

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/11  
Writing

## Key messages

- Candidates should manage their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper. Quite often the time spent on **Section A** seemed to have left candidates insufficient time to meet the required word count in **Section B** or to satisfactorily complete the task.
- Candidates should be aware that relevant content in the correct form is a key aspect of the overall assessment of responses for **Question 1(a)** and **Section B** tasks. To ensure that candidates understand the key requirements, they should pay attention to key words within the question which indicate the specified form, content, audience and purpose of the task. For example, in **Question 3** the key instructions are to *write a story* and to *create a sense of drama and suspense*.
- Candidates must understand the importance of writing in clear, properly punctuated English, with accurate sentence demarcation, to perform well in this exam. It is imperative that candidates know and understand the basics of sentence construction if they are to succeed on this paper. Clear expression in simple and compound sentences with less variety is preferable to expression that does not flow, in long, rambling sentences. Often, weaker candidates lose control of grammar when they attempt to write in long, complex sentences. One error that occurred regularly was that of separating sentences with commas rather than full stops; another common error was writing in sentence fragments. Sentence demarcation is key, followed by accurate use of commas, and then the accurate use of a wider range of punctuation.
- Candidates should be reminded of the need to write legibly and clearly to ensure communication is not impeded. Centres should make use of appropriate access arrangements for candidates who are unable to produce legible handwritten text.
- Candidates who have difficulty with tense selection should focus on writing in one tense, preferably either the present tense or the past.
- Candidates should be encouraged to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such errors impede, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- Candidates must be aware of the need for clear paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech. A secure focus on structure is crucial since it helps the reader to feel that the candidate is in control of their writing.
- Candidates should be exposed to a wide variety of different text types, as outlined in the syllabus, so that they become familiar with the conventions of a variety of writing forms and purposes. They should be taught key features of those text types, to enable them to replicate these in their own writing.

## General comments

A number of candidates self-penalised on the grounds of rubric infringement: some **Section B** responses were appreciably short of the minimum word limit and a few candidates did not answer **Question 1(b)**.

In responses to **Question 1(a)**, stronger responses focused clearly on the question, writing the text for effective leaflets, successfully creating a sense of enthusiasm for the attraction. Weaker responses consisted simple descriptions of the attraction, or described a visit to the attraction, without commenting on reasons for visiting it. Candidates should avoid lengthy preambles before addressing the task; the guidance of *no more than 400 words* means candidates are being guided to provide a purposeful, succinct response.

The strongest responses to **Question 1(b)** maintained a close focus on linguistic and stylistic choices, with the relationship between these features being explained and explored successfully. They used relevant terminology consistently and confidently, using language precisely and appropriately. Weaker responses focused mostly, or entirely, on content and therefore only provided minimal analysis by indirectly outlining the structure of the piece.

Stronger responses on **Section B** generally had a strong sense of the appropriate form for the task (review, story or email), a clear focus on the question, and included appropriate stylistic conventions as well as relevant content.

Weaker responses on **Section B** generally lacked focus on what the task required. For example, some responses to **Question 2** were simple recounts of the content of the comic magazine, with very little in the way of critique or personal opinion; some responses to **Question 3** lacked a sense of drama or suspense; and some **Question 4** responses lost focus on the formality required of the email and became repetitive, with the same points made several times rather than offering a selection of relevant points.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Section A: Shorter writing and reflective commentary**

##### **Question 1**

**You recently visited a tourist attraction in your area that is very interesting but not well known. You have offered to help produce a leaflet in order to attract more tourists to visit.**

- (a) Write the text for the leaflet, using no more than 400 words. In your writing, focus on the reasons for visiting the attraction, and create a sense of enthusiasm for it.**

Candidates wrote about a wide range of different attractions, from museums, festivals, water and wildlife parks to beautiful places such as beaches and natural springs. Many candidates wrote responses of an adequate length using a tone and register appropriate for an information leaflet, and there was some good use made of subheadings to clearly signpost the different aspects of the chosen attraction. The best responses were focused on a real or very well-imagined tourist attraction, which enabled candidates to use realistic detail to inform the text of their leaflet.

A noteworthy number of weaker responses were well below the 400-word limit and, although many such responses showed attempts to demonstrate enthusiasm, it did not feel sincere because the reasons to visit were missing. A great many candidates did not seem to understand the required form for the task and wrote a description or a first-person narrative of their recent visit; however, such answers generally did successfully convey a sense of enthusiasm. The weakest responses often did not name the attraction or explain what it was, referring to it throughout as 'the attraction', for example, and this was inevitably self-limiting. Other candidates, meanwhile, chose to write about an already well-known tourist attraction (Disneyland, for example), and therefore overlooked an important element of the question focus.

Stronger responses showed that the candidates had a clear idea of the specific tourist attraction they wished to publicise and named the attraction clearly. The focus was usually on either tranquillity or adventure and included effective descriptions and evaluative comments, using vocabulary with positive connotations. Most stronger responses covered three or four highlights of the tourist destination and developed each of them informatively and convincingly, integrating a range of persuasive techniques, including similes, metaphors, adjectives and alliteration, throughout the text. The better responses demonstrated an enthusiastic tone and were well structured, sometimes with sub-headings which helped to guide the reader through the text. One candidate wrote about a water park, including the following section: 'The view is not like anything you have seen before. Imagine a blue glacier, powdered with white snow, shining in the light of the sun.' Stronger responses were informative and clearly suggested reasons for visiting, as seen in

this piece which explored Quilmes Green Zone in Buenos Aires, Argentina: 'The whole purpose of the place is to connect people with nature in a unique way. From the outside, it is an abandoned building, looking rusty and grey. However, when you enter it is a new utopic world. The intention of the idea, created by Mark Hill, is to demonstrate how horrible the planet will be if we continue polluting it.'

Weaker responses were often about theme parks. Content centred around 'the thrill of the ride' and 'the family day out' with clichéd descriptions of 'big dippers' and 'mouth-watering hot dogs'. Such responses often came across as simplistic and did not fully address the audience. Many weaker responses lacked paragraphing and were underdeveloped. Quite a number of candidates wrote personal reviews of a visit to a tourist attraction or holiday destination and, although these often included an enthusiastic tone, the purpose and audience was often unclear. Others handled the conventions of a leaflet quite well, but either the basic language skills were absent, or the writing lacked clarity, such as in this example: 'As you slowly tremble into the deep forest in the heart of the island, you have been provided by Heaven with many opportunities that only appears on this island.'

