

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9765/01
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- The best responses focused clearly on relevance to the question and used the most appropriate material for discussion and illustration.
- The best answers had something to say in response to the question and set out to convince the reader of it by means of a structured, illustrated argument.
- Good answers started with the text and used appropriate cultural context as relevant to the question, but avoided biographical speculation for its own sake.
- Wider critical reading is welcomed, but critical quotations need to be entirely relevant to the argument being presented and integrated into a fluent, well-structured essay. When used selectively and aptly, these add to the quality of responses.

General comments

Most candidates were impressively familiar with their set texts and able to quote, sometimes copiously, from them, as well as referring aptly to further texts by the same author, in addition to critical opinion. There is no substitute for close textual familiarity, and in the context of a closed book exam it was particularly remarkable. In some cases, answers did less well because the question was not properly addressed. For example, some answers on the community and the misfits in *The Return of the Native* 12(b) actually discussed Egdon Heath at length with little reference to the people living there. Some candidates who had studied T S Eliot seemed to have only a limited pool of prepared poems to choose from and these were not always the most suitable to the question. Preparation for the examination needs to be as broad as possible to ensure a good match between the question's requirements and suitable textual opportunities.

Use of biography was sometimes unhelpful in that it limited responses to the texts and questions. Candidates who did well focused on the texts first with the context a supporting second, and they avoided getting distracted by biographical speculation. Wider reading and exploration of other literature and culture of the time had clearly been useful and enriched many answers. These saw literary works as complex artistic creations, works of the imagination, and products of conscious and unconscious influences of many kinds on the artist. All the possible meanings which exist within the structure of ideas, language and images in the words of the text were explored from different perspectives. Where biographical facts alone were invoked these did not prove sufficient to address the task of interpreting literature. Those answers did best which focused closely on the question and used good knowledge of the text to answer it, calling on contextual knowledge and understanding to support an argument.

Comments on Specific Questions

Chaucer: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

Question 1

- (a) Answers were often knowledgeable and thoughtful. There were some strong discussions of the concept of gentillesse, referring to both *Prologue* and the *Tale*. Candidates engaged with the ambiguities of the work as a whole, often illuminating both by their critical engagement with the text.
- (b) This was a very popular question. Most answers addressed the mixture of comic and serious in Chaucer's presentation of marriage, and used both *Prologue* and *Tale* to do so. Although it was not specifically indicated in the question wording, many found the *Tale* a helpful point of contrast with the *Prologue*, moving seamlessly between part and whole in many cases. A number of candidates spend too long discussing the character of the wife without close reference to the essay

topic – it is always important to look closely at the terms of the question to ensure complete relevance. Many candidates discussed what was comic and then what was serious, ensuring a logical framework for their essay structure, though sometimes not paying sufficient attention to Chaucer's 'methods and effects'. The 'battle of the sexes' was often well illustrated, however. Some candidates had evidently read all of the 'Marriage Debate' Tales from the Canterbury Tales, making extremely apt but brief contextual points as they worked. Such background, well controlled, will always give depth to a critical argument.

Marvell: *Selected Poems*

Question 2

- (a) This was well answered with excellent textual reference. This was the more popular option. Some argued well that the Pastoral world is not innocent and harmonious, as well as discussing the chaos of human imperfection. Answers here were extremely creditable, with a particularly varied range of poems used for illustration.
- (b) This was a minority choice but very well done – answers were thoughtful and well illustrated from, again, a wide range of poems.

Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*

There was more work on Pope this session than last year and the standard was very high.

Question 3

- (a) This question was not the most popular choice, but there was some fine work with a strong grasp of the implications of the question. The range of quotations used in support was exemplary. Candidates clearly knew the text very well indeed.
- (b) Most candidates did this option. Answers ranged widely, from limited character sketches of Belinda to brilliant critical analyses of Pope's satire. There was in some very limiting biographical material in answers here, with sometimes a page and a half on Arabella Fermor, Pope's disability and so on. Belinda's characterisation is not more serious just because the germ of an idea came from a real girl or real event. If it is to be taken seriously – and this is the proposition at issue in the essay - it is because Pope is employing characterisation as part of his satirical mock-epic framework to make serious points about society's superficiality, or relationships between men and women, or the fragility of beauty, or to evoke particular atmospheres, or a host of other possibilities. The many first class answers examined these issues.

