

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Successful responses will focus on authors' choices of language and literary methods, and the effects these might have on a reader or audience.
- Responses which only recount knowledge of the content of texts and what subjects they explore are not successful.
- Specific references and quotations are needed to support points in essays. This should be particularly remembered for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Successful essays develop a line of argument in response to the question, developing points to a conclusion.
- Answers to **(b)** passage-based questions should examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in great detail.

General comments

Examiners were pleased to read many subtle and probing essays in response to the questions on the papers. Many answers showed a thoughtful exploration of the concerns of the texts and, crucially, of the effects of the methods the writers had chosen to communicate their ideas. There was some really observant and precise discussion of the language, imagery and structures used in poetry, prose and drama. The strongest answers recognise that such careful choices are not the reserve of poets and it is just as important to look closely at the writing of short stories, novels and plays. It is also crucial to show how such choices of language and the use of methods convey the developing meaning of the text; focusing on words, phrases or images abstracted from their context has little value.

It was noted during this series that a number of candidates had relied very heavily for their understanding and interpretation, particularly of poems, on a few internet sources and had taken those opinions as definitive judgements. This led to some narrow and skewed readings, where candidates would have been better advised to look carefully at the texts themselves and consider their own responses.

Comments on specific questions

1. Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** The question on the presentation of the natural world gave candidates a wide choice of poems to use, with 'Out, Out-', 'Mowing', 'Home Burial', 'After Apple Picking', 'The Road Not Taken', 'Birches', 'An Encounter', 'The Wood-Pile' and 'Two Look At Two' being among the most popular. However, having chosen appropriate poems, many candidates drifted from the question and did not focus on the presentation of the natural world, instead writing a general essay about the poems chosen. Others focused on the human being at the centre of the poem. More successful responses avoided narrative accounts and focused explicitly on the question and considered how Frost presents elements of the natural world through his choices of language and imagery, whether those elements are snow, fallen leaves, trees or forests. From these close observations of the poetry they were able to move on to Frost's attitude to nature which becomes apparent from the way he presents it. There were interesting examples of essays which looked at his presentation of trees, in a poem such as 'Birches', and compared this with the telegraph pole, a denuded tree, in 'An Encounter'. There was interesting work too on the presentation of the fundamental forces of nature pushed to their limits by humankind in 'There Are Roughly Zones.'
- (b)** The opening of 'The Black Cottage' was a very popular option, though not many candidates acknowledged that the extract was the start of a longer poem. Many answers offered simple narrative summaries, often incorporating errors, such as that someone has been renovating the

cottage because it has been 'freshly painted', not noticing that this has been done by a 'shower' of rain and the line is metaphoric. Slightly stronger answers commented on the mournful associations of 'black' and noted the 'weathered' appearance and secluded position in order to discuss the cottage's isolation and neglect, often linked with the death of its occupant. The strongest answers considered the whole extract carefully, noting the role of the guiding minister and the listening speaker and how the conversational tone reveals not just the history of the cottage, but through it, the family of the occupant and the attitudes and ideals of the American Civil War.

2. Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, though religion is a central concern of Jennings' poetry. Though some chose appropriate poems, such as '*To a Friend with a Religious Vocation*', '*In Praise of Creation*' and '*Harvest and Consecration*', many answers did not progress beyond giving an account of the poems chosen. Stronger answers were able to show how religious faith and religious doubt are expressed through precise choices of language and carefully controlled metrical and rhyming patterns.
- (b) Several candidates were aware of Jennings' own medical history, though essays which allowed that history to dominate over a careful examination of the language of the poem were not successful. A few responses were able to place the poem in the context of the '*Sequence in Hospital*' with a grasp of the development of the wider text. The subtlety of Jennings' rhyme is such that many candidates asserted that the poem does not rhyme, even, in some cases, having listed the rhyme scheme. Strong answers considered the question's focus on the 'patient's state of mind' and looked at the shifts and developments which demonstrate the speaker's mental state. They noted the uncertainty of the opening question and the first stanza's examination of, and final subjugation to fear. The nihilism of the second stanza, with its focus on 'Noting' in the fourth line, was noted, before the shift marked by 'yet' at the beginning of the final stanza. The imagery of the 'shoots' was explored and the movement back towards life. Strong answers noted that the final phrase, 'Yet I am not the same', is a crucial one to show the changes in the patient's state of mind.

3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) Candidates explored the expression of feelings of grief in poems like Jonson's '*On My First Daughter*', Lewis' '*Song*', Monck's '*Verses Written on her Deathbed*' and Wyatt's '*I Find No Peace*'. Often candidates showed a good knowledge of the poems but were less secure in selecting and directing that knowledge towards the wording of the question; often the answers progressed no further than describing the content of the poems. Stronger responses noted the form of the chosen poems, and how the development through structure mirrored the development of ideas. Such answers also looked carefully at the poets' choices of language and imagery used to present emotional depths.
- (b) '*The Migrant*' was an enormously popular option with a wide range of responses. The strongest were carefully observant of Hendriks' language and structure, looking at how the perspective on the migrant woman develops through the poem. They noted the detached point of view, observing the migrant, with the repeated use of the pronoun 'she', and the consistent use of the diction of travel: 'voyage', 'passage', 'travelled', 'transit', 'departure', 'movement', 'journey' and 'boarding'. Some commented that this motif of constant movement is also reflected in the varied, drifting stanzas, varying between end-stopped lines and enjambment. The disappointments for the migrant were noted, for example the hope that she is 'home' and 'Rooted and securely settled', noting the effects of the metaphor, before it is 'broken' that she is 'Committed' to further travel. This balance is also key to the penultimate stanza and many candidates responded with informed sympathy to the depiction of a wandering, stateless person, uncertain of destination, often putting that into the contemporary context of refugees and migration. The last stanza occasionally caused some confusion; the most successful answers noted a shift in perspective from 'she' to 'We', placing the speaker in the shoes of another passenger in the airport on a regular journey with friends or family, distanced from the migrant who is 'unutterably lonely'. Some interpretations saw the possibilities of seeing within the poem a metaphor for life, with the 'gate for *Embarking Passengers*' representing death. Several candidates, noting that Hendriks is a Jamaican poet, assumed the poem must be about slavery and imposed this interpretations solely on the poem without reading it carefully and responding to its language and expression, which led to truncated, limited readings.

4. Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

- (a) The importance of Moushumi was widely recognised, though candidates who only offered a character summary, or used Moushumi's character to direct their essay at Gogol, were not successful. Better answers considered Lahiri's handling of Moushumi, delaying her full entrance in the novel after her brief appearance at Gogol's 14th birthday party. They considered the author's portrayal of Moushumi's cosmopolitan background, indicating her personal and cultural independence, and ways she is presented as a contrast with Gogol's previous girlfriends, especially Maxine. Very impressive were a number of answers which were able to use precise references and quotations to support the idea that Lahiri's presentation of Moushumi often prefigures her instability as a spouse and the fragility of her relationship with Gogol.
- (b) Most candidates recognised the contrast Lahiri creates between Ashoke's and Ashima's experiences in this passage, but the extract repaid careful attention and those who looked in detail at the writing were able to construct very fine essays. Such responses noted the suggestion of aspiration in the description of Ashoke's job as everything he had 'dreamed of' and noted the sense of beauty and harmony created throughout the first paragraph, with 'thrill', 'joy', 'sweeping view', 'pleasant days', 'melody of bells' and the 'sun-filled' library. There were some suggestions, with justification, that Lahiri presents Ashoke as rather self-absorbed, failing to notice his wife's less happy situation. While the contrast between the characters was noted by most, really sharp answers pinned it down to details of the writing, noting that Ashima's 'wishes' for a different position, contrasting with Ashoke's 'dream', and the library is used by both. While Ashoke sees his son's name and takes an interest in international affairs, Lahiri depicts Ashima taking Gogol to 'children's story hour', writing letters to her mother and reading Bengali books, showing her reluctance to engage in her American life. The repetition of 'no', highlighting what she misses, was picked up by many. Many also noted the beginning of her involvement in the international community by making and selling samosas. One or two interesting essays looked at Lahiri's choices of verbs, contrasting Gogol's confident 'run' with Ashoke's and Ashima's less certain 'wanders'.

5. Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) Most candidates attempting this question recognised the importance of respect and reputation to the New York society at the centre of the novel. Several answers listed character in order to identify who had respect and who did not and considered the value of reputation within society. Many contrasted Bertha Dorset with Lily, acknowledging that Bertha's affairs are widely known but Wharton shows that she still commands respect and a surface reputation, while Lily is undone by baseless rumour about her own reputation. Some answers considered the role of Simon Rosedale, who possesses the wealth to achieve reputation and respect but is always held back because of his race. A very few thoughtful answers considered the moral implications of the terms 'respect' and 'reputation' and contrasted these for what passes as respect and reputation within New York society, thus demonstrating ways in which Wharton exposes the morally corrupt values of that society.
- (b) The passage produced some interesting personal responses, taking different views of Lily's situation. Many answers were alert to the ways in which the passage highlights Wharton's criticisms of society and the commodification of marriage and there was some interesting comment on Wharton's use of Carrie Fisher as a relatively minor character giving a different perspective. The variation in response came when discussing Lily's reactions to Carrie Fisher's suggestions, with some interpreting her 'faint laugh', 'increasing amusement' and 'incredulous gesture' as signs of superciliousness towards Mrs Fisher and a refusal to take her situation and her friend's help seriously. More persuasive were those responses which argued for Lily's attempted detachment and her inability to accept a husband she does not feel affection for, despite the precariousness of her financial position. Thus both George Dorset and the idea of breaking up a marriage for her own security are 'odious' to Lily, whereas Rosedale remains a clear possibility, even though his admiration is 'offensively evident'. Strong candidates picked up on this and were able to refer to Lily's later interview with Rosedale. Strong answers were able to comment carefully on Wharton's blend of dialogue, narration, and insight into Lily's mind provided in the passage.

6. Stories of Ourselves

- (a) The question on a sense of threat was very popular and nearly every answer featured *'The Lemon Orchard'*, which usually proved to be an excellent choice. It was paired with such stories as *'The Signalman'*, *'The Yellow Wall Paper'*, *'Meteor'*, *'Games at Twilight'* and Lim's *'Journey'*. Less successful responses took a narrative approach and summarised the threats evident in the stories, but many candidates were able to focus on ways in which the writers made those threats clear to the reader. With *'The Lemon Orchard'* there was often focus on setting, details of clothing, dialogue and direct reference to weaponry la Guma's use of an uncertain ending also continues the threat. Setting was also key to discussion of *'The Signalman'*, *'The Yellow Wall Paper'* and *'Games at Twilight'*, with the latter two stories also providing material for the representation of the central characters' imaginations and their understanding of the threats facing them. *'Meteor'* was sometimes used interestingly, discussing the Fortans' peaceable mission which lacks any threat, but encountering threats on earth from domestic animals and human beings which leave them completely vulnerable, despite their technological advances.
- (b) The passage from *'The Village Saint'* attracted a very large number of responses and many of these were thoughtful and observant. Some answers relied on narrative and character summary and some focused the whole essay on facades, but many examined the relationships depicted very carefully, noting the passage's development and the gradual revelation of what lies behind Mma-Mompati's and Mary Pule's facades. Candidates explored how the battle between the two women unfolds, and how Mompati exchanges one for the other at the end of the story. There was some very thoughtful engagement with diction, noting the language of appearance in 'people imagined' and 'they seemed' at the passage opening and the contrast between Mary's 'thin wilting, willowy dreamy' appearance and her hidden 'tenacious will', which prefigures how the story develops. The understatement of Mma-Mompati's 'little game' and her requirement for 'a teeny-weeny something' was often noted, and her aggression towards her daughter-in-law encapsulated in language such as 'despised' and 'wilting, plaintive little wretch'. Candidates commented on the language and imagery of her transformation, with plenty to say about 'vampire teeth', 'battle' and 'fury'. Examiners saw some thoughtful comments on the story's ending, often seeing Mompati in the same position with a different woman and discussing the relationship of Mma-Mompati with the village.

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General comments

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Comments on specific questions

1. Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** Candidates attempting this question usually chose appropriate poems, such as '*After Apple Picking*', '*Stopping By Woods*', '*The Cow in Apple Time*' and '*Gathering Leaves*', finding something to say about their seasonality. In many cases, essays were accounts of the poems with little close reference and or direct quotation. This made it difficult to consider the poems' effects, as those effects are produced by Frost's choices of language and poetic methods. Candidates who knew their chosen poems very well and supported their points with quotations were able to develop a comparative thesis and answered the question very successfully.
- (b)** Far more candidates answered on the extract from '*Home Burial*' and examiners read some very detailed and thoughtful responses. The most confident responses identified the grief and tension in the mood and atmosphere and looked carefully at setting and dialogue with focus on the couple's positioning on the stairs and their facial expressions. The tension in the interchange of dialogue was discussed, with its pauses, challenges, questions and repetitions. There were some interesting comments on the way Frost frames the graveyard in the window and leads to the climax of 'the child's mound' by first describing the other gravestones. The final section of the extract was very important and a number of candidates fell short because they did not pay enough attention to it. It

is important that the description of the graves is in the husband's voice and that he admits he is 'wonted to' the sight – his and his wife's differing responses to the view from the stairs are the core of the poem.

2. Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were not many responses to this question, but there was generally a clear recognition of the situation of the speaker. Several answers summarised the poem without giving careful consideration to the focus on the speaker's feelings, but those who were more observant of the question looked at ways in which those feelings are developed through the three stanzas. They commented that in the first two stanzas Jennings focuses on the patient's internal thoughts in preparation for an external show with a 'social smile' and 'ceremony' for the visitors – 'They'. Their presence and 'kindness' is acknowledged, but dealing with them is an effort after which the speaker is 'limp and faint'. Some commented that the 'attempt' to control is also apparent in the regularity of the stanzas and rhyme, subtly disguised through enjambment, and the shorter fifth line of each stanza heralds the final two lines' focus on internal emotion. Most candidates were able to identify the final stanza's shift to 'Your absence' after the presence of 'They' in the previous stanzas. There was some debate about the identity of the one who offers renewal in the final image of 'life' and 'rain', with many candidates suggesting that it could be God.

3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) There were very few answers to this question, and the parting which most candidates focused on was death, using such poems as Jonson's '*On My First Daughter*', Monck's '*Verses Written on her Deathbed*' and Brontë's '*Last Lines*'. Considering parting on a wider basis, others wrote about Cassidy's '*Sons, Departing*' and Thomas' '*The Forsaken Wife*'. Some essays only identified the parting taking place and gave narrative accounts of the poems. More thoughtful responses compared not only different feelings, but ways in which these feelings are communicated in the poems, which of course was only possible for candidates who knew the poems well enough to make secure references and quote from them.
- (b) Far more candidates wrote on Dharker's poem, which was very popular. While there were some essays which focused on racism in general, giving a narrative summary rather than detailed analysis, many were attentive to the tone of the poem, picking up its mixture of frustration and bitterness but also its tactic of turning that into satirical laughter. Candidates commented that the experience was made personal to the reader by the consistent use of the second person pronoun and that the refrain of 'the times we live in' apparently suggests acceptance, but in fact expresses outrage. Many discussed the passport as a sign of identity, read 'backwards' while its owner 'shrinks' to its size. There was much discussion of the characterisation of the passport officer, with his 'mind working' over a name with a Z and suspicious examination of the photograph, often attributed to racism or Islamophobia and linked to diction with the dismissive 'flicks'. There was, though, some confusion in the readings of the poem, with some candidates taking some of the changes to 'birthmark', 'chin' and 'hair' literally, rather than a deliberately absurd satirical suggestion. However, there was some interesting discussion of what constitutes identity, and the aggressive diction of 'scrubbed' and 'rubbed'. The core of identity, and compassion, was noted in 'your heart', which is 'missed'. A number of candidates made thoughtful comments on the half face on the 'newspaper', which although it only 'rustles', has a much more significant impact in a world of growing suspicion in the wake of widely-reported terrorist attacks.

4. Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

- (a) There were not many answers on Sonia, but candidates showed their awareness that her character provides a comparison with Gogol, and as the younger child, how she is shown to assimilate the American way of life more easily and with less parental opposition than her elder brother. Lahiri's presentation of her teenage rebellions was noted, her successful career and happy marriage to an American. Candidates also noted her support for Ashima and the growing closeness between mother and daughter following Ashoke's death.
- (b) The issue of names and naming is central to Lahiri's novel, which was recognised by most candidates. Some therefore treated this as an (a) question, without paying due attention to the details in the writing of the passage. More alert candidates looked thoughtfully at Lahiri's creation of

contrast between the flippancy of the Americans' attitudes to naming and how Gogol and Moushumi respond; the wider text was often used usefully to compare with the agony of naming Gogol. Perceptive responses looked closely at the writing, noting Lahiri's use of the present tense to create the immediacy of the situation and the blend of dialogue with Gogol's internal thoughts. They also explored Gogol's detached perspective and picked up little suggestions about the names which show the connection between him and Moushumi ('that odd bond'), but also hints which prefigure their relationship's collapse, with Gogol referred to as Graham and the things untold between them.

5. Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) While there was some capable discussion of marriage and money in the novel, many candidates ignored the injunction to discuss the matter in the light of the quotation in the question, which directly equates the two. Examiners saw some developed discussion of Lily's conflict between marrying for money and marrying for love, and the role of Selden in this regard, while more wide ranging answers discussed the issues with reference too, to Wharton's range of secondary characters in the novel, including the Dorsets, Simon Rosedale and Percy Gryce. A few looked at Selden and Gerty Farish as Wharton's creation of an alternative view.
- (b) Among the few responses to this question, there were some thoughtful discussions, often considering how Wharton shows Gerty prompting Selden towards renewing contact with Lily despite her own feelings for him. Selden's lack of certainty was picked up in 'rising abruptly' and his 'walk to the window', his 'slight laugh', while Gerty's feelings are made clear by her tactics: she 'opened her case', 'her colour rose' and she 'blushed'. While the two characters discuss Lily, her reputation and fate, Wharton also creates a subtext of Gerty's own emotions, to which Selden is blind, referring to her patronisingly as 'My dear child'.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The stories in the collection feature a number of clear societies and communities, being the centre of such stories as 'Meteor', 'An Englishman's Home', 'The Village Saint', Grace's 'Journey' and 'Games at Twilight', for example. These were the stories usually chosen by candidates to respond to the question, with those trying to construct communities within stories such as 'The Signalman' and 'The Yellow Wall Paper' struggling to form convincing answers. A number of essays presented discriminating discussion of the hierarchy and class presented in 'An Englishman's Home', sometimes with impressive recall of dialogue, and Mma-Mompat's role within the village community was productively explored in 'The Village Saint', with Head's depiction of its changes. Others explored Grace's portrayal of the opposing values of the Maori community and the new officious style of land management in 'Journey', while the presentation of the community of children in 'Games at Twilight' was material for interesting exploration, looking at the children's roles within their hierarchy, with motherly Mira, hairy Ragu, little Manu and so on; with Ravi right at the end of the line.
- (b) This was a very popular question choice seeing a very large number of responses to the question on 'The Yellow Wall Paper' broadly dominated by feminist readings. Such readings are clearly relevant, though in many cases it became a general discussion drawing in the rest of the text, without much reference to the selected passage itself. Many answers which did stick to the passage only offered summary accounts of it, a disappointment when Gilman's writing is so characteristic here, with its shifts of focus, short sentences and paragraphs, dashes and exclamation marks, all of which are fundamental to the way in which the narrator's incoherent state of mind is communicated. Candidates tended to fare better with the language, with some thoughtful comment on Gilman's use of gothic, repulsive and violent imagery to show the narrator's mental state. There was much discussion of 'creeping' and a focus on the smell, although candidates did not always note how the woman's feelings towards it change. There was usually a good recognition that the reader is invited to see the woman in the wallpaper as a representative of the narrator particularly, and of women in general.

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Comments on specific questions

1. Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** There were very few responses to this question. Candidates attempting it chose appropriate poems, usually two from '*The Wood-Pile*', '*Stopping by Woods*' and '*Birches*'. Less successful answers gave summary accounts of the chosen poems, while better essays considered how Frost uses and presents the season of winter in order to consider the effects of his writing. This was only possible if the poems were known in some detail.
- (b)** More candidates tackled the extract from '*The Ax-Helve*' and there were some very detailed and thoughtful responses, looking closely at how Frost reveals the xenophobic suspicion of his narrator, from the initial linking of Baptiste with an 'interfering' branch, through the use of the verb 'stole', to the expectation that he has come to say something unwelcome. Some saw the phonetic accented English to express Baptiste's lines as a means of mocking him, while others noted that the narrator's immediate judgement is that he has come to sell a helve, rather than it being a neighbourly gesture. Some strong responses looked in detail at the rhythms of the lines and phrasing, noting that they are mimetic of the movement at the point where Baptiste holds the axe before taking it. The lines depicting Baptiste's expertise were noted, as well as the narrator's reluctance to admit it – 'what was that to him?' Answers like these showed how much can be

gleaned from a careful analytical reading of Frost's writing and how much is missed by simply narrative responses.

2. Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Too few responses to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Few candidates answered on Jennings' poetry and many of the responses to this question gave a narrative account of the poem, asserting that the speaker is afraid. There were not many careful analyses of the ways in which Jennings portrays that fear poetically. More confident candidates noted the unusually short lines at the beginning and end of the first stanza and the end of the second, breaking thoughts into staccato phrases and creating a sense of incoherence, while the whole poem is held together by enjambment, even between stanzas. Some suggested the structure creates a sense of the narrator trying to cope by separating body, mind and nerves into compartments, using the metaphor of 'a tidy home', before that fails and the longer lines of the second two stanzas mark the surrender 'To fear', with that phrase emphasised by its isolation at the beginning of the final stanza. Many essays commented on the phrasing of the final line, highlighting 'Terror' and 'oblivion' before the focus on the aggressive needle.

3. *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) There were surprisingly few responses to this question, but candidates opting for it chose to focus on such poems as 'Soldier, Rest!', 'I Dream of You', 'This is My Play's Last Scene', 'Death', 'Requiem' and 'Last Lines'. The most successful responses were based on poems with a clear difference of form, attitude or tone, enabling candidates to construct a clear argument in comparing them, while less confident essays relied on narrative accounts of the content of the selected poems.
- (b) Far more candidates chose to write about Rumens' 'The Border Builder', focusing often on the poem's aggressive questions. While a few candidates believed the poem to be a narration of an actual assault at a border crossing, far more were responsive to the ways in which Rumens creates a metaphoric encounter to explore questions of territory and division. The nameless authoritarian 'he' was often in focus, with the aggressive brevity of his questions and the use of 'slammed' for the passport, while the adverb 'Merrily' is used for his unrolling of wire, probably barbed, for the border. Many candidates referred to contemporary contexts of migration and refugees, which was helpful when closely linked to the expression of ideas in the poem; with many seeing the poem as condemnatory of the aggressive insistence of the sanctity of borders in many places across the world.

4. Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

- (a) Maxine was a character who candidates knew well, which led to many accurate accounts of what she does in the novel and of her relationship with Gogol. Many were less certain, though, of how Lahiri presents Maxine, which was the core of the question. There were, though, some strong and detailed essays which looked at how Lahiri shapes the reader's experience of Maxine, by looking at the impact she makes on her first appearance and how the novel defines her by the architecture of her parent's house and the portrayal of her parents and their lifestyle, an enormous contrast in the novel with Gogol's parents and way of life. There were interesting arguments that her character allows Gogol stability and happiness but also represents the apotheosis of his flight from his Bengali background. Many noted that although Lahiri presents Maxine as open-minded, generous and accepting of Gogol's heritage, winning over his parents, for example; it is her lack of comprehension of his mourning his father in a manner true to his culture which eventually drives them apart.
- (b) Examiners saw a number of narrative accounts of the passage which summarised the details of the couple's early married life without comment on either it or the way it is presented by Lahiri. Some of those who looked more closely offered a highly critical view of Gogol and Moushumi; suggesting that they are childish and trivial and unsuited to marriage. More persuasive and thoughtful responses took note of the details provided by Lahiri which indicate their shared sense of adventure and novelty in their marriage. There were interesting comments on the language of affluence and quality used in the description of the apartment, which they fill with fashionable but cheap items from Ikea. Their adventures continue into experimentations with cooking, while Lahiri characteristically uses food choices to indicate cultural values, here embracing 'martinis', 'salami

and cheese' and making 'Indian food infrequently', but also indulging in 'tandoori chicken and pakoras and kabobs' for the occasional Sunday brunch. There were some observant comments which suggested that even at this stage, Lahiri includes a few hints about the future: there is a focus on what belongs to Moushumi separately with repeated use of the possessive pronoun 'her'; the Juliet balcony may suggest that Moushumi is still looking for romance despite being married; the lack of consideration of children may indicate a limitation to the couple's future; and there were several comments on the ominousness of the final image of the extract, the 'pillow pressed over her head.'

5. Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*

- (a) The importance of money in the novel was well understood and the most successful answers to the question looked closely at the wording, considering ways in which the issue is explored by Wharton's writing. Such answers focused on Wharton's portrayal of Lily's repeated attempts to marry a wealthy man, her dependence of other women of wealth and social status and her limited inheritance from her aunt. While candidates were able to show that wealth is importance to gain access to the highest levels of society, they were able to point out that Simon Rosedale struggles to gain that access despite his wealth, while Selden operates on the periphery of it without wealth. Gerty Farish was often used as a foil, demonstrative of Wharton's consideration that it is possible to live a good life without either full access to society or wealth.
- (b) Though sometimes candidates found it difficult to put this passage into context, it provided opportunities for exploration of the women's relationship presented in the passage for those who looked carefully at the narration and the broken dialogue. In discussion of the presentation of Gerty, observant candidates noted the strength of the word 'revulsion', combined with 'shrank back' before her 'compassionate instincts... swept aside all her reluctances.' It was noted that at the end of the passage, Gerty 'knelt' at Lily's side with 'patience', and in these ways, Wharton creates a truly empathetic and considerate character, a direct contrast with the other women around Lily. Successfully directed essays also looked closely at Lily's speeches in contrast to Gerty's patience, noting that no question is answered and nothing explained, while her dialogue is broken by dashes and ellipses suggesting incoherence of thought. Her distress becomes very apparent in her reference to 'the Furies' and in her 'straying hands', while her final speeches of self-deprecation show how far she has sunk.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The few responses to this question considered such stories as Lim's '*Journey*', '*The Yellow Wall Paper*', '*The Signalman*', '*Games at Twilight*' and '*The Lemon Orchard*.' There were often solid accounts of what made characters fearful, but there was less success with discussion of how the writers of the stories present that fear to the reader. Candidates often missed opportunities to look more closely at how settings are created, moods evoked and how the writers' choices of language and structure communicate the characters' emotions.
- (b) There were some thoughtful responses to the extract from '*Journey*', with appreciation of the way Grace creates the old man's perspective and voice. There was comment on his cultural knowledge of the environment and weather, framed in Maori terms, opposed to the 'television', showing he is connected to and understands the environment, whereas the world around him relies on technology. His repeated reference to 'Funny people' who have different values suggest his scorn for them in a gentle way while his knowledge of where 'old roads had been' shows his knowledge and memories which are not valued by society. Even the old man's difficulty in recalling the 'right words' for a 'lunatic asylum' suggest that he is out of touch with new, politically correct terminology. The repetition of the words 'houses' in the final paragraph of the extract, candidates noted, prefigures the central concern of the story and his meeting with the planning department to which he is travelling.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41
Drama

Key Messages

- The set texts are plays and should be written about in terms of dramatization as well as themes or characters
- Candidates need to remember that it is not enough to have insights into their texts — they must be able to communicate this insight clearly and coherently within an organised and developed structure
- When tackling **(b)** type questions, candidates must be willing to engage fully with the detail of language, form and structure in the extract.

General Comments

As always, the best responses showed a lively, personal reaction to the texts studied. At this level, appreciation was often original, with candidates demonstrating a willingness to show knowledge of the texts' themes and techniques through detailed reference to the text and sustained argument. Responses at this level ranged widely across the text chosen and often made interesting connections. Answers were fully supported through quotation, with strong analysis of matters of form, structure and language. In **(b)** passage-based responses, there was clear willingness to examine the dramatic 'arc' of the episode provided, together with strong discussion of precise detail.

At the lower end, responses often showed knowledge of the plot of the play and some understanding of character and theme. In **(b)** responses there was often a slight tendency towards narrating the extract printed on the paper, rather than analysing it. Candidates should take a strategic view of passages, rather than aiming for a line by line approach.

In particular with **(b)** passages, candidates need to be aware that talking about punctuation is not appropriate (though points could be made about dramatic pauses or pacing); they should also be careful to take note of the writer's intentions for staging and action if stage directions are included. Good answers will always take in the overview of a passage; even if discussions are then focused on particular, specific moments.

Comments on Specific Questions

1. *Sweet Bird of Youth*: Tennessee Williams

- (a)** Virtually all candidates were able to give some account of Boss Finlay and most responded to both the domestic and the political, as requested in the question. The best answers offered subtle readings of particular moments, closely anchored to matters of form, structure and language. In these responses there was usually a strong sense of how Williams presents Boss dramatically. Slightly less successful responses often focused more on character study and took a less strategic view of the question, though there was clear reference to Williams's methods. At the lower end of the mark range, responses showed knowledge of the play and action, often through paraphrase or by narrating events. Answers at this level often made good points without quite managing to create a coherent, over-arching argument. A small number of responses made reference to contemporary politics — with varying degrees of relevance and success.
- (b)** Responses to this question almost always showed a sense of where this moment occurs in the play and of Princess's insecure imperiousness. The best responses dealt with both language and action, often drawing attention to Princess's constant self-dramatisation. Chance and Princess were often paralleled in order to draw attention to her character. Less successful responses offered less in the way of close analysis, with a more narrative focus. Although almost all candidates

showed an awareness of her self-absorption and selfishness. The weakest answers often provided a character study of Princess without much reference to the extract provided.

2. *Twelfth Night*: William Shakespeare

- (a) Some candidates saw this question as an opportunity to write about the 'love triangle,' with no great concession to the terms of the question. More astute responses started from the basis that the two do not, in fact, have a relationship in any meaningful sense. This meant that these responses took a more strategic view and were able to look at the relationship through the lens of what the two think about, and say about, love. The role of Viola/Cesario is, of course, important to the relationship, as she is its channel in the play. There were some interesting discussions about the play's ending where the two finally meet and the issue of their relationship is sorted out through their mutual blindness to the reality of the people that they marry.
- (b) Less successful answers sometimes mistook the dramatic situation at this point and assumed that Sir Toby and Fabian are actually talking to Malvolio. Better responses understood that the two of them offer a running commentary on Malvolio's stupidity and self-obsession. There were often lengthy contextualising discussions of Puritanism; though relevant as a background, they often spent too much time which could have been more usefully taken up with close discussion of what actually happens in the passage. The best responses saw how Malvolio is deceived by Maria's plot and that he reveals truths about himself here both to the audience and — more damagingly — to the characters who overhear him. Some candidates were confused about the status of the letter and thought that Malvolio was giving voice to his own opinion rather than being seduced into betraying his inner ambitions.

3. *Henry IV, Part 2*: William Shakespeare

- (a) Most responses were fully aware of the Henry's limited presence in the play and noted that when we do see him he represents power on the wane. There was often useful reference to the scene where Henry and Hal finally engage with one another. Responses usually moved on from this point to observe that the whole play reflects the weakness of King Henry which has allowed rebellion and anarchy to rule his kingdom in his place. The best answers were able to refer to specific moments and characters (the tension between Falstaff and the Chief Justice was popular) in order to discuss the political and moral vacuum that Henry's absence invites. In the best responses there was a strong sense of the structure of the play and of how the dramatic arc points towards the re-establishment of law and order under the new king at the end.
- (b) Responses varied in their treatment of the detail of the scene. Most were able to see that there is an opposition going on here and that there is a clear view of the rebels from their own point of view as defending the realm from disease. On the other hand, Westmoreland sees them as firebrands, led on by 'bloody youth' and is distressed to see a man of the church and a backbone of society ('your Grace,' 'You, Lord Archbishop') defending a threat to the natural order that is 'by a civil peace maintained.' The best responses dealt with the tone of the scene, the defensiveness of the Archbishop in the face of Westmoreland's rightful attack on his involvement with rebellion. Some responses dealt with the rebellion in general, rather than with the specifics of this scene, or offered a paraphrasing, line-by-line discussion which did not enable them to access the higher levels of achievement.

4. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*: Brian Friel

- (a) Most candidates were able to engage with the structural device of flashbacks used in the play. Proficient responses dealt with the detail of why Friel evokes these scenes in order to demonstrate Gar's insecurity and fear about the decision he has made to go to America. These responses also engaged with the various ways in which Gar's memories and images are perhaps being edited and filtered so that Gar can face the future. There was often useful discussion of the tension between the two Gars on the evening before his departure. Very good responses were also able to work on Gar's self-conscious commentary on what he is doing ('*Watch here carefully, every gesture, every little peculiarity: keep the camber whirring....*'). Less successful responses often conveyed some understanding of the function of the flashbacks without really seeing how they lead towards Gar's ultimate lines: '*God boy, why do you have to leave? Why? Why?*' followed by the stuttering uncertainty of '*I don't know. I – I – I don't know*' as Gar is left questioning the filtered view he has presented to himself.

- (b) Virtually all responses were able to compare Public and Private Gar as a means of demonstrating the ambiguity and conflicted nature of his psychological state. The best answers placed this moment in context and saw that Public Gar is desperately trying to conceal his insecurities about his future, his feelings for Kate, and his sense of his own inadequacies. There was often useful discussion of Private Gar's demonstration of love of dramatizing Gar's future, set against Public Gar's desire simply to block out his emotions by busying himself with packing. Most responses made some remarks about the staging and the lethargy of both Gars at the beginning of the scene. Lower level responses simply gave an account of the scene, with occasional comments showing the beginnings of analysis.

5. *Death and the King's Horseman: Wole Soyinka*

- (a) Some responses took the question to focus simply on Elesin and the requirement that he sacrifice himself for the tribal good. Better responses also focused on Olunde and the way that he is torn between two cultures and forced to make sacrifices throughout. Some responses contrasted the two to good effect, with a clear focus on how Elesin exploits his situation whilst Olunde feels the full responsibility of his obligations.
- (b) This was the more popular question for this text and most responses showed understanding of the different perspectives offered by the characters on stage in this incident, but some did not fully engage with the issue of 'clashing cultural values' without simplifying and polarising the issues too much into matters of colonised/coloniser, tribal/imperial, traditional/modern, Christian/Pagan. The best responses were able to identify and analyse the clear distinction that is made between suicide and ritual death and the complete lack of comprehension of this shown by Pilkings. This was often characterised through close analysis of Pilkings' patronising language (*'the old pagan'*) and his peremptory dismissal of anything he doesn't understand (*'Honestly I couldn't understand the fuss he made...'*). The role of Joseph was often emphasised, to good effect, as a bridge character who can explain one culture to another. As elsewhere weaker answers tended to give an account of the scene without really exploring its workings as drama.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42
Drama

Key Messages

- The set texts are plays and should be written about in terms of dramatization as well as themes or characters
- Candidates need to remember that it is not enough to have insights into their texts — they must be able to communicate this insight clearly and coherently within an organised and developed structure
- When tackling **(b)** type questions, candidates must be willing to engage fully with the detail of language, form and structure in the extract.

General Comments

As always, the best responses showed a lively, personal reaction to the texts studied. At this level, appreciation was often original, with candidates demonstrating a willingness to show knowledge of the texts' themes and techniques through detailed reference to the text and sustained argument. Responses at this level ranged widely across the text chosen and often made interesting connections. Answers were fully supported through quotation, with strong analysis of matters of form, structure and language. In **(b)** passage-based responses, there was clear willingness to examine the dramatic 'arc' of the episode provided, together with strong discussion of precise detail.

At the lower end, responses often showed knowledge of the plot of the play and some understanding of character and theme. In **(b)** responses there was often a slight tendency towards narrating the extract printed on the paper, rather than analysing it. Candidates should take a strategic view of passages, rather than aiming for a line by line approach.

In particular with **(b)** passages, candidates need to be aware that talking about punctuation is not appropriate (though points could be made about dramatic pauses or pacing); they should also be careful to take note of the writer's intentions for staging and action if stage directions are included. Good answers will always take in the overview of a passage; even if discussions are then focused on particular, specific moments.

Comments on specific questions

1. *Sweet Bird of Youth*: Tennessee Williams

- (a)** It was not, of course, possible for candidates to deal with all the aspects of failure that are presented in the play. Judicious selection of examples was central to success and most candidates were able to find a way to approach their essay structure through either theme or character. In terms of theme, many argued, with some success, that everyone fails because time is the enemy in Williams's eyes. Many answers focused on the relationship between Chance and Princess, or on comparing the two and a close focus on particular moments helped sustain analysis here. Many responses noted that failure comes from something within the characters, not from external circumstance. There were also some interesting responses that focused on Boss Finlay's family and the way that his bullying of them distorts and corrupts thus making them dysfunctional.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to respond to Boss Finlay's manipulation of the media in this scene. Surprisingly few noted that Boss is speaking on a TV screen, an interesting thing to have happen in a stage play, and that this provides opportunities for other characters offer a running commentary on what he is saying. There was some useful discussion of how Boss uses religious language and constant reference to Good Friday in order to validate his messianic status and his racist views. A small number of candidates commented on what happens to the Heckler, something that undermines Boss's public image in a very vivid, dramatic way during the course of the scene.

2. *Twelfth Night*: William Shakespeare

- (a) Responses to this question were usually able to respond to the various members of Olivia's household and the tensions that exist between them. A small number of candidates focused their responses solely on a character study of Malvolio, which though relevant, could only ever form part of the answer. The best responses were able to analyse the anarchy of Olivia's household and the ways in which her mourning seriousness is undermined by the household she runs. Only a few candidates engaged with the fool, though he provides commentary on the aspirations and limitations of the others. The cruelty of the servants towards Malvolio was mentioned in some responses without really being interrogated. Long digressions about the festival of Twelfth Night often seemed peripheral to the question asked.
- (b) Nearly all responses showed knowledge of where this scene fits into the play, and of how it begins to resolve matters of plot. The question focused on dramatic tension, and there was plenty to explore in their responses. The reluctant, mistaken duellers formed one focus for many responses; the tension between Antonio and the disguised Viola was another for many others. But these were merely plot examples, and answers simply driven by giving an account of plot do not succeed at the highest levels. The best responses were able to argue closely from textual detail and see that the tension comes from misunderstanding but then leads to comic effect or to acute feelings of betrayal on Antonio's part. Some candidates were side-tracked by trying to explain the relationship between Antonio and Sebastian; discussions that often took them far from the passage and well and truly into areas of speculation. The best answers were able to offer astute analysis of both language and action.

3. *Henry IV, Part 2*: William Shakespeare

- (a) The presentation and dramatic significance of Falstaff suffuses the play, and most candidates had no problem whatsoever with producing a character study. However, the question required more than that, and better answers were able to see how his anarchy and self-interested interventions are an integral part of setting up Hal as fit to rule. There was often persuasive discussion of Falstaff's contribution to the humour of the play. The best responses offered detailed analysis of particular moments in order to demonstrate that Falstaff's worldview is doomed, as is hinted so strongly at various points in the play. There was some useful discussion at times of Falstaff's dealings with the Chief Justice, a pivotal relationship in terms of demonstrating the threat that Falstaff poses to law and order, a parallel threat to that of the rebels in the play.
- (b) Answers to this question were able to see how the rebels are assessing their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the king's forces. Better responses were also able to look closely at the language and see that Lord Bardolph's tone of purposeful restraint conceals the immorality of the plotting. The political astuteness of the three was usually clearly seen and the calculation behind it often analysed in terms of imagery (with the pun on plot in line 2 clearly understood and explored). The passion and intemperance of the Archbishop (bearing in mind that he is a man of the church) was only infrequently commented upon, despite the vividness (*'thou would'st eat thy dead vomit up'*) of his language.

4. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*: Brian Friel

- (a) Nearly all candidates were able to talk about the tensions between Public Gar and Private Gar's voices. They often saw Public Gar as rather cowed or introverted, citing the scene with Kate's father or the moments where Gar tries to talk to his father. On the other hand, Private Gar's language was seen as much more ambitious, more extravagant, more imaginative. The disparity between these two contributes to an audience's overall impression of Gar as a rounded character with an inner life. The best responses were able to locate particular moments where the two voices are at odds (or are in agreement) with one another and to demonstrate how drama and dramatic tension are created through this method. A small number of candidates – perfectly legitimately – used the printed passage to furnish useful text for their discussions.
- (b) Most responses were able to locate the extract in the play and make some comments on the various ways in which Gar is trying to block out his past in order to make a future possible. Some sensitive responses were able to locate moments where Private Gar derails Public's attempts to forget (with words like *'Remember'* and the insistent *'Well, do you? Do you? Do you?'*). Friel's stage direction that *'Public pretends not to hear him'* makes the point absolutely. Private here acts as an inner voice and constantly reminds Public that he is still in thrall to a memory and to his own

incompetence as a suitor. There was also useful commentary at times on the use of music in the scene.

5. *Death and the King's Horseman: Wole Soyinka*

- (a) Responses to the question about clashing cultural values were keen to point out various ways in which the British colonialists fail to understand an alien culture. The trivialisation of the death masks was a common example. Beyond that, there were often contrasts made between different sorts of clashes, with Jane Pilkings well-meaning attempts to understand Yoruban culture clearly set against her husband's less flexible, blustering approach to anything he thinks likely to disturb his view of imperialist social order. There were some useful discussions of the role of Olunde, who comes to represent and embody the clash. The best responses looked closely at particular moments and managed to present discussions that were not simply lists of clashing opposites but were instead explorations of mutual incomprehension.
- (b) The passage-based question here prompted a full range of responses. At the lower end, responses were able to outline the tensions between two contrasting worldviews and to see that Olunde and Jane have a respect for each other that transcends their prejudices and preconceptions. The intervention of the Aide-de Camp illustrates this vividly, with his unobtrusive view of the threat posed by 'natives', clearly contrasted to Jane's clumsy attempt to at least try and understand what is going on. Many candidates commented sensibly on the calmness of Olunde's speeches and on his articulacy which demonstrates that his '*calm acceptance*' (as Jane says) of the situation is a considered position that comes from resignation and acceptance, not superstition; it is Jane who cannot quite believe that his mourning has already taken place. The best answers, of course, saw the passage in dramatic terms by identifying and exploring the subtlety of Soyinka's stagecraft rather than simply seeing it all in simplistic terms of cultural clashes.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43
Drama

Key Messages

- The set texts are plays and should be written about in terms of dramatization as well as themes or characters
- Candidates need to remember that it is not enough to have insights into their texts — they must be able to communicate this insight clearly and coherently within an organised and developed structure
- When tackling **(b)** type questions, candidates must be willing to engage fully with the detail of language, form and structure in the extract.

General Comments

As always, the best responses showed a lively, personal reaction to the texts studied. At this level, appreciation was often original, with candidates demonstrating a willingness to show knowledge of the texts' themes and techniques through detailed reference to the text and sustained argument. Responses at this level ranged widely across the text chosen and often made interesting connections. Answers were fully supported through quotation, with strong analysis of matters of form, structure and language. In **(b)** passage-based responses, there was clear willingness to examine the dramatic 'arc' of the episode provided, together with strong discussion of precise detail.

At the lower end, responses often showed knowledge of the plot of the play and some understanding of character and theme. In **(b)** responses there was often a slight tendency towards narrating the extract printed on the paper, rather than analysing it. Candidates should take a strategic view of passages, rather than aiming for a line by line approach.

In particular with **(b)** passages, candidates need to be aware that talking about punctuation is not appropriate (though points could be made about dramatic pauses or pacing); they should also be careful to take note of the writer's intentions for staging and action if stage directions are included. Good answers will always take in the overview of a passage; even if discussions are then focused on particular, specific moments.

Comments on Specific Questions

1. *Sweet Bird of Youth*: Tennessee Williams

- (a)** Responses to this question were all able to give an account of the role and significance of Miss Lucy. They drew attention to the fact that she is a walking representation of Boss's dishonesty and hypocrisy in the relation to sex and the family values that he espouses so vigorously. The best responses focused on the moments where Miss Lucy appears and in her resentments about how she has been treated. A number of candidates also dealt effectively with the encounters between Chance and Miss Lucy, where she acts as a voice of stability and wisdom, thus also making her more credible as a critic of Boss Finley.
- (b)** Strong answers to this question understood the relationship between Princess and Chance elsewhere in the play and were able to see its seeds in these opening moments. There was good analysis of the power dynamic between the two, of how needy they both are and, at times, of Princess' self-dramatization (*'Hurry...I'm dying'*). Less successful responses offered less specific detail and often simply wrote a general essay about the relationship between these characters in the play.