**(b) Write a reflective commentary on your text, explaining how your linguistic choices contribute to fulfilling the task set.**

One approach that worked well for candidates was to use a Point, Evidence, Explanation format to analyse the form, structure and language of their responses to **Question 1(a)**. However, many responses were limited in detail and failed to provide evidence from their **Question 1(a)** response in their commentaries.

In many stronger responses, candidates approached this question in one of two ways, each of which proved to be successful: addressing form and structure, going through the leaflet's content and then concentrating on language; or going through the text, simultaneously analysing all language devices. Stronger responses included quite precise examples and attempted to analyse how the writer's stylistic choices relate to audience and shape meaning, although few candidates did this consistently and in detail. Quite a lot of candidates were able to select particular words and phrases they had used and to begin some analysis of their choices, but few got beyond the level of these two extracts from different candidates' responses: 'The leaflet keeps an enthusiastic tone throughout the whole passage to encourage the reader to attend this attraction. Using words and phrases such as "breath-taking", "perfect", "grabbing the clouds" and "friendly staff and thrilling rides" gives excitement to readers as they want to do all these things the writer is talking about'; 'I used the simile "like a shy animal" to describe the lake appearing through the trees. The simile helps to personify the lake and convey a feeling of the unknown, unexplored.'

Weaker responses sometimes demonstrated an ability to identify some basic language and structural features, but needed more in terms of analysis. Some candidates attempted analysis using general phrases such as, 'I wrote in paragraphs to break up the text and so the reader knew to expect a new topic.' They often wrote very short answers or very general answers, without adequate analysis of effects. Incorrect terminology was common. There were also many examples of candidates paraphrasing the text of their leaflets or focusing solely on structure, needing more in the way of language analysis.

Some weaker responses listed linguistic features that the candidate said they had used without any supporting evidence, for example: 'I used adjectives, metaphors and alliteration'. Quite a few candidates did not focus clearly on detailing and explaining the intended effects of their linguistic choices. Instead, many concentrated on describing the structure and format of their accounts with comments such as, 'I used long and short sentences,' and 'I created a calm atmosphere'. Some candidates did attempt to explain the effect of their linguistic choices but these were often vague, for example, 'I also use repetition in the third paragraph to get my point across,' and, 'I used sub-headings to break the leaflet up'. Other responses were extremely short, wrongly identified linguistic features, and/or had little or no comment on structure.

**Section B: Extended writing**

**Question 2 – Review**

**You have just read a copy of a new comic magazine. Write a review of the magazine, which will be published on an entertainment website. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

Stronger reviews were appropriately written, with a suitable tone and register that discussed, for example, the graphics, the plot and even the durability of the paper used in the magazine's print run, effectively balancing jargon with standard English. Stronger responses were successful in addressing the audience using appropriate language, for example, 'The artwork is insane.' One candidate offered some interesting insights on the incorporation of technology into comics. Stronger responses included an introductory paragraph which included some overview of the comic, including a sense of excitement for its long-awaited release. Headings were used to structure responses. All such candidates named the magazine they were reviewing, which varied from *Batman and Robin* to a new Japanese comic called *My Hero Academia*. One candidate reviewed all the Marvel comics.

Weaker responses simply summarised the comic's storyline, offering few evaluative comments. Others, meanwhile, wrote in great detail about the moral messages contained in the stories within the comic and would have done better to focus on relevant form and content. They often would have been improved with a higher level of structure and detail. Many did not provide the title of the comic they were reviewing.

### Question 3 – Story

**Write a story which begins with the following sentence: *When I was sure that nobody was looking, I picked up the bag.* In your writing, create a sense of drama and suspense. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

Most candidates embraced the immediacy of the opening, beginning in media res; a few resisted its structure and rather awkwardly flashed back to a much longer preamble, one narrator even addressing the audience to insist that they should have started earlier. Candidates should pay attention to whether they are asked to write the opening to a story or a complete narrative, as some cliff-hangers are rather frustrating and felt like an admission that the candidate did not know where this was going. Some candidates opted to write very detailed fights or chases, and the reader could almost imagine a movie scene. Unfortunately, such detail was generally at the expense of a reasoned plot or a completed narrative.

Stronger stories were engaging with clear and reasoned plot lines that created drama and suspense. There were many imaginative responses in which successful candidates exploited various genres and the tropes of those types of writing, including some fine spy stories, thrillers, and even horror stories. Stronger stories often focused on the central character's dilemma in handling a bag with unknown contents, thus creating suspense and tension from the start. In many answers, the protagonist discovered lots of cash or expensive jewellery in the bag, while several found USB sticks with incriminating images or evidence of some sort. Unusually different finds included a cat and a notebook which, when opened, summoned the Night Stalker (resulting in a suitable horror story). An interesting setting was a mediaeval court, where the crown was stolen (in the bag) leading to a chase by a knight on horseback.

Weaker responses included frequent errors and weak expression, which hindered the overall response. Many struggled to maintain a consistently appropriate verb tense. In some cases, there was constant switching from past to present tenses and back again. Not only did this confuse the plot, but it sometimes negated from an otherwise reasonably fair style of writing, as in this example: 'I heard a dog walking around. I knew it was not mine. I lay down and place myself as hidden as I possibly can be. Maybe I can get away with this, this thought came to a halt as I heard the shed door creek open. Time frooze'

A few candidates did not really relate the given first sentence to their story, and wrote a narrative that featured the bag and/or its contents very little, if at all. Weaker responses had over-complicated narratives with a wide range of action. In one story, the narrator collected a bag from a local train station to be then chased across the whole country. The wide scope inhibited the candidate's ability to focus on creating drama and suspense as journey details dominated. Many weaker stories lacked narrative control, with little suspense, drama or plausibility, such as in this story ending: 'I quickly ran home but was stopped by my bully, Rachel. "Why are you so ugly?" I tried to get passed but only to be mocked and got the bag stolen again.'

### Question 4 – Email

**You recently read a newspaper article which said that learning online is preferable to learning in a classroom. You decide to write an email to the editor, in response to this article, giving your opinion. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

Many candidates found the question focus here a relatable topic, drawing on first-hand experiences of online learning. The vast majority believed that, even though they acknowledged some advantages of online learning, being in the classroom was preferable, stating the importance of physical contact for young people as expressed by this candidate: 'When we attend school physically, such as chatting with classmates, this is what makes the process of learning fun and bearable.' Some spent too long recounting their own experiences, which tended to read more like a complaint about their school's approach to online learning. Adopting a wider overview would have been more appropriate to form. Reasons to learn online included: saving money for the school, being more convenient as lessons can be accessed anywhere, and having fewer distractions. Reasons cited against online learning included: the ease of cheating online, lack of socialising, size of classes and issues with internet access or connectivity. Most grasped that an email to an editor is intended for publication and has a wider audience; some still focused solely on the editor's experience (on occasions mistaking them for the author), making a more personalised and occasionally inappropriately aggressive attack.