T S Eliot: *Selected Poems*

Eliot was very popular this session.

Question 5

- (a) Many candidates chose this option, but material used to discuss old age was often limited. Nearly every candidate used 'The Waste Land' and 'Prufrock', though not always selecting the most apt material from these texts in support. Surprisingly few used 'Gerontion' or 'Journey of the Magi', for example. Eliot's extraordinary imaginative ability to inhabit personae and to empathise seemed not to have been generally acknowledged. It was not helpful to simply equate Eliot as a 'character' with Prufrock or Tiresias. Some candidates focused more on the past, some on death, but then it is 'the only end of age', so these accounts could be made relevant.
- (b) The three terms of the question were often discussed in orderly fashion, with useful exemplification, though 'loveless' was often substituted for 'forsaken loves'. 'Missed opportunities' and 'repressed passions' were well discussed and illustrated and candidates attempting this question used the resources of the text much more widely than in (a). There were many very creditable answers, some exemplary: detailed and illuminating. Wider contextual reference to the cultural background was often skilfully used. However, comments – sometimes lengthy - about Eliot's marriage were usually not helpful in developing an argument or analysing the text.

Elizabeth Bishop: *Selected Poems*

Question 6

- (a) Work on Bishop was often accomplished, and well focused on the poems themselves. Candidates did consider her observation of the 'other floating things' well. For the most part candidates wrote relevantly and with considerable appreciation.
- (b) By no means as popular, this option was nonetheless very well done, with careful attention to the prompt quotation. Some excellent essays synthesised the geographical and the historical and were well argued.

Sylvia Plath: *Ariel*

- (a) There were no answers on (a).
- (b) On the whole candidates wrote relevantly and avoided too much focus on biographical material. The range of poems used was limited, as with the Eliot (a) option, the favourites including *You're* and all the poems dealing with children, as well as *Daddy*. The best work was exploratory of imagery, though all candidates had a range of useful quotation to support their arguments.

There were no essays on Walcott.

Daniel Defoe: *Moll Flanders*

Question 9

- (a) There were no answers to 9(a)
- (b) A very small number of candidates answered this question. Answers were knowledgeable, but tended towards general accounts of Moll, rather than narrative method.

Jane Austen: *Persuasion*

Question 10

- (a) There were fewer answers on Austen this year, but they were often very well done. Anne's characterisation in the light of the quotation does demand close textual knowledge and this was in strong supply. Candidates made much of Austen's use of free indirect discourse and because they were able to quote in extensive detail, answers were strongly argued and supported.
- (b) This was the more popular option. There were many excellent and very knowledgeable and appreciative essays here. Candidates had the text at their fingertips and could discuss the structure of the novel and the development of its themes and characterisation with skill.

George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

Question 11

- (a) There were few answers but they were very good – thoughtful and subtle considerations of the proposition. Answers were divided: some arguing that the evidence pointed to the valuing of moral judgement; others that the novel clearly values sexual instinct and sensuality more highly. The wealth of apt quotation in support of the discussion of Maggie and Stephen was very impressive.
- (b) This was the more popular choice. Family duty and loyalty were well appreciated though only a few moved beyond the Tullivers. Many answers concentrated on Tom and Maggie only, but were sometimes exceptionally perceptive and well illustrated, reaching the best marks through depth rather than range of analysis.

Thomas Hardy: *The Return of the Native*

Question 12

- (a) The significance of ritual and superstition was the minority choice but it was well illustrated and discussed. Candidates were by and large knowledgeable and thoughtful in their approach to the question.
- (b) Although the wording of the question is clear, some candidates wrote about the setting of Egdon Heath only. Some of these essays had hardly any relevant paragraphs. Others were able to see the Heath as a context for the community and its misfits and wrote relevantly, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of Hardy's methods.

