

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01
Portfolio

Key Messages

- Teachers should refer to the 0408 Syllabus and Coursework Handbook during the planning stages of the course.
- Tasks for all assignments must be worded to enable candidates to fulfil the requirements of the level descriptors and be written clearly at the start of each assignment.
- Written assignments should include focused ticking and marginal annotation by the teacher which comment on strengths and weaknesses of candidate performance and should be clearly linked to the marking criteria. Where marks are changed during internal moderation there should be a comment justifying the change.
- Clerical checks, including marks transcribed from Candidate work to the Individual Candidate Record card, the Centre Assessment Summary Form and the MS1s, should be rigorous.
- Individual Candidate Record Cards should be securely fastened to Candidate work and presented without plastic folders.

General Comments

The observations in this general report should be read alongside the individual report to the centre.

The Critical Response

Successful responses demonstrated clear critical engagement with the selected text in response to a well-formulated task. These responses analysed the ways writers achieve effects and were supported by well-selected and concise textual references. There were many perceptive and insightful responses seen, demonstrating knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the texts studied.

Weaker responses were narrative or explanatory in approach, lacking textual detail to support ideas and a response to the ways writers create effects. Candidates should be reminded that personal responses should be informed and supported by specific textual detail: merely asserting a point is unlikely to achieve high reward unless supported and developed. Listing the writer's techniques in the introductory paragraph is not a helpful start to a response.

For candidates to be able to meet the assessment criteria in their writing, effective tasks must be set. Tasks beginning with command words such as 'Describe' or 'Explain' can often have the effect of constraining candidates' performance. Examples of appropriately challenging tasks can be found in the 0408 *Coursework Handbook*.

The Empathic Response

The most successful responses focused on a specific character and moment in the text, offering a sustained and engagingly authentic 'voice' for the chosen character and their thoughts and feelings at the chosen moment; the full assignment was clearly written at the top of the response. These responses were firmly rooted in the text.

Less successful responses did not focus on a precise moment and relied on speculation rather than close detail to the text. Often these involved some retelling of the story rather than conveying the thoughts and feelings of the chosen character. Starting an empathic task in diary form, for example, 'Dear Diary', is not normally conducive to a successful response and is unlikely to result in an authentic voice for most characters. Direct quotation and imaginary conversations between characters should also be avoided. It is

not a requirement of the empathic task that candidates attempt to write in Shakespearean or archaic language.

Tasks should be appropriately worded and not direct candidates towards a creative response by asking candidates to 'rewrite' a section of the text. Examples of good and unsuitable empathic tasks are given in the *0408 Coursework Handbook*.

Teacher annotation

Teachers are reminded that all assignments should show evidence of having been marked to assist the moderation process. Focused ticking of salient points, supported by brief, integrated reference to the level descriptors in marginal annotation and a detailed summative comment are a prerequisite for all written assignments. These annotations allow external moderators to understand how the final mark was awarded. It is unhelpful for teachers to just refer to the AOs, in the margin, as these need to be linked to the specific level and skills being rewarded.

Evidence of a rigorous internal moderation process is required in Centres which have more than one teaching group. Comments from the teachers involved in internal moderation should be related to the marking criteria and should assist with the external moderation process. Marks changed during internal moderation should be written at the end of assignments and transferred to the Individual Candidate Record Card, showing clearly which is the final mark and total to be transferred to the Centre Assessment Summary Form and the MS1. All marks changed, during the internal moderation process, should be supported by a clear comment, linked to the level descriptors to indicate the reasons for the change.

Please note that candidate work annotated electronically should still include focused ticking and, when printed, responses should be A4 size to be readable, and not reduced to A5 due to the marginal annotation.

Administration

Centres are reminded of the importance of adhering to the deadline for the despatch of coursework samples to Cambridge. Candidate work should be sent to us with the Individual Record Card fastened securely (e.g. by a treasury tag or staple) to the written assignments (and not placed in plastic wallets) to ensure ease of access. It is not a requirement that draft copies of assignments be included in folders nor that Individual Candidate Record Cards for the whole cohort be included. Assignments should be organised in the order presented on the Individual Record Card. A rigorous clerical check of the transfer of marks, at all stages of the process, should be in place to ensure all candidates are awarded the correct marks and grades.

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Paper 0408/21
Unseen Poetry 21

Key messages

- Candidates who are able to integrate comments on form and structure into their discussion are generally more successful when they link their remarks to the way in which these elements add to points made in response to the question.
- There is no automatic reward for identifying specific features such as simile, metaphor, juxtaposition, etc. Comment on these features work best when they are used to explore the way in which the writer is using these techniques for a particular effect.
- Candidates who can integrate references from the text, embedded within a sentence, suggest a greater focus on the quotation as an illustration of effects created. Those who copy out lengthy quotations followed by 'This shows ...' tend to lose sight of how, exactly the reference demonstrates their point. Particularly unsuccessful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to directly quote the words they are commenting on.

General comments

Most candidates responded well to both questions, managing their time effectively and offering sufficient detail. However, work which was short and underdeveloped struggled to reach the bands in the middle of the mark scheme. Many candidates referenced the poem skilfully and usefully by embedding apt quotations into their discussion. Examiners noted that there was a pleasing willingness to engage with literary techniques and, more importantly, to explore their effects in the context of the poem, and in the service of the candidate's argument/discussion.

Essays were mostly well structured. However, it was noticeable that many candidates wrote exactly the same first paragraph for both parts of the question which blunted their purpose and tended to be a missed opportunity to launch a well-focused essay. Such introductions often read like generic/formulaic paragraphs which candidates had been taught to write. Some candidates simply listed techniques used in the poem in their opening paragraphs, for example 'The poet uses language to vividly portray...' or 'the poet uses imagery, metaphors etc'. Better candidates tailored their opening paragraphs/sentences to the terms of the question by referencing specific subject matter and offering an overview as to how the poem reflected elements of the question. Candidates then went on to explore apt techniques and quotations in relation to the question and the poem in the body of their response.

Some candidates wrote responses which were very speculative and which lost focus on what they were being asked to write on. Better candidates made frequent reference to the specific terms of the question and produced well-focused essays. The best answers considered the poem as a whole, and reflected on the development of meaning across the poem. By selecting key images and moments from the beginning, middle and end of the poem, the best essays were able to reflect on more complex development and more nuanced meanings in the poem. Linked to the exploration of key imagery, the best essays analysed the use of enjambement, end-stopped lines, caesura, rhythm, rhyme, metrical effects and stanzaic structure in relation to the question, specifically discussing *poetic* effects in relation to the question.

0408/21 'On a Son Returned to New Zealand'

Question 1 (a)

How does the poet strikingly portray the huge distance between mother and son?

This was generally well-answered, with candidates understanding that the mother and her son are no longer together. Better responses commented on '*No one can be in two places at once.*' However, many candidates did not pick up on '*So we left Athens on the same morning*' and what that meant in terms of them embarking on separate journeys from the same starting point with the distance growing between them.

The description of the railway carriage caused some confusion with several less-convincing interpretations. Some candidates laboured on the mention of '*Serbian soldiers*' and went off into speculation about wars and fighting without relating the subsequent analysis to the specific terms of the question.