2. *Twelfth Night*: William Shakespeare

- (a) Virtually all candidates could give examples of mistaken identity in the play and then went on to discuss this in terms of the plot ramifications. Better answers, of course, went deeper and saw that these instances lead naturally towards discussions of theme and how the various characters in the play assume that they know one another and then discover that what they thought was true about someone turns out not to be so. There were some very good discussions of the end of the play and of the various ways in which it fails to resolve the issues or, indeed, complicates them by, for example, Olivia marrying a complete stranger and believing that she is in love with him when plainly she can't be. Similarly, Orsino having mistaken Viola for a man and thus confided much in him, then finds that he can readily be in love with her because she has changed gender, without then confronting the problems raised by this paradox. The best answers anchored arguments in close reference to particular moments and examples.
- (b) All candidates were familiar with the given passage and most were able to give an account of Orsino and his feelings about love. More sophisticated responses noted that they are, indeed, feelings about love, not feelings of affection towards Olivia. The question asked about the presentation of '*Orsino and his court*' but many candidates ignored this and simply provided a character study focused on Orsino. More discriminating responses noted that the court conspire with Orsino by providing the music and the imagery ('*Will you go hunt, my lord?*'.... '*The hart*') that allows his self-indulgence. The best answers dealt in detail with the wordplay in the scene and with Orsino's blindness to his self-obsession.

3. *Henry IV, Part 2*: William Shakespeare

- (a) There were only a small number of responses to this question. Candidates were quick to note how rebellion is presented as being against a natural order. More sophisticated responses were able to see that it has come about through a righteous sense of a social contract not being fulfilled by King Henry. The best responses often responded to the language of the rebels and to the way in which they see their role as healers of a national disease. A few answers dealt, to good effect, with the way that Prince John outwits the rebels through his immoral actions, thus contributing to the slightly uneasy feeling in the play that, despite the glories of the new king's rule, politics remain a dirty business.
- (b) Candidates were quick to identify this scene as crucial to the conflicting tensions in the play. Many identified the Chief Justice's wearied tone and his slightly school teacherly expressions of exasperation at Falstaff's behaviour. The best responses noted that exchanges like this mirror what is going on elsewhere in the play where law and order is constantly pitched against rebellion on the national stage. Some candidates were able to engage fully with what Falstaff says by talking about his childish refusal to face up to what he has done by obfuscation, evasion and sheer cheek. Surprisingly, no one commented on the Chief Justice's last line ('*wake not a sleeping wolf*') which is such an obvious clue about what will happen at the end of the play, where the Chief Justice, side by side with the king, demonstrates the ascendancy of the rule of law and order which is, of course, as far as Falstaff is concerned far worse for he has woken the wolf which is '*as bad as smell a fox.*'

4. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*: Brian Friel

- (a) Nearly all candidates were able to talk about the tensions between Public Gar and Private Gar. They often saw Public Gar as rather cowed, citing the scene with Kate's father or the moments where Gar tries to talk to his father. On the other hand, inner Gar was seen as much more ambitious, more extravagant in his hopes for the future. The best answers were able to talk about how much Gar has internalised about America from his reading of comics and watching of American movies to the extent that he thinks that a whole new world will open up for him in the States. There was also much discussion, often closely anchored to text, of how Gar's fantasy life exists to cheer up his humdrum existence. A number of answers rightly pointed out that the extravagance of his fantasies might conceal a deep insecurity about the future, where he knows that emigration to America will probably lead to a dull job and deep loneliness. Some extremely good responses dealt with Gar's love of music and song as a way into the question.
- (b) Candidates responded to the awkwardness of the situation at this point in the play. There was much comment about the vacuous nature of the conversation between Gar and his father, with better responses seeing the terseness of expression, the pauses and hesitations as symbolic of what is not being said at this moment. There was often useful comment on the interventions by

Private Gar who is anxious to prompt a more emotional response from S.B. and is ignored by his public persona until the end of the episode. Many responses noted – rightly – that S.B. faces the same emotional situation as his son and is reduced to clothing his real affections in references to the weather forecast that he has heard, and in passing on what the Canon said.

5. *Death and the King's Horseman: Wole Soyinka*

- (a) All responses to this question were able to identify the range of settings presented in the play. Many candidates seemed to struggle with the ways in which these settings contribute to the dramatic and thematic significance of the action. Some responses looked at the market place as a public space and identified it as significant because it allows Elesin's evasions to be publicly mocked and interrogated. There were also some interesting discussions of the Pilkings' house and its symbolic value as representative of colonial values, with interventions from the Yoruba world upsetting a stable, unquestioning set of preconceptions about the world. The best responses offered close discussion of particular moments with close analysis.
- (b) The small number of responses to this question all showed understanding of the situation at this point in the play. The most successful answers were able to deal with the tension between Elesin's cowardice and the expectations of the tribe. There was also useful discussion of how the Europeans see suicide as wilful self-harm, whereas the Yoruba see it as being part of Elesin's 'blood', which means he has no choice but to embrace his destiny willingly, having taken advantage of its privileges in the past. As always, candidates who treated the extract in detail, noting how it works in dramatic terms, achieved the highest marks. There were some interesting discussions about the use of humour in the passage and about attitudes to imperial authority when it comes into conflict with tribal customs.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51
Shakespeare and other
Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key messages

- 1 Candidates should use wider contextual material sparingly and only where it has direct relevance to the point being made.
- 2 Candidates should consider any prompt given in a question carefully and ensure that their essay directly addresses it.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were still a few rubric errors, with candidates writing two option **(a)** discursive essays, a combination which is no longer permitted, or attempting to answer on more than two texts. There were very few candidates who were limited by expression, though some weaker candidates do adopt an informal style and register, which can limit precision and the development of arguments.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at each level of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – *Measure for Measure* in **Section A** and *Wuthering Heights* in **Section B** – with others remaining minority choices, particularly Marvell and Shelley, a new author in this session. The responses seen on these less popular texts do suggest these texts are very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (a) Candidates often make reference to wider contexts, such as the historical or biographical background to the text and its writer. These can illuminate interpretation when used judiciously, but in many cases, candidates become distracted by this knowledge and often fail to develop their arguments with sufficient reference to the detail of the text itself. Wider contextual material should only be used where it has a significant and demonstrable bearing on the candidate's interpretation or analysis and such references should be brief and precise.
- (b) Candidates should consider the terms of the task carefully before beginning their essays. In this session, many questions had prompts which required the candidate to consider the topic under discussion from a particular angle. For example, Emma's comment about herself in **Question 3(a)** as loving 'everything that is decided and open' was a prompt to discuss Austen's presentation of Emma. Many answers simply ignored the quotation and wrote a more general unfocussed essay on Emma's role and characterisation in the text. This lack of focus means that at best there is only an indirect relevance to some of the candidate's work and at worst that there is a failure to answer the question, except in the most general terms. This will inevitably limit the success of the response. Candidates must ensure that they address the prompts, where given, fully in their response, though this may quite properly involve disagreeing with it, at least in part.

Comments on specific questions

Measure for Measure

This was the most popular text on the paper this session with the majority opting for the **(b)** passage question.

- (a)** Nearly all responses had a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often considered characters in turn, summarising the various attitudes in turn, with some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast, as a way of suggesting an argument. Better answers developed this approach into an argument, with many focussed on Angelo and Isabella, apparently sharing similar attitudes and yet both, for some candidates, hypocritical when 'forced to make unpleasant choices'. Other answers included reference to the lowlife scenes with Pompey, Mistress Overdone and, at times, Lucio seen as a counterbalance to the 'empty moralising', through showing 'life, energy and humour'. Some very good answers saw the topic in more abstract terms, exploring how Shakespeare presents his concerns, such as justice, hypocrisy and morality, through exposing the 'fault lines created by sex in almost every character in the play', as one essay suggested. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to text, with understanding of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to give an appropriate context, though some weaker answers were unsure when this encounter between Angelo and Isabella took place. Basic answers tended to discuss the characters, often with some paraphrasing and summary, with at times understanding of the situation and its significance. Better answers noted, for example, how Angelo becomes less confident as Isabella becomes more impassioned, triggered by the shock of learning how soon Claudio is to die. Others noted how Angelo's use of legal language is balanced by Isabella's religious lexis, often using this as a link into the wider text. Good answers also noted the role of Lucio and the Provost and considered the dramatic effect of their interventions – comic for some, choric for others, but also serving to isolate Angelo. Very good answers explored the language and tone in detail, for example, considering the effects of Isabella's words and their impact on Angelo. Those answers which saw the significance of this passage to the development of plot and characterisation, and were able to find support from the wider text, often did very well.

Richard II

This was the first session for this text and proved to be a popular choice with the majority of candidates choosing the passage question.

- (a)** Most responses were able to select relevant material to address the task, with nearly every answer concentrating on Richard and Henry. Weaker answers often summarised their characters and the ways in which they interact in the play, sometimes in great detail. More successful answers explored how Shakespeare's characterisation revealed two, for some, opposing types of king, often contrasting Richard's 'poetic, emotional self-centredness' with 'Henry's pragmatic, prosaic and populist approach'. Some good answers developed this approach into exploring the dramatic and poetic effects created, whilst others considered the political and social context within which the two kings existed. Answers which also explored the concept of 'kingship', often contrasting Gaunt and York's attitudes with those of Bolingbroke's rebel supporters, did very well.
- (b)** Nearly every answer gave an appropriate context to this passage. Weaker responses lapsed into paraphrase or moved away from the detail of the passage into summarising the events which followed. More successful approaches often discussed the portrayal of Richard's character, his 'evident love of pageant with himself as the main focus', as one candidate suggested. Others explored the dramatic nature of the trial, the unexpected interruption and the banishments that followed, with some analysing what is revealed about the court, the characters and the politics. Very good answers considered the detail of the language and the action, identifying the effects created and the significance to the wider text, with appropriate support from both passage and wider text.

Emma

This was a popular **Section B** text, with a large majority opting for the **(b)** question.

- (a) Nearly every answer relished the opportunity to write about Emma herself. Weaker answers focussed on her character and what she did in the novel, often in great detail, showing a secure knowledge of the text. Better answers shaped their material to address the question prompt, with many seeing the irony of her comment, in view of some of her actions. Others saw this comment as the final step in Emma's maturing into a worthy wife for Knightley. Good answers focussed on 'Austen's presentation', exploring the narrative methods employed to reveal Emma's characterisation and development throughout the novel. Answers which supported the arguments with apposite quotation often did very well.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the context to this passage and most candidates were able to consider what is revealed about Elton's character here. Weaker answers lapsed into summary of the preceding events or a more general essay on Elton and his role in the novel, rather than exploring the detail of the given passage. Better answers considered Austen's concerns in detail, contrasting, for example, the presentation of Elton and Knightley, or discussing 'the social rules which so limited the role of women,' as one suggested. Very good answers focussed on the detail of the passage, analysing the narrative techniques, such as narrative voice and dialogue, as well as language and tone. Answers which developed such points into considering the effects created often did very well.

Wuthering Heights

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the option **(b)** passage.

- (a) Nearly every answer had some relevant knowledge of the text, and of Nellie in particular, with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise what she did, often in great and accurate detail. More successful answers considered her role as a link between the two houses, and the two families. Better answers also addressed the prompt. For some she 'has witnessed others being disciplined rather than suffering it herself'. Others noted the deaths and misfortune she has witnessed as well as the emotional, tragic love affairs. For some it was the discipline of work and the demanding nature of her employers, especially Cathy and Heathcliff. Better responses contrasted the young Nellie in the story with the Nellie recounting the story to Lockwood, with some exploring the boundaries between mistress and servant through Nellie and the two Catherines. Those answers also focussing on her narrative role, whether reliable or unreliable, often did well, especially when the points made were supported by apposite quotation.
- (b) Most answers were able to give a clear context, the return of Heathcliff, to this discussion, though some weaker responses were confused as to the precise point this took place in the novel. Basic answers often paraphrased the passage or generalised about the characters, especially Catherine, here and elsewhere in the text. More successful responses focussed on Bronte's development of the relationships and the characterisation here, though some were confused by the final exchange between Isabella and her brother. Good answers considered the effects of Bronte's writing in detail, considering, for example, the narrative techniques and the narrator, as well as Bronte's use of language and dialogue. Answers developing such points with apposite, brief references to the wider text often did very well.

Franklin's Tale

This was a popular text on the paper, with most candidates choosing the passage question, option **(b)**.

- (a) This was very much a minority choice. Weaker answers were mostly able to identify a number of settings, though not always in sufficient detail, to address the task, often giving a summary of the setting or what happened in it. Better answers considered how Chaucer contrasted settings such as the garden and the black rocks, or the magician's house and his illusions. Good answers saw how Chaucer used these contrasts to develop the characterisation and the poem's concerns, with some exploring his use of symbolism and imagery very well. Very good answers developed these ideas with appropriate reference to the detail of the text and some analysis of the poetic effects created.

- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to discuss the concerns relevantly. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write too generally about the text as a whole. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage. Many responses saw this as the central dilemma of the poem and different interpretations of Dorigen's 'offer' led to very different conclusions. For some she was merely 'kind, in letting Aurelius down gently, with an impossible task'. For others she was troubled, Chaucer using the rocks as symbols of her marriage and her inner conflict, between her desire for Aurelius and her loyalty to her absent husband. Good answers saw how Chaucer's careful presentation of the difference between 'trouthe' and 'gentillesse', here and elsewhere in the text, is a key part of the poem's structure and also its concerns. This led very good answers into exploring the overlaid narratives here of Squire, the Franklin and Chaucer. Others noted the use of 'religious language in the pagan setting,' again linking this to the wider text and context of classical, pagan and Christian belief systems.

Great Expectations

This was a very popular text in this session, with most candidates choosing option (b), the passage question.

- (a) Nearly every answer had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss this topic relevantly. Weaker answers tended to adopt a character by character approach, often summarising what the character did. More successful answers saw the contrasts Dickens creates between characters, for example, Pip and Wemmick's views on 'portable property'. Better answers saw how Dickens develops the characterisation through the different attitudes to wealth, often focussing on Magwitch, as well as Pip, and how their respective attitudes change during the course of the novel. Very good answers saw this in the context of Dickens's wider concerns, including Pip's development, often exploring the narrative techniques that revealed the different and changing attitudes. Answers which supported such arguments with appropriate reference to the text often did very well.
- (b) Almost every answer recognised this as a climactic point in the novel. Some weaker answers were confused as to the precise point this occurs in the novel and even the location – prison. All but a very few answers had a secure knowledge of the relationship, though weaker responses spent too long discussing the previous events, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage. Better answers saw this final meeting in the context of the previous encounters, with many referring appositely to the initial encounter in the graveyard. Good answers explored the various symbols and echoes of those earlier meetings, with many noting the positive change in Pip's character, as his attitude to Magwitch develops and mellows. Others explored the ways Dickens creates pathos here, noting the 'almost father/son relationship revealed', as many suggested. Very good answers explored the language and narrative techniques in detail, showing how the various effects are created. Such answers did very well when the points were developed with apposite, precise references to the wider text.

Marvell

This was a minority choice in this session with very few takers for either option.

- (a) There were very few responses seen to this question. Most answers had sufficient knowledge of the text to address the task, with 'The Coronet', the Dialogue poems and 'Bermudas' popular choices. Better answers considered religion and religious faith, though relatively few were able to deal with these as separate concerns. Those responses which were able to consider how Marvell presents his ideas through his poetic choices, with appropriate support from the text, often did well.
- (b) This was a minority choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the extract, with some unable to link it to the wider poem. Better answers explored how Marvell presents Cromwell as a heroic figure, often placed in a political and sometimes religious context. Others explored the use of gardens and the effect of wisdom and peace this brings, with better answers linking these ideas to 'The Garden' and the Mower poems. Very good responses explored the detail of the poem, noting for example, the use of active, violent verbs, contrasted to the peaceful image of Cromwell. Others explored the rigidity of the poetic structure and rhyme scheme seeing these as indicative of Marvell's attitude to the subject. Answers which developed such ideas with apt reference to the rest of the poem and the selection often did very well.

Shelley

This was the first session for this text and it was the least popular text on the paper.

- (a) This was a minority choice in this session. Most answers had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss Shelley's presentation of nature relevantly. Popular choices were 'Ozymandias', 'Ode to the West Wind', 'To a Skylark' and 'Mont Blanc'. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems, with little reference to the supporting prompt or Shelley's presentation. Better answers were aware of both requirements and addressed them with appropriate support. Good answers often explored Shelley's presentation of nature's power and how man's insignificance was often contrasted. Other answers discussed how, for Shelley, nature represented unchanging and eternal truths, human, political and spiritual. Very good answers supported such arguments with precise references to the poems and did very well.
- (b) This was not a popular choice, with very few answers seen. Some weaker answers appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with a consequent lack of understanding or context. Better answers were able to discuss the extract in its context, though some answers did give too much attention to social and historical concerns with a consequent lack of attention to the detail of the poem. Good answers considered what this extract reveals about Shelley's political and moral concerns in detail, relating them to the wider selection. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the poetic methods, such as language and verse form, and their effects, the answers often did well.

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Key messages

- 1 Candidates should use wider contextual material sparingly and only where it has direct relevance to the point being made.
- 2 Candidates should consider any prompt given in a question carefully and ensure that their essay directly addresses it.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were still a few rubric errors, with candidates writing two option **(a)** discursive essays, a combination which is no longer permitted, or attempting to answer on more than two texts. There were very few candidates who were limited by expression, though some weaker candidates do adopt an informal style and register, which can limit precision and the development of arguments.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at each level of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – *Measure for Measure* in **Section A** and *Wuthering Heights* in **Section B** – with others remaining minority choices, particularly Marvell and Shelley, a new author in this session. The responses seen on these less popular texts do suggest these texts are very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (a) Candidates often make reference to wider contexts, such as the historical or biographical background to the text and its writer. These can illuminate interpretation when used judiciously, but in many cases candidates become distracted by this knowledge and often fail to develop their arguments with sufficient reference to the detail of the text itself. Wider contextual material should only be used where it has a significant and demonstrable bearing on the candidate's interpretation or analysis and such references should be brief and precise.
- (b) Candidates should consider the terms of the task carefully before beginning their essays. In this session, many questions had prompts which required the candidate to consider the topic under discussion from a particular angle, for example, the description of nature as 'destructive and creative' in **Question 8(a)** on Shelley. Many answers simply ignored the quotation and wrote a more general unfocussed essay on Shelley's presentation of nature. This lack of focus means that at best there is only an indirect relevance to some of the candidate's work and at worst that there is a failure to answer the question, except in the most general terms. This will inevitably limit the success of the response. Candidates must ensure that they address the prompts, where given, fully in their response, though this may quite properly involve disagreeing with it, at least in part.

Measure for Measure

This was the most popular text on the paper this session with the majority opting for the **(b)** passage question.

- (a)** Nearly all candidates had a secure enough knowledge of the text to select and discuss relevant material. Weaker answers tended to focus on specific characters, recounting their roles in the play at a basic level, particularly Pompey and Lucio. Such answers were often summative and generalised. Better answers discussed the characterisation of Lucio and Pompey, with Lucio's hypocrisy and lies to the Duke often contrasted to Pompey's earthy honesty to Escalus. Lucio was often seen as: 'the noble user of the houses of shame, whereas Pompey is a worker within the system, thus representing all sides of what the Duke is trying to eradicate', as one response suggested. More detailed answers included reference to Barnadine and Abhorson, also seen as symbolic within the structure of the play, as a victim of and a worker in the state justice system. Good answers also considered and exemplified the different types of comedy used by Shakespeare, including verbal, physical, irony and situational. Others offered some sophisticated arguments about the comic conventions within which Shakespeare was writing, especially marriage and not letting characters die, with some noting the different effects these might have on different audiences, and how these conventions shaped the plot of the play as well as 'creating the moral problems for which the play is well known', as one put it. Such answers, when supporting the arguments with specific reference to the text, often did very well.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to give an appropriate context, with all but the weakest answers recognising this as the first appearance of Claudio and the first mention of Isabella. Basic answers tended to discuss the characters of Claudio and Lucio, often with some paraphrasing and summary, and at times too much emphasis on their roles in the wider text. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage, noting how Shakespeare develops Claudio's characterisation through his language and imagery. Others noted this as 'the better side of Lucio, in his willingness to help his friend'. More successful answers noted how the key concerns of the play, such as justice, the law, sexual morals and religion, are all developed in this exchange, with some answers noting how the audience's view of both Angelo and Isabella is in part created here, especially in Claudio's prescient comment on her ability to 'move men'. Very good answers explored tone and action as well language, noting how the seriousness is undercut by Lucio. Others consider the action, noting that the 'presence of the pregnant Juliet, unspeaking, presents opportunities for vastly differing interpretations', as one suggested. Answers developing such arguments with precise references to the whole play often did very well.

Richard II

This was the first session for this text and it proved to be popular with a more or less even split between the two options.

- (a)** Most responses were able to select relevant material to address the task, with nearly every answer concentrating on Richard and Henry. Weaker answers often summarised their characters and the ways in which they interact in the play, sometimes in great detail. More successful answers explored how Shakespeare's characterisation revealed two, for some, opposing types of king, often contrasting Richard's 'poetic, emotional self-centredness' with 'Henry's pragmatic, prosaic and populist approach'. Many saw the Richard/Bolingbroke conflict as symbolising two types of kingship, with Carlisle's words indicative of those who accepted 'divine right' opposed to those who saw it as a political, populist role to be used for advantage. Others referred to the garden scene as indicating that whether divinely appointed or not, kings still had duties to fulfil if the kingdom was to thrive. Some good answers considered the dramatic methods used by Shakespeare, such as how Richard's acceptance of flatterers was contrasted to Bolingbroke's flattering the people and his noble supporters; others saw a contrast to his thrift and desire to rule fairly in Richard's wastefulness and his unpredictable changes of mind. Very good answers explored the language and imagery used to discuss kings, from Gaunt's nostalgic deathbed perceptions to Richard's musings on the beach and in his cell. There were some excellent analyses of Shakespeare's use of symbols such as the 'hollow crown' and life as a well with two buckets, all indicative of how irrespective of rights, a king is subject to fate and chance like other mortals.

- (b) Most recognised this as the first glimpse of Richard with only his ‘flatterers’ in attendance. Weaker answers tended to discuss Richard and his courtiers generally, with at times too much focus on the wider text; others did consider the detail of the writing but with some paraphrasing of the passage. Better answers noted Richard’s obsession with Bolingbroke, for some, indicating his fear and jealousy and, for others, his underlying insecurity. His attitudes to Bolingbroke’s courting of the commoners was seen as revealing of his lack of understanding of the political climate and thereby his inevitable doom. His inability to grasp the significance of his attitudes to money, his overspending and his callous comments about his uncle all were seen as indicative of his unlikeable character and key steps to his downfall. Very good answers saw the significance of the passage in its presentation of Richard’s selfishness, for example, exemplifying it from within the passage and also from the wider text. Such answers often developed a sophisticated and balanced argument and did very well.

Emma

This was a popular **Section B** text, with the majority opting for the (b) question.