Edith Wharton: *The Age of Innocence*

This novel was once again very popular and well appreciated.

Question 13

- (a) Although there were many excellent essays which focused upon Wharton's 'methods and effects', as required by the question, there was too much biography in other answers. The prompt quotation suggests that the writer's approach to the society described is both lovingly obsessive and critically dispassionate. This can only be answered by close reference to the text: suggesting that Wharton's life in New York or in Europe or her marriage can provide an answer to the question is not convincing. Better answers were based on a close analysis of the writing.
- (b) This option was equally popular – those who really knew the text had many examples to discuss. Some argued that rumour and gossip are peripheral to the real dramas going on, or simply symptomatic of deeper concerns, thinking for themselves and developing skilful arguments. The novel continues to excite very good responses.

D. H. Lawrence: *The Rainbow*

After a slight entry last year, Lawrence was a popular option this session, though some answers showed insufficient familiarity with the text to answer convincingly on either (a) or (b)

Question 14

- (a) The Brinsley Street school episode is a vivid evocation of school life. Those who knew the details and could discuss them did well, but there were some vague answers mainly on Ursula, or about Lawrence's own period as a teacher. Some answers which focused generally on education were often only partially relevant. Where the text was well known, the episode was analysed closely and its significance in the novel then considered carefully.
- (b) This was the more popular option. Some answers were general surveys of religion in the novel, omitting the buildings, festivals and rituals specified by the question, and these did less well. Where specific details were discussed there were some very good answers.

J. M. Coetzee: *Disgrace*

There were more answers on Coetzee this year and the standard was generally extremely high. Candidates used their contextual knowledge of recent South African history with skill and sensitivity. This, together with close critical reading of the novel, made for some excellent essays.

Question 15

- (a) Tensions between youth and middle age in the novel were well understood and well illustrated. Essays displayed perception and clarity of thought.
- (b) 'Retribution and forgiveness' were well grasped and illustrated. Occasionally candidates treated the phrase as if these words were interchangeable, but mostly there was an attempt to consider them separately.

Virginia Woolf; *Mrs Dalloway*

Although there were slightly fewer takers for Woolf this session, there were nonetheless many good answers showing clear appreciation of the novel and good textual knowledge.

Question 16

- (a) This was not the favoured option but masculinity was generally well discussed and illustrated. Peter, Septimus, Richard and Sir William were the characters most often considered. At times, the concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' were treated too simplistically, with human traits being divided rigidly into one or the other (sometimes indicated in essay plans with a vertical line down the page!), but on the whole candidates who attempted this question were analytical and thoughtful.
- (b) There were many sound answers on the social system, with essays considering the position of women, post-war problems and so on. Some had a great deal to say about the medical profession, and whilst this is clearly relevant, the extensive comment here unbalanced essays in some cases.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9765/02

Drama

Key Messages

- Good answers focus on the detail of the passage in the b) options – its language, imagery, structure and dramatic action. The opportunity for close textual analysis is the reason for the inclusion of specific sections of text in the question paper.
- Good answers pay attention to both the literary and dramatic qualities of the texts they are addressing.
- Wider critical reading is welcomed, and critical quotations should be entirely relevant to the argument being presented and integrated into a fluent, well-structured essay. When used selectively and aptly, these add to the quality of responses.
- The requirement to answer at least ONE passage question is a compulsory part of the rubric. If candidates fail to do so they will not be credited for one of their essays.

General comments

Most candidates responded well to the texts they had studied. Many achieved the highest levels and all showed engagement with, and enjoyment of, the texts. Clearly their study had been augmented by visits to the theatre, and appreciation of the plays' dramatic qualities was in many cases enhanced by this direct experience.

The passage questions demand close critical reading of the extracts printed in the examination paper. Due attention needs to be paid to each part of the printed passage and the skills of critical analysis used to interrogate its structure, characterisation, language and action. It will have been selected with a particular general theme in mind, but the close analysis will inform and underpin this critical topic, allowing movement between part and whole of the text. General essays may be excellent (as for example on parent/child relationships in *King Lear*) but will never score as highly as those which make a close analysis of the elements of the printed passage in order to extrapolate wider themes.

