and complex sentence structures) to tell a story dealing with uneducated people in rural America. Comparatively few answers, however, located the passage contextually, drawing attention to the ironic conclusion of the story.

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General Comments

Although there were differences across the variant papers, Examiners saw a good range of answers on all texts. *Half of a Yellow Sun* has proved immediately popular and has prompted some excellent, informed answers, with candidates clearly stimulated by the novel, while *A Passage to India* is perennially popular and discriminates well between levels of ability. Answers on Thomas Hardy are still often obscured by unhelpful biographical discussion and hypothesis, which means that those candidates who concentrate on writing about the poetry emerge strongly and do well. Of the drama texts on the Language and Literature papers, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the most popular text by a clear margin, and often provokes interesting, personal answers.

During this session, Examiners have had the privilege of reading some excellent, detailed and focused answers which have shown a sophisticated understanding of ways in which writers present their ideas in literature, alongside work that may be more modest in attainment, but which nevertheless demonstrates candidates' thoughtful grasp of texts and interest and imaginations stimulated by what they have read.

Question Specific Comments 9695/32

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Despite a question explicitly about the use of landscape, many candidates nevertheless wrote about Hardy's relationship with Emma, which led to unsuccessful answers in the main. Some other candidates tried to steer the question towards poems they knew rather than poems which were appropriate – 'The Self-Unseeing' cropped up several times despite being set indoors – which again was not a successful strategy. More appropriate and focused responses argued that Hardy's vision of the rural landscape shows his admiration for what is enduring and optimistic about the natural world, despite whatever the seasons throw against landscape, animals, birds or flowers, in contrast to man's inability to endure or view life optimistically. Others looked at how landscape is used as a trigger for memory, and is evoked through careful choices of language and imagery. 'At Castle Boterel' and 'Beeny Cliff' were particularly popular choices, but candidates also wrote illuminatingly about 'Afterwards' and 'The Darkling Thrush' among others.
- (b) 'In Tenebris II' provoked some careful and thoughtful responses. The poem was generally well understood in terms of meaning, mood and tone, though there was occasional confusion over isolated words and phrases. Successful answers showed good understanding of the structure of the poem, commenting on how the first three lines of each stanza reflect the view of the majority, while the last line focuses on Hardy himself in a self-critical manner. Some candidates expanded

on this point by noting how the two questions in the poem suggest that Hardy, or his narrator, is searching for answers to the reasons for his apparent outsider status. The harsh alliteration of 'cramped', 'crookedness' and 'custom' was noted as 'perhaps expressing the hostility Hardy feels that society feels towards him.' A tone of scorn towards the multitude was picked up in several answers and such essays often noted Hardy's switch from the first person to the third in the final stanza, creating a sense of detachment or universality.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were not many answers on Heaney on this paper. Of those who had studied his poetry, the overwhelming majority chose to answer on 'The Turnip-Snedder'. Responses were often successful; most candidates found something useful to say about the poem, often commenting on how the language evokes the metallic hard qualities of the snedder, as well as imagery of the mediaeval knight, four-legged animal and the turnip god. Most candidates were able to pick out effective uses of sibilant sounds ('juiced up', 'sliced mess') and the fact that visually the couplets seem 'mechanical' or 'brutal' or 'chopped'. Some candidates thoughtfully related the poem to larger and more horrific ideas of mechanised mass murder.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) This question gave access to a wide range of poems, with Examiners seeing essays exploring nearly every poem in the selection. Some candidates focused on the representation of sociocultural change while others focused on individual epiphanies; either approach was credited as long as clear support was provided. In terms of detail, most candidates discussed imagery, but strong answers also considered structure and form successfully.
- (b) 'For Heidi With Blue Hair' was the overwhelmingly popular choice. An enjoyment of the poem and its issues was apparent in nearly all the answers and the majority of candidates had a confident appreciation of the meaning and narrative of this poem. Less assured candidates found it tricky to engage precisely with 'ways in which the writer presents Heidi's story', writing instead a straightforward critical analysis of the poem stanza by stanza or by retelling the story. Strong answers dealt confidently with Adcock's use of point of view, dialogue, parentheses and caesurae, noting the way in which the School is not explicitly given a voice (apart from the 'twittering teachers' which elicited some neat analysis) and how this influences the reader's sympathies. The quiet emergence of the mother's death towards the end of the poem was considered structurally, as was the repetition of the phrase 'School colours'. The poem's use of the second person prompted much discussion, candidates characterising the narrator as the father, an anonymous friend or even the deceased but onlooking mother. All these views are supported by the affectionate and understanding tone of the narrative and connect with the use of 'For' in the title, indicating that the poem is a tribute. Many candidates connected Adcock's use of free verse with the ideas of freedom explored in the poem.

4. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly all the answers to this text were responses to the passage from Chapter 3. There were some misunderstandings, for example, several candidates believed that Susan was in fact Richard's wife, which skewed their reading of the extract. Most candidates, though, commented on Adichie's presentation of Kainene's poise and how her control over the conversation in this extract prepares the reader for the power she later wields in her relationship with Richard. Candidates noted her candid assessment of her own situation and her dry, sarcastic tone in her frank dialogue. Most too picked up on Richard's almost instant fascination with Kainene and how the narrative reveals his desperation to continue the conversation and make a favourable impression. Strong answers showed their awareness that, though written in the third person, the passage is written from Richard's perspective and showed skill in tracing how the language shows his self-awareness yet shows the gaucheness of his words and behaviour in the encounter with Kainene.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Mrs Moore proved a popular character and this was a popular question. What made the difference between strong and weak answers was the level of precise reference and quotation to support points and the consideration of characterisation, rather than character. Less accomplished candidates tended to describe episodes with Mrs Moore, relying on assertion about what a reader might conclude, without support from specific textual detail or analysis. There was also a tendency to regard her rather simplistically and uncritically. Stronger answers looked at ways in which her character is shaped, examining her behaviour after Aziz's arrest to explore the complexities of her characterisation, balancing her actual significance with her symbolic significance, prompted by the question's cue quotation. Some candidates were very aware of her contribution to the novel's religious interests and how her appearance, presence and physical departure but spiritual presence are linked to the structure of the novel. Many answers included examples of her openness and tolerance, her questioning of Anglo-Indian values and her disillusion following the Marabar Caves incident. Successful answers recognised the significance of the first meeting between Aziz and Mrs Moore in the Mosque and of him calling her an 'Oriental'. Her treatment of the wasp was frequently referred to, as was her 'relationship' with Godbole. Developed responses recognised the symbolic importance of her role, especially after her death at sea, and the importance of her memory to the relationships at the end of the novel. Most answers were able to place the quotation 'Esmi Esmoor...' and many were able to relate the misuse of her name to what they perceived as the 'muddle' of India.
- (b) This was a popular passage and elicited some perceptive and detailed answers. It differentiated candidates' abilities well. Most candidates were able to show the significance of the photograph being seen by Fielding and many explored the details of the dialogue; only stronger answers looked closely at the narrative of the rest of the passage, commenting, for example, on the image of the flowers between the stones of the desert. Many attributed Aziz's first dismissiveness to embarrassment about his home and commented on his emotional responses to the world around him, unlike Fielding's rational reserve. Some subtle readings noted that Aziz is described through third person narration and revealed in the dialogue whereas Fielding's thoughts are shown by free indirect thought and dialogue, meaning that the reader is privy to Fielding's thoughts but not those of Aziz. Candidates noted that it is Fielding's criticism of Callendar which brings the two men together and also saw the significance of the phrase 'there will be no more purdah', relating it to the wider idea of relationships between nations.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) Candidates tended to choose appropriate stories to answer this question and the quality of answers depended on how adept they were at creating an argument rather than relying on narration. Popular stories were 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', 'Elephant', 'The Bath', 'Billennium', 'Report on the Threatened City', 'Real Time' and 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', used in different ways to highlight different facets of pessimism. The discussion of a pessimistic view of humanity seemed to strike a chord with many candidates and answers were often marked by lively personal response. Answers on Frame's 'The Bath' were often marked by perceptive appreciation of how the bleakness of the struggles of age is presented.
- (b) Examiners saw some responses to this question which indicated that candidates thought that the two sections were separate and unrelated, indicating a lack of secure textual knowledge, but many responded very well to the two different perspectives, noting the differences between close observation and detached judgement. Many candidates commented successfully on the first narrator's alien view of earth and its inhabitants, presenting his thoughts in the form of a report. There was interesting discussion of the type of language used – how the diction indicates a lack of familiarity and complete comprehension while offering what was sometimes perceived as arrogant judgement. Alert responses noted that the two sections together are used by Lessing to present humanity's hypocritical use of war under the pretence of seeking peace. A few candidates noted the continuing relevance of Lessing's criticisms. Some candidates suggested that the use of an alien viewpoint makes Lessing's view of humanity more telling or more effective through the use of irony.

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Question Specific Comments 9695/33

1. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

(a) In this question, the **(a)** option proved more popular than the **(b)**. The question created opportunities to discuss a wide range of poems, though 'The Darkling Thrush', 'At Castle Boterel', 'The Voice' and 'A Church Romance' were particularly popular. A number of responses were simply descriptive, referring generally to Hardy's description with little focus on the use of detail in the poems. Stronger answers were able to support comments on details with apposite quotation and show how observation of details, carefully rendered in the poem's language, evoke memories for the narrator in some poems or create vivid visualisation for the reader in others.

(b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

2. Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

(a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

(b) There were some impressively sharp answers on 'The Harrow-Pin' developing full and detailed arguments. The symbolism was often explored effectively and much was made of the violent nature of much of the poem's imagery.

3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were only a small number of responses to this question, a popular pairing being 'A Quoi Bon Dire' and 'Cold in the Earth', where a sense of loss is portrayed in two quite different poems. Other poems featuring in responses were 'One Art' and 'Elegy for My Father's Father'. As with other answers, the most successful essays were those built on detailed knowledge, carefully chosen quotation and specific points on the poets' choices of language and other poetic methods.
- (b) There were a number of sensitive responses to this poem, which recognised the importance of the form of the poem to its overall effect, commenting in particular on the repeated final line of each stanza. A number of candidates offered detailed and conceptualised readings of the whole poem in very structured answers, though some were hampered by making sense of individual images without considering how they fitted into the poem. A number of candidates struggled because they took the poem line by line, rather than reading its sentences; the lack of awareness of enjambement and its impact on meaning limited the quality of some responses significantly.

4. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) There were very few answers to this question and many responses were largely narrative. Candidates were confident with the content of the novel, but had difficulty linking the personal stories to the political/historical ones.
- (b) There were few responses to this question too; most candidates put the passage into context and reported what had apparently happened to Kainene, missing opportunities to explore the passage's balance between the official announcement and the private tragedy. Few really focused on the question and explored ways in which Adichie presents the differences in the characters' reactions to Kainene's disappearance – particularly Richard's desperation and lack of control compared with Olanna's determination to carry on as normal to mask her worry.

5. EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There was a small number of responses to this question, mostly competently done with a clear recognition of the context of the passage and the significance of the meeting between Aziz and Fielding at this late stage in the novel. Some answers were restricted by a narrative tendency where the whole story was re-told in order to put the passage into context. However, more successful answers focused on the way Forster uses dialogue to present character and in particular the embarrassment that Aziz faces. The change in Aziz's character was noted, as was the importance of this moment to the novel as a whole – with many being aware of the importance of Mrs Moore's role.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) This question was often most effectively answered by candidates who chose to write about 'Report on the Threatened City' and 'Billennium', but there were also imaginative uses of 'Elephant', 'The Prison' and 'The Bath'. More successful answers avoided the retelling of narrative and looked carefully at how the stories' authors treated subjects such as politics, population growth, materialism, isolation and old age.
- (b) This question and passage was particularly successful in guiding candidates to analyse Naipaul's writing. Most candidates worked effectively, not just with plot and character, but also with aspects of language, pathetic fallacy, sentence structure and the structure of the passage as a whole. There was some insightful analysis of the effects of the first person narrative and the role reversal between the father and the son and how this in itself creates a sense of terror. Candidates were able to respond effectively to the gradual build up of terror throughout the passage, with reference to the way the author introduces the elements outside set against the sense of claustrophobia inside. They commented on the short, sharp moments of activity or sound, coupled with the effects of the dialogue between father and son.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key messages

Stronger responses will deal with both language and staging.

Question prompt words ('presentation,' dramatic presentation') need to be explained and explored with candidates so that they fully understand the implications behind their use.

Passage based responses often fail to include discussion of the printed stage directions; this is a mistake.

General comments

A relatively small number of candidates take this paper, so it is often not appropriate to make general observations from the number of responses.

Inevitably, a sound premise on which to base an approach to this paper is for teachers and candidates to keep to the fore the study of these texts as dramatic presentations – to lift the words off the page, as it were. This need is reflected in the questions set: implicit or explicit in the question will be the requirement for candidates to look at the 'dramatic presentation' or similar. That means paying attention to aspects such as staging, stage directions and reflection upon language use as it is spoken as drama, not just as printed text designed to be read.

Candidates need to be encouraged to express their own personal responses. The better informed about a play they are, of course, the more convincing and developed the personal response. This implies not simply a 'drilling' of the facts by teachers, but genuine discussions aimed at enabling candidates to think for themselves and produce well-informed and supported opinions of their own. Scripts that reflect this are invariably the more developed and informed – and the more highly rewarded.

As far as the questions themselves are concerned, also to be stressed is that each one is deliberately worded. So, for instance, a question that asks about the dramatic significance of Perdita and Florizel in *The Winter's Tale* is not asking for a character study of the two, but rather a reflection on what these characters contribute to the themes of the play and how other characters react to them. There is invariably the need to look at the wording of the question and to tease out of it the key terms and appreciate its scope.

Responses to passage based questions that focus superficially on character analysis often fail to notice that the character named is interacting with other people. Their reactions to what is said are also an important part of 'dramatic presentation' of character.

Candidates should avoid drifting into narrative and / or paraphrase. The way to handle evidence is to be quite clinical in approach: pinpoint exactly what is needed and make brief and frequent references to textual material that specifically supports the point of argument being made.

Comments on specific questions

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to give a clear account of 'Daddy's' importance to the play. Many pointed out that he drives the action, with George and Nick in his thrall because he provides them with a living. Martha's hero worship of her father was also frequently examined, particularly with

reference to her contemptuous treatment of George and the continuing comparison that she draws between the two. Stronger candidates were able to amplify arguments and perhaps look more at the psychological power that Daddy exerts, particularly in relation to themes about different generations.