Stronger responses showed awareness that a discursive answer works best with clear, logically arranged paragraphs and discourse markers. The best responses looked at the pros and cons of both online and classroom learning in a balanced argument. One candidate considered that the ideal situation would be for students to have a choice so that they could use the learning style that suited them best. One candidate adopted the role of a concerned parent who had watched her son's mental health decline because of online learning. Some adopted the persona of an educational professional, adding empathetic detail to the maturity of tone required to pull off such a voice successfully. The best responses deployed rhetorical devices effectively as part of their argument, not as a bolt-on – for example, when discussing the fragility of connectivity: 'If the teacher is absent, a replacement can be found. But how do we find a replacement for the internet?'

Weaker responses were not as comprehensive and sometimes lacked paragraphing. Reasons were often presented in a list-like form, with limited development of points. Many were poorly punctuated, such as in this example opening to an email: 'On your latest take saying "leaning online is preferable to learning in a classroom" I would have to disagree completly, I just believe this is an untrue statement, this due to the fact that many candidates still believe in socializing face to face instead of virtually, it is also easier for candidates to be taught in a classroom, finally there is more learning involved when it's learning in a classroom.'

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/12  
Writing

## Key messages

- Candidates should manage their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper. Quite often the time spent on **Section A** seemed to have left candidates insufficient time to meet the required word count in **Section B** or to satisfactorily complete the task.
- Candidates should be aware that relevant content in the correct form is a key aspect of the overall assessment of responses for **Question 1(a)** and **Section B** tasks. To ensure that candidates understand the key requirements, they should pay attention to key words within the question which indicate the specified form, content, audience and purpose of the task. For example, in **Question 2** the key instructions are to *write an essay* and to *give your opinion* on the topic.
- Candidates must understand the importance of writing in clear, properly punctuated English, with accurate sentence demarcation, to perform well in this exam. It is imperative that candidates know and understand the basics of sentence construction if they are to succeed on this paper. Clear expression in simple and compound sentences with less variety is preferable to expression that does not flow, in long, rambling sentences. Often, weaker candidates lose control of grammar when they attempt to write in long, complex sentences. One error that occurred regularly was that of separating sentences with commas rather than full stops; another common error was writing in sentence fragments. Sentence demarcation is key, followed by accurate use of commas, and then the accurate use of a wider range of punctuation.
- Candidates should be reminded of the need to write legibly and clearly to ensure communication is not impeded. Centres should make use of appropriate access arrangements for candidates who are unable to produce legible handwritten text.
- Candidates who have difficulty with tense selection should focus on writing in one tense, preferably either the present tense or the past.
- Candidates should be encouraged to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such errors impede, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- Candidates must be aware of the need for clear paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech. A secure focus on structure is crucial since it helps the reader to feel that the candidate is in control of their writing.
- Candidates should be exposed to a wide variety of different text types, as outlined in the syllabus, so that they become familiar with the conventions of a variety of writing forms and purposes. They should be taught key features of those text types, to enable them to replicate these in their own writing.

## General comments

A number of candidates self-penalised on the grounds of rubric infringement: some **Section B** responses were appreciably short of the minimum word limit and some candidates did not answer **Question 1(b)**.



Stronger responses to **Question 1(a)** focused clearly on the question, presenting some clear opinions. Weaker responses addressed the issue but tended to lose focus on explaining their reasons for disagreeing with the premise of the article. Candidates should avoid lengthy preambles before addressing the task; the guidance of *no more than 400 words* means candidates are being guided to provide a purposeful, succinct response.

The strongest responses to **Question 1(b)** maintained a close focus on linguistic and stylistic choices, with the relationship between these features being explained and explored successfully. They used relevant terminology consistently and confidently, using language precisely and appropriately. Weaker responses focused entirely on content and therefore only provided minimal analysis, usually only indirectly outlining the structure of the piece.

Stronger responses on **Section B** generally had a strong sense of the appropriate form for the task (essay, description or review), a clear focus on the question, and included appropriate stylistic conventions as well as relevant content.

Weaker responses on **Section B** generally lacked focus on what the task required. For example, some essays in **Question 2** lacked specific examples of popular places and were disorganised; some responses to **Question 3** were mainly narrative rather than descriptive; while some **Question 4** responses were simple accounts of the event, with very little in the way of critique or personal opinion.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Section A: Shorter writing and reflective commentary**

##### **Question 1**

**You recently read a newspaper article which said that young people have too much free time these days. You disagree, and decide to write an email to the editor of the newspaper about this.**

**(a) Write the text for your email, using no more than 400 words. In your writing, give reasons to support your opinion.**

Nearly all candidates clearly disagreed with the viewpoint, with many similar, reasonable ideas discussed, including time taken up with long school days, extra-curricular clubs, sports and hobbies, part-time jobs and household chores. The vast majority of responses were appropriately formal and some were quite deferential. Many candidates chose to include personal information or anecdotes as well as statistics to prove their points, although the figures used were sometimes unrealistic, for example: 'Seven in ten young people commit suicide due to overwork.'

Stronger responses were well organised and got straight to the point. While the majority spoke as a young person in school or at university, many chose to take on a persona which gave them a different viewpoint on the subject, for example a parent of teenagers, a youth worker or a school principal. This approach gave them more choice of material not just based on the candidate's own daily routine. For example, one candidate who took on the persona of a child psychologist wrote: 'While mainstream media glorifies work, work and more work, they rarely pull back the curtain and show the consequences of excessive labour: stress, anxiety and depression.'

Some convincing responses conveyed strong opinion, yet still managed a respectful tone. For example, one candidate wrote: 'I write to you to express my utter disappointment and vehement disagreement regarding the article "Today's Youth: Have they Lost Their Way?" that was published in last week's issue. I wish to convey my concerns about the ideas present being not only misleading but downright dangerous.' Discourse markers, such as 'furthermore', 'moreover' and 'additionally', were often used effectively to structure the email.