Questions frequently involve the requirement to consider 'presentation', 'dramatic significance', 'dramatic action' or 'dramatic effects'. Answers which took these into account, exploring the effect of actions as well as words, together with the atmosphere created on stage, gained credit. Of course this is a Literature examination, and the words are of central importance. But dramatic action, interaction of characters, occasionally wordless, and climactic moments should be given due weight when required by the question.

Comments on specific questions

Shakespeare: *Coriolanus*

Question 1

- (a) There were no answers to 1(a)
- (b) A small number of candidates had studied the play and all chose the (b) option. Much first class work was seen. Comment on the language of the passage was often very detailed and perceptive, leading outwards to consider the rest of the play in exemplary fashion.

There were no answers on *As You Like It*.

Shakespeare: *King Lear*

The play was overwhelmingly the most popular text on the syllabus as a whole, with a full range of responses from full marks to more modest achievements at the lower end. All showed appreciation of the play.

Question 3

- (a) This was not as popular as the (b) option. There were some good answers, with the best having a very precise idea of what they were focusing on, with discussion of the storm, Lear's madness, the mock trial, the effect of Poor Tom and the presence of the Fool and Kent. In less competent answers, there was vagueness as to what the scenes on the Heath actually are. Some candidates placed the play's action as either inside a castle or on the Heath, resulting in very general comments which took in Dover beach, the cliff and the final battle between Edgar and Edmund. Unsurprisingly, with such a panorama to cover, there was not much specific detail in these responses. Some answers moved sideways into essays that were not quite fully relevant, perhaps on previously studied topics such as madness or sight and blindness.
- (b) This was the most widely taken question on either Paper 1 or 2. Those who focused on the passage did well with Edmund's insight into his father and brother and language of playacting and persuasion; Gloucester's hot-headed actions and words; his sense of grief speaking later to Regan; her opportunism with 'my father's godson', and the riotous knights reference; and Cornwall's 'loyal and natural boy' – not all candidates being aware that 'natural' has different meanings, including 'illegitimate'. The irony in 'child-like office' and 'duty' was often noted, however. There is so much in the passage itself on the question's central theme that it is easy to move seamlessly to the play as a whole. Answers which discussed child/parent relationships generally in the play rather than the passage, did less well.

The contemporary tendency to sympathy for the villains – here Edmund, Regan and Cornwall - can be distorting, as can psychological studies of these characters. The evidence of the very beginning of the play was not always carefully weighed and there was some misunderstanding of the rules of inheritance too. The point often invoked by some candidates that no mothers appear in the play – with the implication that Shakespeare was remiss, tended to lead answers away from the point, by bringing inappropriate expectations to the play- competent answers were based in an understanding of the context of the work as a Shakespearean tragedy (rather than, say having the conventions of a 19th century novel.) Different interpretations are of course welcomed and make good discussion points for both of the relevant assessment objectives (different interpretations and context), but they must be supported with evidence from the play.

Shakespeare: *The Tempest*

Much fine work was seen on the play, though it was less popular than in last year's session.

Question 4

- (a) The 'power' question evoked many thoughtful and knowledgeable answers and was a more popular option than the passage question. Caliban and Ariel were widely discussed in relation to Prospero; but the area for most divergent and individual comment was the relationship of Ferdinand and Miranda – not always felt to show mutual care and affection. The court party also featured usefully in many answers. All in all, there was a strong response to the play's exploration of power relationships.
- (b) The passage question was by no means as popular and answers were often insufficient on the detail of text, many offering more general comments on Caliban, although there is much here that would characterise his ambiguities well, such as Shakespeare's use of blank verse for him, while the others use prose, and his scorn for the trashy garments which distract Stephano and Trinculo so successfully. Many missed the point that Prospero is watching with Ariel and guiding events. However, the fact that this is a crux of the play, and a comedic parody of the Antonio/Sebastian plot to overthrow Alonso, was not neglected in the more attentive responses.

John Webster: *The White Devil*

The play continues to evoke much sophisticated work.