- (b) Responses here focused on the way that power relationships are dramatised. There was often close analysis of ways in which Martha dominates, despite her childishness of tone ('friendly patronizing,' as the stage directions have it). The best candidates were able to look at ways in which the conversation sets up a range of possibilities for the rest of the play in terms of themes and recurrent behaviours. Some candidates simply discussed the relationship between George and Martha in the play as a whole, without really focusing upon this particular moment. This showed knowledge of the play but could not be highly rewarded because it was not anchored into specific, passage-based analysis of the given extract.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) Responses were usually able to give an account of how the relationship between Perdita and Florizel pushes forward the action and resolution of the play. Stronger responses moved into the area of themes, often contrasting Perdita's natural grace with the lack of grace and nobility seen elsewhere. Proficient responses often focused in some detail on the scene between Polixenes and Perdita at the sheep shearing. Contrasts between the Leontes / Hermione and Perdita / Florizel were often clearly done and pertinent. A small number of candidates engaged ably with ideas about court and country.
- (b) Most candidates were able to see the clear contrast of mood and atmosphere that shapes this scene. Some saw Mamillius as a smaller version of his father because of his distrust of the ladies-in-waiting; but in making this point, they often missed out on the larger significance of this as being the moment where Shakespeare reinforces our view of Hermione and allows us to see what has been lost when we hear of Mamillius's death later. Through spending a lot of time on the first section of the passage, some candidates did not then move on to a discussion of the precise terms of Leontes's speech (lines 52-69), with its distorted syntax and imagery, a sign of how twisted he has become though his imaginings, so that his wife's adultery has, by this point, become a threat, 'a plot against my life, my crown.' A number of responses simply tracked the episode without much critical analysis. At times points were too lengthily made, with Mamillius's prefiguring 'A sad tale's best for winter,' often prompting rather lengthy discussions about what happens elsewhere in the play which unbalanced responses.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) A number of responses limited themselves to brief discussion of the occurrence and context of the various dreams in the play. Stronger answers focused specifically on the language in which each dream is shared with the audience and saw how each one comments upon and foreshadows the eventual destiny of its speaker.
- (b) Some responses failed to deal effectively with the passage and resorted to plot summary rather than beginning with the detail of the passage printed. Most had strong opinions about the issue of honesty and deception in the play as a whole, and this sometimes led to answers that were unbalanced. Stronger candidates were able to link the two key words and then use the passage to demonstrate their understanding of Richard and Buckingham's strategies, both here and elsewhere.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) For the most part, responses to this question were able to characterise Blanche's dealings with the men with some skill. However, answers were often sketchy in relation to the prompt given, and this limited them. The prompt gave some key words ('seductive,' 'soft people') to be explored. It also offered a way into some of the image patterns of the play. The strongest candidates were able to

give specific examples about moments where Blanche conjures up 'temporary magic.' Many engaged interestingly with whether Blanche's portrayal of herself as one of the 'soft people' is anything more than another of her delusions, as she seems very determined when we see her manipulating the world around her.

- (b) Most responses managed to outline the importance of the contrasts (and similarities between Blanche and Mitch. Their different registers for talk were often noted, as was the way that Blanche carefully modifies her speech ('softly') in order to build up her allure. There was often close attention to the discussion of Blanche's name and of how she stages herself to seem exotic. Candidates in the lower bands often failed to notice that Blanche is staging herself here, putting on another of her performances with her lies about how much she has drunk and about her motivation for visiting Stella. As in other questions of this type, it was important for candidates to move beyond character study and look at the two in relation to each other in order to do well. A small number of candidates wanted to demonstrate their knowledge of the themes of the play and described them fairly indiscriminately without actually drawing them from the text of the extract presented. This approach should be avoided.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Responses mainly dealt with Sir Robert and Lady Chiltern. Weaker responses had a rather limited definition of hypocrisy. Stronger ones were able to anchor the discussion by talking about the (retrospectively ironic) high-mindedness of the couple early on in the play. Very good responses noted that the ending of the play is ambiguous – the Chilterns seem chastened but their realisations do not seem to change their circumstances, an irony which perhaps places the issue more firmly. Stronger answers also tended to note that other characters demonstrate hypocrisy too. There were some interesting discussions of the issue in relation to Lord Goring, who pretends, hypocritically, to be an immoral dandy, whereas in reality he is the most moral of the characters in the play.
- (b) Candidates found much to discuss in this passage. Some ignored the lengthy stage direction at the beginning, some ignored Sir Robert, but everyone seems to have written about Lady Chiltern. Responses demonstrated varying interpretations to Sir Robert's character and it was interesting to see how well they could be justified. Some responses pointed out – rightly – how he was trying to shift the blame for his predicament onto his wife, who hadn't even been married to him when he committed his "youthful folly". Those who remembered his conversation with Lord Goring wondered how repentant he really was.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

Key messages

Stronger responses will deal with both language and staging.

Question prompt words ('presentation,' dramatic presentation') need to be explained and explored with candidates so that they fully understand the implications behind their use.

Passage based responses often fail to include discussion of the printed stage directions; this is a mistake.

General comments

A relatively small number of candidates take this paper, so it is often not appropriate to make general observations from the number of responses.

Inevitably, a sound premise on which to base an approach to this paper is for teachers and candidates to keep to the fore the study of these texts as dramatic presentations – to lift the words off the page, as it were. This need is reflected in the questions set: implicit or explicit in the question will be the requirement for candidates to look at the 'dramatic presentation' or similar. That means paying attention to aspects such as staging, stage directions and reflection upon language use as it is spoken as drama, not just as printed text designed to be read.

Candidates need to be encouraged to express their own personal responses. The better informed about a play they are, of course, the more convincing and developed the personal response. This implies not simply a 'drilling' of the facts by teachers, but genuine discussions aimed at enabling candidates to think for themselves and produce well-informed and supported opinions of their own. Scripts that reflect this are invariably the more developed and informed – and the more highly rewarded.

As far as the questions themselves are concerned, also to be stressed is that each one is deliberately worded. So, for instance, a question that asks about the dramatic presentation of Leontes' reconciliation with Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* is not asking for a character study of the two, but rather a reflection on the tone, atmosphere and structure of the scene presented. There is invariably the need to look at the wording of the question and to tease out of it the key terms and appreciate its scope.

Responses to passage based questions that seem at first sight to centre on character analysis often fail to notice that the character named is interacting with other people. Their reactions to what is said are also an important part of 'dramatic presentation' of character.

Candidates should avoid drifting into narrative and / or paraphrase. The way to handle evidence is to be quite clinical in approach, pinpoint exactly what is needed and make brief and frequent references to textual material that specifically supports the point of the argument being made.

Comments on specific questions

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

Question 1

- (a) Responses here dealt productively with the question prompt in order to comment on the relationship between George and Martha. Stronger answers dealt with the structure of the play too, pointing out that the third act is as 'close to the bone' as it gets.

- (b) A number of candidates got caught up in discussions of the punctuation in this passage. It is, of course, relevant, but needs to be discussed in terms of the hesitations and uncertainties of the scene as staged, not in terms of question marks, exclamation marks and ellipses. A number of candidates noted the wry, ironic humour of the scene ('Where's my little yum yum'). Enthusiasm for a more general, whole text approach undermined the performance of a number of candidates, as they never really started to come to terms with what is presented at this point in the play. By contrast, some candidates read the passage line by line, and thus never really got round to seeing its overall significance of what has prompted George's rage and frustration and what exacerbates it in Nick's reactions. The confusion of pronouns often used up much candidate energy in trying simply to explain, whereas the central point was, of course, that much of the grim humour of the scene springs from precisely this.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) Many candidates saw Leontes simply in terms of being someone who has a sad life. Stronger candidates were, of course, able to reflect on the more literary aspects of 'tragic' and discuss his inner conflicts and the fact that his fate is dictated by psychological compulsions. The best responses noted that he is not a tragic hero because of the redemptive ministrations of Paulina at the end which lead to renewed life, rather than the death that would be associated with a fully tragic figure.
- (b) Top end responses were able to note the atmosphere of the scene, its quasi-religious feel and the way that this is enhanced through Hermione's use of religious language and the graceful restraint of her speech. There was often commentary on the significance of the music and on the ways in which Paulina stage-manages the presentation of the scene. The strongest candidates noted Leontes' humility, his willingness to listen to Paulina and the language of his final speech that portrays his welling up of joy through its short clauses as he darts from subject to subject. One or two candidates linked this (superbly) to analysis of his syntax elsewhere in the play. Bizarrely, a small number of candidates believed that Hermione really was brought back from the dead by Paulina. A number of candidates summarised the action that had brought all the characters to this particular moment: this could not be highly rewarded.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates were able to give an account of a number of Richard's soliloquies. The opening of the play was, for obvious reasons, very popular. Stronger candidates responded to the precise terms of the question and were able to discuss the effect of Richard talking directly to the audience, both in terms of how he helps us understand his motivation and also in terms of how he makes us into co-conspirators by mercilessly (and exploitatively) invoking our sympathy.
- (b) Contrasts between the two scenes were clearly analysed. Stronger candidates were able to move quickly to matters of language, pointing out that Richmond is concerned for his troops and that he speaks in terms of his mission as being blessed by God and likely to restore the health of the land. The strongest candidates were also aware, however, that Richmond (no less than Richard) is putting a positive gloss on his words and ignoring the fact that he is, in fact, a traitor and insurgent. Nonetheless, there was a clear understanding of how Shakespeare's dramatisation of Richard allows us to go along with Richmond, because by this time in the play we have run out of patience and moral sympathy with Richard. In part this withdrawal of sympathy comes from the scenes presented here. As candidates pointed out, Richard is imperious, speaks of himself impersonally ('the King's name is a tower of strength') and fails to provide leadership, whereas Richmond's later speech (line 56-71) is full of practicalities and firm guidance and support for his men.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) At the lower end, responses often focused on Blanche and Stanley rather than on Stella as a pivotal character. Stronger responses noticed Stella's change during the play, and the way that her

defending of her sister gives way to betrayal at the end. Candidates also explored the way in which Stella is the battleground over which Blanche and Stanley fight, with Stella caught firmly in the middle in trying to reconcile the conflicting loyalties and values that are being pressed upon her.

- (b) Responses here were often acutely aware of the atmosphere of threat, and many candidates made good use of the stage directions in order to make points about sexual threat (the pyjamas and the jungle voices proved popular points for discussion, as did the use of the 'blue piano' being distorted to the 'roar of an approaching locomotive'). There was also often discussion of how Stanley uses space to create his dominance. The strongest candidates weighed their sympathy for Blanche against moments earlier in the play (the spraying of Stanley with the atomiser for example) that show that Stanley's analysis – 'We've had this date with each other from the beginning' is absolutely correct. There was some useful discussion about how Blanche's defensive smashing of the bottle might actually inflame the situation as we already know how Stanley linked sex and destruction on his wedding night.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Most responses were able to see the marked surface differences between Lady Chiltern and Mrs Cheveley. More subtle responses often noted that the two have points of similarity (they like their own way, for example) as well as difference. There was often very useful discussion of the way that Wilde describes the two in the stage directions early on in the play.
- (b) A number of responses noted that Lord Goring has knowledge of Sir Robert that his wife does not (at this point) but omitted to note that the audience shares this knowledge, so missed the dramatic effect. Comments about the two characters were often thoughtful but some candidates failed to respond to the tone, rather than the content of what is said, which meant that Lord Goring's attempts to deal delicately with a difficult situation were often not fully understood.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key messages

Better responses will deal with both language and staging.

Question prompt words ('presentation,' dramatic presentation') need to be explained and explored with candidates so that they fully understand the implications behind their use.

Passage based responses often fail to include discussion of the printed stage directions; this is a mistake.

General comments

A relatively small number of candidates take this paper, so it is often not appropriate to make general observations from the number of responses.

Inevitably, a sound premise on which to base an approach to this paper is for teachers and candidates to keep to the fore the study of these texts as dramatic presentations – to lift the words off the page, as it were. This need is reflected in the questions set: implicit or explicit in the question will be the requirement for candidates to look at the 'dramatic presentation' or similar. That means paying attention to aspects such as staging, stage directions and reflection upon language use as it is spoken as drama, not just as printed text designed to be read.

Candidates need to be encouraged to express their own personal responses. The better informed about a play they are, of course, the more convincing and developed the personal response. This implies not simply a 'drilling' of the facts by teachers, but genuine discussions aimed at enabling candidates to think for themselves and produce well-informed and supported opinions of their own. Scripts that reflect this are invariably the more developed and informed – and the more highly rewarded.

As far as the questions themselves are concerned, also to be stressed is that each one is deliberately worded. So, for instance, a question that asks about the dramatic significance of Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is not asking for a character study, but rather a reflection on what this character contributes to the themes of the play and how other characters react to her or try to change her. Invariably, candidates who take the time to look at the wording of the question and to tease out of the key terms are more highly rewarded than those who simply assume that character analysis is all that is required.

Similarly, responses to passage based questions that seem at first sight to centre on character analysis often fail to notice that the character named is interacting with other people. Their reactions to what is said and done by the central character are also an important part of 'dramatic presentation.'

Candidates should avoid drifting into narrative and / or paraphrase. The way to handle evidence is to be quite clinical in approach: pinpoint exactly what is needed and make brief and frequent references to textual material that specifically supports the point of argument being made.

Comments on specific questions

Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

Question 1

- (a) Responses here dealt with ambitions to have children, contrasting the two marriages presented in the play. A few saw that there was a clear contrast between Nick and George in terms of their academic careers and hopes.
- (b) A number of responses treated this as though it was an unseen, with little evidence presented of understanding of the precise moment at which this scene occurs. Some responses thought that the death of a real child was being discussed; others simply relayed what the characters say by paraphrase. Few saw how George and Martha are playing power games here and exploiting the presence of Nick and Honey in order to further their own aims. George's use of Latin was entirely ignored.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) There were a very small number of responses. Candidates were able to see the broad outline of the differences between court and country, but only the strongest started to discuss the elements of evil in the paradise of Bohemia and ways in which Bohemia demonstrates natural virtue as a parallel to what goes on in the Sicilian scenes. Language use was not often dealt with in detail.
- (b) Candidates focused clearly on the illicit nature of this meeting and on the difference of status between Florizel and Perdita. A number of responses then moved on to explain how Perdita is currently a shepherd's daughter, and this often led to lengthy summaries of the plot to account for how she is in this situation. Stronger answers looked at aspects of the language and noted that despite her country upbringing, the tone and register of what Perdita says suggests that she has a natural nobility which places her as Florizel's equal.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were secure about what happens between the two partners in evil. What was less convincing was the treatment of their presentation – the central element of the question.
- (b) Responses here were keen to focus on Gloucester and thus neglected to note that the drama of the scene is created through the interaction between the characters. This often meant that the responses became over-preoccupied with Gloucester's future intention to marry Anne, grafted with further accounts of general treachery, deception and cunning. One or two candidates thought that the two were already married. There was little reference to 'tension' between the two, and understanding of the 'dramatic presentation' of Anne was often quite restricted.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) Responses dealt securely with the differences between the two families and their backgrounds, often citing Stella as the person torn between these conflicting values. Answers often focused on plot related matters, rather than on 'dramatic implications,' which of course implies the dramatisation of the values.
- (b) Responses here often gave careful attention to the stage directions, thus pinning down Stanley's triumphalism and Blanche's increasing anxiety. Only a few gave much detailed attention to the detail of Blanche's long speech, either in terms of content or form, despite the fact that it is crucial to our understanding of her, both here and elsewhere in the play. More could perhaps have been made of how Blanche's mask drops once she is left alone with Stella. Assessments of Blanche's past and her future prospects were often woven into an awareness of the dramatic context of the

passage, though there were also examples of responses that became diverted into more general, paraphrasing summary of the plot of the play.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Answers here were often sketchy, with much attention paid to Sir Robert's character, much less to our mixed sympathy for his human foibles and hypocrisy.
- (b) Responses usually dealt ably with the presentation of Mrs Cheveley and were able to see some of her techniques for manipulating others. The role of Lord Goring as a foil was not often fully considered, and this meant that responses often failed to see the clash of opposites, both in terms of language and attitudes that is so central to this particular scene. A number of responses were unclear about simple, factual matters of plot. More could have been made of Mrs Cheveley's long-standing dislike of Lady Chiltern, of her self-justification over her quarrel with Lady Chiltern and perhaps of her trivial dismissal (centred round glove size) of the human cost of the revelations she has made. Better candidates were able to appreciate and explore Mrs Cheveley's intelligent humour and wit in the early part of the passage and also to locate her dark cynicism expressed later. Some answers only dealt with the earlier part of the extract.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should consider the terms of the question carefully and identify the main area of discussion before selecting relevant material to introduce.

Candidates should give a precise context to the passage in option **(b)** questions and this should relate to the main area of discussion in the question.

General Comments

Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. All but a very few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many suggested a real enjoyment and engagement with their chosen texts.