Better responses commented on not just the physical distance between the mother and son, but also on the emotions that the mother was experiencing. The fact that they were only able to communicate via letter reinforced the idea of the distances between them, and this was something stronger candidates picked up on. Reference was often made to the different seasons they were experiencing at the same time.

The difference between the two journeys was commented on by some candidates highlighting the sense of distance. Better responses noted structural features of the poem that emphasised separation such as the interesting use of typography to highlight the sense of dislocation of '*He was*', as well as the final line of the poem – a single-line stanza, with its image of simultaneous beauty and hardship, namely that of a '*bright sea-bird*' on a hard, stony, foreign shore.

Question 1 (b)

In what ways does the poet movingly convey her thoughts and feelings?

Some candidates went into a rather speculative mode and wrote (sometimes at length) about what might be the situation with the mother – divorce, domestic abuse, son hates his mother, custody battle etc. Unfortunately this prevented them from actually addressing the question with evidence from text; candidates should be reminded that their focus should be on the question, supporting their thoughts with relevant evidence from the poem.

Better responses made comments on the mother's negative images of her journey which reflected her sorrow or grief about parting from her son. Candidates discussed the mother's behaviour, once she was back in London, with the '*tarnished summer*', and explored the contrasts in the seasons. The mother's expectations about letters and the fact that they were '*late*' reflected her desire to hear from him.

The description of the father's house and its environment drew many different interpretations. Some saw it as a metaphor for her hatred of his father as there were storms. Again, in weaker responses there was a lot of speculation about the father's circumstances with little textual evidence.

The final line was often commented on with candidates stating that this communicated her love for her son, no matter where he was in the world.

The repetition of '*he was*' and '*he is*' and the change of tenses was picked up by better responses and some commented on the position of '*he was*' in the poem as it is isolated from other lines, emphasising separation.

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Paper 0408/22
Unseen Poetry 22

Key messages

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- Candidates who can integrate references from the text, embedded within a sentence, suggest a greater focus on the quotation as an illustration of effects created. Those who copy out lengthy quotations followed by 'This shows ...' tend to lose sight of how, exactly the reference demonstrates their point. Particularly unsuccessful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to directly quote the words they are commenting on.

General comments

Most candidates responded well to both questions, managing their time effectively and offering sufficient detail. However, work which was short and underdeveloped struggled to reach the bands in the middle of the mark scheme. Many candidates referenced the poem skilfully and usefully by embedding apt quotations into their discussion. Examiners noted that there was a pleasing willingness to engage with literary techniques and, more importantly, to explore their effects in the context of the poem, and in the service of the candidate's argument/discussion.

Essays were mostly well structured. However, it was noticeable that many candidates wrote exactly the same first paragraph for both parts of the question which blunted their purpose and tended to be a missed opportunity to launch a well-focused essay. Such introductions often read like generic/formulaic paragraphs which candidates had been taught to write. Some candidates simply listed techniques used in the poem in their opening paragraphs, for example 'The poet uses language to vividly portray...' or 'the poet uses imagery, metaphors etc'. Better candidates tailored their opening paragraphs/sentences to the terms of the question by referencing specific subject matter and offering an overview as to how the poem reflected elements of the question. Candidates then went on to explore apt techniques and quotations in relation to the question and the poem in the body of their response.

Some candidates wrote responses which were very speculative and which lost focus on what they were being asked to write on. Better candidates made frequent reference to the specific terms of the question and produced well-focused essays. The best answers considered the poem as a whole, and reflected on the development of meaning across the poem. By selecting key images and moments from the beginning, middle and end of the poem, the best essays were able to reflect on more complex development and more nuanced meanings in the poem. Linked to the exploration of key imagery, the best essays analysed the use of enjambement, end-stopped lines, caesura, rhythm, rhyme, metrical effects and stanzaic structure in relation to the question, specifically discussing *poetic* effects in relation to the question.

0408/22 ‘How to Cut a Pomegranate’

Question 1 (a)

In what ways does the poet vividly describe a pomegranate?

This question was generally well answered, with candidates understanding the different ways in which the pomegranate was described. Most picked up on the imagery about the heart and blood and how this portrayed the fruit as being delicate and precious. Candidates understood the imagery of jewels and how this conveyed a sense of the fruit being precious/luxurious.

Many candidates referred to the repetition of the absolute ‘never’ and how this emphasized the preciousness the fruit as if it were a living organism. The reference to crystal and ‘holding’ the fruit up to the light caused some confusion with some candidates and some went off at a tangent, losing focus on the specifics of the question. There were some effective comments made about the ‘universe’ and the sense of wonder at the fruit. Candidates commented on the variety of images – visual and gustatory – which were employed in the text and the magical, exotic sense of the fruit.

In terms of structure, responses varied considerably. Very few identified the division in the poem between the father and daughter and that the first part was like being given a tutorial and that the second part described the daughter’s first-hand, tactile experience and her attempted creativity making the seeds into a necklace.

To access higher marks, candidates needed to move towards deeper meanings i.e. those beyond the literal. For such responses, the pomegranate came to represent aspects of the relationship between father and daughter, and elements of the daughter’s past as well as her creative temperament and education. The best candidates were comfortable with speculating what the pomegranate might represent rather than claiming any definitive (and therefore possibly limiting) answer.

Question 1 (b)

How does the poet movingly convey her thoughts and feelings?

The wording of this question required careful attention, especially with the parts of the poem which were the daughter’s thoughts and feelings. Some candidates either did not read the question carefully or misinterpreted it; very few candidates identified that the words in the first part of the poem are the father’s. It was apparent that they did not fully understand or had not noticed the structure of the poem and the use of speech marks for the father’s actual words. In several cases, candidates wrote a response which had no bearing on the question and just repeated much of what they had written for **Question 1 (a)**.

There were, however, some thoughtful responses which understood the poem’s structure and which made insightful comments on the impact of the daughter listening to her father and then going on to have her own experience with the fruit, but being mindful of what her father had said to her. Weaker candidates wrote about the father’s instructions and words for their entire response and did not get as far as the part of the poem which the question relates to; candidates should be reminded that their responses should always be framed around the specifics of the question. Those candidates who engaged with the question about the speaker’s thoughts and feelings made some perceptive comments about her being creative by trying to make a necklace with it.

Comments about ‘The juice tasted of gardens I had never seen’ prompted a lot of speculation about the poet’s situation, as did ‘somewhere I had another home.’ Some candidates invented scenarios where the poet had fallen out with her father or that her family were all dead or there had been a divorce. Such speculation gained credit when supported by reference to the poem.

Many candidates identified the use of exotic imagery to communicate that the speaker’s experience with the pomegranate was unique and special to her, with the last line being both nostalgic and comforting.