Question 5

- (a) Some fine defences of Webster were offered here, discussing all three elements with skill (language, dramatic effects and characters), though coming to very different, but equally convincing, conclusions. There was also some well-judged critical analysis looking at the characterisation from a Brechtian standpoint. Candidates seem to have appreciated the play and most wrote on it with remarkable perception and maturity.
- (b) The passage question was equally popular, with many answers entirely at home with the material – there were many fine perceptive answers. Weaker responses tended to be too general, not paying sufficient attention to the ambiguities depicted within the relationships here.

William Wycherley: *The Country Wife*

Offering a similar number of responses to *The Country Wife* as last year, candidates were well prepared and had a strong sense of the Restoration social context, which most deployed effectively.

Question 6

- (a) Not many candidates chose to write on irony in the play, though those who did it were well prepared and had a wide range of examples to discuss, particularly of dramatic irony.
- (b) Most answers were on the passage question, with many comments on the characterisation of Harcourt and Alithea. The best answers analysed this text closely, though there was a tendency in less accomplished answers to be a little too descriptive of the passage, rather than analytical. Line-by-line running commentary cannot score highly if it becomes simple semi-paraphrase.

Harold Pinter: *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter*

Pinter remains very popular and many candidates offered their best work on these texts. Discussion of cultural and literary contexts for the plays such as Theatre of the Absurd and *Waiting for Godot* was more successful than explanatory biographical ‘facts’ about Pinter, which tended to be unconvincing.

Question 7

- (a) ‘Physical and mental confinement’ was not quite as popular as the (b) option, but there was much outstanding work, relating to both plays and with a wealth of apt reference. The whole cohort handled this thoughtfully, sometimes discussing the phrase ‘physical and mental’ as if it were one idea, but on the whole considering confinement across a range of contexts and with excellent supporting evidence from both plays.
- (b) This option had the distinction of being the best answered of the (b) questions in terms of focus on the printed text. Audience response at each point of the scene was sometimes meticulously traced, with close focus on the implications of both language and action. Interestingly, at the other end of the scale, a few candidates did not really know what to make of Pinter and made comments such as ‘nothing has any meaning – it is up to you to decide’. This was inevitably less convincing than those who tried hard to find different kinds of meaning and were content with ambiguities and avoidance of closure.

Brian Friel: *Dancing at Lughnasa*

This text remains popular and is well appreciated. Contextual material on the Irish background was used sparingly but appropriately in answers.

Question 8

- (a) More popular than the (b) option by far, this topic, or something similar to it, had been well prepared. However, the idea of 'silence' or non verbal events was sometimes too dominant in responses and could give a tangential essay focus. Most knew what they wanted to say and illustrated with more or less detail from the text, with some particularly well-illustrated discussions of the central scene where all the sisters dance. The question wording draws attention to the prompt quotation ('With Michael's comment in mind...'), and those candidates who employed reference to it did well, discussing the idea of 'the spell' successfully.
- (b) Fewer candidates attempted this question. On the whole, it was used as a springboard for a character sketch of Gerry without much analysis of the passage, but those who looked closely were able not only to make perceptive comments about him, but to consider his relationship with each of the sisters, much evidence for which, both direct and implicit, exists in this text.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9765/3 Comment and Analysis</p>
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Key messages

Successful candidates:

- wrote a paragraph at the beginning of their response to **Question 1** in which they introduced their approach to comparing the poems, which was then developed in the rest of the answer. They dealt with both poems simultaneously in the light of the approach they had established.
- had considered the whole of the extracts in **Question 2** and **3** before they began writing, allowing themselves to outline an approach in the opening paragraph
- introduced comment on social/literary/cultural context economically and as an integral part of their answer. Their contextual comments were informed by their wider reading.

General comments

All three questions produced work across the full range of ability.

There were no rubric infringements.

Almost all candidates did **Question 1** first. Nearly all candidates managed their time effectively.

Some Centres showed a preference for **Question 2** or **Question 3** but overall the choice between these questions was even.