- (a) Nearly every answer revealed at least a sound knowledge of the text and most candidates were able to address the task relevantly. Weaker answers often summarised the various family relationships presented in the text, often in great detail. Better answers were able to develop this into considering how the relationships were presented, in terms of contrasts such as Emma and her sister and the Knightley brothers. Others saw how Austen used the family relationships to develop her concerns such as social morals, responsibility and attitudes to wealth. Good answers also consider this as a key method of characterisation, noting, for example, that Emma’s loyalty to and love for her father was symbolic of her inherent goodness. Answers which developed such arguments with detailed reference to the narrative methods, supported by apposite quotation, often did very well.
- (b) Most answers were able to explore the context to the passage confidently – the revelation of Frank and Jane’s secret engagement. Weaker answers were often able to summarise Emma and Harriet’s relationship in detail, sometimes wandering too far away from the given passage. Better answers saw this as a key moment in Emma’s development, ‘the final stage in her realisation that it is Knightley and not Harriet who is most important to her own happiness’, as one put it. Good answers explored the methods in detail, often focussing on the narrative techniques which gave the reader insight into Emma’s state of mind. Others analysed language and Austen’s careful use of dialogue, showing how they develop suspense to the point of Harriet’s ‘shocking revelation’. Such answers, linking their arguments to the wider text with appropriate references, often revealed sophistication and understanding at the highest level.

Wuthering Heights

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the option (b) passage.

- (a) Almost every answer showed a sound knowledge of relevant parts of the text and the majority were able to select suitable material to address the task. Weaker answers tended to discuss different children in turn, often in great detail, though mostly remaining at the narrative level. Better answers made more insightful points by, for example, contrasting the childhood of Catherine and Heathcliff with that of Cathy and Hareton. This approach was developed by some good answers into considering Bronte’s methods of characterisation, for example, Catherine’s stay at Thruscross was seen as the point in which her childhood ‘innocence’ or naivety about Heathcliff is replaced by ‘a more calculating and mature understanding of social class and her role in life’. Very good answers were also able to discuss ‘childhood’ as an abstract context, often using this as a way of interpreting the text in different ways, offering for example a psychoanalytical view of Heathcliff based on his childhood experiences. Such answers often were very successful in supporting these arguments with pertinent reference to the detail of the text.
- (b) Most answers saw the significance of this passage in terms of what it reveals about Cathy and Heathcliff and their relationship. Weaker answers tended to summarise the relationship generally often referring in great detail to the rest of the text, with too little focus on the given passage. Better answers explored what Cathy is revealing about her inner turmoil, with some able to link this to the future developments in the novel, leading to her untimely death. Others noted the effect on Heathcliff and discussed how that affected his development. Some responses also noted Nellie’s role in the text, both as narrator and here as Cathy’s confidant, with some candidates feeling her

actions here in 'lying about Heathcliff's presence and in her lack of understanding to Cathy's dilemma were crucial to the course of the novel', as one suggested. Very good answers explored the narrative methods in detail, often focussing on the symbolism and imagery that Bronte gives Cathy, as well as her use of dialogue and narrative voice. Such answers, when developed into considering the relationship in the wider text, often did very well.

Franklin's Tale

This was the least popular text on the paper, with an even split between the options.

- (a) Most answers were able to discuss Dorigen in some detail. Weaker answers largely ignored the prompt and summarised her role in the poem, often in great detail. Better answers considered the prompt in detail, often by defining what 'treweste' might in fact mean in the context of the poem itself. Relevant arguments were then developed, supported by detailed reference to the text, with some considering her characterisation as 'a true wife only from Arveragus's perspective, in that she obeyed him', whereas others saw her as more ambivalent, in her attitude to her husband and her potential lover, Aurelius. Very good answers saw her role and characterisation as part of the wider concerns of the text in terms of attitudes to marriage and relationships more generally, with some developing a detailed and perceptive analysis of Chaucer's use of symbols such as the black rocks and the garden to support their arguments
- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to discuss the concerns relevantly. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write too generally about the text as a whole. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage, often discussing what is revealed about Aurelius's state of mind and how it develops his characterisation. Some good answers explored the language and the verse form of the passage in detail, analysing Chaucer's use of symbols and religion. Very good answers were able to relate this passage to the wider text in terms of the methods and concerns, often with well chosen, supporting references.

Great Expectations

This was a popular text in this session, with candidates choosing both questions more or less equally.

- (a) All but a very few answers were able to select relevant material to address the task, often revealing a detailed knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to summarise the two characters and the parts they play in the novel separately, with occasional points of comparison and contrast noted. Better answers made these the focus of the response, noting for example their contrasting yet intertwined relationships with Pip, Jaggers and Estella. Others explored Dickens's methods of characterisation, considering language, imagery and symbolism, often making perceptive points about their developing roles and their influence on Pip's life. Very good answers were able to explore these points of contact with reference to Dickens's wider concerns in the novel such as family and relationships, as well as more abstract concepts such as loyalty, love and social expectations. Some very good answers were able to range seamlessly across the text, discussing such concerns in a sophisticated and structured argument, and often did very well.
- (b) Just about every answer recognised this passage as the start of Pip's expectations. Weaker answers tended to summarise the characters and what happened to them from this point onwards, often ranging too widely into the rest of the novel. Better answers explored the effect of the conflict between Joe and Jaggers, with some seeing it as symbolic of the conflict that was to engulf Pip throughout the novel. Good answers explored the role of Pip as narrator, contrasting that with his role in the passage as an excited boy, and analysing the effect of his dual role on the reader at this point. This was at times developed into a consideration of Dickens's methods of characterisation and his narrative techniques, such as dialogue and voice. Very good answers were able to develop such discussions by apposite reference to the rest of the novel, moving confidently between the passage and wider text, without losing focus on the relevant details.

Marvell

This was a minority text with very few takers for option **(a)**, though option **(b)** was relatively popular.

- (a)** There were very few responses seen to this question. Most answers had sufficient knowledge of the text to address the task, with the Mower poems, 'Eyes and Tears' and 'To his Coy Mistress' the most popular choices. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems without developing an argument. Better answers saw the range of ways Marvell presents love and explored different interpretations with detailed supporting references. Good answers were able to develop such discussions and consider his use of different methods, exploring the language and imagery in detail, with a few answers finding relevant comments on Marvell's use of rhythm and verse form. Where answers consider the effects on the reader of his poetic choices, the results were often very good.
- (b)** This was a minority choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, with some unable to link it to the wider text, often approaching the poem as though it were an unseen. Better answers addressed the detail of the poem, often exploring the extended metaphor and offering some perceptive analysis of imagery and tone, as well as language, though few were able to discuss other poetic choices, such as the verse form or the rhythm, with confidence. Some good answers saw this as 'typical of Marvell's approach to religion as a spiritual affair, but expressed through the everyday and earthly conceits', as one suggested. Very good answers were able to link this poem to the wider text in terms of both methods and concerns, often citing the Dialogue poems or 'The Coronet'.

Shelley

This was the first session for this text and it was very much a minority choice, with option **(a)** being the most popular.

- (a)** All but a few answers had sufficient knowledge of the text to find relevant points of discussion. Weaker answers often paraphrased the poems they had chosen to discuss, with the popular choices being 'Ode to the West Wind', 'To a Skylark' and 'Mont Blanc'. For these answers the prompt was largely ignored and there was only the beginning of an attempt to develop an argument. Better answers were able to use their chosen poems to address both the prompt and the variety of ways Shelley presents nature. Most agreed with the given point of view, though some thought his poetic strategies were more about political and social issues, so that 'his attitude to nature reflected these concerns rather than suggesting he was a nature poet', as one candidate put it. Some very good answers offered detailed analyses of Shelley's poetic methods, whilst at the same time, exploring his concerns and presenting a well-structured and developed argument. Such responses did very well.
- (b)** This was not a popular choice, with very few answers seen. Some weaker answers appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with a consequent lack of understanding or context. Better answers were able to discuss the extract in its context, though some answers did give too much attention to biographical concerns, such as the relationship between Keats and Shelley, with a consequent lack of attention to the detail of the poem. Good answers considered what this extract reveals about Shelley's poetic concerns in detail, relating them to the wider selection and his attitudes to poets and poetry more generally. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the poetic methods, such as language and verse form, and their effects, the answers often did well.

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There were responses to almost all of the questions set and answers were seen at each level of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – *Measure for Measure* in **Section A** and *Wuthering Heights* in **Section B** – with others remaining minority choices, particularly Marvell and Shelley, a new author in this session. The responses seen on these less popular texts do suggest these texts are very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (a) Candidates often make reference to wider contexts, such as the historical or biographical background to the text and its writer. These can illuminate interpretation when used judiciously, but in many cases, candidates become distracted by this knowledge and often fail to develop their arguments with sufficient reference to the detail of the text itself. Wider contextual material should only be used where it has a significant and demonstrable bearing on the candidate's interpretation or analysis and such references should be brief and precise.
- (b) Candidates should consider the terms of the task carefully before beginning their essays. In this session, many questions had prompts which required the candidate to consider the topic under discussion from a particular angle. For example, the Marvell question at **7(a)** included a quotation contrasting the love of a fawn with that of 'false and cruel men'. Many answers simply ignored the quotation and wrote a more general unfocussed essay on Marvell's presentation of love. This lack of focus means that at best there is only an indirect relevance to some of the candidate's work and at worst that there is a failure to answer the question except in the most general terms. This will inevitably limit the success of the response. Candidates must ensure that they address the prompts, where given, fully in their response, though this may quite properly involve disagreeing with it at least in part.

Comments on specific questions

Measure for Measure

This was the most popular text on the paper this session with the majority opting for the **(b)** passage question.

- (a)** Nearly all responses had a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often considered characters in turn, summarising the various attitudes separately, with some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast, as a way of suggesting an argument. Better answers developed this approach into an argument, with many focussed on Angelo and the Duke. For some, Shakespeare's presentation of the law and punishment created a 'modern world of moral ambiguities and uncertainties,' as one suggested, often through the characterisation of Angelo and the Duke and their actions, especially when set against the comic undermining of Pompey and Lucio. Many good answers explored the uneasy atmosphere of the play, where, for example, Isabella's repugnance at her libertine brother's crimes, does not prevent her from encouraging Marianna into the same actions. Some very good answers discussed the blurring of the connection between law and justice, often citing the Angelo/Isabella confrontations and the role of the Duke. These answers often explored the concerns in more abstract terms, seeing how the different attitudes, such as Barnadine's and Pompey's, served to present a complex and, for some, disturbing portrayal of how self-interest and hypocrisy undermine both law and punishment. Others though saw such complexity in terms of the dramatic conventions of comedy and 'Shakespeare's desire to entertain his disparate audience', as one suggested.
- (b)** Nearly every response was able to give a relevant context to the passage. Weaker answers concentrated on the characters of Angelo and Isabella, with some exploring how this passage develops the audience's response to them. Better answers focussed on Angelo's, for some, hypocrisy and the irony of his words and situation. Others noted his awareness of his sin and his 'seeming virtue'. Those who analysed the language in detail, the mixture of spiritual, religious references with sexually loaded vocabulary, often did very well. Isabella's changing tone and emotions were at times well analysed, as Angelo's manipulation of the argument, leading to his later 'offer', becomes clear. The ambivalence of Angelo's position, his inner conflict, was often explored, with some noting his unsettling ambiguities, such as 'sweet uncleanness' and contrasting this with his earlier moral and legal certainty. Others saw his tone as menacing, developed through the sibilance of Shakespeare's language. Very good answers were often able to link such ideas into the wider concerns of the play, with telling and precise reference to the wider text.

Richard II

This was the first session for this text and it proved to be a popular choice, with most candidates choosing the option **(b)** passage question.

- (a)** Most responses were able to select relevant material to address the task, with nearly every answer concentrating on Richard and Henry. Weaker answers often summarised their characters and the ways in which they interact in the play, sometimes in great detail, but with little or no reference to the guiding prompt. More successful answers explored how Shakespeare's characterisation revealed two, for some, opposing types of king, often contrasting Richard's 'poetic, emotional self-centredness' with 'Henry's pragmatic, prosaic and populist approach'. Many saw the Richard/Bolingbroke conflict as symbolising two types of kingship, those who accepted 'divine right' as opposed to those who saw it as a political, populist role to be used for advantage. Others referred to the garden scene as indicating that whether divinely appointed or not, kings still had duties to fulfil if the kingdom was to thrive. Some good answers considered the dramatic methods used by Shakespeare, such as how Richard's acceptance of flatterers was contrasted to Bolingbroke's flattering the people and his noble supporters; others saw a contrast to his thrift and desire to rule fairly and Richard's wastefulness and his unpredictable changes of mind. Very good answers explored the language and imagery used to discuss both kings, from Gaunt's nostalgic deathbed perceptions to York's vacillations and changing attitudes to the rebels.

- (b) Every answer recognised this passage as the climax of Richard's fall from grace, ending in his death. Weaker answers tended to summarise the passage, with some appearing confused by the references to Barbary. Better answers saw the significance of the passage in revealing a new and, for some, more sympathetic side to his character. Others noted Richard's passionate outburst initiated by the mention of the 'king', referring to Henry, which together with the affection of the groom contrasting with the 'betrayal' of Barbary, were all seen as humanising Richard and shaping the audience's sympathy for his situation. Good answers saw the horse as a metaphor for England and symbolic of the shift in power and Richard's misfortune. Others discussed his continuing belief in his 'divine right' to be king, noting 'the sad but inevitable outcome of that belief played out in this scene.' Richard's language, and the contrast with his previous self-dramatizations, was often discussed; for example, his use of falling and rising metaphors and language showing his awareness of his changed situation. Many noted Richard's belief that he had been wronged and his 'failure to take responsibility for his own actions' here and elsewhere in the text. Very good answers often explored the highly dramatic nature of this scene, analysing the action and the tone in detail, and often considering the effects on the audience perceptively.

Emma

This was not a popular **Section B** text, with the majority opting for the (b) question.

- (a) There were very few answers to this question. Candidates for the most part had at least a solid knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material. Weaker answers tended to summarise their choices, most often the ball and the trip to Box Hill, with little focus on Austen's presentation or the effects created. Better answers explored the narrative techniques, recognising such events as a mechanism for bringing disparate groups of characters together. Good answers analysed the details of such events, exploring the language and dialogue, such as that leading to Emma's rudeness to Miss Bates at Box Hill, noting how Austen used these gatherings to develop her concerns and as a key tool in characterisation. Answers which developed these ideas with pertinent, precise references to the text often did very well.
- (b) Most answers were able to explore the context to the passage confidently – Emma's rudeness to Miss Bates at Box Hill. Weaker answers were often able to summarise Emma and Knightley's relationship in detail, sometimes wandering too far away from the given passage. Better answers saw this as a key moment in Emma's development, as well as in the relationship, exploring the language and narrative techniques used by Austen to reveal Emma's discomfort. Others analysed Knightley's role, noting his understanding of Emma's high spirits and of Miss Bates's situation, for some, examples of his superior character, though for others his tone was seen as more 'befitting the father figure which Mr Woodhouse was so unable to be', as one put it. Very good answers often analysed Austen's use of narrative voice and free indirect discourse perceptively. Where such discussions were developed by reference to the wider text, with precise supporting references, the responses often did very well.

Wuthering Heights

This was a popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the option (b) passage.

- (a) Almost every answer showed a sound knowledge of relevant parts of the text and the majority were able to select suitable material to address the task. Weaker answers tended to discuss different children and parents in turn, often in great detail, though mostly remaining at the narrative level. Better answers made more insightful points by, for example, contrasting the role of Mr Earnshaw with that of Heathcliff and Hindley. This approach was developed by some good answers into considering Bronte's methods of characterisation, for example, the contrast between Heathcliff's childhood as an orphan with that of Hareton. Very good answers were also able to discuss 'parents' as a more abstract concept, often using this as a way of interpreting the text in different ways, offering for example a psychoanalytical view of Heathcliff based on his lack of real parents. Such answers often were very successful in supporting these arguments with pertinent reference to the detail of the text. The various generations were often contrasted and compared, with some seeing a failure to learn from past experiences, whilst others saw a gradual 'civilising' of family behaviour. The treatment of Hareton, Linton and Catherine in particular were well explored, though many focussed also on Heathcliff's treatment by Earnshaw and then Hindley as fundamental to the novel's development and structure, for example, in Heathcliff's treatment of Hareton and his subsequent development and growth through Catherine. Answers which explored the narrative

techniques used to present these relationships, for example, the role of Nellie in relating these events, often did very well.

- (b) Most answers saw the significance of this passage in terms of what it reveals about Linton and Isabella and their relationship. Weaker answers tended to summarise the relationship generally often referring in great detail to the rest of the text, with too little focus on the given passage. Better answers saw how Bronte's use of multiple narrators creates a suspenseful tone, leading to the surprising reactions of Linton to his sister's flight with Heathcliff. Others saw the significance of the passage in terms of the plot, in particular Heathcliff's determination to revenge himself on Linton, though others noted the contrasting responses to their respective loss of a loved one. Very good answers focussed on Bronte's methods, such as the use of dialogue and dialect, contrasting tones and narrative techniques. Where such approaches were linked to the wider text, with precise relevant references, the responses often did very well.

Franklin's Tale

This was a minority choice in this session, with an even split between the options.

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to find some relevant material to discuss, showing at least a sound knowledge of the text. Weaker answers often listed different examples of 'truth keeping' from the Tale, often summarising them in detail. Most responses agreed with Arveragus's comment, citing the actions of Dorigen, Aurelius, the magician and Arveragus himself. More sophisticated answers however argued this was only a sham, since the characters were actually motivated by other feelings such as envy or a desire to enhance social status or reputation. A few better answers explored some of the methods used to present or challenge Arveragus's assertion, often the language and the symbolism of the poem, but this was disappointingly rare and the majority of answers focussed on the characters and the concerns.
- (b) There were few attempts at this question. Weaker answers often paraphrased the passage, with intermittent commentary on its significance. Better answers identified the passage as part of Chaucer's satirical take on a typical Breton lay. For some, Aurelius's use of 'grace', for example, was suggestive of his moral ambivalence contrasted to Dorigen's clearly expressed fidelity. Good answers explored some of the poetic methods well, such as how the illusion of Aurelius's chivalry is created through the language and contrasted with the reality of his baser desires. Very good answers linked this to the Tale's exploration of different kinds of illusion. Some responses explored Chaucer's use of the 'language of death and despair to create an almost comic image of the squire', as one candidate suggested. For some very good responses, Chaucer's use of Apollo and Phoebus were typical of the part Christian/part pagan/part classical world that Chaucer creates in the Tale, often exemplified with pertinent references.

Great Expectations

This was the most popular **Section B** text in this session, with most candidates choosing the passage question.

- (a) Nearly all responses had a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often considered characters in turn, summarising their crimes and the punishments in turn, with some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast, as a way of suggesting an argument. Most commonly discussed were Magwitch, Compeyson and Orlick with some also commenting on the role of Jaggers and Wemmick. Better answers developed this approach into an argument by comparing and contrasting the effects of these different character portrayals. Where this was supported by precise reference to the text and an exploration of some of Dickens's choices such as language and narrative voice, the responses often did well. Good answers also considered these concerns in more abstract terms, noting for example that the novel might be seen as presenting different 'crimes', from robbery, to exploitation and child abuse, indicative, for some, of Dickens's characteristic moral and social concerns.

- (b) Almost every answer recognised this as a climactic point in the novel; Pip's final coming home to the forge. Those who remembered his intention to propose to Biddy were often able to explore the pathos and the irony of the passage. Some weaker answers were confused as to the precise point this occurs in the novel, though all but a very few answers had a secure knowledge of the characters and their relationships. Weaker responses spent too long discussing the previous events, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage. Better answers considered the narrative methods in detail, noting the language of nostalgia and renewal, for example, which, with his relief at never revealing his intentions to Joe, was proof for some that Pip had finally matured and completed his moral and spiritual journey. Very good answers were able to analyse the narrative voice and how Dickens uses it to shape the reader's response and to build tension. Those answers which explored the effects of the language, narrative methods and use of dialogue, for example, often did very well.

Marvell

This was the least popular text with very few takers for option (b) and none for option (a).

- (a) No responses seen.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the extract, with some unable to link it to the wider text, often approaching the poem as though it were an unseen. Better answers addressed some of the detail of the poem, exploring the presentation of nature and man's relationship to it, for example. Others saw this as at least in part an unemotional argument against cultivation and controlling nature, with some exploring the poetic methods used, such as verse form and diction, to reinforce this point of view. Few answers referred to other poems. 'The Garden' was noted as a counterbalance to the arguments presented here and there was occasional reference to the other Mower poems, but few responses were able to develop an effective argument.

Shelley

This was the first session for this text, which proved to be relatively popular with an even split between the two options.

- (a) Most answers had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss Shelley's presentation of nature relevantly. Popular choices were 'Ozymandias', 'Ode to the West Wind', 'To a Skylark' and 'Mont Blanc', though there was a wide range of poems considered from 'Liberty' to 'An Invitation to Jane'. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems, with little reference to the precise terms of the question or Shelley's presentation. Better answers were aware of both requirements and addressed them with appropriate support. Good answers often explored how Shelley presents Nature's power and how man's insignificance was often contrasted. Other answers discussed how, for Shelley, nature represented different kinds of power, variously interpreted as force or impetus to change, whether physically, morally or spiritually, with some seeing its 'power' in 'its ability to effect mankind physically and emotionally, especially poets', as one response put it. Very good answers also explored how Shelley used natural objects and events as symbols to develop his political and social agendas. Where such arguments were supported with precise references to the poems, the answers often did very well.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the extract, with some unable to link it to the wider text, often approaching the poem as though it were an unseen. Better answers addressed the detail of the poem, noting, for example, Shelley's political concerns and his attitudes to rulers and leaders exploiting the 'downtrodden' workers. This was linked to his hope for revolution. The breadth of his targets and his scorn, from royalty to politicians to the army and religion, were well explored, with some supporting this with appropriate historical or biographical contexts. Very good answers considered the form of the poem in detail and the effects Shelley creates by his choices of language and imagery, often linking this poem to the 'Mask of Anarchy' and 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', with precise references.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Candidates need to show detailed knowledge and understanding of the texts, including the main themes and concerns of a text, and refer to at least some of these in response both to essay and passage questions.
- Answers should go beyond discussion of plot and description of characters to show how a writer creates meaning, selecting relevant key quotations to support the response.
- Answers should be carefully shaped to present a considered point of view; many well-informed, engaged candidates would score more highly if they could develop their essay writing skills to include more analysis.

General comments

This year's paper was of a similar level of difficulty to that of previous years and the questions produced responses covering the whole range of marks. Very few candidates had problems with timing, producing two essays of at least moderate length. Some candidates should bear in mind the virtue of succinctness and that making the same point several times or giving several examples to support it may leave them with insufficient time to make more valid points. Most candidates wrote with clear expression and those who did not were hampered less by language problems than by being over-ambitiously elaborate in their written style.

Clearly, many candidates usefully practise questions from previous years but some attempted to reproduce model answers to these which were not appropriate to this year's question. The importance of reading the question carefully cannot be over-emphasised, particularly when a question begins with a quotation to consider, as in **Question 4(a)**.