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Paper 0408/23
Unseen Poetry 23

Key messages

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General comments

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Essays were mostly well structured. However, it was noticeable that many candidates wrote exactly the same first paragraph for both parts of the question which blunted their purpose and tended to be a missed opportunity to launch a well-focused essay. Such introductions often read like generic/formulaic paragraphs which candidates had been taught to write. Some candidates simply listed techniques used in the poem in their opening paragraphs, for example 'The poet uses language to vividly portray...' or 'the poet uses imagery, metaphors etc'. Better candidates tailored their opening paragraphs/sentences to the terms of the question by referencing specific subject matter and offering an overview as to how the poem reflected elements of the question. Candidates then went on to explore apt techniques and quotations in relation to the question and the poem in the body of their response.

Some candidates wrote responses which were very speculative and which lost focus on what they were being asked to write on. Better candidates made frequent reference to the specific terms of the question and produced well-focused essays. The best answers considered the poem as a whole, and reflected on the development of meaning across the poem. By selecting key images and moments from the beginning, middle and end of the poem, the best essays were able to reflect on more complex development and more nuanced meanings in the poem. Linked to the exploration of key imagery, the best essays analysed the use of enjambement, end-stopped lines, caesura, rhythm, rhyme, metrical effects and stanzaic structure in relation to the question, specifically discussing *poetic* effects in relation to the question.

0408/23 'Keeping Quiet'

Question 1 (a)

In what ways does the poet create striking impressions of modern life?

The best responses picked up on the series of contrasts in the poem, as well as the sense of urgency denoted by the opening 'Now' as well as the use of the inclusive pronoun 'we'. Many candidates mentioned the relevance of everyday objects and experiences (such as 'engines' and 'clean clothes') in relation to the question.

Weaker candidates might have benefited from considering the structural elements of the poem, such as the verbal echoes of the concluding 'couplet' which links back to the opening pair of lines – but with significant differences. The best responses noted the shift to the second person as well as the sense of an imperative in the conclusion of the poem, hinting at a warning or possible educational purpose of the poem.

Question 1 (b)

How does the poet powerfully convey the benefits of slowing down the pace of life?

The best responses noted the sense of togetherness or universality of experience that 'slowing down the pace of life' might confer by invoking line 9: '*we would all be together*'.

Good responses explored the clusters of negative diction and the examples of negative experiences in relation to the question. One area which more candidates might have explored was the qualification of stanza 6 – that '*keeping quiet*' is distinct from '*total inactivity*'. The irony and futility of '*threatening ourselves with death*' was often discussed in detail and this led to thoughtful and perceptive answers when linked to further exemplification in the rest of the poem. The juxtapositions and impact of the penultimate verse were also carefully explored in the best responses, which chose quotations from across the poem and did not confine themselves to a few more obvious images.

The strongest candidates were those that discussed shifts in tone very securely and were alert to the significance of the title of the poem as they analysed the possible deeper meanings of the poem.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/31
Set Text 31

Key messages

Successful responses:

- Show a detailed knowledge of texts.
- Address the question explicitly.
- Support their views with relevant textual reference.
- Explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Use direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- Have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts.
- Narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than focus the response to the question.
- Make assertions which are not substantiated.
- Merely log or explain writers' techniques.
- Have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed the texts they had studied. The most popular this session were *Yerma*, *The Government Inspector* and the poetry anthology. More candidates opted to answer on two texts rather than choosing the same text for both sections. Centres need to remind candidates to put the question number in the margin, rather than simply labelling their responses A and B.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. The two most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set and a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Some of the least successful **Section B** answers restricted their range of reference to the extract printed with **Section A** questions, even where the **Section B** question instructed candidates not to use the extract printed in **Section A**. Candidates need to be familiar with the layout and rubric of the paper before they sit the examination.

The strongest answers showed an impressive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations to support their ideas. For **Section A** questions, the most successful responses explored the detail of the extracts with considerable sensitivity, using much well-selected reference. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text an extensive range of quotation which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. The weakest responses to **Section A** questions tracked the content of the extract without selecting relevant material with which to address the question.

The most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, such as 'memorably', 'powerful', 'dramatic', 'revealing', 'vividly' and 'significant'. There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. Again this session, in less successful responses candidates embarked on a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question. Paragraphs sometimes began with 'Another theme is...', regardless of the thrust of the question. Candidates should be told that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the

highest reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates understood the context of the extract, particularly the importance of Hatsue ‘the only young girl’ winning, then donating, the prize to Shinji’s mother as an apology for her father’s rude behaviour. The most successful responses charted the dramatic build-up of the competition resulting in the climax where Hatsue gives the prize to Shinji’s mother, resolving any conflict between them and revealing her selfless nature, thus making her an ideal bride for Shinji. The symbolic unity of Hatsue with Shinji and their links to nature and the sea, as well as their strength and determination, foreshadowing Shinji’s heroic swim in the climax of the novel were also explored.

The strongest responses explored the characterisation of Hatsue, a heroic protagonist, as an ideal Japanese woman through her physical strength and beauty, connection with nature and respect for her elders. Successful responses focused on the word ‘significant’ of the question: there was celebration of all that the island represented, in contrast to westernisation – so, not only the beauty and the power of human interaction with nature, but the unity displayed among the women. Several candidates drew attention to Mishima’s telling comment: ‘And it was in this same fashion that the politics of the island were always conducted’.

Less successful responses tended to offer superficial responses to the competition between Hatsue and Shinji’s mother rather than analysing key details or focusing on it being a ‘dramatic and significant moment’. There was often a tendency to paraphrase the passage, sometimes in isolation, with no hints of understanding the wider text.

Question 2

Yerma was the most popular text in **Section A**. Most candidates were able to contextualise the extract, with some understanding of the dramatic and unexpected ending where Yerma strangles Juan following him overhearing her conversation with the Pagan Woman.

Successful responses charted how Lorca created the dramatic tension from Juan been ‘listening’ to Yerma defend her honour with the pagan woman, through to the bitter exchange between Yerma and Juan with his blunt rejection of her ‘impossible dreams’. There were some differing responses to Juan’s attempts at intimacy here as tender and loving and were even critical of Yerma here, but the majority understood Yerma’s shock and rebuttal here leading to the dramatic, unexpected stage direction indicating that he ‘suffocates’. Nearly all candidates drew attention to Yerma’s final speech with successful candidates appreciating its impact on stage with her repeated cry ‘I’ve murdered my child!’ for audiences in 1930s Spain as well as contemporary audiences.

Less successful responses tended to work through the extract, considering the surface meanings of the interaction between Yerma and Juan ending with the murder without exploring how the writer has constructed such as powerful ending using various dramatic devices. Some candidates chose to simply list the stage directions ‘violently’ and ‘forcefully’ for example, asserting that they are powerful, but made no attempt to explore them in the extract.

The best candidates were able to contextualise the passage, focusing clearly on the ‘*powerfully dramatic ending*’ making salient links to the rest of the text to show why this was so dramatic. Yerma’s desperation for a child and the realisation this was never going to happen following Juan’s admission he’d never wanted children, her ‘*Impossible dreams*’, was explored as the trigger for her violent reaction and ultimate strangulation of Juan. Yerma’s dilemma was considered; never being able to have child as Juan did not want one and ‘societal pressures’, themes of honour, reputation, sanctity of marriage, preventing her from having a child through other means. There was close detail to the language and dialogue and the rising tension indicated not just by the dialogue but the stage directions, ‘*forcefully*’, ‘*violently*’, ‘*agitated*’ etc. Some commented on Juan’s sexual advances finding her ‘*beautiful*’ in the ‘*moonlight*’ finding this ironic as he had never appeared interested in sexual relationships, never responding to Yerma’s attempts to keep him home. Clearly, having finally established he did not want children took some sort of pressure off him. Most were

able to comment on the shock of the murder and realisation that she had murdered any chance of having a child.