Some scripts contained detailed plans for one or both questions; others none at all. In most scripts there was a structure to the answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

In many answers there was a real sense of enjoyment in the writing. Some candidates quickly identified features that could be fruitfully compared, and were able to analyse and compare those aspects of form, structure and language that shape the meaning of either poem. Others went immediately into a discussion of technical features, e.g. rhythm or rhyme, but said little beyond the fact that such details existed. There was some very interesting discussion of form. Most answers, sensibly, did not try to examine every detail of the version of the sonnet in A, but instead analysed the argument as it develops through the poem (with particular emphasis on the final two lines). With B many argued effectively that the central four lines are a kind of aside, addressing the readers and drawing them in to the poet's thoughts. Some saw this as establishing a more intimate relationship with the reader than Frost makes in his first line.

In various ways, and with varying degrees of perception, many candidates explored the sense of unease that is to be found in both poems: "cherry blooms" and "love" linked with "overcast" and "tears". Some of the best work approached this by comparing that which is "diminished" in A with "grief" or "tears" in B. Many candidates were at home with the idea of joy and grief existing together in human experience, and could make helpful contextual reference (often literary) to illuminate their point. Others noted the poets' dates and ascribed these complex experiences to the events of the 20th century, especially the two world wars. In both cases the most effective references were brief and focused, without large explanatory detail.

It is possible to write very well on a comparison question by examining poem A before working on poem B and referring back to A, but this is a practice that sometimes did not succeed, when candidates spent too long on Poem A and ran out of time for the comparison. The better answers which adopted this approach could arrive at a strategic overview at the end rather than at the beginning; less successful answers did not always achieve an overview, which reduced the effectiveness of their argument.

Sometimes the titles of poems loom large in their meaning, and sometimes they are less important. There was some speculation about the nature of the oven bird (so named because of the shape of its nest), and some answers took “oven” to mean “oven-ready”, although in a few cases this was made briefly and ingeniously effective as part of an argument, or buried under later analysis of other aspects of this poem.

Question 2

The best responses clearly grasped and enjoyed the humour in the passage and produced analysis full of insight. The contextual references (here and elsewhere in the paper) varied with the candidates' wider reading: some wrote well on the echoes of the parable of the Good Samaritan, and recognised some features of the emerging novel form; others were disconcerted by the lack of paragraphing and the differences between 18th and 21st century punctuation. Most candidates were able to write at least effectively about the social criticism in the cast of characters, and others were able to comment in detail on the irony and satire. There was also some good work on such things as direct speech and “reported” direct speech as a means of creating character, and on the rhetorical effects of capital letters and italic print.

Some answers explored the cast of characters, appreciating the lengthy disquisitions of the lawyer, speculating on the precise meaning of the “sticks” of the Lady's fan, and commenting on the levity of the elderly man of wit. There was also a full appreciation of the combination of sharp satire and down-to-earth conversation, examining the theoretical legal complications and the presentation of individuals thrown together by chance defending their own interests under trying circumstances. Some candidates noted the fact that the good-hearted postillion was later to be transported for a lesser crime than abandoning a possibly dying man. These and other means of creating character were explored, and many answers included some consideration of the satirical view of the various social ranks implicit in the actions and comments of the characters.

There was some interesting work on the progression of ideas within the extract: first Joseph is near death, then he is naked and bloodstained, and some candidates saw the passengers' reactions to these states as Fielding's comment on human fallibility.

Less successful answers tended to explore the passage trying to establish what Fielding was saying. This prevented a fuller and more detailed examination of his literary means and effects.

Question 3

The best answers showed that the candidates were at ease with a play script. They explored the form, and made a close analysis of words and actions, having grasped the sequence of events before they started. Others adopted a line-by-line approach, which in some cases caused difficulty with the flashbacks and the son talking directly to the audience. Some candidates wrote well about the connections between the past and the present, and there was a wide appreciation of the tone of the son's responses to his father's reminiscences. The dramatic moment of darkness was widely analysed, and most answers included consideration of dramatic effectiveness. The best work clearly saw the events as action in the mind's eye as well as printed words on paper. Some candidates noted the range of literary and dramatic techniques used by Mortimer.