Weaker responses sometimes spent rather too long explaining that the writers were regular readers of the paper and greatly enjoyed it, and they often spent too much time on trivial details of their daily lives, rather than exploring the consequences of their different routines. Others simply listed the duties and responsibilities thrust upon young people without explaining their reasons for disagreeing with the article. Some weaker responses took an inappropriate tone, verging on rudeness or an overly informal register for the audience and purpose. Many weaker responses lacked paragraphs and other organisational devices and had frequent errors of various kinds,

including lack of control of sentence structure. For example, one candidate wrote; ‘Those attending school, spend at least 8 hours or more in classrooms. Attending to lectures, having in class tests and exercise. Which means less time to play around and more time to studying.’

**(b) Write a reflective commentary on your text, explaining how your linguistic choices contribute to fulfilling the task set.**

One approach that continued to work well for candidates was to use a Point, Evidence, Explanation format to analyse the form, structure and language of their responses to **Question 1(a)**. However, many responses were limited in detail and lacking in evidence from the **Question 1(a)** response.

Many stronger responses approached this question in one of two ways, each of which proved to be successful: addressing form and structure, going through the speech’s content and then concentrating on language; or going through the text, simultaneously analysing all language devices. Stronger responses were focused throughout, exploring techniques and effects in tandem, for example: ‘The author’s repetitive use of the phrase, “There is no time”, highlights how little free time young people have. By placing it in short, simple sentences, the author illustrates how miniscule the time is for the youth.’

The strongest answers gave very precise examples, considered language, structure and form in equal measure and integrated terminology with skill. For example, one candidate wrote: ‘The last line of the first paragraph provides a hook with a compound sentence and sophisticated vocabulary (“misleading”, “downright dangerous”) to create an impression of a refined and learned disposition, so that the editor may be more inclined to consider my disagreement with an open mind. I have used similarly low frequency lexis throughout the email (“mechanical afterthought”, “impressionable”) to achieve an elevated semantic field and formal diction, as is expected of an email to a major newspaper editor.’

Weaker responses sometimes demonstrated an ability to identify some basic language and structural features but needed more in terms of analysis. Some candidates attempted analysis but used general phrases such as, ‘The paragraphs make it clearer for the editor to understand’. They often wrote very short answers or very general answers, listing lots of features but without adequate analysis of their effects. Incorrect terminology was common. There were also many examples of candidates paraphrasing their speeches or focusing solely on structure, needing more in the way of language analysis.

Some weaker responses listed linguistic features that the candidate said they had used without any supporting evidence, for example, ‘I used hyperboles, metaphors and verbs,’ or, ‘I used yours faithfully at the end of the email.’ Quite a few candidates did not focus clearly on detailing and explaining the intended effects of their linguistic choices. Instead, many concentrated on describing the structure and format of their accounts with comments such as, ‘I wrote my email to the editor using a formal tone as convention dictates.’ Some candidates did attempt to explain the effect of their linguistic choices but these were often vague or somewhat meaningless, including phrases such as, ‘I used repetition to encourage the reader to agree with my point,’ or, ‘I did a good job’.

## **Section B: Extended writing**

### **Question 2 – Essay**

**In class, you have been discussing whether the number of tourists visiting very popular places should be limited. Your teacher has asked you to write an essay on the topic, giving your opinion. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

Nearly all responses discussed both the advantages and the disadvantages of limiting tourist numbers in a reasoned fashion and generally included a personal opinion as a conclusion. The vast majority of candidates used an appropriately formal tone. Some candidates gave specific examples to give extra weight to their points.

Arguments for limiting tourist numbers included: they cause pollution, especially litter; tourism damages the overall environment; precious monuments can be damaged deliberately; an increase in petty crime like pick-pocketing; overcrowding at popular spots means a lack of enjoyment for tourists; too many tourists can annoy/disturb locals; too many tourists spread disease.



Arguments for not limiting tourist numbers included: there would be a loss of income/jobs for locals; there would be increased crime due to loss of income/jobs; there could be issues over how tourist numbers are limited and this could cause discrimination problems; lots of tourists means increased revenue for an area, with associated benefits such as increased standards of living; tourists bring a multi-cultural element to countries; everyone should have the right to visit the places they want, when they want.

Stronger essays were clearly planned and written with logically arranged paragraphs and discourse markers. These candidates clearly stated their viewpoint in the opening of their writing, and then proceeded to outline its advantages and disadvantages, which were often mainly concerned with finances and conservation. There were some very sensible discussions on the balance needed between income generated through revenue from tourism and the potential damage to the environment from large numbers of visitors. There were concerns expressed genuinely around the impact on climate change of people travelling around the world, and the harm to wildlife as more and more infrastructure is put in place to support tourism. Stronger responses referred to specific destinations, for example Paris, Victoria Falls and the Taj Mahal. One strong response provided a good example and incorporated it into their argument: 'The Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi UAE has set limits to the number of tourists who can visit. This has allowed thousands of Muslims to safeguard the sanctity of their mosque and allowed others to experience and witness the beauty of Islam.'

Some weaker essays were dry and vague and did not include an example of a tourist destination. Some did not enter into the argument, simply listing and describing certain tourist attractions around the world. They tended to repeat the phrases 'popular places' and 'limit the number of tourists'. Some listed pros and cons in a seemingly random order, rather than planning the order of points before starting to write. In others, the essay nature of the task was substituted for something more resembling an article, with a headline and subheadings. The occasional less confident candidate lost the thread of argument and counter-argument to contradict themselves until a final conclusion suddenly emerged in the last paragraph.

### Question 3 – Descriptive piece

**Write a descriptive piece about a jungle. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere, and focus on sound, movement and light to help your reader imagine the scene. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

Most responses demonstrated some focus on sound, movement and light, but to varying degrees. Often, the more successful answers used a narrative framework as a structure, such as walking through the jungle, floating down a jungle river, or the progression from morning through to night. However, some candidates used this technique but slipped too far into a predominantly narrative style.

Stronger responses usually had some sort of structure, for example a narrative frame such as a walk or an expedition. One particularly striking description was from the perspective of a hawk, flying from one scene to another within the jungle. There were some novel approaches, including: likening the jungle to a king's (lion's) court; a guided meditation; a description from the viewpoint of a native tribesperson; and a battle ground with plants and animals fighting off human invaders. Several candidates opted instead for a reflective frame, considering the contribution a jungle may make to biodiversity, the global environmental balance and mankind's well-being. Both these reflections and narrative twists worked best when framing, not replacing, the sensory imaginative detail prompted by the question's focus on sound, movement and light, for example in this response: 'It has all been consumed, destroyed, desecrated, left derelict by the most destructive animal on earth. Man.' Stronger responses provided specific details of the jungle setting, for example: 'Between the leaves, writhed pinkish, brownish worms, inching their way between, over and below the leaves. To them, the vast darkness above them was what we humans think of as the vast expanse of space.'