Less successful responses retold the plot to this point then explained what was happening in the passage but most could understand that Yerma was never going to be able to have child now she had killed Juan. Candidates who worked through the passage did not always reach the end which prevent exploration of the most dramatic part of the text – Juan’s murder. Others did not comprehend the gravity of the situation suggesting it was family honour which would prevent her from having a child with someone else.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to contextualise the extract, with some understanding of the shocking attack on Precious Auntie’s wedding by the villainous character of Chang who caused her to become ‘a widow and an orphan in the same day’.

The most successful candidates responded perceptively to the impact of joy with tragedy, assimilating the word ‘shocking’ with the language and imagery of death and murder. Their responses traced the joy and anticipation of the wedding preparations in contrast to the devastating attack and murder of Precious Auntie’s almost-husband and father as revenge for her not accepting Chang’s hand in marriage, culminating in exploring Precious Auntie’s shocking reaction to the traumatic experience in the final sentence: ‘She tipped the ladle and swallowed.’

The most successful responses traced the various shocking occurrences in the extract with sensitivity such as realising Chang’s involvement in the attack; Precious Auntie seeing ‘her father lying in a ditch’ and the hearing the horrific ‘crack’ that ended Baby Uncle’s life; and the moving description of Precious Auntie ‘wild with grief’ harming herself.

Less successful responses tended to work through the extract, considering the surface meanings of the attack and its effect on Precious Auntie instead of analysis key moments in detail, or not focusing on what makes moments in the extract ‘shocking’. Surprisingly, a significant minority completely overlooked the final couple of sentences – or did not consider it shocking.

Question 4

Most candidates responded positively to this question, with the majority being able to contextualise the extract, understanding that both the major and his wife have been duped by Khlestakov, whom they believe to be a government inspector.

The most successful candidates explored how dialogue provides insight into the characters of the major and his wife. Most candidates’ responses gave a sense of audience through dramatic irony, relishing the impending fall that awaited these two with the contrast of reality when set against their fanciful and ridiculous dreams. For example, how the audience would find it humorous that the major boasts about not giving his ‘daughter in marriage to some common squirt’ when that is exactly what he is doing.

The strongest responses carefully traced what makes the dialogue a striking and dramatic characterisation of the major and his wife. These addressed Gogol’s satirical attack on corruption in 1830s Russia. This is exemplified in the major’s lengthy dialogue about corruption, when the constable enters, and the decadent lifestyle prevalent in St Petersburg during that time where the Major’s wife aspires to be part of the ‘crème de la crème’. A few noted the stereotypical and racist nature of the comment, ‘two-faced Jews’. The best candidates showed awareness of the text as performance and understood the writer’s intentions and dramatic impact of the scene.

Less successful responses tended to only consider the surface meaning of the dialogue between the major and his wife, giving simple character portraits of them, instead of analysing key dramatic aspects of the dialogue in detail, or not considering the ways dramatic devices are utilised to create an effect on the audience.

Question 5

Most candidates picked up the contrast between the gloom of the first part and the hope of the second. They understood that the speaker gains inspiration from an ‘aged thrush’ at night, in the dead of winter. Many grasped the metaphorical meaning of the ‘Century’s corpse’ referencing the end of a century and the ‘aged thrush’ heralding hope for the 1900s. They explored his depressing thoughts, stimulated as he ‘*leant upon a*

coppice gate’ and grasped how he becomes more hopeful in the volta when he hears the ‘aged thrush’ and the ‘ecstatic sound.’ These understood the speaker’s state of mind as he considered the landscape and weather reflecting his mood.

The most successful candidates explored poetic devices used to contrast the first and second half of the poem. There was consideration of how the melancholic tone at the start, using the motif of death (‘spectre-grey’, ‘corpse’, and ‘crypt’), alludes to the speaker’s depressed state of mind and the grim winter setting at the end a century, with reference to the effects of industrialisation. These responses recognised how the change in tone, marked by lyrical, religious imagery (‘evensong’ and ‘carolings’) announces the entrance of the ‘aged thrush’ as a ‘blessed Hope’ for both the speaker and the century to come. A few candidates compared Hardy’s use of the thrush in his ode with that of Keats in the Romantic tradition in his ‘Ode to a Nightingale’.

Less successful responses tended to respond superficially to the poem, considering how depressed the speaker appears at the start in contrast to the encouragement of the ‘thrush’ to have ‘some blessed Hope’ rather than analyses various poetic devices to ‘strikingly convey the speaker’s state of mind’. A minority of candidates unfortunately spent too long on the first part of the poem resulting in responses that did not even reference the thrush. Some focused too much on the social, industrial background with little understanding or focus on the question or close analysis of the text.

Question 6

Most candidates were able to contextualise the extract, understanding that the argument between the narrator and his school friend, Mark, triggered the conflict with his parents, particularly his mother.

Most successful responses sensitively traced the relational conflict between the narrator and his parents, particularly as the narrator distances himself from mother and, therefore, from his cultural heritage to fit in with his American peers. Notably the symbolic importance of the paper ‘water buffalo’ representing Chinese culture having the ‘air of life’ squeezed out of it, and the significance of this repeated motif as the mother tries to reconnect with her son at the end of the extract.

The most successful candidates explored the notion of identify through the cultural symbols of language (the significant difference between ‘love’ and ‘ai’), toys (the paper ‘water buffalo’ and ‘a full set of Star Wars action figures’) and foods (‘I pushed the chopsticks and bowl’ and ‘Mom learned to cook American style’) in the context of the narrator’s conflict with his parents.

Less successful responses tended to retell the narrative with occasional reflections on character behaviour. These typically considered the surface meaning of wanting to fit in with his America peers after being bullied, but did not offer a detailed exploration of the tension between the narrator and his parents and its significance.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates commented on the good relationship between Shinji and his mother, noting the many ways in which Shinji acts as a good son. They referred to Shinji’s hardworking nature and desire to provide for his family; his pride in giving his mother his paycheck in silence each month; his refusal to commit double suicide with Hatsue due to his filial duties; and his prayer for their well-being at the shrine. The most successful candidates were able to give more emphasis to Shinji’s mother, commenting on her life as a widow; her wish for a daughter to help her with the housework; her attempts to intervene on his behalf (with both the lighthouse keeper and Hatsue’s father) and her respect for Shinji as the male head of the household according to Japanese custom. Less successful candidates tended to focus exclusively on Shinji’s side of the relationship, however this was often still done quite well. In general, candidates tended to answer this question more thematically, giving less of a response to the ways Mishima uses language, structure and form.