There are two general issues to address this session:

- (a)** Candidates should have a clear strategy in mind for tackling the questions. This should include considering the terms of the task carefully – identifying the main focus of the question and deciding what if any is the crux of the question. Many questions offer a challenge or proposition on a key area of the text and it is vital, if the candidate it is to answer the question relevantly, that this is clearly recognised before the candidate starts to consider what might be the appropriate material to introduce into the essay. Focusing on the key terms of the task set is an important first step in producing a relevant and focused answer.
- (b)** When tackling a passage question candidates should identify the context for the passage in their answer. This might be what has happened immediately before or is about to happen; it might be a key moment for a particular character. Candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of why the passage is significant to the text as whole in order to address the terms of the task fully. For poetry contexts, if the passage is an extract from a longer poem, then the same approach is required. For a complete short poem, the candidate will need during the course of their answer to demonstrate an understanding of how and in what ways this poem is typical (or not typical) of the methods and concerns of the poet.

Specific Texts

Section A *Shakespeare*

As You Like It

Option **(a)** was the slightly less popular choice and candidates who took the time to consider the task carefully often did well. Nearly all candidates understood the importance of the Forest of Arden as an alternative setting to the 'envious court' and had a solid knowledge of the events that took place there. More developed answers were able to link that to a discussion about the characterisation and the way Shakespeare explores the strengths and weaknesses of his characters through those events. Many candidates recognised the 'innocence' of the existing inhabitants such as Corin, Silvius and Phoebe, though few answers thought the incomers showed much evidence of innocence. Most candidates accepted that 'self knowledge' if not 'wisdom' was acquired by many of the characters in the Forest. Stronger answers commented on Duke Senior, learning about life by accepting the harshness of existence in the forest, and Orlando, whose development also happened in the Forest principally because of Rosalind's 'love prate'. Nearly all answers noted Duke Frederick's and Oliver's instant transformation in the Forest – with more

developed answers seeing either the structural necessity for Celia to 'get a mate' or the comic convention that required Duke Senior to be reinstated to his Dukedom. Many found this dramatic method to be clumsy. Jacques and Touchstone were often perceived as being 'impervious to the delights of the forest' with many noting Touchstone's discontent on arriving.

Option **(b)** was popular and there were some excellent, detailed and analytical responses.

Candidates who were able to explore the preceding context – Orlando's tussle with Oliver and his subsequent plot using Charles to kill Orlando, as well as Rosalind and Celia discussing love and chance – often discussed the effect on the audience with greater precision. More developed answers also saw in Orlando's unbending response to Duke Frederick the root of the banishment of Rosalind which follows the extract. Nearly all candidates discussed the 'action' noting how exciting this might be on the stage; many also saw the development of Duke Frederick here and in his sudden change of mood towards Orlando an 'explanation' of his unexpected conversion in Act Five. Many answers focused on the development of the relationship between Rosalind and Orlando, from the initial 'falling in love at first sight' to the passing on of the necklace; fewer candidates noticed Celia's supporting role, effectively introducing Rosalind as his 'mistress'.

Coriolanus

This was a more popular choice this session than previously. Option **(a)** was often well done with many answers considering the motivation of each of the main characters in turn and nearly all candidates showing a secure and detailed knowledge of the text. More developed answers saw how the 'self-interest' of the Tribunes, for example, became the mechanism for driving forward the plot. Those who developed this line of discussion into considering the dramatic structure in detail often did very well. Many answers decided that only Coriolanus himself was not motivated by 'self-interest', often seeing him as 'too honest to have any dubious motivation', citing his inability to adapt to the political necessities either in the market place or at the end in Corioli. Volumnia was generally recognised as having mixed motives, partly wanting the fame and reputation for her son, but also for her own status.

Option **(b)** was also popular and most candidates, if not able to accurately place the passage as Coriolanus's first appearance, did note that his tetchiness undoes much of the good that Menenius had achieved through his preceding belly fable. As an introduction to the hero many saw his opening words as the key to the dramatic conflict to follow, with some noting the animal and disease imagery with which he berates the crowd. More developed answers identified two strands to his attitude. Firstly there was the gulf in his eyes between the inherent value of the patricians and the plebeians (with a few answers seeing in his 'surprise' at the decision to appoint Tribunes his position as being 'of the patricians but not with them'). Secondly for many it was clear he had judged them as a result of their behaviour on the battlefield. Many saw the foreshadowing that takes place in this scene – of the conflict with the Volsce to follow and more obviously with the Tribunes. As one candidate put it:

Shakespeare makes us admire him for his straightforward honesty and bravery whilst simultaneously making the audience dislike his narrow-minded elitist world view and his evident lack of sympathy for the starving people

A few noted the irony of it being Coriolanus himself who delivers the news of their appointment, whilst other more developed answers pointed out that his accusation 'every minute you do change a mind' was ultimately a charge which could be levelled at Coriolanus himself on many occasions in the play to follow.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Most answers explored the different family groupings in turn, noting the meanness and unpleasantness of the John Dashwood and the Ferrars families, especially when contrasted with the Barton Cottage Dashwoods and Mrs Jennings/Middleton families. Often the distinguishing feature in the success of an essay was the ability to select carefully relevant examples and avoid too much detailed story telling. More developed answers saw how the differences between these family groups and in some cases within them formed the structure of the novel and the framework of Austen's plot. Many noted the contrasting relationships of the Dashwood sisters and the Steele girls, with some seeing the key role of as Brandon as an outsider but included within the Barton Cottage group. Those answers which focused on

'presentation' and were able to support comments on language and imagery for example with specific support from the text often did very well.

Option **(b)** was also popular and often very well tackled. Nearly all candidates could explore the development of our understanding of the relationships between mother and her daughters, the early signs of 'sense and sensibility' in Elinor and Marianne and noting what for some was Mrs Dashwood's position in the middle of the alternative opinions of her daughters. More developed answers focused on the language and tone, with some explorations of how Austen generates humour and engagement through her presentation, especially of Marianne:

Who represents the flaws of living a life with only sensibility in a comedic way as she starts with a barely logical argument and ends up grasping at straws.

Elinor's teasing and as it turns out prophetic comments on fever were often explored and nearly every candidate was able to see the irony of Marianne's comments here in view of where she ends the book, though few candidates recognised that her sensibility seems to be aligned to a seriousness, in comparison with Elinor and her mother, in which lay the seeds of her tragic relationship with Willoughby.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Option **(a)** was the popular choice for this minority text. Many candidates were able to find relevant material from both *Prologue* and *Tale*, often discussing them in great detail. Chaucer's use of symbols such as the relics and the bones in the *Prologue* and the bell and the Old Man in the *Tale* made the basis for a number of sensible discussions. Stronger answers developed the response into a consideration of moral and spiritual death, citing the Pardoner himself and the three rioters as examples, as well as the physical deaths at the end of the *Tale*. Other answers saw an almost Gothic element, linking this to the Pardoner's aim of 'scaring his congregation into buying his relics', with a few answers picking up the context of the Plague and remarking that 'death in Chaucer's work was no more prevalent than it would have been in real life for his listeners.

Option **(b)** was relatively rare but many answers saw the Pardoner's hypocrisy, giving examples of his own gluttony as well as commenting in detail on the role of the Pardoner generally in sermonizing and trying to sell his wares. This led some answers into considering the methods of sermonizing revealed here and the sense of a dramatic performance by the Pardoner in order to win over his audience. When these were supported by reference to the text, the essays often did well.

John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice. Option **(a)** was less popular. Nearly all candidates agreed that the poetry was dramatic and were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, though weaker answers offered a general summary rather than identifying the ways that the poems were dramatic. There was some different views on what in fact 'dramatic' might be in the context of his poetry – some answers concentrated on the sense of acting and the way Donne creates a drama often with two actors. This led stronger answers into comparing his love poetry and his religious poetry and finding perceptive contrasts. Other answers considered 'dramatic' as meaning 'arresting' or 'shocking' and again there was some lively discussions on the effects Donne creates with these techniques. Stronger answers concentrated on 'the effects' and this led naturally into in a discussion of style rather than content.

Option **(b)** was more popular and nearly all candidates had a good knowledge of the poem on which to base their analysis. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem and link it to summaries of other similar poems such as *The Sun Rising*. Stronger answers concentrated more on the methods and their effects, though most tended to take the poem at face value and only a few more discriminating answers were alive to the situation and to the light, gently teasing tone. Occasionally answers spent rather too long on biographical details but this was rare and most answers were able to engage with some of the detail and show understanding of some elements of the metaphysical style.

Silas Marner

This was a popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(b)**. Answers on **(a)** generally showed a good knowledge of Molly and Nancy and most were able to link them through their relationships with Godfrey. More basic answers concentrated on the narrative, with some extensive summaries offered. Stronger answers responded to the 'roles and characterisation', seeing how Eliot shapes the narratives in order to create reader response. Candidates who referred to the language – Molly's association with dark

and morbid imagery contrasted to Nancy's light and positive presentation for example – often did well. Those answers which explored how Godfrey's development is presented through these relationships alongside his relationship with Eppie often did very well.

Option **(b)** was more popular, with some excellent answers, showing a very good understanding of how Eliot's narrative techniques encourage the reader into an understanding of the two brothers and their relationship. More basic answers were tempted into giving too much detail from elsewhere in the novel, but stronger answers did see how the language here shapes the development of the relationship and the plot. Some answers explored some of the telling details such as the reaction of the 'handsome spaniel' and many good answers could explore the tone and how that shapes the reader's response. Other answers pointed out the revelation of Godfrey's secret, with a few remarking on the failure to mention Eppie and thus Eliot's choices as a writer.

Hardy: The Return of the Native

This was relatively popular in its first outing with most opting for **(a)**. Eustacia's relationships with Clym and Wildeve were well explored by nearly all answers, the more basic responses concentrating on the narratives and the links between them, as well as her character. Stronger answers took up the challenge of the question, exploring the twin ideas of 'love' and 'loneliness' as methods of characterisation in equal measure. There was disagreement about her role with some seeing her as a tragic figure, whereas others thought she was 'witchlike' not only in Hardy's presentation but also in her effect on the men and women around her, Nonsuch and Mrs Yeobright being often cited as telling examples. Good answers also referred to how Hardy presents her – the dark imagery, her attitude to the Heath and distant places. As one candidate put it:

She uses men and the idea of love as a way to escape the tragically boring, to her, Heath, but in the end the Heath consumes her.

(b) was less popular with weaker answers offering an extended paraphrase, sometimes with appropriate links to the wider narrative of Thomasin and Venn. Others explored the language closely, seeing the hints of the developing relationship and the eventual outcome, as well as in Mrs Yeobright's attitude, her eventual sad end. Stronger answers noted her move from the concerned 'Tamsin, Tamsin' to 'disgraceful performance' and wondered which was the true response. Other answers concentrated on the Reddleman and how he was presented here and what the significance of that was in the wider text.

The Changeling

This was a popular choice, with many opting for **(a)**. Nearly every answer showed a detailed knowledge of the text, though a few seemed to concentrate overly on the early parts of the relationship. Stronger answers saw in Beatrice's language both an unconscious attraction as well as her recognition at this early stage of the dangers that De Flores represented. More basic answers were often able to give a very detailed account of the relationship and the characters, with some exploring how and in what ways it changed during the course of the play. More sophisticated answers developed this into discussing how Middleton in fact constructs his plot around this ambiguity, often seeing the initial lack of understanding and awareness shown by both of them as the mainspring of the tragedy to follow.

Option **(b)** proved less popular this session. Most answers understood some of the basic conventions at work and how the dramatist might use a subplot to underscore the main concerns through comedy. This led stronger answers to consider those concerns in more detail – such as the attitudes to women and the assumption of infidelity. Beatrice's own position was often contrasted to that of Isabella and some considered the effect of the madhouse setting. The most able candidates also explored some of the comic conventions – the role of Lollio as a tricky servant, the coarse ribaldry of some of the dialogue and the comic convention of an old husband and a young wife, for example. These answers were very good when these conventions were linked into a consideration of the main concerns.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should consider the terms of the question carefully and identify the main area of discussion before selecting relevant material to introduce.

Candidates should give a precise context to the passage in option **(b)** questions and this should relate to the main area of discussion in the question.

General Comments

Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. All but a very few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many suggested a real enjoyment and engagement with their chosen texts.

There are two general issues to address this session:

- (a)** Candidates should have a clear strategy in mind for tackling the questions. This should include considering the terms of the task carefully – identifying the main focus of the question and deciding what if any is the crux of the question. Many questions offer a challenge or proposition on a key area of the text and it is vital, if the candidate it is to answer the question relevantly, that this is clearly recognised before the candidate starts to consider what might be the appropriate material to introduce into the essay. Focusing on the key terms of the task set is an important first step in producing a relevant and focused answer.
- (b)** When tackling a passage question candidates should identify the context for the passage in their answer. This might be what has happened immediately before or is about to happen; it might be a key moment for a particular character. Candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of why the passage is significant to the text as whole in order to address the terms of the task fully. For poetry contexts, if the passage is an extract from a longer poem, then the same approach is required. For a complete short poem, the candidate will need during the course of their answer to demonstrate an understanding of how and in what ways this poem is typical (or not typical) of the methods and concerns of the poet.

Specific Texts

Section A *Shakespeare*

As You Like It

Option **(a)** was a much less popular choice. Candidates who took the time to consider the task carefully often did well, focusing on the key terms of the quotation. Nearly all candidates understood the importance of the Forest of Arden as an alternative setting to the 'envious court' and had a solid knowledge of the events that took place there. More developed answers were able to link that to a discussion about the characterisation, often contrasting the discontented and bitter such as Orlando and Jacques with those who had a more contented life such as Corin. Stronger answers considered the way Shakespeare explores the strengths and weaknesses of his characters through the events and chance meetings in the Forest, with some sophisticated discussions seeing the Forest as merely the setting and only important because the characters were no longer in their usual world – Oliver was often seen as good example of this. Many candidates remembered the physical discontents of the cold and hunger in the Forest as well as the more philosophical issues arising for such as Touchstone and Jacques. Better answers developed this into

exploring how Shakespeare developed his characters and plot through the various reactions to these discomforts.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were some excellent, detailed and analytical responses. Candidates who recognised this as the opening of the play often explored the dramatic techniques employed for setting the scene and introducing the characters, with better answers discussing the structure – introduction, summary, confrontation and resolution – and the dramatic effects thereby created. Nearly every answer considered the characters and how what is revealed here sets the direction for the ensuing play, with some weaker answers focusing too much on the subsequent events at the expense of analysing the detail of the passage. Stronger answers noticed the role of Adam and how the brothers' attitudes to him shaped the audience's response to them. A surprising number of answers thought that Orlando in fact strikes Oliver first, but many mentioned the dramatic action involved, with some recognizing an *'all too realistic portrayal of a young 'upstart' challenging his older brother, much to his annoyance.'*

Coriolanus

Option **(a)** was much less popular. Many answers recognised that 'Rome' meant different things to different characters and groups of characters and in these differences lay the conflicts on which the play was developed. More basic answers concentrated on the Plebeians and the Patricians, sometimes seeing the Tribunes and Coriolanus as representatives of the generic attitudes. More developed answers identified that Coriolanus and the Tribunes were in fact not necessarily in tune with their peers and that in the attitudes betrayed by such as Tullus, Menenius and Volumnia as well as the citizens, Shakespeare was able to present a very complex political picture in which the only certainty was the lack of agreement as to what in fact 'Rome' was.

Option **(b)** was more popular and many candidates were able to offer a precise context – though some did think this occurred after Coriolanus's failed attempt to become consul. Candidates who concentrated on the 'audience' and the effects created often did well, recognising that this is a different Marcius from the one the audience has just seen threatening and goading the citizens. His admiration for Tullus as well as his fellow patricians was often noted and the general mood of excitement as military action was promised, amongst the patricians but not the rioting citizens, was well explored. The Tribunes commentary on Marcius was also well discussed, many recognising that the audience would see these as Coriolanus's real enemies and perhaps in listening to their accusations have the seeds of doubt planted about his future even at this early stage.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Most answers explored the different parent/child groupings in turn, noting the meanness and unpleasantness of the John Dashwood and the Ferrars families to each other, especially when contrasted with the Barton Cottage Dashwoods and Mrs Jennings/Middleton relationships. Often the distinguishing feature in the success of an essay was the ability to select carefully relevant examples and avoid too much detailed story telling. More developed answers saw how the differences between relationships and in some cases within them formed the structure of the novel and the framework of Austen's plot. Many noted the contrasting relationships of the Dashwood sisters with their mother, with better answers seeing this as a key element of the novel's structure. Those answers which focused on 'presentation' and were able to support comments on language and imagery for example with specific support from the text often did very well.