Answers should be carefully structured, so planning at the beginning can often be useful. Good answers often consider differing interpretations of a character, a relationship or a key event but successful candidates use discourse markers – 'however', 'on the other hand', 'another way of interpreting', etc. This means that the candidate avoids appearing to contradict an earlier point and shows an ability to develop an argument.

It is commendable that many candidates read the views of critics and quotations from them can be useful in developing an argument, especially if the candidate is able to illustrate the point being made by the critic by detailed reference to the text or show why they disagree. However, some candidates use quotations which state the obvious and contribute little to the quality of the response.

Although a poem can be read in isolation and regarded as a work of art in its own right, the collection selected for study needs to be viewed as a whole, so that the **(b)** questions on individual poems should be treated in a similar way to those on a passage from a play or a novel and understood to have two main requirements: students must show understanding of that poem, including the poet's use of language and poetic techniques but must also place that poem within the wider context of the poet's concerns and ways of writing, so there must be links to specific details and quotations from other poems. Most centres now understand the need for this approach to prose and drama texts.

Above all, candidates should ensure that they consider not so much what is written in each text but how the writer has crafted the text to convey its meaning, using detailed knowledge of the text to support the discussion.

Comments on specific questions

1. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah*

This continues to be a popular text with more candidates choosing the **(b)** option, though there were also many responses to **(a)**.

- (a)** Good answers included relevant context on the issues of Non-American and American blacks, the cultural significance of hair and the Obamas. They questioned the stereotyping within the blogs as a form of racism and some found Ifemelu hypocritical. Few commented on the final blogs written in Nigeria and what they reveal about Ifemelu. There were comments on the empowerment provided by the internet and the way Adichie uses Ifemelu as a mouthpiece for her own views. Competent answers demonstrated how the blogs mark a development in Ifemelu's personal growth, noting why the blogs began and why they stopped, how they give Ifemelu a voice and help her connect with a wider community. They noted how events in her life reported in the blogs are given a racy, often flippant treatment, such as the 'Hot White Ex', in contrast to the more troubled, thoughtful tone in the main text.

Weaker answers showed insufficient detailed knowledge of the content of the blogs, so made very general, often valid, points about the more outspoken, uncensored style of the blogs in comparison with the rest of the text without quoting examples to illustrate this. Most had some general knowledge of topics, such as racism or hair but did not supply details.

- (b)** Stronger candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of Obinze in the wider text, noting his economic progress and his confident demeanour, contrasting his attitude with those of his compatriots. The context of Nigeria's post-colonial reliance on oil companies was linked to the earlier advice that a successful business in Nigeria needed a white manager. Western influence in Nigeria was also connected to the accusation of 'white man behaviour.' Obinze's tendency to judge those around him was linked to the same habit in Ifemelu. The rising tension was noted at the end of the passage where the conflict between Obinze's love for Ifemelu and his duty towards his family is emphasised. Competent answers made some detailed reference to the presentation of Obinze in the wider text, making comparisons with his behaviour in the passage. They commented on the significance of 'half-hearted shake', 'the coldness of his tone', of Buchi holding out her arms to him and Obinze's preoccupation with his phone. Weak answers demonstrated little detailed knowledge of Obinze in the novel as a whole, apart from his love for Ifemelu and his deportation from England, so they tended to consist of personal response to Obinze within the passage, with a balance of sympathy and condemnation of his plan to divorce Kosi.

2. ARAVIND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*

This text continues to be very popular with many candidates, who often quoted critical objections to Adiga's presentation of India. These critical views were not always well integrated into the answers or well linked to the question.

- (a)** This question invited candidates to go beyond an outline of the plot, showing discrimination in selection of relevant material. Apart from material clearly linked to politics, such as the rigging of elections, the violent treatment of the rickshaw driver and the bribing of politicians, there was plenty of opportunity to link other areas of the text (such as the condition of the local hospital where Balram's father died, the poor state of schools with teachers receiving no salary, the lack of infrastructure such as decent roads) to the inefficiency or corruption of government. Many interpreted Balram's murder of Ashok as a political act and referred to the rooster coop motif to support this. Stronger candidates were able to quote some of Balram's statements, such as 'The book of your revolution sits in the pit of your belly, young Indian...', interpreting this as a kind of political rallying call, inciting others to follow his example. Ironic references to the Great Socialist and the statue of Ghandi were seen as some of the more subtle ways Adiga presents political concerns. Weaker responses focused on the contrasts between those living in the Light and the Dark, relations between masters and servants and the rooster coop, all of which were usually made relevant to the question.

- (b) Good answers covered the passage and its relation to the wider text, commenting on the way the epistolary form provides insight to Balram's feelings with the characteristic parenthesis directed at Jiabao conveying Balram's insolent tone, despite the more serious nature of most of the passage. Most responses appreciated the irony in Balram's expectations of the Stork and the bathetic effect achieved by the revelation of his chief concern, his feet. Some candidates spent too much time discussing Balram's tendency to zoomorphism giving too many examples, leaving insufficient time to deal with the whole passage. The trickle of urine was misunderstood by some who thought either that Balram had deliberately urinated into the water being used for the Stork's feet or that the Stork had urinated. The erotic response to the massage was noted and sometimes linked to other erotic undertones in the wider text. The contrast between Pinkie Madam's behaviour here and her earlier treatment of Balram made a good link to the wider text. Some connected her more humane attitude with her exposure to western culture. The Stork's attitude to her and to women in general was a fruitful area for comment, missed by those who did not get this far in the extract.

3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

This text is becoming more popular and students are showing engagement with the ambiguities created by the writer and their significance. They seem to find it easier in this text than in others to view characters as constructs of the writer and thus to discuss the writer's methods and intentions, perhaps because the structure of the text distances them as readers from the characters. The (b) question was the more frequently tackled.

- (a) Good answers focused on role and presentation, rather than describing the character of Julia and her actions. Some viewed her as a figment of the saxophone teacher's imagination or as a bridge between music and drama. The descriptions of the saxophone in various 'suggestive poses' and the use of language drawn from theatrical performance also featured in good responses. There were some sensitive responses to Julia as an outsider and her preoccupation with 'watching' as well as performing was linked to the main concerns of the plot as well as her search for her identity as an adolescent. The ambiguity between performance and reality was discussed with comment on the lack of clarity as to whether a scene is real or staged. The relationship between Julia and Isolde and the gossip to which it gives rise was seen as structurally balanced with the affair between Victoria and Mr Saladin.
- (b) This passage could clearly be linked by many candidates to the main concerns of role playing and the search for identity. Stanley's character and his search for a role here and elsewhere in the novel were discussed as well as the attitudes displayed by the teachers. Some made connections between Stanley's desperation to be noticed and appreciated and his poor relationship with his father. There was some careful analysis of the passage with close focus on phrases such as 'ambitiously moody' 'branding' and 'quietly shepherded'. The cynical tone of the narrator was identified. Weaker candidates tended to provide simple narrative commentary on the passage with little reference to the wider text or close analysis of the language of the passage.

4. ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca and My Children! My Africa!*

This text was studied by a significant minority of students with some engagement, particularly with the context of *My Children! My Africa!* There was evidence of detailed textual knowledge and an increasing awareness of the texts as drama, though some candidates demonstrated only general knowledge of the plays based on plot and characterisation.

- (a) Few candidates attempted this and those who took the introductory quotation into account were the most successful. They needed to explore the ways in which Elsa and Isabel undergo some change in understanding of themselves in the course of the play, rather than simply to write character studies. Isabel was found to be more straightforward in that she acquires an understanding of the underprivileged black community and of her own luck in being born with a white skin through her relationship with Zolile School, Thami and Mr M. Elsa was viewed as learning to see Marius as a caring man, rather than a villainous bully representative of the conservative, patriarchal Christian society, and/or coming to terms with her own identity through confiding in Helen about her affair and subsequent abortion. The ways each character expresses herself through long, explanatory speeches or through dramatic use of expletives formed part of the discussion of dramatic effects. The role of each character as mediator was also discussed but weaker candidates sometimes became side-tracked by discussion of the other characters. They were both viewed as symbols of hope at the end of each play.

- (b) Successful answers offered a close reading of the extract and made relevant links to other areas of the text, usually confining themselves to *My Children! My Africa!* Knowledge of the South African apartheid context was useful, some referring in particular to the Bantu Education Act, though this kind of knowledge needs to be carefully deployed, linking to commentary on the text rather than tacked on indiscriminately. Good responses located the passage contextually and explored the power of this soliloquy, sometimes observing the dramatic shifts in tone throughout the passage, contrasting the ‘gentle Chinese heart’ of Confucius with the ‘heart attacks’ and the ominous ‘mad zoo of hungry animals’ experienced by Mr M. The dramatic effects of the passage were observed, such as the Brechtian breaking of the fourth wall as he directly addresses the audience and the thumping of his chest with his clenched fist. These were thematically linked to the conflict between violent and peaceful methods of gaining rights for the black community, and indicated that Mr M is not a two-dimensional, conservative figure but one who has had to exercise control over his own inclinations towards violence. The description of Mr M’s morning routine, while superficially light-hearted in tone, could be linked to and contrasted with Isobel’s descriptions of her home life with Auntie in the kitchen and other comparisons made by her between the lifestyle in the town and in the ‘location’. Mr M’s darker description of ‘loved and precious children who go hungry and die of malnutrition’ explains why even he has a dangerous animal prowling around in his heart. Despite his conservative attitude and his assertion that this animal is called Hope, this passage was viewed by some as presaging the later eruption of violence.

Weaker responses tended to give narrative commentary on the passage and discussion of Mr M’s character, sometimes contrasting his views with Thami’s.

5. ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

This remains by far the most popular text, with most candidates tackling option (b). Candidates showed much evidence of reading critical views of the play but need to be mindful of using these views as part of the argument, supporting or disagreeing by referring to the text, rather than using the criticism assertively as indisputable fact. Some ambitious candidates used quotations from critics and various approaches to literary criticism such as Marxism or Feminism without supporting their ideas through the text.

- (a) Strong candidates explored the **ways** Miller presents the relationship of Willy and Linda, usually referring to both of them in each paragraph, rather than discussing Willy’s and Linda’s characters separately. They were able to quote frequently and move around the text with ease. Some viewed the relationship as akin to that of a mother and child, referring to Linda buttoning up Willy’s coat, reminding him to take his glasses, taking charge of the household accounts, defending Willy against his sons – ‘attention must be paid’- and referring to him as a ‘little boat looking for a harbour’. On the other hand Willy’s treatment of Linda was viewed as chauvinistic and in keeping with 1940’s culture. His constant silencing of Linda and belittling of her opinions as well as the affair and the gifting of stockings were referenced but needed to be linked to Miller’s methods, such as the many mentions of stockings in the text before their significance is finally revealed through the use of ‘mobile concurrency’, the use of stage directions (such as Linda often seen carrying laundry) and other dramatic devices. Some viewed Linda as strong and perceptive with her suspicious attitude to Ben and awareness of Willy’s borrowings from Charley. The ambiguity of Linda saying ‘We’re free’ in the Requiem and the contention that Linda is to be blamed for not confronting Willy about his delusions and the suicide attempts were all valid lines of argument.

Weaker responses viewed Willy and Linda as victims of the capitalist system without really discussing their relationship. Some candidates saw the question as a prompt to extol the virtues of Linda as a downtrodden woman with little reference to the text apart from the stockings. Others diverted into discussions of Willy’s relationship with Biff and Happy. The danger of treating characters as real people, rather than the constructs of the writer, was apparent in some answers.

- (b) Many candidates were able to do well in commenting on this passage. Stage directions and dramatic features such as lighting, Willy speaking through the wall of the kitchen or smiling at a kitchen chair are important aspects of Miller’s dramatic method and were taken into account in better answers. There is a tendency to overlook these features in the mistaken belief that only the spoken script is of importance. The treatment of these ‘mobile concurrency’ episodes varied greatly. Some candidates labelled this passage as an example of a delusion and evidence of Willy’s declining mental condition while others recognised it as not so much a flashback as a kind of daydream that mingles memories with wish-fulfilment. Others explored the passage as an actual memory juxtaposing the cosy past with the dingy present and exposing the flaws, the seeds sewn in the past, which lead to the tragic situation of the family in the present. Fruitful areas for comment

were the importance of the car as the family centre-piece, the favouring of Biff over Happy, Willy's smiling at Biff's theft of the football, the encouragement of seeking favours from women, all of which needed to be linked to later events. The setting with the elm trees and the promise of a hammock evoke an idyllic scene which contrasts with the cramped garden, overlooked by apartment blocks and with chopped down elm trees all lit by an angry orange glow seen at the beginning of the play. The irony of Willy's cult of personality -'well-liked'- and his arrogant dismissal of Charley were contrasted with the later success of both Charley and Bernard. The punch-bag was seen as a symbol of dumb masculinity which would be out of place in the competitive commercial world the boys would face in later life.

6. DEREK WALCOTT: *Selected Poetry*

Few centres had studied this text but it will no doubt increase in popularity as it becomes more familiar and its accessibility is recognised. Nearly all answers received were on option **(b)**.

- (a)** Some of the extraneous material candidates included in option **(b)** could have been more usefully employed here such as the colonial history of the Caribbean and Walcott's dual heritage. Walcott could be viewed as presenting himself as a spokesperson for those who live in the shadow of colonial history and share a dual heritage/hybridity. Poems particularly suited to tackling this question are: Ruins of a Great House, where conventional responses to the iniquities of West Indian history are subverted by the recognition of the coexistence of beauty and evil – murderers and poets – and the sense of the impermanence of all human achievement; The Almond trees is specifically concerned with women and slavery while Veranda confronts the theme of mixed heritage more overtly; Nearing Forty is concerned with the act of writing poetry and the fear that imagination is ebbing. Walcott's experiments with different verse forms and types of rhyme or non-rhyme could be addressed here. Some weak responses concentrated on simple biography with few details from the poems and little analysis.
- (b)** Most candidates who tackled this option gave a coherent reading of the poem with some appreciation of the effects of using first and second person pronouns – we/you – and of the use of pathetic fallacy. More attention could have been paid to the use of religious lexis – it is blest – and this could have been linked to religious concerns in Walcott's other poems or to his focus on death in other poems such as Sea Canes. Better answers contained some analysis of the language as opposed to paraphrase. It is rare to see 'characteristic' addressed. Those who tried to link the poem with the colonial history of the West Indies or to Walcott's dual heritage could have employed this material to better effect in option **(a)**.

7. W B YEATS: *Selected Poems*

This text has become increasingly popular. Candidates demonstrated familiarity with the context of Irish history and the life of the poet as well as the development of Yeats's poetic concerns over time. Most candidates used this knowledge to good effect which was relevant to the poems under discussion.

- (a)** Few candidates chose this option but those who did found plenty of accessible material in poems such as Leda and the Swan, No Second Troy, Long-legged Fly and The Second Coming. None discussed Yeats's use of Irish legend in poems such as The Circus Animals' Desertion and Under Ben Bulbin. Apt connections were made between Maud Gonne and Helen of Troy, and between British treatment of Ireland and the rape of Leda. They also discussed the significance of the gyre and the perversion of the Christian idea of the Second Coming. More successful answers also explored and analysed the language of the chosen poems – 'the blood-dimmed tide', 'the ceremony of innocence', 'slouches', 'indifferent beak' – and poetic effects such as placing of questions at the end of some poems – 'What rough beast...slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?', 'Was there another Troy for her to burn?'.
- (b)** Most candidates studying Yeats chose this question. Most of them were able to place the poem in the context of Yeats's life (with references to Maude Gonne and sometimes her daughter) and it was pleasing to see some discuss the poem in relation to his development and concerns as a poet, such as his romanticism and love of nature and his attitude to growing older, as demonstrated in poems such as The Lake Isle of Innisfree, Among School Children and Byzantium. Other candidates struggled to connect this poem with events such as the First World War or the Irish fight for independence and were perhaps too zealously attempting to assign specific significance to phrases like 'broken rings' (misread by several as 'broken wings') instead of alluding to Yeats's more general concern with the state of Irish culture as demonstrated in September 1913. Many

explored the language and tone of this poem with success and sometimes compared the way Yeats describes swans in this poem with his violent portrayal in *Leda and the Swan*. Even the weaker answers considered the significance of the odd number, nine-and-fifty and the fact that swans mate for life. They also commented on the effects created by the description of the autumn scene and the poet's choice of words – 'brimming', 'wheeling', 'clamorous', 'bell-beat' – as well as the concluding question.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Candidates need to show detailed knowledge and understanding of the texts, including the main themes and concerns of a text, and refer to at least some of these in response both to essay and passage questions.
- Answers should go beyond discussion of plot and description of characters to show how a writer creates meaning, selecting relevant key quotations to support the response.
- Answers should be carefully shaped to present a considered point of view; many well-informed, engaged candidates would score more highly if they could develop their essay writing skills to include more analysis.

General comments

This year's paper was of a similar level of difficulty to that of previous years and the questions produced responses covering the whole range of marks. Very few candidates had problems with timing, producing two essays of at least moderate length. Some candidates should bear in mind the virtue of succinctness and that making the same point several times or giving several examples to support it may leave them with insufficient time to make more valid points. Most candidates wrote with clear expression and those who did not were hampered less by language problems than by being over-ambitiously elaborate in their written style.

Clearly, many candidates usefully practise questions from previous years but some attempted to reproduce model answers to these which were not appropriate to this year's question. The importance of reading the question carefully cannot be over-emphasised, particularly when a question begins with a quotation to consider, as in **Question 4(a)**.

Answers should be carefully structured, so planning at the beginning can often be useful. Good answers often consider differing interpretations of a character, a relationship or a key event but successful candidates use discourse markers – 'however', 'on the other hand', 'another way of interpreting', etc. This means that the candidate avoids appearing to contradict an earlier point and shows an ability to develop an argument.

It is commendable that many candidates read the views of critics and quotations from them can be useful in developing an argument, especially if the candidate is able to illustrate the point being made by the critic by detailed reference to the text or show why they disagree. However, some candidates are using quotations which state the obvious and contribute little to the quality of the response.

Although a poem can be read in isolation and regarded as a work of art in its own right, the collection selected for study needs to be viewed as a whole, so that the **(b)** questions on individual poems should be treated in a similar way to those on a passage from a play or a novel and understood to have two main requirements: students must show understanding of that poem, including the poet's use of language and poetic techniques but must also place that poem within the wider context of the poet's concerns and ways of writing, so there must be links to specific details and quotations from other poems. Most centres now understand the need for this approach to prose and drama texts.

Above all, candidates should ensure that they consider not so much what is written in each text but how the writer has crafted the text to convey its meaning, using detailed knowledge of the text to support the discussion.

Comments on specific questions

1. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah*

This continues to be a popular text with most candidates choosing the **(b)** option, with a few responses to **(a)**.

- (a)** Some candidates were able to comment on the structural effect of Nigeria as the setting near the beginning of the novel and the end. There was some contrast between life in America, Britain and Nigeria. Good answers included discussion of attitudes to women and marriage, evidenced by the role and treatment of Auntie Uju as mistress of the General and by Kosi's expectations of marriage; the status of economically successful men such as the Chief (who is important to Obinze's career in Nigeria) and the General. The prevalence of corruption was noted. Post-colonial influence was seen as significant with the supposed superiority of the English or French curriculum to the Nigerian system; the attitude to the oil companies and the reference to 'white man behaviour'. It was seen as significant that on her return to Nigeria Ifemelu is no longer writing blogs about race as 'Race doesn't really work here'. Instead the subject of her final blog becomes the dramatic contrast between poor and rich in Nigeria despite and because of the tendency to globalisation, as well as the effects of modern development on more traditional aspects of Nigerian life such as the hawkers. Some noted the difference in style between this blog and the ones written in America as well as the contrast between Ifemelu's serious, poetic tone in her final blog and her satirical description of the Americanahs at the Nigeropolitan club
- (b)** There was a wide range of achievement in dealing with this question. Good answers demonstrated appreciation of the contrast between the different kinds of communication in this passage: the free indirect, omniscient narrative; the use of dialogue and the directness of the blog. Hair as a political symbol and the intricacies of racism were discussed in parallel with Ifemelu's personal growth. The evidence of flaws in the relationship between Ifemelu and Curt was noted, with Curt's apparent support for this 'movement of black women' alongside his jokey attitude to the hair products in the fridge and the fact that Ifemelu does not feel able to tell him about the 'Jungle' remark. The fact that Ifemelu expresses her concerns in blogs while Curt watches television suggests a mutual estrangement. The references to religion were connected with Ifemelu's mother and her more fanatical identification of hair with religion. Some able candidates discussed the parody of romantic language and use of sentence structure to describe the day 'in early spring' when Ifemelu fell in love with her hair. Competent answers noted the friendly sense of community evoked in the blog, use of the inclusive 'we', phrases like 'let's move forward' and the way the passage leads up to the most important part of the message, 'black women totally rock'. Weaker candidates took a more narrative approach to the passage, making some reference to the importance of hair, race and blogs in the novel as a whole.

2. ARAVIND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*

This text continues to be very popular with many candidates, who often quoted critical objections to Adiga's presentation of India. These critical views were not always well integrated into the answers or well linked to the question.

- (a)** This question invited candidates to go beyond an outline of the plot, showing discrimination in selection of relevant material and awareness of the key word in the question, 'presentation'. Good responses identified the complexity of this master/servant relationship. They discussed the kind treatment which differentiates Ashok from the rest of his family, the homo-erotic dimension to the relationship, demonstrated in the phrase 'my Ex', the ways in which Balram learns from and imitates Ashok, even to the extent of buying the services of a prostitute with blonde hair, and his eventual adoption of Ashok's name. The use of the light/dark motif and the rooster coop were relevantly incorporated into answers as well as the use of zoomorphism where Ashok is compared to a lamb, indicating his weakness in relation to the Stork and Mongoose and his potential to become a victim of the white tiger. The defining event which was seen by many as provoking Balram to murder was Ashok's compliance in the plan to transfer the blame for Pinky Madam's accident onto Balram and Ashok's indifference when Pinky Madam tells Balram that his help is no longer needed. Weaker candidates gave mainly narrative accounts with some discussion of how far the murder could be justified.

- (b) Good answers covered the passage and its relation to the wider text, commenting on the way the epistolary form provides insight to Balram's feelings with the characteristic parenthesis directed at Jiabao conveying Balram's insolent tone and the unspoken riposte to Ashok's complaint about the spitting, despite the more serious nature of much of the passage. The vivid description of pollution caused by traffic was noted by nearly all candidates, some seeing it as a metaphor for corruption in the city, while competent responses made a link to the rural environment where Balram grew up (the calf taken from its mother and his sympathy for the buffalo) as well as discussing the contrast between rich and poor, the realisation that one could still be in the dark in this city environment and Balram's sense of being both inside the 'dark egg' of the car and outside it, empathising with the beggar who reminded him of his father. Good answers contained some analysis of phrases like 'dark egg' and discussed the use of colour in the passage. Most candidates commented on the rupee incident where Balram's position as a servant is reflected in his dog-like abasement on the floor of the car, and the irony of the bribe which Ashok and the Mongoose have just paid. Some candidates spent too much time discussing Balram's tendency to zoomorphism giving too many examples, leaving insufficient time to deal with the whole passage.