Question 8

Most candidates focused on Juan’s characterisation in the play, noting that he is consistently depicted as ‘dry’ in comparison with Victor’s depictions which are bursting with life. Candidates were able to discuss Victor’s use as a foil character to display two contrasting models of masculinity. Most candidates paid particular attention to Juan’s statement that he likes ‘Sheep in the pen, women at home’, noting the

dehumanising language used by men to describe women. Some saw this as Juan treating Yerma as an animal rather than part of the tradition that women stayed at home to keep home and tend the children. More successful responses discussed the emphasis on male honour throughout the play and the way it prevents Yerma from achieving female honour or the gendered expectations of honourable behaviour in 1930s Spain. Successful responses also paid attention to Juan's role as a farmer, noting that he 'spreads his seed' in a literal sense but is not willing to metaphorically do the same. Less successful responses tended to focus on the gendered expectations of women, not making a detailed response to the role of men in the play.

Many responses focused on the role of men in married life, contrasting Juan and Victor. They explored the symbolism of water and fertility to develop their ideas and saw Victor as the ideal man, especially for Yerma.

Question 9

Very few candidates chose this question. Those that did tended to focus on the language barrier LuLing faces and paid little attention to other cultural clashes; the life she left behind in China, the process of emigration, or her secretiveness about her past. Successful responses often drew attention to the dinner scene, in which Art's children are disrespectful towards Chinese food and customs, and their dislike of hearing Mandarin at the dinner table. Less successful responses tended to exclusively focus on LuLing's struggle to learn English, giving occasional mention to Ruth's dislike of Chinese culture too.

Question 10

This question was a popular choice. Most candidates were able to respond well to this question, noting that Khlestakov's primary way of amusing the audience is through his audacious lies. Most candidates drew particular attention to his monologue about his life in St. Petersburg, noting that he seems to get carried away inventing more and more outrageous accolades that he has achieved. The most successful responses tended to pay close attention to Khlestakov's stage directions, noting the prevalence of slapstick comedy in his interactions with women. Successful responses also discussed his use of deception and tricks to attain material goods; his high opinion of himself; his increasingly brazen requests for money from the townsfolk; and the comic impact of his deception being revealed through the letter. The ridiculous flirting with Khlestakov by the Mayor's wife and 'competition' between daughter and mother was seen to be entertaining. Stronger candidates also focused on his hypocrisy, referring to comments such as 'I can not abide two faced people.'

Less successful responses tended to focus on the corruption displayed in the play, which often led candidates to discuss the Mayor and his officials rather than Khlestakov. They often focused too much on the Mayor, although this could be relevant since, like the Mayor, he was 'spinning a fine web.' Candidates who focused mainly on Gogol's exposure of corruption in Russia were unable to score high marks.

Question 11

Successful responses discussed the report-like nature of the poem's structure; the speaker's excitement; and the size of the whale, conveyed through the inability to see the whole creature at once, and the comparative size of the dorsals. The best responses were able to quote accurately, engage with the sheer amazement conveyed by the poet and appreciate both form and structure. They understood the performance the whales put on for their audience as they '*break the surface*' and '*disappeared underwater*'. Very few candidates focused on the first stanza of the poem. Those who did commented on the difference in tone from the remainder of the poem. Some referred to the use of the dash in '– and we did' to draw attention to the building excitement which he was experiencing.

Strong responses commented on the scientific aspects, comparing the whales with the vessel and the use of 'exact' measurements. In doing so they could make comparison with nature and the fact that despite the advancement of humanity, Mother Nature was still in control. One candidate made an effective comment on the humbling and enigmatic aspect of the ending as the whales vanish.

Many responses seemed to put too much emphasis on a personal response, discussing their own feelings about seeing nature or the need to protect it, rather than rooting their discussion in the text itself. Few responses addressed the writer's use of language, though many addressed his use of form and structure. In some cases, there was simply a summary of the poem and very few textual references. There was often misunderstanding, for example some failed to grasp that the simile '*grey as slate*' was comparing the colour of a stone/tile to the same grey as the whales.

Question 12

Responses to this question were often brief and stayed relatively surface level in their analysis. These consisted of summaries of the events of the short story, with some misunderstanding the protagonist's emotional journey. More successful candidates explored Annie's journey from dislike for her home to growing nostalgia and a fear of leaving, through to her eventual knowledge that she must leave to become her own person. These saw the pathos of the ending, where Annie sees her parents on the shore. Less successful responses candidates believed that the protagonist's parents were abusive monsters that she hated throughout the text.

Stronger candidates focused on the mixed feelings which Annie was experiencing. These could be traced back to the beginning of the story where Annie simply stated, 'My name is Annie John'. She had the same names as her mother, and this led to her feeling that she lacked a personal identity. Stronger candidates then developed this in terms of how she then had to strive to establish herself as a person, citing references such as 'made with her/his own hands'. Some commented on her being trapped and desiring to escape.

Many responses focused on the breakfast and its celebratory nature. Stronger candidates commented on the ambiguity of this event using the reference 'eating with a smile on my face and disgust in my heart'. Weaker responses simply commented that she did not want to hear the sounds of her parents. In discussing the walk to the jetty, some candidates simply reiterated what she passed whereas stronger responses focused on how she felt about some of the places and that her 'heart burst with joy at the thought of never having to see any of this again'.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/32
Set Text 32

Key messages

Successful responses:

- Show a detailed knowledge of texts.
- Address the question explicitly.
- Support their views with relevant textual reference.
- Explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Use direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- Have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts.
- Narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than focus the response to the question.
- Make assertions which are not substantiated.
- Merely log or explain writers' techniques.
- Have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed the texts they had studied. The most popular this session was *The Sound of Waves*, with two thirds of the candidates answering on this text for both sections. Equal numbers chose the anthology of poetry, *Yerma* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, with very few on the short stories and *The Government Inspector*. Centres need to remind candidates to put the question number in the margin, rather than simply labelling their responses A and B.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. The two most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set and a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Some of the least successful **Section B** answers restricted their range of reference to the extract printed with **Section A** questions, even where the **Section B** question instructed candidates not to use the extract printed in **Section A**. Candidates need to be familiar with the layout and rubric of the paper before they sit the examination.

The strongest answers showed an impressive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations to support their ideas. For **Section A** questions, the most successful responses explored the detail of the extracts with considerable sensitivity, using much well-selected reference. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text an extensive range of quotation which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. The weakest responses to **Section A** questions tracked the content of the extract without selecting relevant material with which to address the question.

The most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, such as 'memorably', 'powerfully', 'dramatic', 'vividly' and 'significant'. There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. Again this session, in less successful responses candidates embarked on a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question. Paragraphs sometimes began with 'Another theme is...', regardless of the thrust of the question. Candidates should be told that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest

reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates recognised the importance of the antagonists Chiyoko and Yasuo meeting on the boat, journeying from Tokyo to the island. They explored it in terms of what it reveals of the differences between city and island life, and in the context of Shinji and Hatsue's newfound love. The most successful responses charted the introduction and characterisation of Chiyoko, her interaction with Yasuo and his characterisation, and their roles as foils to Shinji and Hatsue, foreshadowing them attempting to sabotage the latter's relationship.