Option **(b)** was also popular and often very well tackled. Many candidates had a detailed knowledge of Mr Palmer and his role in the novel, with weaker answers spending too much time on the wider text. Stronger answers saw the various ways that Austen reveals his character, often seeing the contrast between what he said, what his wife said and what Elinor thought. Others discussed the various relationships he shared with his mother in law and with Sir John, his honesty in his assessment of them often noted as a positive. Some very good answers considered the final paragraph in detail, noting how Elinor's 'voice' seems to become that of the narrator. As one candidate put it: *Would Elinor really think of Mrs Palmer as a very silly woman?* Candidates who focused on such details in the passage often did very well.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Option **(a)** was the popular choice for this minority text. Many candidates were well equipped to see the links between the concerns raised in the *Prologue* and the details in the *Tale*, showing secure knowledge of the

text as a whole. Stronger answers developed from this selective narrative summary into a consideration of Chaucer's concerns, focusing how the narrative in fact highlights the hypocrisy of the Pardoner himself as well as being an example of the very sins against which he preached.

Option **(b)** proved less popular but many answers saw the dramatic nature of this denouement to the *Tale*, with more basic answers summarizing what had gone before. More developed answers explored the performance element of the Pardoner's words, linking it in to what he had said in the *Prologue* about performing. Answers which concentrated on the language and tone of this passage in detail, linking the analysis to the wider concerns often did very well.

John Donne Selected Poems

This was a minority choice. Option **(a)** was less popular. Candidates often concentrated on the religious poems, with many showing a detailed knowledge of *Death be not Proud* for example, with stronger answers exploring how Donne presents death and different attitudes to it. More developed answers were able to compare these attitudes to those revealed in his love poetry such as *The Relic*, often making perceptive points about tone and language. Stronger answers all focused on the idea of 'presentation' and those answers which supported comments about language, imagery and verse form with well chosen examples often did very well.

Option **(b)** proved more popular and nearly all candidates had a good knowledge of the poem on which to base their analysis. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem and link it to summaries of other similar poems such as *The Sun Rising*. Stronger answers concentrated more on the methods and their effects, with some very detailed and thoughtful responses, sensitive to the specific situation which Donne is describing. Most answers were able to engage with some of the detail and show understanding of some elements of the metaphysical style, with very good answers exploring the effects of language and imagery here and relating them to the wider selection.

Silas Marner

This was a popular choice with the vast majority of candidates opting for **(b)**. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of the text, with more basic answers discussing the individuals such as Silas and the Cass family as representative of the social differences, with some answers focussing on the Raveloe community and the common ground of the village inn. Better answers concentrated on how Eliot presents those differences, partly through characters, but also through attitudes to, for example money and religion. Eppie was often seen as a key symbol, with a few recognising that in rejecting her, Godfrey hands over his status as a father to Silas.

Option **(b)** was more popular, with some excellent answers, showing a very good understanding of how Eliot's narrative techniques encourage the reader into a response to Godfrey and Silas. Basic responses were tempted into giving too much detail from elsewhere in the novel, but more able answers did see how the language here shapes the development of the relationship and the plot. Stronger answers noted the narrative voice directing the reader's response and giving an insight into the inner conscience of Godfrey, though not of Silas. Most answers recognised the narrative significance of Godfrey's 'rejection' of Eppie and how that would come back to haunt him.

Hardy: The Return of the Native

This was very much a minority choice with only a few answers offered for either option. The **(a)** answers often had a detailed and thorough knowledge of the relevant parts of the text and often had strong opinions on the relative merits of the two women. Stronger answers concentrated on the presentation – the contrasting use of imagery and tone – or contrasted their response to such as Wildeve or crucially for some the Heath itself. Candidates who planned their answer by careful consideration of the task and judicious selection of material often did very well.

The **(b)** option was very rarely attempted, but candidates did show an understanding of Hardy's methods of presenting the minor characters, through action and dialogue, as well as responding to the comedy. In this regards Christian was often well analysed. Nearly all recognised the togetherness and warmth of these characters, often reflecting on the lack of this amongst the main characters.

The Changeling

This was a popular choice, with many opting for **(a)**. Nearly every answer showed a detailed knowledge of the text, though a few seemed to concentrate overly on the early parts of the relationship. Stronger answers saw how the quotation offered opportunities to explore the effects of the relationship, on the two characters as well as on the play as a whole. Nearly all agreed with the quotation and many found ample evidence from the text to justify their opinions, with some weaker answers, spending too long in summarising the events. Answers which concentrated on the idea of 'presentation' often did very well and there were some very good analyses of the language and imagery and the effects that Middleton thereby creates.

Option **(b)** was much less popular. Most answers understood some of the basic conventions at work and how the dramatist might use a subplot to underscore the main concerns through comedy. This led better answers to consider those concerns in more detail – such as the attitudes to women, the deception and disguises revealed here and the dramatic and comedic nature of Antonio's changes of behaviour. Stronger answers saw how Isabella in her responses offered a counterpoint to Beatrice and her decisions when faced with a similar opportunity.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

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Candidates should give a precise context to the passage in option **(b)** questions and this should relate to the main area of discussion in the question.

General Comments

Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. All but a very few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many suggested a real enjoyment and engagement with their chosen texts.

There are two general issues to address this session:

- (a)** Candidates should have a clear strategy in mind for tackling the questions. This should include considering the terms of the task carefully – identifying the main focus of the question and deciding what if any is the crux of the question. Many questions offer a challenge or proposition on a key area of the text and it is vital, if the candidate it is to answer the question relevantly, that this is clearly recognised before the candidate starts to consider what might be the appropriate material to introduce into the essay. Focusing on the key terms of the task set is an important first step in producing a relevant and focused answer.
- (b)** When tackling a passage question candidates should identify the context for the passage in their answer. This might be what has happened immediately before or is about to happen; it might be a key moment for a particular character. Candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of why the passage is significant to the text as whole in order to address the terms of the task fully. For poetry contexts, if the passage is an extract from a longer poem, then the same approach is required. For a complete short poem, the candidate will need during the course of their answer to demonstrate an understanding of how and in what ways this poem is typical (or not typical) of the methods and concerns of the poet.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

As You Like It

Option **(a)** was a popular choice. Candidates who took the time to consider the task carefully often did well, focusing on the key terms 'dramatic effects' and 'contrast'. Nearly all candidates understood the importance of the Forest of Arden as an alternative setting to the 'envious court' and had a solid knowledge of the events that took place in each setting. More basic answers summarized these events, often seeing some connections in terms of characters and themes. More developed answers observed a series of balancing elements such as reconciliation/disintegration, loyalty/betrayal and love/hate. In some essays this was linked to a consideration of the dramatic effects, how out of these conflicts Shakespeare created the drama. Good answers recognised the ambivalence of Duke Senior, recognizing the positives in the Forest and yet quick to return to the court. He was often contrasted to good effect with Jacques and Touchstone, with a few answers also recognizing that the freedom which the female characters have in Arden enables the denouement to unfold.

Option **(b)** was less popular but there were some excellent, detailed responses. Candidates were well prepared to discuss Jacques's well known speech, though a few weaker answers tended to ignore the rest of the passage. Stronger answers reflected on the effect of the song and also the Duke's response to Orlando and Adam, often contrasted with Duke Frederick and Oliver. Some answers speculated on the purpose of Jacques 'set speech' and sometimes struggled to see it in the context of the wider text, but those who concentrated on the language and especially the way Shakespeare manipulates the tone often did very well.

Coriolanus

This was a minority choice with few answers seen for either option. Answers on option **(a)** often had a detailed knowledge of the text and were able to discuss the role of Tullus as a counterpoint to Coriolanus, though answers were often less secure in seeing the role of the Volscians generally. Answers which focused on presentation, in terms of language and action and were able to support their points with specific reference to the text often did well, especially if this was linked to a sense of the dramatic structure and the play's concerns.

Responses to option **(b)** were rare, and most candidates were able to explain the situation and the various roles. A few candidates were surprised by Virgilia's strength of will in standing up to her mother in law, with some wondering why Coriolanus could not take a leaf out of her book. Stronger answers saw how this conversation was part of the characterisation of Coriolanus, not only in terms of his mother's effect on him but also as a father and a husband, with some noting that Virgilia's 'disease' was preferable to the 'mirth' of Volumnia.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Most answers were able to discuss the characters in detail, with weaker answers spending too long in summarizing the main events. Candidates who focused on the key terms and were able to explore the roles often did well, with many seeing '*similarities in the two villains who are both out for themselves*'. More developed answers saw links between Lucy and Marianne, exploring how Marianne's inability to keep Willoughby was thrown into relief by Lucy's firm hold on Edward. Their significance in shaping the plot was often noted, with a number of answers pointing out that both of them are given a relatively comfortable ending, though the consensus was that Austen was more generous to Willoughby in giving him a chance to explain than she was to Lucy, who is described in unattractive terms until the very end.

Option **(b)** was much less popular with mostly solid answers, showing knowledge of the text and some understanding of the significance of the conversation between Elinor and Brandon. A precise knowledge of the context was important in recognizing what follows from this passage and therefore in establishing the significance. Stronger answers saw how Austen shapes our response to Brandon and Elinor, laying the foundation for the later developments, with a few good answers exploring the role of Mrs Jennings and the effect of the light touches of humour. Candidates able to explore Austen's careful use of dialogue with relatively little narrative often did well.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

This was a minority choice. Option **(a)** was rare but candidates nevertheless showed a solid knowledge of the whole text and were able to see how the Pardoner manipulates his audience to achieve his effects. More developed answers saw multiple audiences, seeing for example how the Pardoner's sense of his audience changes from the *Prologue* to the *Tale* and the catastrophic effect of his confusing his audience at the end in his contretemps with the Host. Better answers also considered Chaucer's audience, with some well supported and detailed deconstructions of the multiple layers within the text.

Responses to option **(b)** were rare but many answers saw the dramatic nature of this setting up of the *Tale*, with more basic answers summarizing what was about to happen. More developed answers explored the dramatic element of the Pardoner's words, linking it to what he had said in the *Prologue* about performing. Answers which concentrated on the language and tone of this passage in detail, linking the analysis to the wider concerns often did very well.

John Donne Selected Poems

This was a more popular choice. Option **(a)** was less common, though most essays showed a sound knowledge of the text and were able to summarise and partly explore three relevant poems. Better answers saw different types of drama, ranging from the teasing and tender love poems such as *The Sun Rising* to the more heartfelt religious poems in which the agonies of the repentant sinner are so dramatically and movingly presented. Good answers were able to support arguments with ideas about poetic methods and where apposite quotation was given in support these candidates often did well.

Option **(b)** was more popular and most candidates had a good knowledge of the poem on which to base their analysis. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, with some suggesting limited knowledge and understanding. Better answers concentrated more on the methods and their effects, with some very detailed and thoughtful responses, sensitive to the specific situation which Donne is describing and making apt links to other holy sonnets. Most answers were able to engage with some of the detail and show understanding of some elements of the metaphysical style, with very good answers exploring the effects of language and imagery here and relating them to the wider selection.

Silas Marner

This was a minority choice. Option **(a)** answers showed knowledge of the text, with more basic answers listing the various symbols and summarising where they appeared in the text. Better answers were able to offer a more literary assessment of Eliot's use of symbols and imagery, noting for example how the unredeemed Marner was often associated with spiders and darkness, whereas later under the influence of Eppie and Dolly he becomes 'lighter'. Some good answers noted how Eliot uses symbols to structure the novel – the Pit for example and Marner's gold, while at the same time using them to underpin her characterisation.

Responses to option **(b)** were rare. Most were able to give a brief context, explaining Godfrey's situation, with weaker answers getting drawn into the wider text in too much detail. Stronger answers concentrated on characterisation from within the passage, looking closely at the language and use of dialogue and narrative. Good answers saw the sensitivity with which Eliot develops Godfrey here, the mixed emotions and mixture of guilt and relief. A few noticed the setting up of his later confession to Nancy and nearly all were able to see how Eliot presents a very human figure here through her use of telling detail.

Hardy: The Return of the Native

This was very much a minority choice with only a few answers offered for either option. The **(a)** answers often had a detailed and thorough knowledge of Eustacia's 'tragedy' though few though she was 'ordinary'. Stronger answers developed from the narrative summary into a consideration of Hardy's methods of characterisation, often supporting points with relevant reference to the text. Candidates who were able to explore language and how Hardy presents the 'tragedy' and shapes a reader's response to Eustacia often did very well.

The **(b)** option was very rarely attempted, but candidates did show an understanding of Hardy's methods of presenting the characters, through action and dialogue, as well as responding to the relationships, with some seeing the root of Thomasin's problems with Wildeve in this rather tense exchange between the two 'nearly weds'. Those who focused on the detail found many hints of the future problems in the language and when this was added to a clear sense of context were often able to show good understanding.

The Changeling

This was a popular choice, with many opting for **(a)**. Nearly every answer showed a detailed knowledge of the text and De Flores's role in particular. Stronger answers wrestled with the ambivalence of his comment and saw in that an interesting way into discussing the characterisation. More basic answers concentrated on his relationship with Beatrice which was often summarized in detail. Where this was developed into a consideration of how Middleton develops De Flores through this relationship and how it highlights the 'worse' elements in both of them, especially when supported by detailed textual references, the answers often did very well.

Option **(b)** proved less popular. Most answers were able to offer a general summary of the passage but few seemed to have a confident grasp of the context or why this confrontation was significant. Stronger answers explored the language – especially the disease imagery – and Beatrice’s attempts to preserve her image. Some candidates wondered what her emotions towards Alsemero were at this point in the play, while others recognised how the dramatic tension had been building up to the point when Alsemero voices his accusation and how quickly the plot unravels from this point on.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates need to read questions more carefully and shape their material to the task.

They must pay more attention to 'methods' in answering **(a)** questions, and while offering a close, analytical appreciation of the passages in the **(b)** question, be able to put the printed extract into the context of the work as a whole and the writer's characteristic methods and concerns.

Candidates need to make more use of short quotations, in both **(a)** and **(b)** questions; to integrate them into the grammar of their sentences and use them for commenting on structure, form and language as well as to support comments on character and concerns.

General comments

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers. All questions proved accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements. There were a few rubric errors with some candidates attempting more than two questions. The strongest scripts were characterised by wide-ranging, perceptive, well structured responses which offered some sustained discussion of relevant ideas and detailed analyses of how writers shape meaning and a reader's response. They showed a sensitive awareness of the significance of social, cultural and literary contexts. Even at lower levels of achievement, it was clear that many candidates are beginning to develop a framework of literary ideas and critical skills which they are able to apply to some degree to the passages. It was good to see candidates confidently considering structure, point of view and symbolism, particularly in the novels. Sometimes, however they identified a few specific aspects of method or concerns which they could discuss with some sensitivity but they did not show how these discussions contribute to the development of ideas, significance or effect within a passage. Weaker candidates still tend to rely on narrative summary and paraphrase, offering personal views on what is being presented rather than how it is done.

Candidates could improve their analytical skills by being encouraged to make a point, support it with a quotation and then explore how the significance or effect is achieved by making a specific comment on the choice of language. This applies to all the genres but candidates seem particularly inhibited in commenting on language in the drama texts. Some scripts in the lower bands were compromised by a lack of textual knowledge. The standard of expressive English was usually fluent enough to sustain communication. At many levels there was evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues and personal insights into specific details. Many candidates communicated a real enjoyment and thoughtful engagement with the texts they had studied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses.