3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

This text is becoming more popular and students are showing engagement with the ambiguities created by the writer and their significance. They seem to find it easier in this text than in others to view characters as constructs of the writer and thus to discuss the writer's methods and intentions, perhaps because the structure of the text distances them as readers from the characters. The (a) question was the more frequently tackled.

- (a) This was a straightforward question and candidates who could refer to specific scenes in detail did well. Almost all answers focused mainly on the saxophone teacher, with a fairly even spread including reference to various drama school teachers and Mr Saladin. Good answers focused on role and presentation, rather than simply describing the characters and their actions. The ambiguity between performance and reality, especially in the scenes with the saxophone teacher and mothers of her pupils, was competently linked to the central concerns of the novel. Her manipulation of Julia and Isolde and the wish-fulfilment concerning her relationship with Patsy; the descriptions of the saxophone in various 'suggestive poses' and the use of language drawn from theatrical performance also featured. The tendency of teachers to see younger reflections of themselves in their pupils was extended to the drama school teachers, with some specific comment on the way the language they used in discussing their pupils betrayed a cynical attitude. Stanley's desperation to impress his teachers and Julia's more detached behaviour were mentioned.
- (b) This passage could clearly be linked by many candidates to the main concerns of role playing and the search for identity. The best answers showed evidence of close reading while moving confidently between the passage and the wider text. They discussed the stereotypical acting out of male and female roles, placing them in the wider context of the play, with some links to the ways Julie ponders on how to act out her role as seducer of Isolde. There was some analysis of the language, such as the way the transformative power of acting is suggested in the phrase 'rising like a phoenix out of the pallid ashy figure that had been the boy'; the extended metaphor of the voyage and Stanley's cynical version of Mr Saladin's clichéd response. The preoccupation of the other students with their own contributions and 'how they would contrive to make the words seem spontaneous and unrehearsed' was linked to other areas of the text which display the self-absorption of adolescence. There was also discussion of the way this improvisation and the final performance blurs the boundaries of the plot.

4. ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca and My Children! My Africa!*

This text was studied by a significant minority of students with some engagement, particularly with the context of *My Children! My Africa!* There was evidence of detailed textual knowledge and an increasing awareness of the texts as drama, though some candidates demonstrated only general knowledge of the plays based on plot and characterisation.

- (a) Few candidates attempted this and those who took the introductory quotation into account were the most successful. They needed to explore the ways in which Marius and Mr M. could be viewed as villains but how their characters are developed by Fugard in different ways, so that Marius emerges as a caring man, rather than the bigoted bully representative of the conservative, patriarchal Christian society first seen through the eyes of Elsa. The character of Mr M was seen as initially more sympathetically presented, mainly through the use of soliloquy which allows him to break the

fourth wall and engage directly with the audience. Some contextual knowledge, particularly of the Bantu Education Act, was useful here as Mr M's obedience to authority in this matter is the initial cause of the conflict between him and Thami. There was mixed response to Mr M's 'betrayal' of his pupils, with some candidates arguing that he deserved to die.

Thoughtful answers discussed the moral implications of the characters' beliefs

- (b) Successful answers located the passage contextually and offered a close reading of the extract while making relevant links to other areas of the text, usually confining themselves to *The Road to Mecca*. The dramatic features of the passage were observed, such as Elsa running her finger over the furniture to display the dust and Helen making a move to leave the room. Some candidates noted irony in the fact that Elsa is now bullying Helen in attempt to stop her giving in to the domination of Marius. The significance of candles and of light and dark were discussed in relation to the wider context of the play and Helen's isolation. Weaker responses tended to make narrative commentary on the passage with discussion of Elsa's character in contrast to Helen's.

5. ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

This remains by far the most popular text, with most tackling option (b). Candidates showed much evidence of reading critical views of the play but need to be mindful of using these views as part of the argument, supporting or disagreeing by referring to the text, rather than using the criticism assertively as indisputable fact. Some ambitious candidates used quotations from critics and various approaches to literary criticism such as Marxism or Feminism without supporting their ideas through the text.

- (a) The strongest responses noted that we never know what Willy sells and took this as a starting point for an investigation of the text. They took up the idea of selling as a wider, often destructive context for self-realisation and success. Some commented on Willy's connection with the earth and his skill with his hands, suggesting he is in the wrong line of business just as Biff is an example of one who is not best served by the American capitalist/consumerist dream. There was discussion of the role of Willy's hero, Dave Singleman, exploring the symbolism of that name, and the haunting effect of Ben as a false image of what Willy might have been. Some argued that Willy ends up selling himself in his bid to cash in on the insurance. Some were able to quote apt statements from Charley and Biff at the end of the play. Weaker answers tended to treat the Lomans and Willy in particular as real people, rather than constructs of the writer. A lot of narrative answers asserted that Willy had once been a great salesman and now it was a great shame he was old and could no longer achieve success, or they discussed Willy's character in general or in relation to his family with little reference to the idea of being a salesman.
- (b) Many candidates were able to do well in commenting on this passage. Stage directions and other aspects of Miller's dramatic method were taken into account in better answers. There is a tendency to overlook these features in the mistaken belief that only the spoken script is of importance. Despite the fluctuations in Willy's mood, it was agreed that at this point in the play, Willy and Linda are feeling optimistic, mainly as a result of the unrealistic plans of their sons to set up their own business and Willy's misplaced confidence in his ability to persuade Howard to take him off the road. By now the audience has come to understand the gap between Willy's expectations and reality, so this gives rise to dramatic tension as we wait for the tragic events to unfold. Willy's imperious tone at the start of the passage 'he'll just have to take me off the road' was contrasted with his fumbling confusion about the family finances. His cursing at the products which have let him down and his envy of Charley for buying a better quality, well-advertised machine were linked to the illusion of happiness sold by capitalist America. Some reflected on the word choice – the personification of objects as if they were to blame and the implied accusation of Linda 'I told you'. Linda was seen as characteristically encouraging and supportive throughout, though not allowed to finish some of her sentences – the buttoning up of Willy's jacket, 'that's the spirit'. Some found her complicit in Willy's delusions – 'It's changing Willy'. Connections to the wider text were made through the symbolism of the stockings and the disastrous outcome of the dinner he is so looking forward to as well as the interview with Howard and Biff's failure to acquire a loan from Oliver. Weaker answers revealed insufficiently detailed knowledge of the wider text to make these connections or tended to give a narrative commentary on the passage with little appreciation of the effects and implications of language choice.

6. DEREK WALCOTT: *Selected Poetry*

Few centres had studied this text but it will no doubt increase in popularity as it becomes more familiar and its accessibility is recognised. Nearly all answers received were on option **(b)**.

- (a)** Some of the extraneous material candidates included in option **(b)** could have been more usefully employed here such as the colonial history of the Caribbean and Walcott's dual heritage. His role as a poet could be viewed as a spokesperson for those who live in the shadow of colonial history and share a dual heritage/hybridity. Poems particularly suited to tackling this question are: Ruins of a Great House, where conventional responses to the iniquities of West Indian history are subverted by the recognition of the coexistence of beauty and evil – murderers and poets – and the sense of the impermanence of all human achievement; The Almond trees is specifically concerned with women and slavery while Veranda confronts the theme of mixed heritage more overtly; Nearing Forty is concerned with the act of writing poetry and the fear that imagination is ebbing. Walcott's experiments with different verse forms and types of rhyme or non-rhyme could be addressed here. Some weak responses concentrated on simple biography with few details from the poems and little analysis.
- (b)** Those who tackled this question often gave a coherent reading of the poem with some appreciation of the poetic methods employed. Better responses were able to identify the movement in tone from the first stark line, 'Half my friends are dead' to them being 'just there'. They noted the conversation between the speaker and the earth with some appreciation of the effects created by the description of the scene with its mixture of natural and supernatural imagery. Little attention was given to the sea canes and their significance which could have been linked to symbols used in other poems or to Walcott's focus on death in other poems such as Odd Job. Those who tried to link the poem with the colonial history of the West Indies or to Walcott's dual heritage could have employed this material to better effect in option **(a)**.

7. W B YEATS: *Selected Poems*

This text has become increasingly popular. Candidates demonstrated familiarity with the context of Irish history and the life of the poet as well as the development of Yeats's poetic concerns over time. Most candidates used this knowledge to good effect which was relevant to the poems under discussion.

- (a)** Few candidates chose this option. They were allowed a broad interpretation of 'symbols and symbolism' and all candidates selected sensible examples. Poems appropriate for this question ranged from the clearly symbolic, such as The Circus Animals' Desertion to more subtle examples such as The Wild Swans at Coole which lends itself to a range of interpretations. Leda and the Swan was also successfully explored and viewed as symbolic in various ways including the outcome of the rape leading to war and violence, with Helen of Troy herself symbolising these. Connections were made with Maud Gonne both here and in No Second Troy and the rape of Leda was seen as symbolic of British treatment of the Irish. Prayer for My Daughter, with its more subtle use of the laurel and the Horn of Plenty as symbols, was an apt choice. As well as identifying symbols, candidates need to comment on the way Yeats uses these symbols, his choice of words and poetic effects. Selecting the poem printed in option **(b)** was not a good choice as symbolic possibilities here are limited.
- (b)** This was a popular choice and many candidates performed well, showing a good grasp of poetic devices in the poem and of its context; the link with Major Robert Gregory and the situation of Ireland in the First World War. Those who were unaware of the context were disadvantaged because they could not convincingly interpret 'Those that I guard I do not love; / Those that I fight I do not hate' or 'Nor law nor duty bade me fight', though many of them did identify the parallel structure of the lines, the repetition of 'balance' and the overall sense of balance in the poem. Some candidates argued that the persona was almost suicidal, feeling that life was meaningless – 'waste of breath' and many thought him lonely while disregarding the 'impulse of delight'. There was good comment on the use of the first person pronoun 'I' throughout and able candidates saw that though he is one individual he represents the many (particularly Irishmen) who took part in the conflict. Some viewed it as an anti-war poem, referring to Yeats's antipathy to violence.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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- Answers should go beyond discussion of plot and description of characters to show how a writer creates meaning, selecting relevant key quotations to support the response.
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This year's paper was of a similar level of difficulty to that of previous years and the questions produced responses covering the whole range of marks. Very few candidates had problems with timing, producing two essays of at least moderate length. Some candidates should bear in mind the virtue of succinctness and that making the same point several times or giving several examples to support it may leave them with insufficient time to make more valid points. Most candidates wrote with clear expression and those who did not were hampered less by language problems than by being over-ambitiously elaborate in their written style.

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Answers should be carefully structured, so planning at the beginning can often be useful. Good answers often consider differing interpretations of a character, a relationship or a key event but successful candidates use discourse markers – 'however', 'on the other hand', 'another way of interpreting', etc. This means that the candidate avoids appearing to contradict an earlier point and shows an ability to develop an argument.

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Although a poem can be read in isolation and regarded as a work of art in its own right, the collection selected for study needs to be viewed as a whole, so that the **(b)** questions on individual poems should be treated in a similar way to those on a passage from a play or a novel and understood to have two main requirements: students must show understanding of that poem, including the poet's use of language and poetic techniques but must also place that poem within the wider context of the poet's concerns and ways of writing, so there must be links to specific details and quotations from other poems. Most centres now understand the need for this approach to prose and drama texts.

Above all, candidates should ensure that they consider not so much what is written in each text but how the writer has crafted the text to convey its meaning, using detailed knowledge of the text to support the discussion.

Comments on specific questions

1. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah*

This continues to be a popular text with more candidates choosing the **(b)** option, though there were also many responses to **(a)**.

- (a)** Good answers included relevant context on the issues of Non-American and American blacks, the cultural significance of hair and the Obamas. They questioned the stereotyping within the blogs as a form of racism and some found Ifemelu hypocritical. Few commented on the final blogs written in Nigeria and what they reveal about Ifemelu. There were comments on the empowerment provided by the internet and the way Adichie uses Ifemelu as a mouthpiece for her own views. Competent answers demonstrated how the blogs mark a development in Ifemelu's personal growth, noting why the blogs began and why they stopped, how they give Ifemelu a voice and help her connect with a wider community. They noted how events in her life reported in the blogs are given a racy, often flippant treatment, such as the 'Hot White Ex', in contrast to the more troubled, thoughtful tone in the main text.

Weaker answers showed insufficient detailed knowledge of the content of the blogs, so made very general, often valid, points about the more outspoken, uncensored style of the blogs in comparison with the rest of the text without quoting examples to illustrate this. Most had some general knowledge of topics, such as racism or hair but did not supply details.

- (b)** Stronger candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of Obinze in the wider text, noting his economic progress and his confident demeanour, contrasting his attitude with those of his compatriots. The context of Nigeria's post-colonial reliance on oil companies was linked to the earlier advice that a successful business in Nigeria needed a white manager. Western influence in Nigeria was also connected to the accusation of 'white man behaviour.' Obinze's tendency to judge those around him was linked to the same habit in Ifemelu. The rising tension was noted at the end of the passage where the conflict between Obinze's love for Ifemelu and his duty towards his family is emphasised. Competent answers made some detailed reference to the presentation of Obinze in the wider text, making comparisons with his behaviour in the passage. They commented on the significance of 'half-hearted shake', 'the coldness of his tone', of Buchi holding out her arms to him and Obinze's preoccupation with his phone. Weak answers demonstrated little detailed knowledge of Obinze in the novel as a whole, apart from his love for Ifemelu and his deportation from England, so they tended to consist of personal response to Obinze within the passage, with a balance of sympathy and condemnation of his plan to divorce Kosi.

2. ARAVIND ADIGA: *The White Tiger*

This text continues to be very popular with many candidates, who often quoted critical objections to Adiga's presentation of India. These critical views were not always well integrated into the answers or well linked to the question.

- (a)** This question invited candidates to go beyond an outline of the plot, showing discrimination in selection of relevant material. Apart from material clearly linked to politics, such as the rigging of elections, the violent treatment of the rickshaw driver and the bribing of politicians, there was plenty of opportunity to link other areas of the text (such as the condition of the local hospital where Balram's father died, the poor state of schools with teachers receiving no salary, the lack of infrastructure such as decent roads) to the inefficiency or corruption of government. Many interpreted Balram's murder of Ashok as a political act and referred to the rooster coop motif to support this. Stronger candidates were able to quote some of Balram's statements, such as 'The book of your revolution sits in the pit of your belly, young Indian...', interpreting this as a kind of political rallying call, inciting others to follow his example. Ironic references to the Great Socialist and the statue of Ghandi were seen as some of the more subtle ways Adiga presents political concerns. Weaker responses focused on the contrasts between those living in the Light and the Dark, relations between masters and servants and the rooster coop, all of which were usually made relevant to the question.

- (b) Good answers covered the passage and its relation to the wider text, commenting on the way the epistolary form provides insight to Balram's feelings with the characteristic parenthesis directed at Jiabao conveying Balram's insolent tone, despite the more serious nature of most of the passage. Most responses appreciated the irony in Balram's expectations of the Stork and the bathetic effect achieved by the revelation of his chief concern, his feet. Some candidates spent too much time discussing Balram's tendency to zoomorphism giving too many examples, leaving insufficient time to deal with the whole passage. The trickle of urine was misunderstood by some who thought either that Balram had deliberately urinated into the water being used for the Stork's feet or that the Stork had urinated. The erotic response to the massage was noted and sometimes linked to other erotic undertones in the wider text. The contrast between Pinkie Madam's behaviour here and her earlier treatment of Balram made a good link to the wider text. Some connected her more humane attitude with her exposure to western culture. The Stork's attitude to her and to women in general was a fruitful area for comment, missed by those who did not get this far in the extract.

3. ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

This text is becoming more popular and students are showing engagement with the ambiguities created by the writer and their significance. They seem to find it easier in this text than in others to view characters as constructs of the writer and thus to discuss the writer's methods and intentions, perhaps because the structure of the text distances them as readers from the characters. The (b) question was the more frequently tackled.

- (a) Good answers focused on role and presentation, rather than describing the character of Julia and her actions. Some viewed her as a figment of the saxophone teacher's imagination or as a bridge between music and drama. The descriptions of the saxophone in various 'suggestive poses' and the use of language drawn from theatrical performance also featured in good responses. There were some sensitive responses to Julia as an outsider and her preoccupation with 'watching' as well as performing was linked to the main concerns of the plot as well as her search for her identity as an adolescent. The ambiguity between performance and reality was discussed with comment on the lack of clarity as to whether a scene is real or staged. The relationship between Julia and Isolde and the gossip to which it gives rise was seen as structurally balanced with the affair between Victoria and Mr Saladin.
- (b) This passage could clearly be linked by many candidates to the main concerns of role playing and the search for identity. Stanley's character and his search for a role here and elsewhere in the novel were discussed as well as the attitudes displayed by the teachers. Some made connections between Stanley's desperation to be noticed and appreciated and his poor relationship with his father. There was some careful analysis of the passage with close focus on phrases such as 'ambitiously moody' 'branding' and 'quietly shepherded'. The cynical tone of the narrator was identified. Weaker candidates tended to provide simple narrative commentary on the passage with little reference to the wider text or close analysis of the language of the passage.

4. ATHOL FUGARD: *The Road to Mecca and My Children! My Africa!*

This text was studied by a significant minority of students with some engagement, particularly with the context of *My Children! My Africa!* There was evidence of detailed textual knowledge and an increasing awareness of the texts as drama, though some candidates demonstrated only general knowledge of the plays based on plot and characterisation.

- (a) Few candidates attempted this and those who took the introductory quotation into account were the most successful. They needed to explore the ways in which Elsa and Isabel undergo some change in understanding of themselves in the course of the play, rather than simply to write character studies. Isabel was found to be more straightforward in that she acquires an understanding of the underprivileged black community and of her own luck in being born with a white skin through her relationship with Zolile School, Thami and Mr M. Elsa was viewed as learning to see Marius as a caring man, rather than a villainous bully representative of the conservative, patriarchal Christian society, and/or coming to terms with her own identity through confiding in Helen about her affair and subsequent abortion. The ways each character expresses herself through long, explanatory speeches or through dramatic use of expletives formed part of the discussion of dramatic effects. The role of each character as mediator was also discussed but weaker candidates sometimes became side-tracked by discussion of the other characters. They were both viewed as symbols of hope at the end of each play.

- (b) Successful answers offered a close reading of the extract and made relevant links to other areas of the text, usually confining themselves to *My Children! My Africa!* Knowledge of the South African apartheid context was useful, some referring in particular to the Bantu Education Act, though this kind of knowledge needs to be carefully deployed, linking to commentary on the text rather than tacked on indiscriminately. Good responses located the passage contextually and explored the power of this soliloquy, sometimes observing the dramatic shifts in tone throughout the passage, contrasting the ‘gentle Chinese heart’ of Confucius with the ‘heart attacks’ and the ominous ‘mad zoo of hungry animals’ experienced by Mr M. The dramatic effects of the passage were observed, such as the Brechtian breaking of the fourth wall as he directly addresses the audience and the thumping of his chest with his clenched fist. These were thematically linked to the conflict between violent and peaceful methods of gaining rights for the black community, and indicated that Mr M is not a two-dimensional, conservative figure but one who has had to exercise control over his own inclinations towards violence. The description of Mr M’s morning routine, while superficially light-hearted in tone, could be linked to and contrasted with Isobel’s descriptions of her home life with Auntie in the kitchen and other comparisons made by her between the lifestyle in the town and in the ‘location’. Mr M’s darker description of ‘loved and precious children who go hungry and die of malnutrition’ explains why even he has a dangerous animal prowling around in his heart. Despite his conservative attitude and his assertion that this animal is called Hope, this passage was viewed by some as presaging the later eruption of violence.

Weaker responses tended to give narrative commentary on the passage and discussion of Mr M’s character, sometimes contrasting his views with Thami’s.

5. ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

This remains by far the most popular text, with most candidates tackling option (b). Candidates showed much evidence of reading critical views of the play but need to be mindful of using these views as part of the argument, supporting or disagreeing by referring to the text, rather than using the criticism assertively as indisputable fact. Some ambitious candidates used quotations from critics and various approaches to literary criticism such as Marxism or Feminism without supporting their ideas through the text.

- (a) Strong candidates explored the **ways** Miller presents the relationship of Willy and Linda, usually referring to both of them in each paragraph, rather than discussing Willy’s and Linda’s characters separately. They were able to quote frequently and move around the text with ease. Some viewed the relationship as akin to that of a mother and child, referring to Linda buttoning up Willy’s coat, reminding him to take his glasses, taking charge of the household accounts, defending Willy against his sons – ‘attention must be paid’- and referring to him as a ‘little boat looking for a harbour’. On the other hand Willy’s treatment of Linda was viewed as chauvinistic and in keeping with 1940’s culture. His constant silencing of Linda and belittling of her opinions as well as the affair and the gifting of stockings were referenced but needed to be linked to Miller’s methods, such as the many mentions of stockings in the text before their significance is finally revealed through the use of ‘mobile concurrency’, the use of stage directions (such as Linda often seen carrying laundry) and other dramatic devices. Some viewed Linda as strong and perceptive with her suspicious attitude to Ben and awareness of Willy’s borrowings from Charley. The ambiguity of Linda saying ‘We’re free’ in the Requiem and the contention that Linda is to be blamed for not confronting Willy about his delusions and the suicide attempts were all valid lines of argument.

Weaker responses viewed Willy and Linda as victims of the capitalist system without really discussing their relationship. Some candidates saw the question as a prompt to extol the virtues of Linda as a downtrodden woman with little reference to the text apart from the stockings. Others diverted into discussions of Willy’s relationship with Biff and Happy. The danger of treating characters as real people, rather than the constructs of the writer, was apparent in some answers.

- (b) Many candidates were able to do well in commenting on this passage. Stage directions and dramatic features such as lighting, Willy speaking through the wall of the kitchen or smiling at a kitchen chair are important aspects of Miller’s dramatic method and were taken into account in better answers. There is a tendency to overlook these features in the mistaken belief that only the spoken script is of importance. The treatment of these ‘mobile concurrency’ episodes varied greatly. Some candidates labelled this passage as an example of a delusion and evidence of Willy’s declining mental condition while others recognised it as not so much a flashback as a kind of daydream that mingles memories with wish-fulfilment. Others explored the passage as an actual memory juxtaposing the cosy past with the dingy present and exposing the flaws, the seeds sewn in the past, which lead to the tragic situation of the family in the present. Fruitful areas for comment

were the importance of the car as the family centre-piece, the favouring of Biff over Happy, Willy's smiling at Biff's theft of the football, the encouragement of seeking favours from women, all of which needed to be linked to later events. The setting with the elm trees and the promise of a hammock evoke an idyllic scene which contrasts with the cramped garden, overlooked by apartment blocks and with chopped down elm trees all lit by an angry orange glow seen at the beginning of the play. The irony of Willy's cult of personality -'well-liked'- and his arrogant dismissal of Charley were contrasted with the later success of both Charley and Bernard. The punch-bag was seen as a symbol of dumb masculinity which would be out of place in the competitive commercial world the boys would face in later life.