The most successful responses explored possible interpretations of Mishima's intentions, for example Chiyoko and Yasuo as representatives of the negative influence of Westernisation on traditional Japanese values. This included Chiyoko's materialistic possessions (her 'Boston bag'), her 'unsociable' attitude towards other islanders, her 'gloomy' disposition, and viewing herself as 'unattractive' due to western influences of city life in Tokyo. Similarly, such candidates explored how Yasuo, with his 'leather jacket', may also represent materialistic western masculine ideals. Some considered how this portrayal, with his attitude to Chiyoko, was very similar to the moment later in the novel where he attempts to rape Hatsue.

Some of the very best focused upon how Chiyoko created for herself a life based upon appearance and image, which was at variance to the person she really proved herself to be. They were invariably the candidates who reflected perceptively on the language used by Yasuo. Responses to Chiyoko varied in that some were sympathetic to her, feeling so insecure and isolated, whilst others saw her as opinionated and arrogant – and thus, an ideal match for Yasuo.

Less successful responses tended to consider a more superficial response to Chiyoko and Yasuo meeting. Other less successful responses spent too much time considering certain aspects, such as Chiyoko's lack of self-confidence, at the expense of other significant parts of the extract. There was some confusion regarding her relationship with her father and who is to blame for her lack of confidence and concern with physical appearance. The comparison she draws between Yasuo and Shinji, and the evidence of her feelings for Shinji was sometimes missed, possibly because it was placed at the end of the passage.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to contextualise the extract, understanding the role of Maria as a foil to Yerma. Unlike Maria who is in a fruitful, loving marriage, they saw how Yerma is in a fruitless, loveless marriage exemplified by her argument with Juan in the previous scene.

The most successful candidates traced the deteriorating relationship between Yerma and Maria through the use of dramatic devices such as their dialogue and stage directions. Such candidates also analysed, in detail, the juxtaposition of 'flowers' and 'thorns' representing fertility and the results of infertility.

The most successful responses explored the relationship between Maria and Yerma as representative of expected gender roles in 1930s rural Spain. Such responses also traced, in sensitive detail, Lorca's utilisation of linguistic and dramatic devices to reveal Yerma's deteriorating mental state, 'every day I dream more and hope less', evoking sympathy for her from the audience. The strongest responses considered Maria's attempts to comfort Yerma and reassure her that she has 'some purpose in life', considering the anger this creates.

Less successful responses tended to consider the surface meaning of Yerma's inability to conceive in contrast to Maria who, according to the stage directions, 'comes in holding (her) baby'. Such responses failed to comment enough on the methods Lorca uses, particularly dramatic devices, to achieve his purpose. In a passage with so much to explore, a significant number of candidates did not refer to Yerma's relationship with Juan and his sisters, and the way the water image is used differently at this stage to describe Yerma's desire to get rid of his sisters.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to contextualise the extract, understanding the superstitious actions of the Ghost Catcher following Precious Auntie's suicide and Luling's emotional response. They understood – to varying degrees – why it was so important to Mother and Father that the ghost should be trapped.

The most successful candidates understood the fraudulent behaviour of the Ghost Catcher and the dramatic irony of the family paying for their 'sincerity'. Such candidates explored the memorable and dramatic depiction of the various rituals, particularly the frightening 'shout and leap' towards Luling.

Stronger answers sensitively explored Luling's emotional experience of discovering Precious Auntie's identity to the terror of thinking the Ghost Catcher is going to 'squeeze' her into a jar, culminating in the guilt of the last sentence: 'I was her traitor'.

Less successful responses tended to work through the extract superficially, without considering why the extract is memorable, such as not recognising the significance of the Ghost Collector being a fraud and not considering how frightening the Ghost Catcher was to Luling.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to contextualise the extract, understanding its pivotal significance in alerting the audience to the characterisation of Khlestakov before his mistaken identity.

The most successful candidates explored how the writer uses dialogue, stage directions and Khlestakov's soliloquys to reveal how Khlestakov is portrayed as a gluttonous, idle, gambler.

The most successful responses considered ways that Gogol uses the character of Khlestakov to critique aspects of Russian society such as decadent living and gluttony. They found humour in the contrast between his current penury – and the frustration it brings him – and his vivid picture of future success, giving examples of his delusions of grandeur. The very best identified this moment as significant in being the last time the audience sees the real Khlestakov before his mistaken identity and explored how his two soliloquys provide an insight into his real nature. They considered the way he addresses the waiter, using 'my dear chap' and 'my dear fellow' to create familiarity and manipulate him into providing food.

Less successful responses tended to superficially trace the dialogue between Khlestakov and waiter. They explained what each character says and does without commenting on its significance nor how Khlestakov is 'vividly' portrayed.

Question 5

Most candidates were able to contextualise the poem. They understood – to varying degrees – the writer's protest against humans endangering the natural environment, in particular that of the wilds of Australia, through colonisation and industrialisation.

Successful responses explored the writer's use of poetic techniques to convey anger at the destruction of the natural environment. They referred to similes relating to predators such as the 'eaglehawk' and 'tigersnake' fighting back against humanity's destruction. They understood that the writer wants Australia to remain wild and dangerous and to fight back against the human conqueror.

The most successful responses explored the writer's rage through the anaphora of 'die' and examples of the natural world illuminating what humans are doing to themselves 'we are the conquerors and self-poisoners' ending with the poignant last line: 'we are ruined by the things we kill'. They recognised that the poem shows humans corrupting nature and reaping what they sow.

Less successful responses referenced the poet being angry yet found it challenging to communicate how she used various poetic techniques, such as the semantic field of death, to convey her anger and what she was angry about. Some spent a considerable proportion of their answer on the context of industrialisation, sometimes forcing references to fit their thesis. These responses gave little attention to the writer's depiction of the natural world which is at the heart of this poem.

Question 6

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

Section B

Question 7

This was by far the most popular question chosen by candidates. Most candidates were able to make a good response, often paying particular attention to Shinji's bravery in attaching the ship to the buoy; his selflessness when praying at the shrine; his respectfulness to Hatsue; his hardworking nature; the use of Yasuo as a foil character; and Shinji's connection to nature. The most successful responses tended to explicitly comment on Mishima's historical and ideological worldview, explaining how each example fit into his own beliefs about what made an admirable man, rather than assuming that these qualities were universally admired. For instance, some candidates often drew a link between the ostensibly admirable trait of Shinji's 'well-built' physique and Mishima's own career as a bodybuilder. Less successful candidates tended to focus too heavily on Shinji's connection to nature, spending much of their essay discussing links between the two without necessarily explaining why this made him an admirable character.