- (a)** There were a few responses to this question with candidates tending to choose poems which dealt with Adcock's interest in her ancestor's experience of New Zealand in 'Water', or her own memories in 'Going Back' or 'Instead of an Interview'. In terms of 'methods and effects' better candidates explored some of the ways Adcock made her own 'memories tingle' – the imagined meeting in 'Water' and the lists of details in the other two poems, developing the ideas into discussions of 'home' or changes and the feelings these seemed to evoke. With varying degrees of success they also looked at the way the syntax, rhyme and rhythm recreate a sense of the

spoken voice and tone. Most candidates dealt with each poem in turn, with weaker ones relying on summaries.

- (b) Responses to this question covered the range. There were some very good conceptualised ones which having noted Adcock's interest in Nature, placed the poem in the context of her ecological concerns by referring to 'Regression' and her fascination for the quirky detail of creation as seen in 'The Pangolin'. They commented on the use of repetition and alliteration in the first line, how the patterning there and alliteration elsewhere underlines the theme of symmetry; saw the structural function and rhythmical effect of the repetition of 'Goodbye' and picked up on a variety of sound effects and choice of language. Good candidates were able to build paragraphs of sustained analysis around specific details e.g. a comment on the effect of the goodbye to the alliterative 'sweet certitudes' would lead to a discussion of the impact of the sentence structure and irony of the prophetic 'It will come'. Others worked through the poem in an attempt to grasp its meaning and with some close reading made reasonably competent responses, though the subtler tones of wry rumination were less frequently noted. Some candidates read the poem as a protest against our concern with conformity. Weaker essays from candidates who often had quite an impressive recall of quotations, spotted various poetic devices, and then found examples of similar features in other poems in an attempt to discuss the characteristics of Adcock's work without giving sufficient attention to the printed poem to generate a coherent discussion of its meaning and effects.

Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

Auden is gaining in popularity and some candidates showed a more detailed appreciation of the poems as poetry and less irrelevant preoccupation with the poet's sexual orientation. Some candidates who chose to do the (b) questions did not pay sufficient attention to the question: 'Write a detailed appreciation of the following poem'. They had quite detailed knowledge of Auden's characteristic use of poetic methods, picked examples from the poem and then found other examples from elsewhere, sometimes with good explanations of the effects, but the resulting essays tended to be catalogues of stylistic devices, lacking in connective discussion to show an understanding and appreciation of the printed poem.

- (a) A few candidates opted for this. There were some good explorations of the variety of contributions made by Auden's treatment of Nature in his presentation of love: from the witty exaggerations of love in 'As I walked out one evening...' to the more sober setting and consideration of the seasons in 'From the first coming down...' and the use of the stars in 'Let me be the more loving one'. Other poems used were 'Look, stranger,' and in general summary form: 'River Profile'. Most essays tended to deal with one poem at a time and in weaker essays there was some reliance on summaries. Better essays, with quotations available, looked at the use of imagery, the visual and sound effects and discussed tone, confidently building appropriate personal response to natural details into interpretations of the poems.
- (b) This was the more popular option. Very few seemed to know it was part of a longer poem. Those that did had a more secure sense of its focus on the role of the poet, while others often over-invested in a more general discussion of the importance of Time in Auden's work, how in this poem 'it treats people badly'. Stronger answers read the poem closely, following the sentence structure across the stanzas to show a clear understanding that Time 'Worships language and forgives/Everyone by whom it lives'. They connected this to an appreciation of the images in the last three stanzas to show how Auden uses opposites 'rapture/distress', 'deserts/fountain', 'prison/free' to uplift the human spirit even in times of the desperate state of pre-war Europe. There were some excellent discussions of the use of language to create a sense of the public tone within the poem. More modest answers showed partial understanding, frequently not paying enough attention to the ending. They spotted examples of personification and were able to comment on the more obvious aspects of the use of language: the 'dogs that bark', 'farming a verse', but the 'frozen seas' of 'pity' caused problems. Very few of the best answers were prepared to discuss the originality of 'human unsuccess'. Weaker answers often went for isolated features without generating any sense of an argument or attempted paraphrases. Some did not really understand what Auden thought of Yeats, misreading 'vessel' as an insult, getting distracted by Time and tending not to notice the contemporary references in the fifth stanza.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This was a less popular text this session and less well done because there was less evidence of close reading of the novel as a whole in answers to both questions.

- (a) There were a few responses to this question which prompted some discussion of Grace's difficulty and fear of Philip and Anne's children, that they would see through her and how Grace became childlike in turn, waiting to be fed at breakfast. There was also some reference to Grace's childhood memories, focusing on her sense of exclusion but little specific detail was offered and little attempt made to discuss methods of presentation.
- (b) This was more frequently answered. Some responses adopted an adventurous, holistic approach to the passage, often beginning with the middle or end and offering brief, but pertinent wider textual allusions. Many candidates considered the contrast between Grace's intense inward verbalising and her outward inability to communicate. There were some commendable attempts to grapple with the language and sentence structure with better candidates showing some insight into the way Grace's inner world is presented with her own code of language which does not match the reader's expectations. These candidates explored, with some sensitivity, her view as a 'migratory bird' of buildings and man's need for courage to 'stand upright'. Other candidates tended towards a generalised narrative approach, summarising the content rather than the depiction of Grace, restricting their discussion to more obvious aspects like explaining the 'migratory bird' image and becoming fixated on their view of Grace's psychological state rather than the effects of the writing in the passage.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

Both questions elicited some well-supported discussions and answers showed evidence of a genuine interest in the play's issues. There was some evidence of critical reading, on the issue of language, colonialism and the play itself. As always the test is how well this material is integrated into an argument, and made relevant to a view of the text as drama, constructed to illicit an immediate response from an audience in the theatre.

- (a) This was the less popular option and less well done because it required some discussion of how drama works in terms of generating an audience response. Some candidates were in danger of writing historical essays with discussion of the issue of language within the colonial context, rather than taking the opportunity of looking at the dramatic presentation of these issues in scenes where the characters offer various emotional responses both to what is happening and to each other. The dramatist's exploration of the characters' emotions was either omitted or presented as a bolt-on to contextual knowledge. Better candidates covered a range of emotions, discussing the tension surrounding Owen's role and Friel's presentation of Owen's awareness of its significance: for example in the two translation scenes with Lancey or the Tobair Vree discussion with Yolland. Some attempted to comment on the comedy of the Yolland and Maire's romantic scene, but few thought to contrast this with her reaction to Yolland's disappearance. More modest answers tended to be catalogues of characters, saying how each one feels and how the audience might feel about a character. Those who focused on the shifts in views of particular characters like Hugh and Owen, had some potentially useful material, but the approach was too often rather factual and explanatory rather than showing how Friel generated dramatic impact on the audience.
- (b) The passage was the popular choice and it prompted some close and appreciative analyses of its dramatic effects, with much consideration of Hugh's character and inadequacies – his late arrival, drinking too much and treating Manus badly – which was seen as symptomatic of Irish culture and attitudes. The teaching methods were described, felt to be inadequate and linked to the issue of the need to learn English and the effect of Maire's rebellious assertion at the end. There was also comment on the roles of Doalty and Bridget and in almost every essay, the dramatic effect of the 'Brief pause' that follows the reference to the Donnelly twins prompted speculation about their 'part' in the play. These absent participants clearly fascinate candidates and that 'dramatic effect' is well understood. Better essays showed how an audience is prepared for Hugh's entrance by Doalty's mockery of him previously and how Friel presents him with a surprising amount of dignity and wit especially in his interaction with Doalty. They included discussion of language in its various manifestations in the extract, how an audience appreciates the richness of linguistic resonance in Hugh's culture. The broader discussion of the symbolic function of the baptism and the identity of the baby's father or of Hugh's report on his meeting with Lancey allowed candidates to move comfortably between the extract and the wider play.

Question 5 L.P.HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This is becoming a popular text. The (b) question was the preferred choice but both questions prompted responses across the range.

- (a) In responding to this question, candidates were able to analyse the overall structure of the novel and strong candidates looked at the duality of the narrative point of view: the older Leo's issue with memory and view of his younger self in the Prologue, the way Hartley captured the youthful naivety in the recreation of his experiences at Brandham Hall and the consequences of past events on different characters in the Epilogue. Some candidates addressed the issue of how Leo's 'Golden Age' is presented through the symbolism, awareness of class and the restrictions surrounding dress codes and relationships. Weaker responses tended to be rather generalised, offering disparate references to the handling of the past, lacking a coherent, clear line of development.
- (b) The strongest responses offered balanced approaches dividing time between detailed critical appreciation of the authorial style and intention, commenting on the relationship between the passage and the whole novel. Most candidates understood the significance of the moment and could place the passage in context of Marion's irritation and rejection of the narrator. Often there was some good explanation of the relationships and feelings involved, and many attempted to show how Leo's habitual way of thinking was reflected in the language. Better essays explored in some detail, the implications of the descriptions of the pool and its surroundings and of the metaphors of romance and disenchantment linking the description of the rushes to the idea of being 'Vanquished'. The passage also allowed for some discussion of present and past and the loss of glamour.

Question 6 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This was a very popular text with candidates displaying impressive amounts of detailed knowledge and obvious enjoyment of the richness of its texture. Just occasionally, notions of post-colonial condemnation of British influence proved to be a distraction, particularly in the (b) question. Both questions were popular and many candidates did well.

- (a) Some responses showed sophisticated, highly focused discussion on the role of Velutha as carrying meaning both in the context of the emotional lives of other characters and in terms of the political concerns of the novel. Such arguments were rich with debate, textual reference and appreciation of literary style. His relative elusiveness was mentioned, and better essays noted the ways that the narrative structure allowed for his emergence in intimacy with Ammu at the climactic end of the novel. Surprisingly little was said about his personal charisma though the symbolic force of his appearance in Ammu's dream, his introduction through Rahel's mind at the funeral and his representation as the God of Small Things, The God of Loss were often sensibly analysed. More modest answers contrasted his excellence and straightforwardness with the devious and evil manipulations of other characters such as Baby Kochamma and Comrade Pillai. Weaker answers gave pedestrian accounts of his role in the novel or over-invested in his role as representative victim of the caste system. Interestingly Sophie Mol was the other character that some candidates admired as a source of light.
- (b) There were lots of good readings of this passage and considered appreciation of a range of narrative methods and effects, including quite detailed analysis of the 'Basin City' paragraph. Few failed to put the passage in its immediate context and many expressed sympathetic understanding of Estha's feelings, the repulsiveness of the language in the description of the Orangedrink Lemondrink man, the significance of the 'dirt-coloured rag', and the unsettling irony of the final details, the suggested 'fizzy drink'. Better answers defined the different angles of vision, commenting on the effect of the italicised list of imperatives; noting who saw the 'luminous woman with the polished shoulders' and who must have registered the sign 'HERS'. Modest answers focused competently on the presentation of character and Roy's uses of capitalisation, short sentences, portmanteau words and italics were all listed and commented upon as being characteristic. Some of the weakest essays assumed that a discussion of 'language and sentence structure' meant that it was unnecessary to consider what was actually being communicated and the resulting catalogue of notes on features from the passage and elsewhere in the text resulted in essays that lacked substance and coherence. There were also some who uncritically applied what they knew of the wider text to the passage and maintained that the passage was narrated by Rahel.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

Soyinka has become increasingly popular with candidates obviously appreciating the universal appeal of the plays. Both questions were equally popular and produced responses across the range, though there is a

tendency to take the plays rather seriously as exposures of corruption and gullibility rather than giving equal appreciation to Soyinka's delightful exploitation of the ridiculous.

- (a) There were some engaged and lively responses to this question. Candidates obviously relished the opportunity to celebrate the theatricality in both plays whilst debating the balance of comedy and political interest. More successful candidates had a framework of ideas about the different ways comedy works: it can be situational, physical, visual, slapstick, and in these plays very verbal. They used this framework to analyse specific scenes. Most candidates had a clear understanding of the political significance of Jero's manipulation of people, particularly the Minister and the comedy arising out of his dealings with Amope and Chume. Candidates seemed less secure on *Jero's Metamorphosis*. Very few candidates looked in detail at the government's intention to build an 'execution stadium' on Bar Beach and saw the comedy in the fact that the prophets' outrage was to do with who should gain the monopoly of ministering the last rites rather than the inhumanity of the proposal. More modest answers explained the historical context, Jero's role and gave some detailed accounts of his early speeches to demonstrate corruption and the irony of his religious calling or 'trade'. Weaker answers were very heavy on the historical and political context, made some general references mostly to *The Trials* and asserted some comic effects by very general references to action and characters.
- (b) Good essays placed the scene in the context of the particular corruption the Chief Executive and Policewoman are investigating and understood the 'management' of the situation by Rebecca aided by Ananais. Stronger essays offered some analysis of Rebecca's speech, looking at the parody of evangelical meetings, the use of Biblical language and repetition coupled with the irony of Ananais's verbal attack on the policewoman. There were some attempts to discuss the action on stage, though mostly as evidence of Ananais's hypocrisy and corruption rather than showing any real appreciation of the farce. Weaker essays tended to take an explanatory approach and provide narrative summaries or character portraits.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates need to read questions more carefully and shape their material to the task.

They must pay more attention to 'methods' in answering **(a)** questions, and while offering a close, analytical appreciation of the passages in the **(b)** question, be able to put the printed extract into the context of the work as a whole and the writer's characteristic methods and concerns.

Candidates need to make more use of short quotations, in both **(a)** and **(b)** questions; to integrate them into the grammar of their sentences and use them for commenting on structure, form and language as well as to support comments on character and concerns.

General comments

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers. All questions proved accessible and there was little misinterpretation of their requirements. There were a few rubric errors with some candidates attempting more than two questions. The strongest scripts were characterised by wide-ranging, perceptive, well structured responses which offered some sustained discussion of relevant ideas and detailed analyses of how writers shape meaning and a reader's response. They showed a sensitive awareness of the significance of social, cultural and literary contexts. Even at lower levels of achievement, it was clear that many candidates are beginning to develop a framework of literary ideas and critical skills which they are able to apply to some degree to the passages. It was good to see candidates confidently considering structure, point of view and symbolism, particularly in the novels. Sometimes, however they identified a few specific aspects of method or concerns which they could discuss with some sensitivity but they did not show how these discussions contribute to the development of ideas, significance or effect within a passage. Weaker candidates still tend to rely on narrative summary and paraphrase, offering personal views on what is being presented rather than how it is done.

Candidates could improve their analytical skills by being encouraged to make a point, support it with a quotation and then explore how the significance or effect is achieved by making a specific comment on the choice of language. This applies to all the genres but candidates seem particularly inhibited in commenting on language in the drama texts. Modest essays on the poetry also tended to focus on extracting meaning rather than commenting on the effects achieved by the choice and placing of specific words. Some scripts in the lower bands were compromised by a lack of textual knowledge. The standard of expressive English was usually very good or fluent enough to sustain communication of reasonably complex ideas. At many levels there was evidence of thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues and personal insights into specific details. Many candidates communicated a real enjoyment and thoughtful engagement with the texts they had studied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. In answers to both questions, there was often too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing.

- (a)** This question allowed candidates to interpret what was meant by 'place' and while many thought in terms of the UK and 'Unexpected Visit' or New Zealand through 'Water', Going Back and Instead of an Interview, a few also made use of House Talk and the court in Witnesses. The key word 'treatment' in the question invited candidates to consider method and effects, but generally

candidates relied on more or less detailed narrative summaries of the poems with the occasional generalised comment on Adcock's characteristic use of colloquial speech and brackets. Weaker essays over-invested in biographical detail.