There were some vivid and original descriptions of animal life in the jungle, with a strong focus on visual imagery, for example in this description of a toad: 'He sat like a king on the throne that was the pond, soaking in its murky shallow water. The dancing lights from above focused on him as he stared at me, extremely still, apart from his elastic neck that bulged with every rapid breath he took. Suddenly, without warning, his mouth became a blur of sap and pink and the crystal-like reflective wings of an unsuspecting fly poked out of his mouth. In the next second, he hopped away.'

In some weaker responses, candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote a story set in a jungle. Many candidates struggled to write in accurately constructed sentences, with many responses showing a proliferation of minor sentences or participle clauses, such as in this example: 'On a calm morning, with bright white clouds and sunny sun greeting everyone as they open their eyes. Loud chirps from the small brown birds that seem energetic. Owls howling in the background.' A significant number of candidates also had trouble with verb tenses, often flipping back and forth from present to past. Some weaker responses

lacked original descriptions, merely listing a few things that could be encountered in the jungle and then bluntly stating a colour or two, accompanied by a sound that could be associated with the phenomenon, as in this example: 'The birds are yellow, green or red. They chirp, and their wings flutter. The frogs are green or brown. They make a screeching sound.'

Some candidates used what appeared to be pre-prepared or well memorised descriptions of a forest in the autumn, many of which were adapted clumsily to describe a jungle. In such responses, content was not fully relevant and the task was not well achieved; candidates should be able to demonstrate the ability to use their writing skills to write effectively for a specific task, which cannot be achieved through applying previously prepared or memorised responses.

#### Question 4 – Review

**You recently tried to buy something online, but you had some problems with the experience. You decide to write a review of this online shopping experience, which you will post on your blog. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

There were some lively answers to this question, with most written using an appropriate tone and register for a blog. The structure was usually clear and judgements were made for it to read like a review. Most candidates included specific shopping experiences and real or fictional websites and products to illustrate the problems they encountered, along with detailed accounts of technical glitches, poor customer service, delayed delivery and shoddy products. A few candidates described a positive outcome, often with a refund; a great many others felt they had been scammed. Most answers concluded with a recommendation to avoid that particular site or online shopping altogether.

Websites were criticised for being too slow, unresponsive to payment, and possibly scam sites. Tracking orders was also a problem, as were delays in delivery and the quality of goods when received (not matching the pictures on the website, for example). Items purchased included, clothes, jewellery and IT equipment. One candidate wrote: 'Moreover, the website is universally accessible so I think it is the minimum to expect it to have a translation setting so people who know other languages can use it.'

In stronger responses, candidates managed to make what could be quite dull material into an interesting and sometimes humorous read. They demonstrated familiarity with professionally written reviews and exploited every generic feature thereof. They engaged with an imagined audience with whom they clearly had an ongoing relationship; their blogs included links to imagined past and future postings, suited to someone who had a clear following. There was a good use of humour by many candidates and many of the reviews, although somewhat exaggerated, seemed to reflect real-life experiences. They were often written in a lively style, for example: 'So that's where I am now, cozily cramped between 9000 boxes and writing an update on my blog. I'm contemplating whether or not to return all of them. I mean I could keep a couple of dozen and just gift them to family and friends for the next few years. After all, who would not want a Donut-Burger-Maker?'

Weaker reviews lacked important details such as the name of the website or the product being bought. Some got bogged down in quite tedious details about the website and delays to the order. Many neglected to address the audience reading the blog. Less convincing responses were littered with grammatical errors and often gave a long narrative account of the online shopping procedure, without actually reviewing the experience. Other weaker responses related a lengthy history of some online transaction that went awry, with no evaluation of the service.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/13  
Writing

## Key messages

- Candidates should manage their time carefully, allocating an equal amount of time for each section of the paper. Quite often the time spent on **Section A** seemed to have left candidates insufficient time to meet the required word count in **Section B** or to satisfactorily complete the task.
- Candidates should be aware that relevant content in the correct form is a key aspect of the overall assessment of responses for **Question 1(a)** and **Section B** tasks. To ensure that candidates understand the key requirements, they should pay attention to key words within the question which indicate the specified form, content, audience and purpose of the task. For example, in **Question 3** the key instructions are to *write an article*, focusing on ' and also to comment on *why it can be so good for their physical and mental health*.
- Candidates must understand the importance of writing in clear, properly punctuated English, with accurate sentence demarcation, to perform well in this exam. It is imperative that candidates know and understand the basics of sentence construction if they are to succeed on this paper. Clear expression in simple and compound sentences with less variety is preferable to expression that does not flow, in long, rambling sentences. Often, weaker candidates lose control of grammar when they attempt to write in long, complex sentences. One error that occurred regularly was that of separating sentences with commas rather than full stops; another common error was writing in sentence fragments. Sentence demarcation is key, followed by accurate use of commas, and then the accurate use of a wider range of punctuation.
- Candidates should be reminded of the need to write legibly and clearly to ensure communication is not impeded. Centres should make use of appropriate access arrangements for candidates who are unable to produce legible handwritten text.
- Candidates who have difficulty with tense selection should focus on writing in one tense, preferably either the present tense or the past.
- Candidates should be encouraged to proofread carefully, particularly for accurate sentence demarcation and for tense confusion/inconsistency. Such errors impede, sometimes seriously, the overall sense of fluency and cohesion.
- Candidates must be aware of the need for clear paragraphing in their responses, including paragraphing for direct speech. A secure focus on structure is crucial since it helps the reader to feel that the candidate is in control of their writing.
- Candidates should be exposed to a wide variety of different text types, as outlined in the syllabus, so that they become familiar with the conventions of a variety of writing forms and purposes. They should be taught key features of those text types, to enable them to replicate these in their own writing.

## General comments

A number of candidates self-penalised on the grounds of rubric infringement: some **Section B** responses were appreciably short of the minimum word limit and a few candidates did not answer **Question 1(b)**.

In responses to **Question 1(a)**, stronger responses focused clearly on the question, consisting of engaging news reports with clear comments on the impact on local people. Candidates with weaker responses tended to write accounts of the incident but without appropriate form. Candidates should avoid lengthy preambles before addressing the task; the guidance of *no more than 400 words* means candidates are being guided to provide a purposeful, succinct response.