Many candidates traced the development of the son's relationship with his father, and saw a parallel between the father's refusal to acknowledge his blindness with the son's unease when talking to and about his father. Some were unsure about aspects of the extract – the episode with Iris, for instance, when the son learns to whistle, but there was some interesting explanation of the function of this event, and many candidates showed understanding that this is the opening of the play, when themes and relationships are being introduced that will assume different and perhaps greater significance at a later stage. The whistling episode was frequently assessed in this way. Some answers made an effective point out of Iris's name.

There was some interesting work on context – the father's unusual tenth birthday in Africa was seen by some as fixing his childhood in the colonial past, and some candidates suggested that the words of his song also placed him historically. Some candidates referred to Pinter as a comparison or contrast with Mortimer, with varying relevance and success.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9765/04

Personal Investigation

Key Messages

The best answers:

- were as individual and personal as possible in respect of both texts and topic
- followed the advice offered by CIE on the candidates' Outline Proposal Form
- considered in some detail the effects created by form, structure and language, whichever genre each text was written in
- ensured that there was sufficient reference to, and quotation from, the subsidiary texts as well as the two main ones

General Comments

As was the case last summer, there was some very good work indeed in this Paper, often of quite outstanding excellence; it was once again clear that Centres were aware of what is required by the Syllabus, and almost all candidates demonstrated a high level of confident critical skill in what they wrote. Texts selected varied greatly, with titles that were often very searching in character. Essays were naturally of differing levels of success, but the overwhelming number showed real skill and often sophistication in their writers' ability to compare and contrast four texts in ways that were critically alert and sensitive, and controlled in structure and organisation. Examiners were repeatedly struck by the knowledge and understanding that they saw, and with the fluency and often elegance with which texts were linked and arguments presented.

Outline Proposals

An important part of the process of this Paper is formulating a title and submitting an Outline Proposal Form. Getting the title right is the key to success on this Paper, so this section goes into some detail about this aspect of the course.

All candidates are required to submit an Outline Proposal Form during the year preceding the examination, once they have decided – with, of course, guidance and advice from teaching staff – on their texts, and on the thrust of what they plan to write, but certainly before they start even drafting their essays. The proposal must list the two principal texts to be studied and used, together with the two or more subsidiary texts, and perhaps also any critical material that will be consulted and discussed; there must be a draft question, together with a brief outline of what their essay is likely to say. The wording of the title is important, and candidates should not be concerned if suggestions are made to amend it when their proposals are returned by CIE – such amendments are suggested to help and encourage candidates to follow to the fullest what the Syllabus requires.

The most essential aspect here is *comparison*, and by far the greatest number of suggested amendments to draft questions arise because there is no explicit or sometimes even implicit intention to compare texts within what is proposed – this needs to be foregrounded.

Other changes had occasionally to be required because an inappropriate text was proposed – inappropriate in the sense that it is one of those set in either Pre-U Paper 1 or Paper 2, and must therefore not be used for Paper 4, or occasionally because it was not a literary text. Critical works, or sometimes texts of cultural or historical material, may of course be read and referred to in the essay, but cannot be one of the four principal and subsidiary texts used. There are theoretically occasions when a text may be questionable, in that it does not appear as demanding as one might expect at Pre-U level, but the nature of the question set on it, and the nature of the other texts, may explain its choice and indeed make it acceptable.

Centres might like to remind candidates to make the most of the opportunity to receive advice from CIE, and to follow the advice of the Examiners who will be assessing their final essay

Key Assessment Objectives

Mention has been made of the crucial and central importance of comparison – the Specification requires there to be “*significant comparisons between two authors*”. Two points need to be made here: firstly, the two principal texts must clearly be by two different writers, and secondly the comparisons must be significant and substantial. The most confident candidates will introduce the two principal texts, and perhaps the subsidiary ones too, very early in their essays, and keep them working together throughout, so that there is at least a reasonable degree of equivalence in the way that each one is treated. Of course exact arithmetical equality is not possible, but the two principal texts should be given approximately the same amount of critical attention; again the most confident candidates will move easily and fluently between them at all times. In a similar vein, while the subsidiary texts will of course not receive so much time or space, there must be enough evidence to show that each has been studied, so just a couple of sentences on each will not be sufficient.