- (b) Tadpoles was linked appropriately with 'Toads', 'The Three Toed Sloth' and 'The Pangolin'. The issue here was to balance a detailed analysis of the printed poem with relevant, selected references to the others to show Adcock's characteristic methods and effects. The best answers explored the natural processes of development and birth and the analogy between the human sphere and the reptilian world, appreciating the precision in choice of language to show Adcock's perception of there being beauty in the most unlikely quarters. They clearly enjoyed the visual quality in phrases like 'clumps of eyelashes feet' and 'ribbon-tailed blackcurrants', the comic self-portrait of herself as a 'hugely gloating grand-maternal frog' and the juxtaposition of 'spermatozoa' with 'darlings'. Weaker answers tended to use a linear approach with a paraphrased summary of content showing some understanding of poetic method but only a few connecting style and theme with other poems. Partial answers used biographical knowledge to focus on the 'long distance' between Adcock and Oliver, paying attention to the surrogate grandmotherly relationship but missing the variations in tone.

Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

Auden is increasing in popularity with the majority opting for the (b) question which produced a full range of responses.

- (a) A few candidates opted for this. There were some good explorations of the variety of contributions made by Auden's use of landscape in his presentation of Love in 'From the first coming down' and the use of the night sky in 'Let me be the more loving one'. Other poems used were 'Look, stranger,' and just occasionally, 'River Profile'. Most essays tended to deal with one poem at a time and in weaker essays there was some reliance on summaries. Stronger essays, with quotations available, looked at the use of imagery, the visual and sound effects and discussed tone, confidently building appropriate personal response to natural details into interpretations of the poems. The weakest candidates wrote about three poems they had learned regardless of whether these had any actual content relating to the question.
- (b) There were a range of commentaries on this poem, most obviously explaining its 'concerns'. The more obvious theme – normal experience being pursued in spite of an extraordinary occurrence – was of course, central but there were some interesting things said about the contrasting attitudes of age and youth, with many picking up and discussing the references to the Christian myths of miraculous birth and martyrdom. The best answers pointed out, how Auden used the conceit of commenting on paintings to raise his characteristic human and ethical concerns, as well as the state of Europe. Many noted the indifference of Nature to human suffering to argue that Auden thought indifference was part of human nature; it was the job of artists to remind people of this. They showed how he appears to be objective and unemotional but in fact is quite judgemental by looking carefully at the diction and tone, contrasting this presentation with the more dramatic 'Refugee Blues'. Some of the strongest discussed form, recognising that the irregularity of the rhyme and length of lines mimicked the reflective discussion of what appeared to be everyday events. Weaker answers attempted to extract meaning and sometimes struggled to create a coherent paraphrase of the poem. Some being unaware of the significance of 'Old Masters', thinking the 'aged' were waiting for death and recounting the story of Icarus in too much narrative detail.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This was a less popular text this session though both questions provided answers across the range.

- (a) The extent to which this was well done depended on the availability of detailed knowledge and the way it was used to develop ideas. Most took a psychological view of Grace's childhood memories, seeing them as a safe retreat from the demands of present experience, or as a response to the loving stability of Philip and Anne's relationship, trying to come to terms with her memories of childhood. There was some consideration of how the odd nature of her childhood contributed to her problems of security and communication in later life. There was some discussion of her feelings of exclusion from 'the flood', her pride in being recognised as 'a jackdaw', her defiant shouting of 'Lottie-and-George' and the child's partial misunderstanding and anxiety of words.

- (b) The passage stimulated real appreciation of the beauty and fluency of Grace's thought, the fine quality of the distinctions and perceptions she develops, but these good essays also noted the disparity in sentence structure, the one-line brevity of actual speech contrasted with the rhapsody of private thought and feeling. That these inner perceptions are presented in the third person until line 39 after which we have Grace's thoughts in the first person was picked up in a few very good scripts. They focused on the self-prodding, the way she remembers the soprano, and self-loathing, commenting on the way the language and sentence structure creates Grace's mental processes, but there was some reluctance to engage with the extended metaphor of the 'delousing of the spirit.' Weaker answers made little attempt to place this in context and attempted to give narrative paraphrases

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

Both questions elicited well-supported discussions and answers showed evidence of knowledge about its issues. There was extensive evidence of critical reading, on the issue of language, colonialism and the play itself. As always the test is how well this material is integrated into an argument, relevant to the question which also considers the text as drama.

- (a) This was a popular choice with the very best responses considering the dramatic presentation of culture and colonialism by focusing on dramatic structure and pin-pointing specific scenes for analysis. In these cases, contextual details, whether social or political, arose naturally and seamlessly from analyses of the dramatic methods and effects in play. Crucial to this is a discussion of the implications of the central dramatic conceit about the use of language in the play: how Friel exploits the audience's understanding that though the play is written and performed in English, characters are speaking Gaelic and in some scenes *they* do not know what each other are saying, even though the audience does. There were some good explorations of the different views of language within the play, the implications of the attachment to the classics, the contrast of the two brothers embodying different ideas about British colonialism and the role of Yolland as the 'committed Hibernophile'. Weaker answers interpreted the question as colonialism having dramatic repercussions in the lives of the characters or that Yolland's disappearance and the English reprisals (dramatic events) were a result of the renaming of Irish places.
- (b) The passage was generally well analysed with some understanding of its context and effect coming towards the end of the play, though responses from weaker candidates tended to be unbalanced, with excessive discussion of the wider context, particularly Hugh's treatment of Manus and an account of his disappointment in love with Maire. The way Manus treats Sarah directly evokes the opening of the play, and many candidates made useful comparisons with the earlier scene, clearly explaining the irony of 'There's nothing to stop you now...' Stronger candidates paid more attention to the nuances of language, for example, Manus's anxiety about accounting for his possessions, the possibly symbolic reference to the 'pet lamb', his unwillingness to confront Hugh's drinking problem other than euphemistically: 'he makes a lot of noise'. Most commented on Manus's avoidance of acknowledging the reference to Maire and there was some recognition of the shift in Owen's perception of his role in 'Two shillings a day for this – this – this'. Weaker answers tended to focus on Manus's care of his father and made obvious responses to the stage directions.

Question 5 L.P. HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This is becoming a popular text with many candidates showing quite a detailed understanding of Leo as a character, but less detailed appreciation of the narrative methods and effects.

- (a) There were a few impressive responses confirming candidates' genuine engagement with the text. There were some extremely knowledgeable, well supported discussions of how Hartley presents the adult Leo with the site and chief cause of his childhood trauma, and of him reconsidering himself, Marion and how she saw her relationship with Ted and his death, in comparison to the youthful Leo and her grandson. More modest answers were able to give quite detailed accounts of the Epilogue, though there was rarely much reference to the question's suggestion of different characters' versions of the past. Weaker answers tended to be more generalised discussions of the adult Leo's quest for 'closure' and a simplistic view of Marion: her lack of awareness of her responsibility for what had happened and her lies about the number of visitors she received.
- (b) Stronger answers to this question contextualised the passage quite precisely and discussed the role played by the heat and the Zodiac as part of a framework of ideas that Hartley used to present the youthful Leo's obsessions. In exploring the implications of the words 'miracle' and 'magic' they

kept a balance between explanation with reference to the wider text and the significance here to the discussion of the elder Leo of his younger self's view of reality, the world of imagination and the kind of person he wanted to be. Some noted the extraordinary disassociation of 'One felt another person, one was another person.' Weaker answers showed they understood aspects of Leo's character, selecting examples from the passage and elsewhere to illustrate their points and making intermittent assertions about the significance of the imagery. Some answers tended to be more general or gave over-long explanations using the wider text, of the more obvious details within the passage, without developing much of a coherent argument.

Question 6 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

In this richly written text, the narrative methods and effects of the language are striking and memorable. However, some candidates tend to read the text simply as a critique of the Indian caste system at the expense of considering the literary qualities of the novel itself.

Both questions were popular and produced responses across the range.

Critical reading needs to be selected carefully. At this level, readings of critics on the text can be helpful but references to Kundera, Barthes and post-Structuralism – 'the incoherency of meaning' – very rarely enhanced a candidate's understanding and appreciation of the text.

- (a) This question was on the whole, well answered, with the most used argument being that we see Velutha through the eyes of others. In the best answers this was combined with a detailed analysis of the non-sequential narrative structure and its effects, showing the veiled reference through Rahel's thoughts at the funeral, which becomes clear when his death is described with its terrible precision and haunting detail. The horror of that section was placed against his kindness and sensitivity in playing with the children and the beauty of his interaction with Ammu at the end. The symbolic resonance of his being *The God of Small Things* and *The God of Loss* was clearly understood and often competently illustrated, while Ammu's dream was often well analysed though one or two thought Velutha was actually an amputee. More modest answers showed detailed knowledge of the text and gave detailed accounts of his role and the views of other characters such as his father, Baby Kochamma and Comrade Pillai. Weaker answers tended either to be partial – focusing on Velutha as a representative victim of the caste system or less frequently betrayed by Marxism or they were generalised accounts of his history.
- (b) This passage produced some very good responses, with most candidates able to make productive use of the context of the extract. They used knowledge of the family situation and ideas about culture to discuss the comic effect of Sophie Mol's confusion over the use of 'Baby' and the repeated denial of any knowledge of *The Tempest*. There were brief discussions of the effects of the novel's narrative structure of the parenthetical reference back, via Rahel and the bat, to Sophie Mol's funeral. Estha's previous experience with the Orangedrink Lemondrink man was used to explain his sullen behaviour, pointing out the irony of his 'Finethankyou' and exploring the accumulation of foreboding imagery at the end with detailed analysis of a range of stylistic features and effects. Many candidates clearly appreciate the way Roy shifts the angle of vision, and the different viewpoints of characters and their preoccupations were often ably brought out and related to language. Others tended to focus on the idea of 'The Play', focussing the presentation of Baby Kochamma's Anglophilia and the pettiness of her 'revenge' and explaining Ammu's participation in the 'Indo-British Behaviour Competition' as a function of her divorced, single mother status. Weaker essays focused more generally on the ways characters behaved and felt, listed the portmanteau words, and examples of capitalisation, tending to explain these simply as portraying how the children heard these words with less appreciation of their effects in the context of the passage.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis*

Soyinka is becoming a very popular text with candidates usually managing to make sensitive use of the historical and political context while clearly understanding the universal appeal of the plays. They clearly understand the dramatist's intention and methods though they seem to have less detailed knowledge available on the second play and to find comedy more difficult to analyse.

- (a) There were some impressive answers to this question, which were extremely well-informed about the changing political landscape in which the two plays were produced and which also considered in great detail the whole range of dramatic methods used to transform Jero from the trickster

(modelled as one candidate helpfully pointed out, on the traditional Yoruban character Eshu-Elegba) to the politician in the second play. Good candidates moved easily between the two plays building contrasts of location, role – particularly in relation to women – and the scale of operation between the two plays. They also considered the softening effects of Jero's soliloquies and the physical comedy in *The Trials* which is absent in *Metamorphosis*. Weaker answers worked through the plays sequentially, dealing in some detail with the obvious parts of *The Trials* and suggesting that Jero's seriousness was shown through by his changing reaction to women and his businesslike interaction with Rebecca. Few seemed to have anything of any substance to say about the political significance of the Execution Stadium in *Metamorphosis*. The weakest answers seemed not to see any difference between the plays and to regard Jero as simply being on the make in both of them.

- (b) Those candidates who noted the prompt in the question to comment on language and action did well. Most enjoyed the characterisation and the lively exchange, briefly sketching the context to demonstrate the building of tension through dramatic irony, recognising that Amope did not know what had happened to Chume and could not interpret the ending of 'his period of abstinence' and the 'lifting of his cross'. Good candidates pointed out that Soyinka normalises bribery and corruption in Nigerian society generally by having Amope the one character who sees through Jero, refer casually to 'A little here and a little there, call it bribery if you will.' Most appreciated the effects of Chume's fighting with the mat and the farcical end with Jero's appearance and one line exclamation. Weaker answers tended to be those which got distracted into general considerations of the female role in Nigeria or the multiple ironies of Jero's behaviour which was not the main focus of this extract.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates need to read questions more carefully and shape their material to the task.

To improve performance on **(a)** questions, candidates need to pay more detailed attention to 'methods'. Passage questions are always used to give candidates an opportunity to demonstrate close reading and a detailed analysis of the way a writer shapes a reader's response by manipulating structure, form and choice of language. To improve performance on **(b)** questions candidates need to focus the essay more firmly on how the writer develops ideas and generates effects within the printed extract, using references to the wider text to illuminate points about concerns or methods as appropriate.

Candidates need to make more use of short quotations, in both **(a)** and **(b)** questions; to integrate them into the grammar of their sentences and use them for commenting on structure, form and language as well as to support comments on character and concerns.

General comments

This paper attracted a small entry which makes it difficult to comment on candidate performance on all the texts however Centres looking for support on the full range of texts will find detailed commentaries on all questions in the reports on papers 61 and 62. This paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers and other papers this session. All questions were accessible but there was some misinterpretation of their requirements. Most candidates opted for **(b)** questions but did not appreciate the need for close reading and discussion of the extracts. A few specific aspects of a writer's concerns or methods were identified as 'characteristic' and this assertion was reinforced by brief references to the wider text. Although candidates had a framework of potentially relevant concerns and some literary terms, there was a lack of coherent discussion, both of the printed extracts themselves and of these brief references. Candidates showed a better focus on the drama and prose extracts and as a result, essays were more productive in demonstrating understanding of how a writer's methods create effects.

Candidates could improve their analytical skills by being encouraged to make a point, support it with a quotation and then explore how the significance or effect is achieved by making a specific comment on the choice of language. This applies to all the genres but candidates seem particularly inhibited in commenting on language in the drama and poetry texts, though there was some attempt to discuss symbolism in the prose extracts. Weaker candidates still tend to rely on narrative summary and paraphrase, offering personal views on what is being presented rather than how it is done. Some scripts in the lower bands were compromised by a lack of textual knowledge. In the better essays there was evidence of some thoughtful consideration of the broader textual issues and personal insights into specific details. Those candidates who offered an analytical approach were able to communicate a real enjoyment and thoughtful engagement with the texts they had studied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. In answers to both questions, there was often too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing.

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to make comments on performance appropriate. The question was open; lots of poems could be made relevant. The quotation should have helped candidates to select and structure ideas about methods and effects. The key issue here was

whether candidates had enough detailed knowledge and appreciation of individual poems as 'Toads', 'Unexpected Visit', 'Water', 'Going Back', 'Instead of an Interview', 'House Talk' and 'Witnesses'.

- (b) Stronger answers attempted to balance some detailed analysis of the printed poem with relevant, selected references to the others to show Adcock's characteristic methods and effects. There was some sound understanding of how the feeling of dislocation was achieved through the use of language: the possessive 'my Thorndon', the list of 'London, England, Ireland, Europe' and the use of the word 'exile'. Weaker answers relied on biographical material to discuss this concern. There was some clear understanding of how sentences structure with the use of lists, the conjunction 'And', and ellipsis are used to suggest a stream of consciousness. Candidates who were able to focus on poetic method, could identify devices such as the alliteration of 'ingrained; ingrown; incestuous' but showed partial discussion of the language in the context of the poem and confined remarks to the fact that the 'alliteration showed Adcock's resentment' to her home town and was also used in 'Regression'. Frequently candidates would identify a concern, such as appreciation of nature or distance from family and then briefly refer by title to another poem. Candidates struggled to say anything very meaningful about the form of the poem, some being distracted by Adcock's background in the classics, and uncertain what to say about the perceived lack of formal structure and patterning.

Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

Auden is increasing in popularity but there were too few responses to make comment appropriate. The (a) question was open, inviting candidates to interpret 'place' as a descriptive context or a sense of a moment such as being in the street at night, or something more specific such as an art gallery in 'Musée des Beaux Arts'. As always the key issue is to shape selected material to fit the question.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

There were too few responses to make comment appropriate.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

This has proved a very popular text with candidates showing a sophisticated understanding of its universal resonance when considering the issues of language, identity and colonialism and some insight into Friel's dramatic methods and effects. There were too few responses to question (a) to make comment appropriate.