The strongest responses to **Question 1(b)** maintained a close focus on linguistic and stylistic choices, with the relationship between these features being explained and explored successfully. They used relevant terminology consistently and confidently, using language precisely and appropriately. Weaker responses focused entirely on content and therefore only provided minimal analysis, usually by indirectly outlining the structure of the piece.

Stronger responses on **Section B** generally had a strong sense of the appropriate form for the task (story, article or review), a clear focus on the question, and included appropriate stylistic conventions as well as relevant content.

Weaker responses on **Section B** generally lacked focus on what the task required. For example, some stories in **Question 2** lacked in sense of drama or mystery; some responses to **Question 3** did not adequately address the benefits of spending time outdoors; and some **Question 4** responses were simple recounts of a trip by plane, with very little in the way of critique or personal opinion.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Section A: Shorter writing and reflective commentary**

##### **Question 1**

**Something very unusual happened near your home recently. You decide to write a news report about this event, which will be published in your local newspaper.**

- (a) **Write the text for the news report, using no more than 400 words. In your writing, focus on the atmosphere of the event and the impact it has had on local people.**

Many features of a report were successfully integrated into the majority of these reports for a local newspaper. The focus of the news story was important: those more successful responses selected an engaging event; others selected a more mundane subject, which impacted on the opportunity to explore it in a meaningful way. Some lost focus on report form and became narrative, sometimes even a first-person recount. Most responses included a headline written to engage the reader and fulfil the *unusual* aspect of the question in terms of an event. Closing comments were also evident across most responses, indicating for example, 'further news to follow.'

Stronger responses were appropriately structured for a news report, using an inverted triangle structure, as it was referred to in many candidates' commentaries. Stronger responses used an effective headline were structured with sub-headings, clear topic sentences and other newspaper conventions. Humour was a feature of some stronger responses, as well as intrigue, which in some cases was immediately introduced in the headline and opening section of the report, for example: 'Grandma on the run: The elusive pet stealer' and 'Halloween Havoc'. One candidate structured the report around 'Aliens from Mars' featuring 'extra-terrestrials' who 'stole a cow, using their flying saucer after taking a wrong turn home.' This example, and more like it, were effective in terms of the precision of language used, employing both third and first person. Successful responses had a clear structure, noting the need to include both atmospheric details surrounding the event together with eyewitness accounts. Candidates made effective use of adverbs of time and pronouns in their reports.

Weaker responses often included quotations from neighbours or passers-by, but fell short of capturing atmosphere. Whilst direct speech is a feature of a report, the punctuation and layout of it was mostly poor. Weaker responses were usually paragraphed but were very brief, which impacted on the development and overall quality of the piece. A small number of candidates produced quite confused accounts which were purely narrative in terms of form.

**(b) Write a reflective commentary on your text, explaining how your linguistic choices contribute to fulfilling the task set.**

One approach that worked well for candidates was to use a Point, Evidence, Explanation format to analyse the form, structure and language of their responses to **Question 1(a)**. However, many responses were limited in detail and lacking in evidence from the **Question 1(a)** response.

Stronger responses provided sustained analysis of language and also commented on the news report's structure by referring to the 'Four W's' and the 'Inverted Triangle'. Effective commentaries provided evidence of how discourse markers were used to signpost events, hence creating a logical structure. Some higher level commentaries specifically referenced the use of pronouns, as in this example: 'I used first person perspective, singular and plural form as it was about the town so, by using the possessive pronoun "our", makes the reader feel included in the event. Singular pronoun "I" was used to give my perspective as a journalist.' Rhetorical questions, listing, the rule of three, alliteration and assonance were also often referenced. As candidates were providing analysis of language used in a news report, there was some competent analysis of how reported speech had been used, as in this example: 'The use of reported speech helps to better transfer the feelings of the townsfolk, thus fulfilling genre requirements.' Other stronger responses detailed the pathos-logos-ethos sequence and included analysis of, for example, the use of hyperbole, use of reported speech, onomatopoeia and parallelism.

Weaker responses consisted of content-driven accounts. Many did not provide specific examples from the **1(a)** response to support points made. Some weaker responses included commentary on alliteration, listing and repetition, but would have been improved with analysis of how these features would affect the reader.

**Section B: Extended writing**

**Question 2 – Story**

**Write a story which begins with the following sentence: *As he picked up the book, Max realised that an envelope had been hidden underneath it.* In your writing, create a sense of drama and mystery. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

There were many engaging and well written responses to this question. The contents of the envelope provided a stimulus for hidden treasure stories, letters from long-lost relatives (often a parent wanting to be reunited with a child), espionage and voyages of discovery. Strong responses created a sense of voice for their main character, Max.

Stronger candidates engaged the reader from the outset by focusing on the envelope, creating a real sense of intrigue and suspense as to its contents, for example: 'Taking the CD out of the envelope, he inserted it into his PC, and what he saw next was truly shocking. An envelope had been hidden underneath it. Puzzled, he ran his fingers along its coarse edges, its yellowed surface.' For other candidates, minute details, including the texture of the envelope, the style of handwriting, even the weight, provided interest for the reader, as shown in this example: 'He turned it over in his hands. It was made of high-quality paper, stark-white. His father's name and address were scrawled on the front in cursive writing with dark green ink.'

Weaker responses tended to include too much dialogue, with flaws in punctuation that often made it unclear which character was speaking. Some weaker responses involved complex family dramas with little focus on creating drama and suspense. There was often confusion regarding point of view, together with a lack of control of tenses and little sense of purpose.

**Question 3 – Article**

**In class, you have been discussing the fact that many teenagers spend a lot of time indoors these days. You decide to write an article for your school magazine. In your writing, focus on ways to encourage teenagers to spend time outdoors, and why it can be so good for their physical and mental health. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

Many candidates approached this question from personal experience. There were a range of reasons given for young people remaining indoors, with a reliance on social media as the top issue. Most candidates had a secure understanding of the relevant form and audience. Candidates used direct address together with



listing and some highly charged emotive language. Mental health issues dominated most responses with sport seen as a solution to improve overall well-being.

Stronger responses were lively with some energetic writing, including an upbeat tone and a strong sense of voice, as seen at the close of this candidate's writing: 'We are a generation that has grown up surrounded by technology – it is ingrained into our everyday lives. We need to make positive changes which can be hard. By surrounding yourself with love and an improved lifestyle, we can live life to the full!' Strong responses combined personal anecdote with a more objective evaluation of the problems caused by being indoors. Some stronger responses showed awareness of form with the use of headlines, straplines and sub-headings, for example: 'The Great Outdoors: A Guide to Digital Detoxing'. Use of sub-headings such as 'New body. New mind. New you!' clarified structure and organisational focus. In focused responses, language was persuasive and tackled the topic of mental health particularly well.