6. DEREK WALCOTT: *Selected Poetry*

Few centres had studied this text but it will no doubt increase in popularity as it becomes more familiar and its accessibility is recognised. Nearly all answers received were on option **(b)**.

- (a)** Some of the extraneous material candidates included in option **(b)** could have been more usefully employed here such as the colonial history of the Caribbean and Walcott's dual heritage. Walcott could be viewed as presenting himself as a spokesperson for those who live in the shadow of colonial history and share a dual heritage/hybridity. Poems particularly suited to tackling this question are: Ruins of a Great House, where conventional responses to the iniquities of West Indian history are subverted by the recognition of the coexistence of beauty and evil – murderers and poets – and the sense of the impermanence of all human achievement; The Almond trees is specifically concerned with women and slavery while Veranda confronts the theme of mixed heritage more overtly; Nearing Forty is concerned with the act of writing poetry and the fear that imagination is ebbing. Walcott's experiments with different verse forms and types of rhyme or non-rhyme could be addressed here. Some weak responses concentrated on simple biography with few details from the poems and little analysis.
- (b)** Most candidates who tackled this option gave a coherent reading of the poem with some appreciation of the effects of using first and second person pronouns – we/you – and of the use of pathetic fallacy. More attention could have been paid to the use of religious lexis – it is blest – and this could have been linked to religious concerns in Walcott's other poems or to his focus on death in other poems such as Sea Canes. Better answers contained some analysis of the language as opposed to paraphrase. It is rare to see 'characteristic' addressed. Those who tried to link the poem with the colonial history of the West Indies or to Walcott's dual heritage could have employed this material to better effect in option **(a)**.

7. W B YEATS: *Selected Poems*

This text has become increasingly popular. Candidates demonstrated familiarity with the context of Irish history and the life of the poet as well as the development of Yeats's poetic concerns over time. Most candidates used this knowledge to good effect which was relevant to the poems under discussion.

- (a)** Few candidates chose this option but those who did found plenty of accessible material in poems such as Leda and the Swan, No Second Troy, Long-legged Fly and The Second Coming. None discussed Yeats's use of Irish legend in poems such as The Circus Animals' Desertion and Under Ben Bulbin. Apt connections were made between Maud Gonne and Helen of Troy, and between British treatment of Ireland and the rape of Leda. They also discussed the significance of the gyre and the perversion of the Christian idea of the Second Coming. More successful answers also explored and analysed the language of the chosen poems – 'the blood-dimmed tide', 'the ceremony of innocence', 'slouches', 'indifferent beak' – and poetic effects such as placing of questions at the end of some poems – 'What rough beast...slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?', 'Was there another Troy for her to burn?'.
- (b)** Most candidates studying Yeats chose this question. Most of them were able to place the poem in the context of Yeats's life (with references to Maude Gonne and sometimes her daughter) and it was pleasing to see some discuss the poem in relation to his development and concerns as a poet, such as his romanticism and love of nature and his attitude to growing older, as demonstrated in poems such as The Lake Isle of Innisfree, Among School Children and Byzantium. Other candidates struggled to connect this poem with events such as the First World War or the Irish fight for independence and were perhaps too zealously attempting to assign specific significance to phrases like 'broken rings' (misread by several as 'broken wings') instead of alluding to Yeats's more general concern with the state of Irish culture as demonstrated in September 1913. Many

explored the language and tone of this poem with success and sometimes compared the way Yeats describes swans in this poem with his violent portrayal in *Leda and the Swan*. Even the weaker answers considered the significance of the odd number, nine-and-fifty and the fact that swans mate for life. They also commented on the effects created by the description of the autumn scene and the poet's choice of words – 'brimming', 'wheeling', 'clamorous', 'bell-beat' – as well as the concluding question.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/71 Comment and Appreciation</p>

Key messages

Good answers:

- Demonstrate that candidates have read and considered their chosen poem or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- Do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase, but focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passages, and upon how these shape meaning.
- Show how literary devices and techniques are used by the writers to create particular effects and responses.
- Use personal responses to reflect the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not simply to what is said.
- Maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout the response, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General comments

There was as usual a very good range of responses to the three questions in the Paper, and most candidates had clearly read the poem and passages carefully before starting to write about them, so that they were able to see each of them as a whole, and most therefore did not omit the significance of the closing lines or words. There were relatively few responses which relied solely upon simple paraphrase or narrative, and there was plenty of critical discussion of language and structure, especially with the poem. A few candidates spent unnecessary time comparing the printed poem or passages to what they had read by other writers, or speculating about what influences might have been brought to bear on the writing by historical conditions at the time of writing; both of these factors were unhelpful, and very rarely added any value to the close reading that must be expected. The best responses ensured that they focused entirely and solely upon what was printed on the question paper.

The majority of responses explored not just what each writer says, but more importantly how they creates meaning and effects, and where appropriate how characters are formed and presented. There was inevitably some small element of narrative or paraphrase in many responses, but this was for the most part quite minor, and was introduced as a way of working towards critical exploration. The language used by each writer was of course the most significant aspect of this exploration, with particular focus upon imagery, but also upon such devices as alliteration, assonance, similes, metaphors and so on; some candidates used more unusual technical terminology, which was sometimes helpful, but also appeared at times to be there for its own sake rather than as a means of explaining or elucidating a point. There is usually less use of rhythm or rhyme in a piece of prose, but where it does help create a particular effect then it is certainly worth commenting upon, but no credit can be given for simple 'alliteration spotting', or for just noticing the apparently common 'rule of three'. It is likely that there will be more examples of such techniques in poetry, though where there is no regular rhyme or rhythm – as is very clearly the case in the poem set for **Question 2** – then no credit can be awarded for just saying that these are not present; and the difference between blank verse and free verse was not always acknowledged by candidates.

Almost all candidates completed their two responses fully and properly; a few were clearly rushed towards the end, and once or twice they were very obviously unfinished, but these were few and far between. Time management was considerably better this session than it has sometimes been in the past. Arguments were in most cases at least reasonably clear and were often well structured, so that candidates' ideas could be seen to develop as they progressed, and were in most cases the result of careful reading and planning; there were occasional instances where new ideas were suddenly thought of, and some candidates relied a little

too much upon asterisks and arrows to indicate where these new ideas fitted, but such responses were relatively uncommon.

However, as in November 2017, there were many comments on handwriting and it was clearly one of the most significant concerns. All examiners understand the pressure that candidates are under during a timed examination, and that having chosen which poem or passages they wish to write about they have only a short time in which to do this, but if as a result their handwriting is so hurried and untidy that it is difficult to read then they are doing themselves no favours at all, and may in fact be doing harm. No penalty is ever imposed simply for poor presentation, but when a response becomes hard, or even in parts impossible to understand, then clearly it is unlikely to attract the marks that it may deserve. The instructions on the question paper say '*You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers*', and it really is absolutely essential that candidates follow this requirement.

As in most past sessions, a few candidates worried unnecessarily about the titles of the texts from which the printed passages were taken. Sometimes they made quite sensible comments – Helga Crane in **Question 1**, for example, is trapped by the school and by Dr Anderson in a kind of quicksand – but sometimes comments led to speculation and candidates are much better served by focusing firmly and fully upon the passages or poems given.

It was noted this session that candidates frequently wanted to see the passage or poem within much wider contexts. For example, the passage in **Question 1** was sometimes seen as mainly political in its 'message' – Dr Anderson and his school were seen as embodying all that was wrong with American society in the 1920s, and he in particular was often said to be a prime example of how men held all the power (in a so-called patriarchal society), while women were inferior in every way, a somewhat sweeping statement. **Question 3** was very frequently seen as illustrative of a post-colonial country, with the boy representing the ex-imperial British, and Somi and Ranbir members of the new and increasingly independent India; relatively few responses saw the passage as a simple tale of one rather isolated and lonely boy who happens to meet two cheerful and welcoming young men, who simply want to be friendly. Too much focus was placed upon wider political ideas instead of upon what is actually being presented in the two passages concerned; some candidates spent far too much time and energy on these matters, to the exclusion of close critical exploration of what is written.

Comments on individual questions

1. Quicksand- Nella Larsen

This was a popular question, and there were some sensitive and thoughtful responses to writing. There are two strong characters in the passage, and candidates were almost all able to see how the writer creates them and how she illustrates their differing determination; most also saw how the passage is structured, and were able to comment with some confidence about how this is designed to surprise and perhaps please its readers.

Helga Crane's opening speech makes her strength of character very evident from the start; she is courteous in saying '*I have to confess...*', but her one-word conclusion ('*Today*') makes her intention absolutely clear. While she certainly shows some doubts as the conversation continues, her language becomes increasingly strong, culminating in the repeated word '*hate*', and her likening of the school to '*some loathsome, venomous disease*'. There was no doubt in the minds of virtually every candidate that she wishes to be severely and honestly critical of a place that she has – for reasons that she goes on to explain – come to feel truly bitter about. In striking contrast, Dr Anderson is presented as an equally strong but very different kind of person, seen by some candidates as kind and supportive, but by others as manipulative and cunning, even toying and playing with the young woman as he persuades her to change her mind. The language and images used in relation to both was frequently well considered: Helga's bitterly angry words in lines 13–17 were often isolated and critically assessed, as were Dr Anderson's much quieter and calmer replies in lines 4, 7 and 9 for example; a few noticed the subtlety of the closing two words in line 9, as possibly indicative of a much harder purpose beneath his apparent calm. There was an interesting range of interpretation about how the writer presented the Principal: some saw him as impressive, wise and kindly, whereas others were equally sure that he was arrogant, patronising and complacent.

The discussion continues in an almost dramatic fashion, building towards something of a peak in line 33 with Dr Anderson's cool and arguably discourteous question. As several responses pointed out, he must know Helga's age, given that he presumably appointed her to the teaching post, so the question is not quite as neutral as it might appear; his longer speech in lines 36–42 has a strange effect on Helga, almost as if she is

being hypnotised by the charisma of the man; this was shown to be the case when candidates said that she felt 'a mystifying yearning which sang and throbbed in her.' One or two suggested that there is a kind of sexuality here, but this is not in any way explicitly the case; it is shown by the writer to work, however, and Helga agrees to stay – in fact, rather than just agreeing to stay she positively resolves to do so. Dr Anderson makes the mistake of referring incorrectly to her background and family, when the passage is given a final twist; interestingly, the final words are a kind of echo of the opening, with Helga saying 'This afternoon. Good-morning', recalling her abrupt 'Today'.

There is plenty of material in the passage to explore, and many candidates did so with confidence and some insight and perception; very few wrote as if the two characters were real people, and made it quite clear that they were fictitious creations, exploring Nella Larsen's writing with some degree of critical sophistication.

2. *You Will Forget*- Chenjerai Hove

How a candidate addresses a poem is often a particularly good test of her or his critical confidence, and this poem was no exception. It is worth noting that only a few candidates accurately quoted from the poem, in most cases simply ignoring the poet's use of line breaks and writing as if the words were prose, which does show a slight lack of sensitivity to how the poem is written. The poem here lacks many of the characteristics that might be expected in poetry as there is no rhyme and no conventional rhythm, perhaps arguably none at all and there is not a regular pattern to the stanzas; it does, however, have some very striking repetition, of two phrases in particular, and some powerful images, pulled together by alliteration and assonance. There is in fact a great deal to discuss in the way the poet writes, and how he conveys his message – and for once this word is fully justified – to his readers. The shift in tone at the end of the poem by contrast gives some suggestion that those readers who live in comfort may even, in some ways, be worse off than those who do not. A lot of responses speculated as to who 'you' is, some arguing quite confidently that it might even be the poet himself, though in a way this is just speculation, not really adding critical insight.

Repetition is central to the structure, and as every candidate pointed out there is repetition of one or both of the main phrases in every section, giving a kind of musicality and rhythm to it, especially if read 'aloud' in the mind. There is much alliteration, too, always to draw attention to some particularly striking thoughts, as for example in line 3, lines 8–9, line 18, lines 29–30, and many candidates commented with sensitivity on these and other examples, not just identifying them but making clear how and why the poet uses this technique. There is also some very striking language: what, for instance, are the purpose and impact of the word '*bald*' in line 4, or of '*the sinewy neck*' in line 7? There were candidates who wanted the poem to be simply about feminism and the dreadful suffering that women in under-developed parts of the world have to face, and of course this is partly what the poet says, but there is also the consideration that the men suffer too – they die in the mines, they fight and die in battles.

However, there is something of a turn at the end of the poem, which only a few candidates seemed to notice – perhaps because of time pressure, but perhaps too because these lines may at least in part contradict what is said earlier. Lines 31–33 seem to suggest that although there is much – too much – that is simply dreadful suffering there is also some warm connection between bare feet and the soil; women and nature are not totally at odds. And while the sense of the closing two lines may not be immediately obvious after the relative simplicity of the rest of the poem, the idea is expressed that living in wealthy comfort may actually mean that you forget the fact that despite everything there is also an almost inexpressible harmony between the turning seasons and the animals who help cultivate the land. The end of the poem may have a kind of half-spoken positivity which in comfort too long you will also forget.

3. *The Room on the Roof*- Ruskin Bond

As with the other two questions, this is not necessarily a passage about political concerns; the fact that it is set in India, some ten years after that country's independence from Britain, does not necessarily mean that this is its central issue. Candidates who wrote simply about what was there on the printed examination question paper were much more successful than those who wanted there to be some other, 'hidden' meaning which goes beyond the scope of what they see printed on the examination paper. It may be just the start of a story about a lonely English boy who meets a friendly Indian boy and then his friend, who despite their personal and cultural differences become acquainted and confident with each other; candidates who treated it in this way almost invariably wrote better and critically more successful responses than those who tried to make it much more racially and culturally significant.

Many responses worried that the boy is not given a name by the writer, forgetting perhaps that this is just the opening page or two of a much longer novel. Others, more helpfully, saw his namelessness as part of his

lonely and isolated nature as the passage opens; he is happy in his own way, enjoying being in the rain and in the countryside, and clearly prefers this to being either at home or in Dehra. His appearance is not immediately attractive, but probably not significantly so, and there is no evidence that his rough face and loose and heavy lip are the result of physical abuse by his parents; it may just be that the writer does not want a conventionally good-looking or 'heroic' character to be central to his tale. His appearance may also just reflect the kind of person the writer wants to contrast with Somi, or even to suggest that his outward lack of handsomeness is a reflection of his inward ordinariness. He is in his own way, too, a happy boy, as is stressed in line 3 of the passage, significantly where the smile is in his eyes, not just his mouth – he is genuinely content. An interesting idea appeared several times: the rain that '*rode on the wind*' in line 1 was suggested to be a precursor of the arrival of Somi on his bicycle, together with the way that the writer describes the '*soft, swishing sound*' of the tyres on the wet road.

When he does meet Somi, of course, the writer stresses the differences in their physical natures, as well as their general demeanours; Somi is outgoing, lively, riding not walking, and keen to be helpful and friendly; there is no criticism whatsoever of the boy in what Somi says or does, and it is important that the boy finally agrees to sit on the bicycle, attracted by Somi's warm nature.

There is some momentary uncertainty when they meet Ranbir, who is not just larger physically but also '*the best wrestler in the bazaar*', a phrase which might have worried the boy, whose views on the bazaar are made clear at the start of the passage. But Ranbir too is friendly, and the fact that after just a few minutes the boy can feel jealous when the conversation continues in Punjabi does seem to imply that he is already much happier and settling into a new friendship. Many candidates were puzzled by the apparently odd spelling of the word '*Hullo*', expecting it to be '*Hello*', but both spellings are perfectly normal, and there is nothing significant about the former – and certainly not evidence that the two Indian youths are members of a child trafficking gang, using a special password.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/72 Comment and Appreciation</p>

Key messages

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General comments

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As in most past sessions, a few candidates worried unnecessarily about the titles of the texts from which the printed passages were taken. Sometimes they made quite sensible comments – Kiki in **Question 3**, for example, is determined that she will make Menzi pay for what he has done, so that her future will be more securely held – but sometimes comments led to speculation and candidates are much better served by focusing firmly and fully upon the passages or poems given.

It was noted this session that candidates frequently wanted to see the passage or poem within much wider contexts. For example, the passage in **Question 1** was sometimes seen as mainly political in its 'message' – hatred of apartheid in South Africa, and presentation of dreadful poverty in Botswana, ignoring the fact that none of the passage is actually set in South Africa, and that the stress in Botswana is the concern and care shown by the woman towards Isaac. And **Question 3** was frequently seen as drawing attention simply to the power held by men in Swaziland, and the suppression of women that this led to; too few candidates saw the passage as simply about one relationship, and about one very determined young woman and one apparently carefree young man. Too much focus was placed upon wider political ideas instead of upon what is actually being presented in the two passages concerned; some candidates spent far too much time and energy on these matters, to the exclusion of close critical exploration of what is written.

Comments on individual questions

1. *White Dog Fell From the Sky*- Eleanor Morse

All three questions were addressed in more or less equal numbers, but this was by a very small margin the least popular, though it was tackled with often perceptive and thoughtful critical skill; the most successful responses as always came from candidates who concentrated solely upon what was given, without more than very brief passing reference to any political contexts. There is no explicit reference anywhere else in the passage to apartheid, or to racial concerns.

Isaac is introduced, as many responses suggested, as if he is dead; the writer's repeated use of the word '*it*' in the first two paragraphs is striking and of course horrific, especially when the assumed corpse shows signs of life. Several candidates made the interesting point here that Isaac's apparent resurrection is symbolic of the new life that he begins to experience later in the passage. The setting reflects Isaac's perilous position, and while the dust is meant quite literally it is also used to reflect his near-lifelessness and his complete isolation; the two men have gone, he is away from his family, and even his cardboard suitcase is missing. He has nothing left. The sudden and unexplained introduction of the white dog is presented by the writer as completely mysterious; where she has come from, and what she represents is entirely unclear, and Isaac's assumption that she may be there to accompany him to the land of the dead is fully understandable. It is interesting, as noted by one or two candidates, that the dog is female, like the woman who helps him later.

The potentially mystical nature of lines 19–27 is however abruptly stopped when Isaac sees some trash; this makes it clear to him, and to the reader, that he is truly alive; '*the realm of the dead*' would not have such things. And at that exact moment he hears a human voice; he is not alone, and the white dog has not merely offered him some comfort but has also helped him to hear, and meet, another human. The woman is understandably anxious and uncertain when she sees Isaac, still covered in dust. But in a moment rich with meaning, he throws off much dust when he '*struck his pants with his hands*', and when he finds that he is in Botswana he wipes his face '*as though opening a curtain*'; many responses saw these two images as full of significance, and made some thoughtful comments about them.

The woman offers tea, and the symbolism of water takes on a greater importance; the long paragraph (lines 65–76) about the tides and what causes them has much possible meaning about Isaac's relationship with his

own mother, and how he feels now that he is separated from her, but the concept of water, which has been in the background from the moment that the two men throw a bucket of water over Isaac, now becomes much clearer. Water is a symbol of birth, or of re-birth, and possibly for some candidates as an image of baptism and many saw this as Isaac's new life starting.

2. *Can It Be?*- Manmohan Ghose and *She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways*- William Wordsworth

By a small margin this was the most popular question, and in most cases it was addressed with at least some degree of competence, and often proficiency. Comparing two poems is not easy, but almost without exception candidates did this with confidence, keeping both poems in their argument at all times, rather than simply writing two discrete commentaries. This may perhaps have been in part because the two poets write about a similar experience – the death of a loved woman and the feelings that this arouses – and they do so in very closely similar structures; there was no need for much to be said about the fact that both poems are written in four-lined iambic stanzas, with a nearly identical rhyme pattern, though some candidates thoughtfully suggested that while the emotions presented, especially by Ghose, are very strong, the tight structuring keeps them under control, perhaps making them even stronger when at the end of each stanza (Ghose) and at the end of the whole poem (Wordsworth) the reader can see powerful grief struggling to come out. It worth noting that only a few candidates accurately quoted from the poem, in most cases simply ignoring the poet's use of line breaks and writing as if the words were prose, which shows a lack of sensitivity to how the poems are written.

There are similarities in images, of course, as almost all responses considered: flowers are used by each poet, but while Wordsworth describes Lucy as 'a violet', the grave in Ghose's poem is given roses – violets are small and delicate, roses are larger and brighter; the woman in Ghose's poem was full of energy and bubbled with life; Lucy was '*half-hidden from the eye*', the different flowers reflecting those figures that they have been given in tribute to. Both poets use images of stars in their poems, but while Ghose says that '*the daisies shine like stars*' Wordsworth calls Lucy '*fair as a star, when only one/Is shining in the sky*', again contrasting the outward-going Ghose woman with the silent and lonely Lucy. Ghose ends each stanza with a question: his poem is full of disbelief that his love is dead, and cannot accept at the end of the poem that he, '*and you*', can be alive still, while '*She nothing, she nowhere*', a verbless line which a few candidates commented on. The end of Wordsworth's poem is similarly bleak, but in a different way; until the final line there is no explicit suggestion that the poet knew Lucy at all, let alone loved her, but the last five words of the poem movingly make it clear that whatever their relationship was he misses her. The final line, preceded by the heartfelt '*Oh*' is surely and unarguably grief-laden, and not – as a few candidates suggested – cold and sarcastic.

3. *What the Future Holds*- Sarah Mkhonza

As with **Question 1**, there were many responses which went well beyond the passage itself, to say that Kiki is presented by the writer as a kind of feminist model, and that the passage is written in order to criticise the male-dominated society that they believed to have existed in Swaziland in the late 1980s. This may or may not be the case when the whole novel is read, but there is little in this extract to suggest that Sarah Mkhonza is writing a political tract; it is, rather, a relatively brief presentation of a young woman who has been made pregnant, whether by rape or consent (those candidates who were convinced that it was rape provided no evidence for this), and has been abandoned by the baby's father, and after two years of caring for the child is finally determined to seek Menzi's support. Why she has waited for two years is not made clear, though lines 3–4 seem to imply that she was simply stubborn and did not want to show any sign of weakness; however, speculation about this did not help any response.

Looking at the passage as it stands – and this is all that candidates are required to do – Kiki is quickly presented as being angry and determined as she travels on the bus to confront Menzi. The second paragraph (lines 3–12) echoes what is going on in her mind; those many candidates who used the term free indirect discourse here were quite correct in doing so, but few failed to say what effects this creates, and comparisons with Jane Austen's use of the technique were not especially helpful. The writer tells us what Kiki feels as she travels, with the climactic image that was noted by most of '*suffering like a lamb before the shearers*'. It was a pity that relatively few seemed to notice the last word, and so took the image to mean that she felt as if she was about to be slaughtered, and those who saw it as a Christian image again made personal assumptions beyond what the writer actually says; Kiki has felt that until now she was being stripped of security and comfort, and that like a sheep she could do nothing about it, though now she is determined that she will.