- (b) There was some response to this question showing a sound knowledge and understanding of the context and the scene's significance as the ending of the play, though comment tended to be very general and focused on the feelings of the characters. Comments on Hugh tended to give an overview of his feelings, contrasting his pride in the memory of his exploits of 1798 and his frustration at not being able to remember the translation of Homer. There was some implied response regarding the effect of the language in the perception that Hugh sees himself as heroic in the opening speech. Comments on Maire were confined to her desire to learn English but little exploration of the dramatic and emotional impact of her fixation on the word 'always.' There was however a general understanding of the central dramatic conceit about the use of language: how Friel exploits the audience's understanding that though the play is written and performed in English, characters are speaking Gaelic and that the use of Latin and Greek and Hugh's forgetting 'essentially confirms the fate of the Irish language. Success with (b) questions always depends on how well candidates balance discussions of the broader issues and knowledge of the wider text with a detailed exploration of the nuances of the language and effects of the dramatic action within the passage. There was a lot of potential for example to discuss the effect of Jimmy's move towards Maire, the significance of his discussion of 'exogamein,...to marry outside the tribe' with his observation 'And you don't cross those borders casually' in relation to Maire and to himself with Athene.

Question 5 L.P. HARTLEY: *The Go-Between*

This text was not chosen for study by Centres entering this paper. The novel is becoming a popular text with many candidates showing a detailed understanding of Leo as a character, but less detailed appreciation of the narrative methods and effects. Both the **(a)** and **(b)** questions here offered opportunities to focus on the central issue of how Hartley presents Leo's character.

Question 6 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This has proved a very popular text and candidates tend to show a genuine fascination with the broader concerns of the social context and the characters, the narrative structure of the novel and a real appreciation of the original way language is used to shape a reader's response.

- (a)** This was a minority choice. One response focused on the political context and Roy's views as a political activist to describe the failures of the Communist Party and how both characters revealed the irony of ideas about equality. Chako's abuse of his role as 'management' of Paradise Pickles was compared to Velutha's position as an untouchable, the injustice of his betrayal by Comrade Pillai and his role as victim of the 'Love Laws and police. There was also some comparison of their roles as male figures in the lives of Ammu and the children, though less detail on methods of presentation.
- (b)** This was the more popular choice and produced answers across the range. Most candidates took the opportunity to look at characterisation. Stronger candidates used the context to show that while the children were happy at this point, they soon would not be and to point out that both Ammu and Baby Kochamma were unhappy because of their pasts. Some essays focused on the shifting multiple viewpoints and tracked them making appropriate comments on details such as the view that Ammu was 'dangerous', the repeated reference to the sensuous polished shoulders, and the use of sentence structure to suggest anxiety in the ambiguity of Estha and Rahel's view of her. There was some insight into how Baby Kochamma is used here to present a view of the twins and some recognition of the irony in her comparison of herself in relation to Ammu. Weaker answers tended to use the details in the passage to explain the characters, often with appropriate reference to the wider text and the development of the plot but without looking closely at the choice of language in the passage, though there was some lively discussion of how Baby Kochamma is presented here and elsewhere, as the villain of the piece. There were opportunities to link details in the last paragraph to a discussion on the presentation of children, the importance of 'small things' and the significance of the title. There was some misunderstanding that the rigid ideas on marriage across the religious groups and the caste system as represented here and in the wider novel were a result of colonialism.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This popular text has produced responses across the range, with candidates obviously enjoying the universal appeal of the issue of corruption in political life and the presentation of Jero. This was very much a minority text on this paper and not well done. The **(a)** question was the preferred option and responses were compromised by a lack of detailed textual knowledge. Candidates tended to rely on generalised portraits of Jero and his exploitation of people's aspirations and gullibility in *The Trials* and of his use of blackmail in *Metamorphosis*. Few candidates showed a detailed knowledge and appreciation of the dramatic impact of the discussions on the Execution Stadium in the second play. There were too few responses to **(b)** to make general comment relevant. This question offered the opportunity to explore how Soyinka presents the other prophets and creates comic effects on stage through language and action.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.

Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, upon how these shape meaning, and not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.

Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, but – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.

Answers should maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General Comments

There were many good or very good critical responses to the three questions, though still a fair number that relied overmuch on simple narrative or paraphrase, or – in **Question 3** particularly – on technique identification with little relevant comment. It cannot be too heavily stressed how important it is to move well beyond such a simple approach; the Band Descriptions, upon which all assessment is undertaken, make it very clear that even for a mark in Band 5 answers will be required to show “*some limited ability to use knowledge of the text*”, and to show “*some understanding of ways in which the writer’s choices of structure, form and language shape meanings and effects*”. These two italicised notes emphasise that what matters is how answers *use* textual knowledge; simple knowledge by itself is of little value, and will never lift an answer above the lowest Band.

In the same way, knowledge and identification of literary techniques will never on its own be enough. It must be expected at A Level that candidates have a confident awareness of at least the most common devices – alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, for example – and merely finding them will never be sufficient for more than a low mark; what Examiners look for is an ability to appreciate the ways in which each writer has used these techniques, what effects are created as a result, and how these effects relate to the meaning and impact of the given poems or passage as a whole.

Personal response to these effects, and to the ways in which meanings are created, is also required, and Examiners rewarded answers that did this with sensitivity and understanding. What they could not reward were answers that responded only to the ideas presented by the writers, or to the situations they described; and even more importantly they could not reward answers that move away from the poems or passage to consider similar ideas or even similar texts; such digressions were almost invariably unhelpful.

Most answers satisfactorily completed work on two questions, as required by the Syllabus; some were a little unbalanced, spending more time on the first question so that the second was shorter or sometimes unfinished, inevitably leading to a mark that was lower than might have been the case if timing had been more exact. Examiners could assess only what was written, and could give no credit for what *might* have been written; where time was becoming a problem a few candidates resorted to using bullet-points towards the end, rather than saying nothing; this was never as satisfactory as properly completed work, but it was certainly better than simply running out of time in mid-sentence.

Question 1

The first thing to say, and perhaps the most important, is that this is an extract from a play, and should therefore have been treated as such; some answers made excellent and perceptive comments about its dramatic nature, clearly visualising it as something to be seen and heard as well as read, while many others regarded it as if it were a straightforward prose passage. There are many stage directions in the piece, and Hale's lengthy speeches in the second part are full of actions, actual and described, so that there are many theatrical impacts that could have been considered.

Almost all answers discussed the opening description of the kitchen in some detail, the best ones considering the kind of visual impact this setting must have upon an audience as the extract begins; an audience will wonder why there is such apparent disorder and incompleteness, and that – in combination with the obvious uncertainty and discomfort felt by the women characters – must give rise to at least some questions, echoed in the hesitant movements and speech of Mrs Peters and Mrs Hale, contrasted with the professional confidence of the County Attorney, who rapidly takes control of both the situation and the other characters, leading to the later almost complete focus on Hale. His two long monologues are so full of reported speeches, and of reported and actual movement, that the best answers spent most of their time on these, and on the ways in which the playwright creates drama and uncertainty here, and of course sheer puzzlement. Answers which spent a lot of time speculating about who actually killed John Wright, or whether it was suicide, and speculated at unhelpful length about Mrs Wright's possible involvement and her mental stability, often showed an implicit grasp of Glaspell's writing, but did not always focus upon it as much or as closely as they might have done.

Mention is made above about the need to keep a firm focus on the passage rather than on any possible external factors; a number of answers speculated that because the play was first produced in 1916 it must necessarily have been influenced by First World War events in Europe; the fact that the play is set in the USA, and that the country did not join the War until 1917, did not seem to matter to these candidates – and even more significant is surely the fact that nothing whatsoever in the passage itself makes any reference either explicitly or implicitly to a European war. Candidates who wrote in this way could not gain any credit for such speculative ideas.

Question 2

There is a wealth of material in this passage for comment, and most answers took full advantage of this, though as with **Question 1** there were several which decided that the passage was not in fact just about a boat's captain and his ordeal before a tremendous storm, but really about how we should manage our lives in the face of all the trials and difficulties that we face. Of course this may well be an additional, metaphorical, analogy that one could argue, but to ignore what Conrad *actually* writes was unwise, and did not lead to any helpfully critical discussion of the writing.

The great majority of answers saw the passage for what it was, and responded appropriately, considering some of the ways in which Conrad portrays the narrator's sense of absolute dark loneliness, of tense and nervous anticipation, and finally of the overwhelming shock when the ferocity of the rain actually hit the boat. The narrator is of course not drowned, and the boat is not capsized, two quite common suggestions which illustrated a lack of careful and thoughtful reading. There is, however, a mass of very powerful writing, with plenty of varying sentence structure (paragraphs 1 and 4 especially), of repetition for effect (paragraphs 1 and 4 again), of assonance and alliteration (paragraphs 4 and 6), of similes (paragraphs 5 and 7), of metaphors (paragraphs 1 and 8), all of which, and more, were discussed and explored in some detail by many candidates. No credit was given to those few who commented that some of the writing was too exaggerated to be convincing: for example those who argued that in paragraph 8 "*the last light in the universe*" could not actually have gone out, or that in paragraph 6 it was not possible for anyone to be so totally soaked as the narrator is in such a brief instant; such literal-minded comments did not take any account of the deliberate exaggeration-for-effect in the writing, and again moved away from the passage itself into non-literary matters.

Question 3

As noted in the General Comments above, it was in the answers to this question that most technique-spotting occurred, possibly because some candidates clearly found some difficulties in grasping exactly what the poems say, particularly the first. However, to spend so much time – in some cases extending to over a page of writing – on the structure and rhyme schemes of the poems was on the whole time wasted; they are both sonnets, and both have therefore strict and entirely accurate rhyme and rhythm patterns; no more really needed to be said, since given the formal nature of a sonnet the two poets do not make any particular use of

the form, except in the break – the volta - that each makes between lines 8 and 9. There are of course examples of alliteration in both poems, and there are some caesurae, and some enjambements, but not enough answers considered how the two poets *used* these, and to what effect.

Most answers saw that there were significant differences in tone, with Downing's poem being far more relaxed and warm than Derozio's. Most were well able to see Downing's sheer romantic enjoyment of the rising moon and its effects on the landscape; the somewhat Gothic setting was noted by many, but instead of the fearful and sinister implications that such a setting might imply most answers were well able to see and discuss the far gentler vision that he creates in the poem's sestet – and many made some sensitive comments on the impacts of the final line's quiet but moving assonance ("*deeper/sweeter/dreamed*").

Derozio's poem, by contrast, was not so confidently grasped, and there were some rather unexpected and indeed entirely unfounded and unargued ideas: it is not a letter to the moon, it is not about space travel, it is not about life after death. The poet, unlike Downing, sees the moon initially as cold and lonely, compares it to someone who has "some fearful deed of darkness done", and wonders why this should be the case; in line 9, with an sudden and emphatic realisation (and with a most effective caesura, to which some candidates drew sensible attention), he decides it is because the moon can see how unwell and how unfortunate the earth and its inhabitants are, and is thus "pale with sympathy" for us.

Candidates were asked to compare the poems, not to write two discrete critical commentaries; most did in fact make some comparisons, even if these were at times quite superficial (both poems are sonnets, both are about the moon, both were probably written in the 19th century), but too many treated them independently until the last paragraph or so, when they were briefly brought together. The most confident answers made sustained and constant links and contrasts, moving between the two poems throughout their responses, and it was these answers which tended to be rewarded with higher marks.

Interestingly, all three questions were answered in roughly equal numbers, though **Question 1** was marginally the least popular, despite being arguably the most straightforward. Provided, as noted above, candidates could treat drama as drama and not as a different kind of prose, there was no good reason to leave it out.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.

Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, upon how these shape meaning, and not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.

Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.

Answers should maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General Comments

There were many good or very good critical responses to the three questions, though still a good number that relied overmuch on simple narrative or paraphrase, or – in **Question 1** particularly – on technique identification with little relevant comment. It cannot be too heavily stressed how important it is to move well beyond such a simple approach; the Band Descriptions, upon which all assessment is undertaken, make it very clear that even for a mark in Band 5 answers will be required to show “*some limited ability to use knowledge of the text*”, and to show “*some understanding of ways in which the writer’s choices of structure, form and language shape meanings and effects*”. These two italicised notes emphasise that what matters is how answers *use* textual knowledge; simple knowledge by itself is of little value, and will never lift an answer above the lowest Band.

In the same way, knowledge and identification of literary techniques will never on its own be enough. It must be expected at A Level that candidates have a confident awareness of at least the most common devices – alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, for example – and merely finding them will never be sufficient for more than a low mark; what Examiners look for is an ability to appreciate the ways in which each writer has used these techniques, what effects are created as a result, and how these effects relate to the meaning and impact of the given poems or passage as a whole.

Personal response to these effects, and to the ways in which meanings are created, is also required, and Examiners rewarded answers that did this with sensitivity and understanding. What they could not reward were answers that responded only to the ideas presented by the writers, or to the situations they described; and even more importantly they could not reward answers that move away from the poems or passage to consider similar ideas or even similar texts; such digressions were almost invariably unhelpful.

Most answers satisfactorily completed work on two questions, as required by the Syllabus; some were a little unbalanced, spending more time on the first question so that the second was shorter or sometimes unfinished, inevitably leading to a mark that was lower than might have been the case if timing had been more exact. Examiners could assess only what was written, and could give no credit for what *might* have been written; where time was becoming a problem a few candidates resorted to using bullet-points towards the end, rather than saying nothing; this was never as satisfactory as properly completed work, but it was certainly better than simply running out of time in mid-sentence.

Question 1

These are two strikingly different poems, in both form and content, and all candidates who wrote about them were able to make at least some thoughtful comparisons, even if there was often considerable uncertainty about what each – particularly the second – is saying. As noted in the general comments above, a number of answers relied upon a somewhat mechanical listing of techniques, rather than exploring first what each poem is about, and then how these techniques helped create meaning and tone. There was, for example, little critical value in noting that the first poem uses archaic language (it was after all written more than 400 years ago), while the second is more modern, though given its likely date of composition it can hardly be called up to date or contemporary; many answers identified alliteration in both poems, but with very little attempt to consider why each poet had used it; and a surprisingly large number asserted that the second poem is free verse, with no discernible rhyme pattern, when it is of course a very tightly controlled sonnet.

Most answers drew attention to the fact that both poets were looking back in time, and commented on some aspects of how they view the past; most saw the anonymous poet as bitter and angry at how he (or occasionally she) had wasted time by falling in love, and that as the closing lines say firmly asserting that there is absolutely no good time to do so. Rossetti also writes with regret, but in her case it is a wistful, poignant regret that she cannot remember exactly when it was that she first fell in love; unlike the first poet her love had grown, slowly but certainly, and her sadness is that she cannot recall how or when it began. There is no suggestion at all in the poem that she regrets having fallen in love, and unlike the anonymous poet her final lines are surely celebrating in an almost inexpressible manner how profoundly she values this love.

Many answers noted the use made by both poets of time, most strikingly in the first poem, where there is a clear stanza-by-stanza progression from year to day to hour to minute, a progression neatly summarised in the closing two lines; this, combined with the tightly controlled and formally organised structure of the poem was seen by many as the poet's way of keeping a lid on his overflowing anger and bitterness. Rossetti's use of time is different, but is used to reinforce her point that she cannot now recall that one crucial moment in her life.

Question 2

This was the least popular question in this Paper, perhaps because it looks quite long, but there were some very good and critically astute discussions of Abrahams' writing, and of the ways in which he establishes mood and character in a relatively short time. The move from almost complete silence and inactivity at the start, through some growingly intimate conversation, to the sudden and totally unexpected violence at the end of the extract, was well noted by the most confident answers, who also often felt a growing sense of warmth towards Xuma and his predicament.