The capacity to quote considerable textual detail accurately was a feature of the most successful responses. There was so much to admire in a character who candidates correctly identified as having the qualities of Mishima's 'ideal man'. His physical appearance and physique, a testament to a healthy, hardworking life as a fisherman, was explored. His devotion to his mother and brother, saving his hard-earned money for his brother to experience a trip to the mainland he had been unable to enjoy and concealed delight in handing over his pay packets to his mother was noted. His love for the island and prayers at the shrine for the islanders and his family, with the guilt of having dared to wish for a wife such as Hatsue was explored and supported. Many candidates explored the development of his relationship with Hatsue, seeing the novel as a 'coming of age' text and linking this relationship with his connection with nature. A common quote cited was 'her lips tasted like sea weed' and there was frequently a focus on his meetings with her. His respect for Hatsue not wanting him to see her naked was contrasted with Yasuo's attempted rape, and candidates' admiration for Shinji was expressed through their delight in Terukichi's eventual acceptance.

Many responses took the approach of contrasting Shinji's poverty, lack of interest in material goods and closeness to nature (which ultimately rewarded him) to his foil, Yasuo with the occasional danger of some candidates spending too long on Yasuo. Shinji's humanity and courage in accepting to tie the rope to the buoy with the struggle against the sea was sensitively explored. A common quote was that Yasuo's 'quivered' but that Shinji had the courage to go and help others stating 'I'll do it'. Less successful responses tended to add this on at the end – often in a narrative manner and spent a good proportion of their answer on Shinji's physical attributes.

Question 8

Many candidates interpreted the question as requiring an analysis of Yerma and Juan's relationship rather than an exploration of marriage more broadly in the play. The most successful responses were thus those that considered the marriages of other characters in the play. They noted that Maria's marriage provides an idyllic picture of what marriage was 'supposed' to look like in 1930s Spain, as she becomes pregnant quickly and finds happiness with her husband. There was a focus on the repressive, restrictive and conservative nature of the society, many commenting on the patriarchal role of men and the Catholic Church. Some candidates attempted to connect this with Lorca's own situation, seeing his depiction of marriage and relationships as a means of protest. Most candidates provided some direct textual support, even if it was only 'sheep in the pens: women in the house' with stronger responses seeing Yerma's reply 'If only that home were not a grave' as foreshadowing the end of the play. The most successful responses also discussed the Pagan Woman and the Second Woman's view of marriage, offering opinions contrasting 1930s Catholic expectations here. Successful responses explored the motif of water to denote fertility, which allowed them to demonstrate their close reading skills. Less successful responses tended to focus exclusively on Yerma's infertility, briefly linking this back to the question at the end of each paragraph.

Yerma's obsession with having a child, and Juan's lack of sympathy for her childlessness, painted a decidedly negative view of married life where a woman's self-worth was dependent on her ability to conceive and have children. Most candidates could sympathise with Yerma feeling 'useless' and the dramatic impact of the final scene when her name/barren is openly used. It was noted how Juan in an inebriated state finally attempted physical contact. The dramatic impact of his admission that he never wanted to have children was explored, as was the lack of trust in a marriage where two people did not communicate openly or understand each other. Juan's selfishness, resulting in her strangling him to death, was, for a few candidates, evidence that marriage had to be based on mutual love and respect, something she might have achieved with Victor.

Successful responses often focused on Juan and Yerma in turn. Comments on Juan included those made by the Pagan Woman who compared him to ‘a lizard in the sun’. They also cited his paleness and white face, sometimes comparing his stature and colour with that of Victor whom Yerma truly loved but could not marry. Textual references used to discuss her loss of identity and frustration at suffocating within in the marriage were, for example ‘the moon searching for itself in an empty sky’, ‘just give me room to breathe’ and how she longed to ‘breathe a mountain of fire.’ Some stronger candidates commented on the quotation ‘sheep in the pen..’ in terms of Yerma’s reply ‘If only that home were not a grave’ as foreshadowing the end of the play. In terms of societal expectations, more successful responses went beyond the basic comments and explored the fact that she was in a marriage arranged by her father and that she was ‘with him as he is my only hope’ and ‘family honour comes first’.

Question 9

Most candidates chose to comment on the description of Ruth and her mother being born in contrasting dragon years which made them ‘the same but for different reasons’, noting that their similarities are one of the primary causes of conflict between them. Most candidates discussed the dynamics of the relationship, seeing it as a clash between Ruth’s American identity and Luling’s Chinese upbringing. They recognised their inability to communicate effectively as due to Luling’s poor command of English and hidden past and to Ruth’s avoiding her Chinese heritage and language. The most successful responses were able to skilfully draw out the themes of silence and communication, linking this to intergenerational trauma and the keeping of secrets. Successful candidates also engaged with the running theme of suicide and the transmission of suicidal thoughts across generations.

Less successful responses tended to focus heavily on Ruth’s childhood conflict with Luling without considering the link between these clashes and Luling’s own conflicts with Precious Auntie as a child. Very few candidates made mention of Luling’s dementia except in passing. Weaker responses adopted a narrative based approach primarily focusing on the cultural differences between Ruth and Luling seeing how Luling forced Chinese culture on Ruth when she was young, particularly the food and the writing. They tended to focus on Ruth’s childhood, referring to a limited number of moments such as the time Ruth is injured and LuLing shows concern and pride. Occasionally, less successful candidates would confuse Ruth and Luling’s experiences with their respective mothers, and a few based their arguments on the events of the passage in **Section A**.

Successful responses charted how the relationship changes to one of mutual love and understanding where Luling could say sorry for the perceived suffering she had caused Ruth, though she could not remember the specifics. There were many sensitive responses which sympathised with both women – Ruth for her fraught childhood and fears, for example thinking herself pregnant because she was not taught the basics of life, instead being an expert on ghosts and signs. The revelations in her mother’s manuscript such as Luling’s traumatic childhood and life with Precious Auntie, were seen as cathartic. Ruth’s ability to move on with her life with Art and to become a writer herself were seen as evidence that Ruth was finally able to make sense of her relationship with her mother and move on. Much was made of Ruth’s astute use of the sand box to obtain what she wanted, including the move to San Francisco whilst her cruelty in her diary entries, knowing her mother would read them, was seen as one of the lowest points in their relationship. A particularly strong candidate commented on the symbolism of a phrase from Precious Auntie’s manuscript ‘a magic thread to mend a quilt’ as summing up Ruth and her mother’s relationship. This was taken in conjunction with Ruth’s comment about being ‘free of shooting stars’ as representative of the change in their relationship.

Question 10

Most candidates commented on the Mayor’s corruption, his poor treatment of the shopkeepers and his greed as ways of showing his despicable nature. Some found it more difficult to analyse his amusing qualities, although many enjoyed the way he is so easily taken in by Khlestakov, getting his comeuppance when his daughter’s marriage and their move to St Petersburg come to nothing. More successful responses commented on Gogol’s use of dramatic irony to mock the Mayor and use of stage directions to create slapstick comedy. The strongest explicitly linked the comedic elements of the play with the Mayor’s despicable characteristics, demonstrating how his greed and ambition led to humorous situations later on in the play in which he looks foolish. For instance, candidates noted that the Mayor’s early corruption in ordering the postmaster to open all outgoing letters leads to his humiliation when Khlestakov’s letter is read out in front of the town. They explored the drama and audience reaction to this moment, recognising his downfall comes before an actual Government Inspector is about to call. Many successful responses referred to his hypocrisy, quoting ‘I am a devout churchgoer’ and citing the flogging of the widow which he ordered and denied saying, ‘It was not me, I swear to God: she flogged herself’. He was considered despicable

because he always put himself first, right from the moment where the inspector's visit was announced and never considered others – even his own daughter.