The four Assessment Objectives are all equally important. The way in which an essay is structured and argued has just been touched upon in the comments about comparing texts, and this formulation of an argument is a crucial aspect of AO1, which also requires the appropriate use of critical terminology; it also requires – and there were no candidates this summer who failed to address this requirement to at least some degree, and often with remarkably confident fluency – appropriate, well-chosen and at best seamlessly interwoven textual detail and reference. Examiners pay close attention to the confidence and clarity with which paragraphs are structured, and to how they are linked to each other and to the essay thesis as a whole.

AO2 requires understanding and appreciation of how form, structure and language shape meaning: candidates will of course be looking primarily at wider elements and characteristics of their texts, but they are also expected to demonstrate that they can explore and compare ways in which their writers use these three factors, by means of some brief but focused discussion of short extracts and passages; the ways in which these extracts reflect their wider textual contexts are also something that confident candidates will illustrate and exemplify. Fewer candidates this year used either poetic or dramatic texts, in relation to both of which it is clearly rather easier to comment on particular genre factors, but it is essential that in respect of all three genres there is discussion of form, structure and above all perhaps of language, and the effects that these create.

Part of AO3 has already been discussed – the need to compare texts of possibly different genres and/or periods, and to do so in the most fluent and seamless manner possible. Its other requirement is equally important, and in most cases this summer it was tackled with at least reasonable skill – the need to look at and discuss some personal academic research into the texts, usually in the form of critical reading and interpretation. This can take the form of published critical writing, either in hard copy form or on Internet websites, in which case candidates should show an ability to engage with alternative views and opinions, to use them in at least a reasonably developed form as part of their own personal interpretations and ideas. It can also take the form of other kinds of critical or academic research relating to the texts in question, but again whatever is selected and referred to needs to be integrated into the essay, and not just become a detached stand-alone statement or implication that research has been undertaken.

Contextual factors, finally (AO4): in some ways the easiest to manage, but if done well possibly the hardest; biographical or historical material by itself is simple to find and write about, but as with critical ideas it does above all else need to be not just very directly relevant, but also seen as central in some ways to how the texts are read and appreciated. It is, in the word of the Specification, the *significance* of such factors that matters, and in the word of the Levels Descriptors, candidates are expected to show *consideration* of these; they must in other words once more be integrated into the whole ongoing argument that candidates are presenting.

Word length and presentation

It might be helpful to remind candidates that answers which are significantly shorter than 3500 words are self penalizing, and if they are significantly longer they may be subject to a penalty.

Quotations, footnotes and bibliographies are required, and do not count towards the 3500 word limit. Footnotes must be reserved very firmly for acknowledging the source of a quotation or reference made in the body of the essay, or perhaps very occasionally for making a brief additional comment; they should not be used for writing extensive additional material which should have formed part of the main argument, and if this latter is the case then Examiners will have to take them into account when assessing whether an essay is

seriously over-long. All quotations from secondary sources must be properly acknowledged, but there is no need to make footnoted page references to every quotation from the primary texts. Bibliographies – and where appropriate webographies – must of course be full and complete, but it is helpful if they can be in two parts: one part listing the sources that have been cited and/or quoted in the essay, and the second part listing publications and websites that have been consulted but not actually mentioned. There is no regulation house-style for bibliographies, but candidates should certainly indicate the title and writer of each text, together with publisher and date of publication, and perhaps the ISBN number where appropriate; website addresses should be given in full, together with the date on which they were last accessed.

Administration by Centres was, like last year, very efficient: work was submitted promptly and correctly; cover-sheets were fully and correctly completed; word counts were given, often and usefully in two totals, one including and one excluding quotations; most Centres attached copies of their candidates' proposal forms. In most cases essays were stapled together, or candidates used treasury tags; both methods are entirely acceptable, and considerably better than paper-clips, which can very easily become detached, and certainly better than shiny and slippery plastic wallets, which should, please, be avoided.