Most answers considered the ways in which Abrahams describes the darkness and peace in the opening lines; the ellipses after each of the clock chimes are helpful, but so too are the deliberately inexact words used ("*somewhere in the distance*" and "*the big man*"). The repeated emphasis on the word "*shadow*" adds to the mystery and possibly too a sense of threat, and the fact that the woman is initially almost indistinguishable in the dark serves to increase the ominous possibilities of danger, points well noted by many answers. A number of candidates made the interesting point that as readers we are no wiser about Xuma than the woman is, and that we learn about him only through her eyes rather than through any authorial description beyond that of the curious little bundle that he carries. Many candidates commented favourably about Xuma's courtesy, and about the woman's kindness and courage in this situation, though those who confidently assumed that because she came out of the shadows she must be a prostitute could offer no evidence for such a view, apart from the sexual innuendoes in the closing lines of the extract; this section works in a way like the opening, in that we are finally given the woman's name, and learn this, together with some brief but very striking introductions to other characters, through the eyes of Xuma this time.

Answers that made comments such as these demonstrated that they could see beyond the simple narrative and were able to appreciate at least something of Abrahams' writing skills; rather too many, however, relied upon paraphrase and explanation of what happens, rather than even attempting any critical exploration of the extract.

Question 3

This extract was popular, and very often well managed, despite the worryingly frequent answers which wrote at some length about the history and evils of slavery – important and in some ways relevant, of course, but such general discussion of the topic too often distracted from close and critical reading of what Douglass actually says here; and there is so much packed into the apparently quite short passage that these digressions meant that much of what is in the passage was missed or only lightly skimmed over. It is of course autobiographical, and all the more powerful for that reason, but many candidates spent an unnecessarily long time explaining what autobiography is, and how the repeated use of the pronoun “I” proves this; in the same way as defining literary techniques is in itself of little value, so is this basic explanation of form.

The passage is simply structured, as many answers noted, with each of its four main paragraphs writing about a clearly defined topic, leading to the summing up in the brief fifth paragraph, with its powerful repetition from earlier of the word “*wretched*”. There is plenty of material in each paragraph, whether it is repetition (as in lines 4, 20-21, 32-34), balance and contrast (lines 3-4, 21-22, 37), metaphor (lines 13-15, 19, 36), alliteration (lines 22, 28, 36), and much more. There was some sensitive personal response to some of the writing, for example the moving contrast between the writer’s bitter condemnation of Mr Covey and the ways in which he turned Douglass from a human into a brute in paragraph 1, and the vision of Chesapeake Bay’s “*broad bosom*”, with its maternal or possibly sexual connotations; many also noted the very intimate writing in paragraph 2, and almost all spent a lot of time considering the broken and very painful writing in paragraph 4, where Douglass speaks to the ships of freedom and to God, whose very existence comes into agonising doubt, but finally moving to a resignation that “*there is a better day coming*”. Answers which made a determined effort to move beyond paraphrase often made some very thoughtful comments here.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.

Answers should focus upon the language, form and structure of the poem or passage, upon how these shape meaning, and not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.

Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.

Answers should maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General Comments

There were many good or very good critical responses to the three questions, though still a good number that relied overmuch on simple narrative or paraphrase, or – in **Questions 1 and 2** particularly – on technique identification with little relevant comment. It cannot be too heavily stressed how important it is to move well beyond such a simple approach; the Band Descriptions, upon which all assessment is undertaken, make it very clear that even for a mark in Band 5 answers will be required to show “*some limited ability to use knowledge of the text*”, and to show “*some understanding of ways in which the writer’s choices of structure, form and language shape meanings and effects*”. These two italicised notes emphasise that what matters is how answers *use* textual knowledge; simple knowledge by itself is of little value, and will never lift an answer above the lowest Band.

In the same way, knowledge and identification of literary techniques will never on its own be enough. It must be expected at A Level that candidates have a confident awareness of at least the most common devices – alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, for example – and merely finding them will never be sufficient for more than a low mark; what Examiners look for is an ability to appreciate the ways in which each writer has used these techniques, what effects are created as a result, and how these effects relate to the meaning and impact of the given poems or passage as a whole.

Personal response to these effects, and to the ways in which meanings are created, is also required, and Examiners rewarded answers that did this with sensitivity and understanding. What they could not reward were answers that responded only to the ideas presented by the writers, or to the situations they described; and even more importantly they could not reward answers that move away from the poems or passage to consider similar ideas or even similar texts; such digressions were almost invariably unhelpful.

Most answers satisfactorily completed work on two questions, as required by the Syllabus; some were a little unbalanced, spending more time on the first question so that the second was shorter or sometimes unfinished, inevitably leading to a mark that was lower than might have been the case if timing had been more exact. Examiners could assess only what was written, and could give no credit for what *might* have been written; where time was becoming a problem a few candidates resorted to using bullet-points towards the end, rather than saying nothing; this was never as satisfactory as properly completed work, but it was certainly better than simply running out of time in mid-sentence.

Question 1

This was the most popular question in the Paper, and often answered with some critical perception, though too many candidates simply worked through the poem line by line, paraphrasing what the poet says, and making a few explanatory rather than exploratory comments. Many noted its surprisingly modern attitude, despite its presumed date of publication, and saw it as a prototype of feminist writing; the speaker is, they said, forthright and determined in her attitudes, though with a nicely gentle touch at the very end. There was much comment on some of the language in the first two stanzas – “*bend me to your will*”, “*bondslave*,” “*drudgery*”, “*servant*”, “*wingless angel*”, “*feeble worship*” – language which strikingly conveys the poet’s anger at how her assumed or would-be lover seems to view her, summed up in the repeated “*I refuse you*”. There were sensible and perceptive comments on the slight change of tone in stanza 3, where the alliterative use of the letter “s” in the middle conveys not just her anger, but also her understanding of her lover’s possible view of her as simply a sexual being, and noted too the fascinating movement of words in the stanza’s closing lines, from “*fond caresses*” and “*your sense delight*” to the renewal of anger in “*shame, and pity and abasement*”.

The final stanza creates a fundamental shift, introduced in its opening words, “*But lover*”, and leading to a welcome which the speaker will offer the man if he agrees to treat her on entirely equal terms – as noted above, an arguably very modern view for a poem written some two hundred years ago – and in contrast to the quite strident tone earlier, the concluding words are warm, safe, and perhaps surprisingly religious in the cosmic imagery of stars laughing with joy and the idea that their “*co-equal love*” will touch the very heart of god.

No credit was given to answers that simply noted that there is no rhyme in the poem, nor indeed to those who said there is no regular structure or rhythm to the writing; answers that saw the movement of argument and idea, however, made pertinent and valuable comments, and those who saw that while irregular the poem is in fact predominantly iambic in rhythm, controlled though occasionally altered and so perhaps reflecting the mostly controlled feelings of the speaker, as well as simply conforming to 18th century convention, again made some valid points.

Question 2

This poem was similarly very popular, and led to some thoughtful, sensitive and sometimes quite personal responses; it also attracted some uncertain and assertive ideas, usually based upon misreading or simple determination to fit the poem into a pre-conceived notion of what some candidates wanted it to be about. It is, for instance, surely not a poem about the onset of a World War, or about the Great Depression of the 1930s, or about India/Pakistan conflict, but rather a straightforward piece of childhood memory and nostalgia, possibly before adulthood ends the freedom of the child, but more likely quite simply summer memories before the cold of winter sets in – which is what the poem says, and what the repeated lines (8-9, 17-18 and quite explicitly 26-27) make very clear. More often than not, it is safe to assume that a poem has no “hidden message” or “hidden meaning”, but is quite simply about what it says.

The first stanza attracted some thoughtful and interesting responses: the speaker, recalling his childhood, recreates the exciting feelings that he had when his uncle swung him “*round and round*” so fast that the landscape became a straight line. He recalls hearing his family laughing at his enjoyment, and then he remembers showing off his muscles in a typically boyish way. The second stanza tells how Uncle Ayub swung him into the river at the end of his long arm, an arm like a tree branch, and the cold of the river made him go “*purple as a plum*”, an image that several answers noted as being aptly in keeping with the late summer picnic memory. In the words of one Examiner, the poet describes the world as “*scaled down to his child’s view*”. Those few candidates who argued that nobody ever goes this colour missed the point made by Ghose, at the same time falling into the trap of criticising *what* he writes rather than *how*; and the candidate who said that he went this colour because he was drowning again surely misread what is actually said. His grandmother’s embrace is so huge that it “*swallowed*” him, a nicely nostalgic touch, with a touch of a child’s embarrassment at this feminine act. The final stanza moves to the play-fight, or as several answers put it the fruit-fight, that he and his uncle have, and again the grandmother’s kindly intervention – completely ignored by both the child and his uncle – was noted and commented on by many.

Many answers referred to the poem’s regular and quite formal structure, with a refrain after each stanza. Some candidates worried that there is no rhyme pattern and no obvious or regular rhythm, and made all kinds of suggestions as to why this might be the case, all of which were necessarily speculative, since we can have no idea why Ghose wrote in this particular way. It is worth stressing to candidates that unless there is a very clear and obvious significance in why a particular structure has been used there is little critical

point in trying to guess a reason – far better to focus upon what is written and upon its effects, rather than attempting to speculate about things that we cannot possibly know.

Question 3

There were relatively few responses to this question, but some thoughtful and often quite perceptive ones. Some noted the ironic title – *My Brilliant Career* – an irony echoed in what the narrator says in line 23, and many commented quite fully on the power of some of the descriptions of the heat and exhaustion that are described with such vividness. A few suggested that the fallen cow can be read as metaphorically reflecting the weariness and distress suffered by the narrator, and some remarked upon the almost poetic reiteration of “*Weariness! Weariness!*” as a kind of refrain, together with the deliberately rhythmical lines 30 and 54 as further illustration of the writer’s skill. There are of course many moments in the extract that are worthy of critical attention; while a simple enough narrative, the writing itself is very carefully crafted, with apt and striking use of repetition, alliteration, similes, metaphors, all of which received comment in at least some answers.

As noted above, no reward could be offered by Examiners for comments that are general or not focused on the passage itself; so those who suggested that the narrator is showing typical teenage exaggeration and melodrama, but without pointing to supportive illustration of this, could not be rewarded. Nor could those who castigated her for being selfish, or saying that she should pull herself together – life is tough (or in some cases life is full of beauty) and she should accept that. Such comments were not critically focused, and did not look at the actual writing.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

Key Messages

Good answers will:

- address the set questions with clear and concise focus;
- explore how writers create their particular effects, discussing their literary techniques in some detail;
- support what is said with brief, apt textual quotation and reference;
- make some appropriate use of critical and/or contextual material to support the arguments proposed;
- where practicable, write on individually selected and worded tasks, to make responses as personal as possible;
- ensure that the total length of the folder remains within the 3000 word limit.

General Comments

This was another very good session, with work showing evidence of much successful and professional teaching by Centres, whose preparation of candidates, and presentation of their work, was of a consistent standard. It was clear from the work submitted, as well as from the many thoughtful and often very detailed proposals that had been sent to CIE in advance, that a great deal of thoughtful care had been taken in selecting texts to stretch the ablest candidates and to support the less confident, and in framing appropriate questions that would enable candidates to demonstrate their critical skill and confidence. The word “critical” here is particularly significant: few responses relied entirely or even largely upon narrative or paraphrase, and there were few simple and uncritical character studies; most candidates were at pains to explore at least some of the ways in which their chosen writers use language and structure to shape meaning and create effects on their readers or audiences.

Some Centres continue – quite legitimately – to use the same texts for all their candidates; there is nothing whatsoever wrong in doing this, and for all sorts of reasons it may realistically be the only approach that can be adopted. Some appeared to offer a small range of texts, with candidates choosing, or being guided towards, a particular pairing; if this is feasible within a particular School situation, it can be very helpful, allowing stronger candidates to address more demanding texts while giving less confident ones more straightforward ones. Such an approach does of course make for much greater demands on School and teaching resources, and may not always be possible; it is worth stressing very firmly that what matters in the end is not the texts themselves, but what each candidate writes, and it is this and this alone that assessors and Moderators must assess.

Having said this, however, it is almost always helpful to candidates of all abilities and skills to be offered a range of different questions; how they choose which ones to address is then of course a matter for the Centre to decide. Having a range of questions, though, can be very helpful: what each candidate writes is much more likely to be entirely personal and individual than if all are addressing the same task, and personal, independent response – supported by thoughtful argument and by textual knowledge and quotation – is what the syllabus looks for. There will inevitably and rightly be ideas which have arisen in class, as the result of what is taught and what is discussed, but it is always good when assessors and Moderators can see evidence that candidates have not just listened and learned, but have taken hold of these ideas and used them as a means of developing and working towards their own individual conclusions.

Mention has been made of the need for close critical reading, and for the necessity of some apt but quite brief quotations from the texts themselves to support what is being argued; however interesting a candidate's ideas may be, it is essential that they do not remain as simple assertions, but are founded upon clearly and appropriately chosen textual reference. Arguments should be clearly and accurately expressed and structured, so that a reader can always follow the thread of what is being said. It may be helpful also to make some brief note of some contextual factors that influenced the way in which a text was written, or – if

the text is an older one – how it is read or viewed in the twenty-first century. Such contextual factors may include historical or social information, or perhaps the way in which a particular culture is presented in the text; some biographical knowledge about a writer may be helpful, though candidates must be very careful not to make unfounded assumptions about what any writer meant or intended – this is something that we can very rarely be sure about. Candidates may also have come across another person's critical view of a text, whether in a printed text or an online article, or even simply in class discussion, or have seen a filmed or television version of a text, and may helpfully want to make use of such alternative views; this is not something that is required – it is not listed in the marking criteria – but if a candidate finds it helpful to her or his argument then some discussion of such views can be valuable as one way of developing or strengthening a particular argument. But the over-riding quality that is looked for is personal, independent, supported and argued critical response, and this must take precedence at all times.

The submission of work this session was well managed; almost all work arrived promptly, and almost all Centres included all the necessary paperwork, which made for straightforward moderation. Two very small points are worth re-iterating from previous Reports, though: please do not put work inside plastic folders or wallets, and please do not use paper-clips – the best way to keep work together is to use staples or treasury tags; it is also helpful if each candidate can indicate the number of words that have been used, to encourage them to keep within the guideline limits set by the Syllabus.

A list of texts used by Centres this session follows below; this is not intended to act as a list to copy but simply to illustrate the kind and the range of work that has been studied by candidates, and which has proved successful in what they have written.

Two interesting points are worth mentioning: there were rather fewer essays on drama this session than has often been the case, but rather more on poetry; this is not in any sense to criticise Centres whose candidates correctly used texts from two different genres. Where a play is used, however, it is important that candidates remember to consider and to discuss it as drama, as a piece of theatre, as well as a text to be read; they will of course not be expected to treat it as if this were a Theatre Studies syllabus, but it is likely that their responses will be rather more confidently addressing the genre aspect of the marking criteria if they analyse critically how the playwright shapes audience reactions.

Where poetry is used, two points need to be made. Firstly, candidates should write about a reasonable number of poems, and certainly more than just two or three; much will of course depend on how long and how complex the poems are, but three or four should be seen as a minimum for close discussion, with a further two or three for briefer comparative consideration. It is helpful for candidates to offer evidence in this way that they have studied a similar number of poems as they will have done in a set-text paper.

Prose:	Austen	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
	Greene	<i>Brighton Rock</i>
	E Brontë	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>
	Eliot	<i>The Mill on the Floss</i>
	Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
	Hemingway	<i>A Farewell to Arms; The Sun Also Rises</i>
	Proulx	<i>The Shipping News</i>
	Orwell	<i>1984</i>
	Hosseini	<i>The Kite Runner</i>
Drama:	Williams	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>
	Shakespeare	<i>Romeo and Juliet; Much Ado About Nothing; Hamlet</i>
	Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Poetry:	Blake	<i>Songs of Innocence and Experience</i>
	Millay	selected poems
	Heaney	selected poems
	Dylan Thomas	selected poems
	Edward Thomas	selected poems
	Larkin	<i>The Whitsun Weddings</i>