Less successful responses tended to focus on the Mayor's despicable qualities and state that they were also comedic without necessarily explaining the link between the two. They often explained what he said and did, without identifying why or how these were despicable. Some responses focused more on the actions of other characters and attempted to link these back to the Mayor, creating answers which did not really respond to the question being asked.

Question 11

The challenge for many candidates in **Section B**, and particularly with poetry, is accurate recall of the text to support ideas and for close exploration of the language and way the poet achieves effects.

Responses to this question showed the greatest contrast in quality. The most successful candidates showed an impressive memory of the poem, tending to go through the poetic devices used in each line from start to finish rather than approaching the question thematically as is normally the case in **Section B**. This linear approach was acceptable given the poem's structural shift from Winter to Spring. They commented on the change from Winter to Spring, noting the frost on the ground and the sound of the birds.

The strongest responses were characterised by insightful personal responses to the poem in addition to their memory of the poet's use of language, structure and form. Successful candidates paid particular attention to the line 'June in her eyes, in her heart January', noting the chiasmic structure and symbolism used to convey the disinterest of the speaker's lover. Less successful responses tended to misunderstand the meaning of the poem, missing the relationship between the speaker and his lover. They focused a brief essay entirely on this one line with the common misconception that the woman no longer loved him rather than this being unrequited love, believing that she had never loved him.

There was often too much of the poet's background given in a lengthy introduction, followed by straightforward summary and/or paraphrase of the poem. In these answers, there was surface understanding of the text e.g. '*dead swallow*' was literally winter's cruelty rather than spring being a time of rebirth. Some attempts to explore single words or phrases were less successful when the context was not given. For example, '*benumbed earth*', '*To melt that marble ice*', '*heart congeal'd*' and '*Scalding*' were explained with no sense of the speaker's thoughts and feelings. In slightly stronger responses, there was a basic understanding that his 'lover' did not reciprocate his love and was cold, even though the weather was warm and nature was alive again.

In contrast, stronger responses offered a clear understanding of the symbolism of the end of winter and rebirth in spring and the contrast between the speaker's mood and his love interest. There was understanding of the personification of winter with '*Her snow-white robes*' and his joy in nature with '*the long'd for May*' and the despair that it did not bring a change in heart of his 'love'. There was critical understanding of form and structure, rhyme scheme and the use of punctuation to indicate a change in mood for example. '*Now all things smile: only my love does lower*'.

Many commented on 'the earth has lost/Her snow-white robe' not only in terms of it being an indication that Spring was close, but the personification of the earth as female linking to his lover. Stronger responses commented on the thawing of winter in terms of the relationship, citing references such as 'the warm sun thaws the benumber earth' and 'Nor hath the scalding noonday sun the power/to melt that marble ice'. Some considered this a representative of his frustration. There were also comments on the tender aspect of the 'cuckoo' and the 'bee'. Some of the strongest responses commented on the 'fireside' with the flames perhaps representing glimmers of hope in the relationship.

Question 12

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/33
Set Text 33

Key messages

Successful responses:

- Show a detailed knowledge of texts.
- Address the question explicitly.
- Support their views with relevant textual reference.
- Explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Use direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- Have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts.
- Narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than focus the response to the question.
- Make assertions which are not substantiated.
- Merely log or explain writers' techniques.
- Have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed the text they had studied, *The Sound of Waves*. Centres need to remind candidates to put the question number in the margin, rather than simply labelling their responses A and B.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. The two most common problems arose from a lack of focus on the question set and a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Some of the least successful **Section B** answers restricted their range of reference to the extract printed with **Section A** questions, even where the **Section B** question instructed candidates not to use the extract printed in **Section A**. Candidates need to be familiar with the layout and rubric of the paper before they sit the examination.

The strongest answers showed an impressive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations to support their ideas. For **Section A** questions, the most successful responses explored the detail of the extracts with considerable sensitivity, using much well-selected reference. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text an extensive range of quotation which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. The weakest responses to **Section A** questions tracked the content of the extract without selecting relevant material with which to address the question.

The most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, such as 'strikingly.' There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. Again this session, in less successful responses candidates embarked on a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question. Paragraphs sometimes began with 'Another theme is...', regardless of the thrust of the question. Candidates should be told that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

This paper had a small entry. It is possible to make useful comment only on the questions below.

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates commented on Shinji's reaction to the news of Yasuo being at the party with Hatsue, seeing it as a source of tension. There was much empathy for him not being invited due to his low status.

Successful candidates explored the way the writer creates a melancholy mood here as Shinji moves in the darkness of the evening, looking up at the lights of the party. Shinji has barely met Hatsue, yet his sense of longing is suggested by the language highlighting her beauty and gentle nature.

Successful candidates also explored Shinji's faith and piety. He prays 'in his heart', rather than simply going through the motions of a ritual. They commented on how readers share this intimate scene, with the ellipsis allowing us to pause and reflect on Shinji's humble, selfless requests. After all the prayers for his family and the community, comes the personal prayer for a 'good-natured, beautiful bride...say someone like Terukichi's returned daughter...' Several commented that he dares not use her name as it would be too presumptuous.

Some successful candidates observed that although Shinji fears he may have been wrong to ask such a selfish prayer, the wind's orchestra, as one candidate described the onomatopoeia and auditory effect of the description here, differs. The star-filled sky was sometimes seen as offering hope too and candidates commented that mood has lightened significantly from the start of the extract. These candidates noted that Shinji has the approval of the sea-god and Mishima.

Less successful candidates explained what Shinji says and does in the extract, using their knowledge of him elsewhere in the novel to comment on his character. Stronger responses explored how the language and structure, for example of the prayer, 'strikingly' portrays the change in Shinji. Less successful responses focused on his physical strength seen in his ability to run up two hundred steps, and kindness in giving twenty yen. There was some confusion about him not being invited to the party, for example one response stated that Shinji was leaving the party at the start of the extract, having danced with Hatsue.

Question 7

Most candidates showed some understanding of Terukichi as a wealthy, hard-working and self-made man. They saw these qualities as being worthy of admiration and respect.

Responses focused largely on Terukichi's treatment of Hatsue. Many felt he was cruel to give her away for adoption as a child. They focused on his response to Hatsue and Shinji's relationship, in particular his treatment of her once the rumours circulated. Terukichi was either seen as overprotective, and even cruel, in not listening to her or as trying to protect his daughter.

A few more successful responses referred to Terukichi's unreasonable behaviour in refusing to see Shinji's mother. More balanced responses whilst finding little to admire or respect in him, did draw attention to the fact that he does develop as a character who relents as he initiates the test for Shinji and Hatsue.

Less successful responses were largely descriptive and narrative in approach, rather than analysing the way Mishima encourages the reader to consider Terukichi. Responses lacked the range of textual reference, with many using only his approval of Shinji's 'get up and go'.

The least successful responses offered little more than a very short character sketch with limited knowledge of the text and no supporting textual reference.