Some responses were weaker where candidates had misinterpreted or lost focus on the question, which led them to advise on healthy eating or to strenuously defend the use of social media, instead of maintaining focus on encouraging the audience towards the great outdoors. Others did not engage the teenage audience, listing activities that teenagers could undertake; some provided lengthy anecdotes without clearly addressing the question.

#### Question 4 – Review

**You recently flew to another country, using an airline you have not flown with before. Write a review of the airline, which will be published on an international travel website. Write between 600 and 900 words.**

Most candidates adopted a methodical approach to the question, which led to some laborious but perfectly competent pieces of writing. Candidates were able to tap into their own experiences and either exaggerate them or speak truthfully about them. Responses covered all aspects of the flight, from experiences in the airport lounge to touch down. Flight attendants, food, and toilets were all reviewed, along with the comfort of the seats, including leg room.

Stronger responses showed excellent understanding of the features of a review, and, hence, there was often the adoption of a sophisticated voice and register that facilitated some sophisticated expression and some humorous touches appropriate to a travel website. Higher level responses structured the review so that ideas flowed through a logical sequence which tackled ticket purchase, ease of boarding, leg room, friendliness and efficiency of the flight attendants, in-flight entertainment, hospitality and baggage reclaim. What could have been a very dry subject was often made more readable by the injection of some gentle humour, for example: 'Punctuality is not a strong point of Gold Star and, as if to rub salt in the wound, we were treated to a panoramic view of planes taxiing in, boarding and leaving, all while ours was yet to make an appearance.' A sense of sarcasm was achieved by this candidate who, like many, also maintained an upbeat mood: 'While I was waiting (and waiting) to board, I could not help but notice how small everybody's check-in luggage was. Then I saw a sign saying, "No baggage over 5 kg." Were they serious? A criminally low weight for an international flight!' Upbeat, lively writing proved effective, as opposed to the 'listing' effect of things going wrong as seen in weaker responses.

Weaker responses tended to consist of personal accounts starting with facilities at the airport and other factors such as passport control, which were not within the control of the airline in question. Others merely listed the aspects of the flight that had gone wrong, while some indulged in writing about their own personal likes and dislikes in the way of food and beverages, in an uninteresting process of listing, showing little awareness that users of the website would like to know about the available range of seats, meals, inflight entertainment and other amenities. Features of many weaker responses were lack of paragraphs and other organisational devices, and frequent errors of various kinds, including lack of control of sentence structure. For example, one candidate wrote: 'I've heard many people talk about Singapore Airlines and complementing it. So, even I decided to travel in that airlines to see what's all this hype about.'

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/21  
Drama, Poetry and Prose

## Key messages

1. Learners should ensure they address the idea of ‘presentation’ in appropriate questions.
2. Learners should avoid ‘feature-spotting’ at the expense of analysis in their essays.

## General comments

There were responses seen at every level of the mark scheme to every text on the paper. The large majority of learners showed evidence of appropriate preparation, with at least a sound basic knowledge of their two texts. Many learners had evidently worked hard to acquire their knowledge and understanding of the texts and these learners were always able to select relevant material to address the given tasks. There were few rubric errors in this session, but it is important that learners understand the optionality on the paper if they are to achieve the best mark possible. The quality of the expression was generally appropriate to the task, with some excellent examples of essay writing seen. Some learners, on the other hand, are at times disadvantaged by a lack of clarity in their writing.

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

1. Many of the questions on this paper refer to the writer’s ‘presentation’ of a specific element in the text or in the passage from the text. Learners should note this requires them to consider the writer’s choices, which may include genre-specific methods such as stage directions, or more general matters of style such as choices of imagery and language. Many less successful answers would be improved by ensuring that these points are considered fully, along with providing evidence of knowledge and understanding of the text.
2. There were a number of learners in this session who used a list of literary terms as a way of structuring their response, particularly on **(b)** questions on poetry. This can be a useful way of approaching the text, but learners should also remember that these terms are not in and of themselves ‘analysis’ of the text. There were many occasions when a term such as ‘asyndeton’ or ‘metonymy’ was followed by an example from the text without any other comment, so that it seemed the learner was ‘feature-spotting’ rather than analysing the effects of the writer’s choices. Learners should always have the effects of the writing, especially in passage questions, as the main focus of their essay.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section A: Drama

#### Question 1

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons***

- (a)** This was a popular choice with almost one third of the entry offering a response. Nearly every answer was able to select relevant material with which to address the task, most often focusing on some of the relationships in the Keller family and in the Deever family. Weaker answers tended to summarise the relationships, most often that between Chris and his father and George and his father, with slightly better ones at this level offering comparisons between them, showing how ‘Chris and George learn the truth about their fathers and it changes everything for them’, as one

suggested. Other weaker answers retold the stories of all of the relationships in turn, though rarely moving beyond simple narrative. More competent answers considered in what ways these relationships developed during the course of the play and often noted that ‘as revelations occur, so does the plot become more complex and involved, until Chris’s rejection of his father leads to the tragic climax of the play’, as one learner explained. Many sound answers explored the way ‘these relationships are all intertwined’, with some able to tease out the ‘paradoxes, such as Anne knowing the truth about Larry, but rejecting her own father anyway’, as one put it. Good answers moved beyond these complex narratives and considered how Miller presents the relationships dramatically. Many good answers noted the comparisons and contrasts between the families and the separate relationships in detail. Others explored the use of stage directions, often with appropriate quotation, while other good answers analysed the language, comparing for example ‘Joe’s nervous, almost shifty, words, to Chris’s straight to the point language’. Some learners also noted the use of symbols, such as the tree and the letter, exploring what effect these might have on an audience. Very good answers were able to bring such approaches together within a structured framework, fully alive to the dramatic methods that Miller uses, and often showing a perceptive awareness of contexts.