When in the bank itself she has a range of thoughts: the baby on her back is of course literally real, but is also a metaphor for the problems that she is carrying. It is also a way used by the writer to suggest that while Kiki had not wanted a baby she cares for it, playing with its feet and is a good mother. She uses the baby with some skill when first confronting Menzi – the writer makes her take it from her back and show it to Menzi without a word; he has to speak first. Kiki is shown to have mixed feelings about him, too; he is dressed in a way that contrasts strikingly with her; she actually admires his coin-counting skill (perhaps, as several candidates suggested, she still has some lurking affection for him), but at the same time sees him as like the devil.

When their dialogue begins Kiki's strength comes to the fore, and Menzi is shown as powerless in the face and the justice of what she says. Many candidates referred to the lengthy speech in lines 46–51, and noted several rhetorical methods used by Kiki. Rather more than in **Question 1**, candidates were so apparently taken up with admiration for Kiki, here and even more at the very end of the passage, that they seemed to forget that she is simply a fictional creation, albeit a very live and realistic one. This is something that future candidates do need to be careful about: they should refer at least once or twice to the writer herself or himself, and make it clear that they are aware that hers/his are the skills that are being explored.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/73 Comment and Appreciation</p>

Key messages

Good answers:

- Demonstrate that candidates have read and considered their chosen poem or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- Do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase, but focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passages, and upon how these shape meaning.
- Show how literary devices and techniques are used by the writers to create particular effects and responses.
- Use personal responses to reflect the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not simply to what is said.
- Maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout the response, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.

General comments

There was as usual a very good range of responses to the three questions in the Paper, and most candidates had clearly read the poem and passages carefully before starting to write about them, so that they were able to see each of them as a whole, and most therefore did not omit the significance of the closing lines or words. There were relatively few responses which relied solely upon simple paraphrase or narrative, and there was plenty of critical discussion of language and structure, especially with the poem. A few candidates spent unnecessary time comparing the printed poem or passages to what they had read by other writers, or speculating about what influences might have been brought to bear on the writing by historical conditions at the time of writing; both of these factors were unhelpful, and very rarely added any value to the close reading that must be expected. The best responses ensured that they focused entirely and solely upon what was printed on the question paper.

The majority of responses explored not just what each writer says, but more importantly how they creates meaning and effects, and where appropriate how characters are formed and presented. There was inevitably some small element of narrative or paraphrase in many responses, but this was for the most part quite minor, and was introduced as a way of working towards critical exploration. The language used by each writer was of course the most significant aspect of this exploration, with particular focus upon imagery, but also upon such devices as alliteration, assonance, similes, metaphors and so on; some candidates used more unusual technical terminology, which was sometimes helpful, but also appeared at times to be there for its own sake rather than as a means of explaining or elucidating a point. There is usually less use of rhythm or rhyme in a piece of prose, but where it does help create a particular effect then it is certainly worth commenting upon, but no credit can be given for simple 'alliteration spotting', or for just noticing the apparently common 'rule of three'. It is likely that there will be more examples of such techniques in poetry, though where there is no regular rhyme or rhythm – as is very clearly the case in the poem set for **Question 2** – then no credit can be awarded for just saying that these are not present; and the difference between blank verse and free verse was not always acknowledged by candidates.

Almost all candidates completed their two responses fully and properly; a few were clearly rushed towards the end, and once or twice they were very obviously unfinished, but these were few and far between. Time management was considerably better this session than it has sometimes been in the past. Arguments were in most cases at least reasonably clear and were often well structured, so that candidates' ideas could be seen to develop as they progressed, and were in most cases the result of careful reading and planning; there were occasional instances where new ideas were suddenly thought of, and some candidates relied a little

too much upon asterisks and arrows to indicate where these new ideas fitted, but such responses were relatively uncommon.

However, as in November 2017, there were many comments on handwriting and it was clearly one of the most significant concerns. All examiners understand the pressure that candidates are under during a timed examination, and that having chosen which poem or passages they wish to write about they have only a short time in which to do this, but if as a result their handwriting is so hurried and untidy that it is difficult to read then they are doing themselves no favours at all, and may in fact be doing harm. No penalty is ever imposed simply for poor presentation, but when a response becomes hard, or even in parts impossible to understand, then clearly it is unlikely to attract the marks that it may deserve. The instructions on the question paper say '*You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers*', and it really is absolutely essential that candidates follow this requirement.

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As in most past sessions, a few candidates worried unnecessarily about the titles of the texts from which the printed passages were taken. Sometimes they made quite sensible comments – all manner of possible things are revealed or possibly revealed, in the night described in **Question 1** – but sometimes comments led to speculation and candidates are much better served by focusing firmly and fully upon the passages or poems given.

It was noted this session that candidates frequently wanted to see the passage or poem within much wider contexts. For example, the passage in **Question 1** was sometimes seen as an example of what was too often and simplistically seen as a criticism of 'a patriarchal society', where the missing wife is apparently escaping the male dominance of her overpowering husband, and is therefore a victim of an over-simplistically entitled patriarchal society; and the young boy in **Question 3** is, in the eyes of a lot of candidates, clearly suffering from some kind of psychological problem, often identified as Attention Deficit Disorder which his parents, representative of wider society, selfishly refuse to accept. Too much focus was placed upon wider political ideas instead of upon what is actually being presented in the two passages concerned; some candidates spent far too much time and energy on these matters, to the exclusion of close critical exploration of what is written – the presentation of an increasingly puzzling and frightening experience in the night, and a picture of a young boy who simply but desperately longs to be like his older brother in having a colt of his own.

Comments on specific questions

1. *The Night Reveals*- Cornell Woolrich

This was the most popular question, and there were some interesting responses to the passage, as well as some which seemed speculative at best and even outlandish at times. The most successful and the most convincing came from candidates who took the passage at its face value; a man wakes in the night, discovering to his surprise that his wife is not there, followed by his growing panic when she seems to have left the building completely without any forewarning or explanation. There is no evidence at all in the passage, and probably no suspicion either, that she has gone to be with a secret lover, or that she is planning to return to kill her husband; and there is similarly no evidence at all that the writer is using the mystery to present a male-dominated 1930s American society, in which the wife is simply fleeing from the overbearing control of her husband, who is an image of a so-called patriarchal society, an expression used very loosely by many candidates both here and in **Question 3**.

Harry Jordan is presented by the writer as a perfectly normal middle-aged man, perhaps a slightly dull one, but entirely without any gross flaws as either a human or husband. The opening sentence of the passage is a startling one, and many candidates quite justifiably referred to it an example of a story beginning '*in media res*'; as readers we are as much in the literal and metaphorical dark as Harry, a darkness that the writer gradually disperses to reveal the time of night, initially with the kind of ghostly glow from the alarm clock adding to the slightly alarming atmosphere being created. Harry's eyes are blurred, but they do come into

focus and the writer adds to the deepening puzzlement by his use in the second paragraph of the instincts that stem from prehistoric human beings. The writer continues to narrate what Harry does, slowly moving towards the initial climax in line 30 – ‘*now he was starting to get worried*’. We are shown the thoughts that run through his mind, in a kind of free indirect discourse.

There is a wealth of material in the following lines, and many responses made sensible and sometimes very perceptive use of this to illustrate how the writer continues to create Harry’s bewilderment, and that of his readers as well. The fact that he refers to his son as ‘*the kid*’ was noted in several responses; surely, however, this simply means that his prime worry is for his wife, and that his son’s being safe is for the moment unimportant – not in any sense at all that he is in some way a child-abuser. Harry’s thoughts continue to explore other possibilities, a technique used by the writer not just to develop the character, but also to delay any explanation for his readers; he is masterfully sustaining the tension of the piece. At the same time his re-creation in lines 45–57 of the ways in which Marie clearly loves Harry add weight to the deepening mystery, and again surely cannot support the speculative idea that all that she did was simply an act to put Harry’s mind from being suspicious about her infidelities. The revelation that there had been a dreadful accident five years previously may possibly be a foreshadowing of some similar event taking place right now, but it may more probably have been included by the writer to reinforce Harry’s love and concern.

Harry is portrayed as being in a state of severe shock when he speaks to the night operator in line 65, reflected in the stumbling and uncertain way his words are given; he is desperate to hear the operator’s reply, which when it comes could simply be the truth, or it could – for the first time in the passage – suggest something more sinister or worrying. On the face of things, this is a passage that is primarily narrative, a good and gripping story, with strong character creation, but there is more than enough material for some close critical exploration, and many candidates responded with some confidence and competence.

2. *Those Rainy Mornings- Frank Chipasula*

There were some sensitive and often quite personal responses to this poem, and many candidates found it to be full of rich and powerful images, creating a very warm and affectionate picture of the speaker’s aunt and of the way he now, as an adult, looks back and sees her love and kindness, in his own words ‘*with sweet memories*’. Few candidates tried to look beyond the poem itself, though inevitably and quite rightly there was discussion of the clear poverty in which the speaker and aunt aGwalanthi lived, and of how she rose above this through sheer hard work and determination it is a striking and deeply memorable portrait of a remarkable woman. Only a few candidates accurately quoted from the poem, in most cases simply ignoring the poet’s use of line breaks and writing as if the words were prose showing a lack of sensitivity towards how the poem is written.

The poem opens with a clear statement of fact – ‘*my aunt awoke with the first cockcrow*’ – but as most responses said this is more than just a statement, illustrating as it does how reliable and conscientious the aunt was, waking earlier than anybody else in the household; immediately we are told that her thoughts were not for herself.

The placement of the next words interested almost every candidate, as did the two words in line 11; most saw this odd positioning as evidence of their huge significance, reiterating the early hour at which she awoke, and very often seeing the orange dawn as a kind of foreshadowing of the light which not just the day, but more importantly the woman herself, brought to the children in her care. The rest of the opening section is full of life and colour, and indeed of humour – ‘*its sooty buttocks*’ no doubt reflects simply the curved shape of the porridge pot, but also the kind of slightly naughty laughter that the word ‘*buttocks*’ may raise in a child. More important are the words ‘*orange*’, ‘*making it sing*’, ‘*leaping flames*’, all creating a happy and lively mood. Lines 5–6 are less colourful, but make clear how hard-working and physically tough aunt aGwalanthi was. Most candidates noted some alliteration here, and in lines 3 and 4, and most argued some thoughtful reasons for its usage.

There was some misinterpretation of the second section, with a surprising number of candidates believing that the ‘*giant witch*’ in line 8 was the aunt herself, rather than a figure in the speaker’s nightmare; it made little sense to see this creature as the aunt, when she is immediately afterwards spoken of as ‘*her soft shadow*’, a figure of comfort. Some took the witch to be the speaker’s mother who had supposedly abandoned him, and if thoughtfully argued this made some sense. But all noted the liveliness of the aunt in line 9, and the repeated use of the word ‘*soft*’, contrasted with ‘*tough*’ in line 5: the two sides of the woman are neatly conveyed.

Some background is offered in lines 11–14, though this is never fully clarified; what is clear, however, is that in the midst of poverty – the torn umbrella and chalk dust – the aunt has taken on responsibility for ‘*these*

children, never identified by number or name, whose parents have either left them permanently, or whose work takes them away from home. And the final lines of the poem are a heartfelt outpouring of emotion from the adult speaker, wishing that he had been able to fully see the reality of aunt aGwalanthi's care; the word *'soft'* is used again, alliteratively contrasted with *'scrawny'*, to assert once more how deep his memories are.

3. *My Friend Flicka*- Mary O'Hara

This was the least popular of the three questions; surprising, because its contents are so readily accessible, and indeed as said by more than one candidate they do echo what many youngsters feel about family and about school! A number of candidates spent too much time discussing what they perceived to be the matter with Kennie; instead of simply seeing him as described in the passage, as a boy unwilling and in some ways unable to concentrate on book learning when all he wants is to be like his father and brother and have a colt. He cannot see the point of school subjects and tests. There is no suggestion whatever in the passage that he suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder, or some other identifiable psychological condition; there is similarly no evidence that he is seriously bullied by either his father or his brother – the former is of course shocked and disappointed that his test results are so poor, and the latter just enjoys older-brother baiting but it goes no further and the writer is presenting a normal family and its members with a degree of realism and insight, rather than putting forward any medical or political points.

There is plenty to discuss in the language used by the writer, and most candidates selected at least some of this; for example, the second sentence is very brief and abrupt, and at first unclear – is the shock because Kennie's results were good, or bad? This is rapidly answered, and his father's sarcasm is painful to read in lines 5–7, so painful for Kennie that *'his cheeks burned'*; several candidates made the interesting point that his father is not called this, but the writer uses his name only, stressing the force with which he speaks to Kennie, and reinforcing Kennie's feelings of separateness. Howard's echo of his father is similarly hurtful, and the word *'chirped'* is interesting because it suggests the kind of mock-innocence with which he speaks here. Kennie's mother (given her role rather than her name) effectively supports Kennie, as she does again in lines 31 and 43.

Few candidates noted the word *'carelessly'* in line 25, but it is important, especially when it is so sharply contrasted by *'McLaughlin's scarred boots and heavy spurs [which] clattered across the kitchen floor'*. Rob is a hard and physical man, with no sympathy for anybody different from himself, a point made by many candidates, who also noted the effects of the alliteration and onomatopoeia in that sentence.

The final long paragraph (lines 47–55) was explored by almost every candidate, seeing how it is used by the writer to portray Kennie's inability to focus on his school work, and to echo the almost insatiable desire that he has to be outside in the open with his father, his brother and a colt. The long and gentle sentence beginning in line 52 (*'Sometimes it wasn't even a wonder.....'*) was considered in a few responses, reflecting the would-be gentle and dreamlike nature of Kennie's mind, brought suddenly to a halt by the bell. And many concluded, as does the writer, with the repeated wish for a colt; this is what is uppermost in Kennie's mind, and the writer uses the repetition to stress this.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08
Coursework

Key messages

Good folders will:

- Address their two texts with clear, concise and consistent focus upon what the questions ask.
- Explore how each writer creates particular effects, discussing some of the literary or dramatic techniques used.
- Support comments with brief but apt textual quotations and references.
- Make some brief use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments
- Where practicable, write on individually selected and worded questions, to make responses as personal as possible.
- Ensure that the work submitted remains within the overall 3000 word limit (Note: quotations do not count towards this total).

General comments

This was a good session and moderators all reported that with very few exceptions centres had submitted work that was well in line with what the Syllabus requires, and that centres had assessed this work carefully and professionally; keeping closely to the published Marking Criteria when proposing marks. Where there were more than just a few learners centres had frequently asked two or even three teachers to read the essays, so that the final mark was the result of some thorough internal moderation and discussion. All the texts selected were appropriate and most centres offered, or encouraged, a range of different questions even where texts were the same for all learners, so that what was written was clearly freshly individual and independent. Work was carefully presented and in virtually every case it was helpfully annotated. A few folders exceeded the 3000-word limit but on the whole this was not a concern.

Centres are expected to submit Outline Proposal Forms (OPFs) to Cambridge before work begins, so that a senior moderator can advise on any changes that might be needed; such advice might be that a particular text may not be used at all – if set on any other 9695 Paper it cannot be used in Paper 8 – or that it may not be entirely appropriate, if for example it is an IGCSE or GCSE text which may have been used previously, or which is not sufficiently demanding for A-Level study. A change may also be recommended to the wording of suggested questions, to enable learners to show critical skills, rather than just textual knowledge. Most centres did submit OPFs and in most cases the advice offered had been accepted; it is important that all future entries are preceded by such proposals.

Texts used this session were frequently canonical ones, though there were some quite unusual and challenging ones as well; list is appended at the end of this report. There is of course no necessary advantage or disadvantage in choosing what might be regarded as ‘safe’ texts because what matters is what learners make of them and how they respond to the questions set on them. Selection will certainly in many cases depend upon what texts are available to centres and upon the extent to which teachers are able to tackle something new and possibly more challenging. What is always just a little disappointing is where a centre uses the same two texts across a number of examination sessions; this is perfectly legitimate but it can make it more difficult for them to produce work that is entirely fresh and personal and is something that some centres may wish to consider for next year.

A few centres felt able to allow, or indeed perhaps to encourage, complete freedom of text choice, so that all learners tackled a completely different pair of texts; this of course may add to teachers' difficulties in managing and overseeing the work, but if it can be done then it can lead to interesting and certainly entirely independent writing. At the other extreme, where each learner uses exactly the same texts, and even exactly the same questions, then freshness of response is much less likely to result, and work can and sometimes did become quite similar across the whole entry.

The questions set were on the whole entirely appropriate and helpfully challenging. They should require learners to go well beyond simple narrative responses, or indeed straightforward character studies, to explore ways in which each writer presents her/his ideas; the wording in the Marking Criteria varies a little from Level to Level, but at all above Level 1 the requirement is for learners to demonstrate '*understanding of ways in which writers' choices of structure, form and language shape meanings*', so it is clearly essential that questions encourage this. It is also a requirement that there is some acknowledgement that opinions and interpretations of texts can vary, and at higher Levels that learners can *use* such alternative opinions as part of their own developing ideas; this again is something that can be incorporated into a question, which may for example offer a provocative or contentious comment on the text for learners to discuss. These are factors which the submission of an OPF will help so that recommendations can if necessary be suggested for the redrafting of questions before work actually begins.

Secondary material seems to have been used with some greater success than has sometimes been the case; no doubt the availability of critical reviews on the Internet is one reason for this, as well perhaps as teacher encouragement. Learners generally demonstrated confidence in wrestling with alternative viewpoints rather than just mentioning or quoting them, and there were even instances of essays where a single critical essay was explored in some detail, with learners disagreeing quite forcefully, and presenting convincing personal arguments as a result. Live performances of plays, whether seen in a theatre or on YouTube, were sometimes referred to and the directors' interpretations discussed, suggesting a real awareness that drama is meant to be seen and heard, not just read.

The standard of close critical reading was often high; learners clearly understood the importance of language analysis, and could spot poetic techniques with confidence, though the exploration of imagery was generally more successful than discussion of form and structure. Some poetry essays did tend to take on a rather list-like approach, working conscientiously through a number of discrete poems, one at a time; less often was there any real attempt at drawing these together to form any sort of overview.

Linked to the need to consider alternative views is the idea of footnotes and a bibliography. It is good academic practice to acknowledge all quotations from secondary sources in a footnote; this should not be lengthy, but it should contain the name of the critic, the title of the book concerned (or the website consulted) with a page or Act/Scene number where appropriate. A slightly fuller list can then be added in a bibliography, which should also contain brief details of any work or website that has been consulted but not actually quoted. This listing certainly adds to the academic authority of a response, and as well as addressing one of the Marking Criteria requirements it also helps to clarify that the work is indeed original and personal. Quotations, footnotes and bibliographies do not count towards the 3000 word limit, and many centres this year encouraged learners to put two word counts at the end of each essay, one with and one without quotations.

Word length has been mentioned; almost all folders were well within the 2000–3000 parameters, which was good. There will be no automatic penalty for work that falls outside these limits, but any that is *seriously* beyond will inevitably be self-penalising; if below 2000 then it is highly doubtful if enough will have been written to answer the two questions adequately, and if above 3000 then it is quite likely that there will be repetition, or more likely some deviation away from a precisely focused response and as such in both cases the learner will have to lose marks because of failure to adhere to what the Marking Criteria require. It should of course not be the case that any such work whether severely over or under the word-count is actually submitted; a centre **must** make itself aware of under- or over-length and require learners to rewrite the work appropriately.

Centre annotation and summative comments were very helpful indeed this session, and almost invariably made it clear how and why the marks proposed had been decided. Annotations should always relate to the wording of the Marking Criteria, with appropriate individual notes to elaborate on these, and overall summative comments should similarly relate to the Criteria. A few centres made no annotations or comments; this was never helpful, as there was no indication as to how their marks were reached, and it is also a breach of the requirement published in the coursework guidance document (just above the Marking Criteria) that *'Each piece of work should bear evidence of having been marked by the teacher.'* As noted at the start of this report, too, where feasible there should be some evidence of internal moderation – a second marker, for example, with comments in a different ink colour, or simply two marks at the foot of each piece, but with the agreed one highlighted. For very small entries this may of course not be possible.

The list below contains a number of texts that were used successfully by learners. It is not an exclusive list, nor is a list of recommended titles, but it is included to illustrate the very wide range of writing that was used. Most are canonical, but there are certainly also some that are less obviously so; what matters above all is that each text is a sufficiently demanding one for sustained Advanced Level study, that it is approved by Cambridge following submission of an Outline Proposal Form, and that the questions set on it are helpfully directed to the particular strengths and interests of each learner.

PROSE:	F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>
	Edith Wharton	<i>Ethan Frome</i>
	J.D. Salinger	<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>
	Ken Kesey	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>
	Khaled Hosseini	<i>The Kite Runner</i>
	Jane Austen	<i>Pride and Prejudice; Mansfield Park</i>
	Louis de Bernieres	<i>Captain Corelli's Mandolin</i>
	Margaret Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
	Aldous Huxley	<i>Brave New World</i>
	Ian McEwan	<i>Atonement</i>
	Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i>
	Oscar Wilde	<i>The Portrait of Dorian Gray</i>
	Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie	<i>Half of a Yellow Sun</i>
	Iris Murdoch	<i>The Bell</i>
	Jean Rhys	<i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i>
	George Eliot	<i>Silas Marner</i>
	Chinua Achebe	<i>Things Fall Apart; No Longer at Ease; Arrow of God</i>
	Angela Carter	<i>Wise Children</i>
POETRY:	Wilfred Owen	Selected poems
	Siegfried Sassoon	Selected poems
	Ted Hughes	Selected poems
	Carol Ann Duffy	<i>The World's Wife</i>
	Tony Harrison	Selected poems
	Sylvia Plath	Selected poems
	T.S. Eliot	Selected poems
	Stevie Smith	Selected poems
	Simon Armitage	Selected poems
	Philip Larkin	Selected poems
	W.H. Auden	Selected poems

DRAMA (Candidates who show an awareness that plays are to be seen, heard and experienced in a theatre, or on a screen, rather than just read as a book almost always write with a more acute and successful critical facility):

Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire; Death of a Salesman; The Glass Menagerie; Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>All My Sons; The Crucible</i>
Christopher Marlowe	<i>Dr Faustus</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Othello; King Lear; Much Ado About Nothing</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest; An Ideal Husband</i>
Edward Albee	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
J B Priestley	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Every Good Boy Deserves Favour</i>
Robert Bolt	<i>A Man for All Seasons</i>
J M Synge	<i>The Playboy of the Western World</i>