- (b) This was the most popular question in **Section A**. Some weak answers were not confident about the nature of the relationships and the characters’ roles, particularly George and Larry, both of whom were mistakenly identified as Anne’s father and husband. Learners do need to show accurate knowledge of the basics of their texts across all the levels of assessment. Other limited responses narrated the events leading up to George’s arrival, sometimes in great detail, with a consequent lack of focus on the given passage. Many responses did show at least partial awareness of Anne and Chris’s situation, with better responses at this level aware of the underlying tensions between them, George and the rest of the family. More competent answers were able to explore some of Miller’s dramatic methods, his use of stage directions and the contrasting tones for example, in discussing George’s significance at this point in the play. Many noted his ‘rudeness to Sue and Chris as he adjusts to being back near his old home’, as one put it. Others considered the tensions in more detail, ‘George fresh from realising his father is innocent, Chris worried that his marriage to Anne might be in jeopardy and Anne torn between her loyalty to George and her love for Chris’, as one summarised them. Good answers probed more deeply into the complexities of the situation. ‘The shadow of Larry’s death and Steve’s wrongful imprisonment hangs over every word’, as one suggested, whilst other answers considered the impact of George’s arrival on the play’s development and how ‘his attitudes and words start the doubts in Chris’s mind about his own father’, as one learner put it. Very good answers developed such ideas, with some seeing George more symbolically as ‘the avenger come to defend his father’. Other very good answers compared and contrasted Miller’s presentation of George and his relationship with Anne, to that of Chris and, in some cases, Joe. Such arguments were at times well supported by detailed reference to the passage and the wider text. Very good answers also analysed the details of the passage fully, exploring language and tone, as well as the stage directions and the dramatic action, often with perceptive comments well supported by precise reference to the passage.

## Question 2

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

- (a) This was a minority choice of question. Nearly every answer had some relevant details from Shakespeare’s presentation of Benedick. Weaker answers tended to retell his relationship with Beatrice, often in great detail, with more capable answers also referring to his friendship with Claudio and Don Pedro and how ‘by the end he has to choose between love and friendship after Hero’s false accusation’, as one answer stated. Competent answers were able to shape their discussions to the given question, exploring for example ‘the many different ways Benedick is suffering, physically, emotionally and socially because of his newfound love for Beatrice’, as one noted. Good answers developed such ideas, considering in detail Shakespeare’s presentation, ‘through the use of deception, the quick-witted comic exchanges and Benedick’s soliloquys’, which ‘led to a rounded and interesting characterisation’, as one put it. Other good answers focused on the quotation directly, considering the significance of his ‘use of “suffer” and “against my will” as indicating the conflict between the public, antagonistic image and the tender more caring reality’, as one suggested. Other essays explored this conflict, noting how ‘he is the one who first suggests Don John is the real villain and quickly sides with Beatrice and thus Hero against Claudio,’ as one put it. Very good answers analysed Shakespeare’s use of language, ‘the innuendoes in many of Beatrice’s quips’, and ‘the vagueness of the backstory’ all of which ‘develop the audience’s interest in his character and his relationship’, as one suggested. Very good answers supported such

discussions with apposite contextual references and precise references to and quotation from the text.

- (b) This was the more popular choice for this text. Nearly every answer could identify the context and were aware of some of the significance of this passage. Weak answers retold the history of Borachio's deception and the consequences for Hero, though some assumed she was now really dead and that there was a 'niece' to take her place in the remarriage. Better answers at this level often had strong opinions on 'the unfairness of the situation, as men decide what will happen to the women', as one put it, with some strong condemnation of Claudio and Leonato in a number of answers, for 'At least Borachio did what he did for money and appears genuinely repentant for the effects of his actions as well as defending Margaret', as one essay suggested. More competent answers developed these points, with some awareness of the question – how an audience might be affected. Many saw that some would be offended by the situation, how Claudio is so easily forgiven, whereas others, recognising the context, suggested that 'the easiness with which Claudio accepts the second marriage would not trouble an Elizabethan audience, comfortable with the comic conventions', as one put it. Good answers explored the tone, how Shakespeare shifts between near tragedy to easy comedy, as well as looking closely at the language, with some analysing the poison imagery. Claudio's assertion that he sinned 'but in mistaking' was often commented on at this level, with some linking his words to the play's title and its inherent word play. Very good answers were able to shape their arguments to the task seamlessly, exploring many pertinent concerns, with appropriate support and contextual awareness. Some very good answers also noted the comic elements in this passage, Dogberry in particular, and some recognised how the audience would approve of 'Leonato's undoubted enjoyment in being able to berate the princes, safe in the knowledge that Hero is still alive'.

### Question 3

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

This was not a popular choice of text, with too few responses on the (a) option to make general comments.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) There were only a few responses seen on this question. Weaker answers often had some knowledge of Amope's role in the play generally, but rarely were able to focus on the details of the passage. Better answers at this level had some understanding of her character, 'typically angry and abusive to everyone around', as one noted. Other answers discussed her role here in terms of the plot, through her relationship with Jero and her husband Chume, but also in terms of 'Soyinka's moral concerns about life in Nigeria', as one suggested. She was often seen as 'a moral compass, helping the audience recognise the corruption all round', as one said, though other competent responses saw her as 'the caricature of the angry, bitter wife, inevitably going to get her come-uppance,' as one expressed it. Good answers considered Soyinka's presentation in more detail. For example, 'her aggressive language, her talking to the audience and her frustration at Jero's escape all make her more human', as one essay argued. Other noted the use of stage directions, as well as the comic element, 'almost slap stick and physical', as one put it. Where such ideas were supported by apposite quotation from the text and some focused analysis, the answers did well.

### Question 4

#### **THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling***

This was the least popular text on the paper with almost no responses seen on either option. Consequently, it is not possible to make general comments about performance.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.

## Section B: Poetry

### Question 5

#### ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice of text in **Section B** with too few responses on option **(a)** to be able to make general comments.

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b)** There were not many responses to this question overall. Weaker answers seemed to struggle with some basic knowledge of the poem, appearing to respond as to an 'unseen', with a consequent loss of understanding and a too generalised personal response. Better answers at this level tended to summarise the content of the poem, with some awareness of the wider text and some understanding of Browning's concerns, most commonly time passing, change, nature and lost glory. More competent answers considered Browning's poetic methods, for example, 'his use of the grand lexis of courts and palaces juxtaposed with the ordinary sights of the countryside, sheep grazing where once there was a hundred gated city', as one suggested. Language and imagery were analysed at this level, with some understanding of Browning's methods and his concerns, though good answers also considered his use of form and rhythm, to 'create a mood of peaceful nostalgia, reflecting his attraction to natural things', as one put it. Other good answers did integrate some contextual references and where the analysis was supported by precise reference to the extract and the wider text, the answers did well.

### Question 6

#### OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was a minority choice of text in **Section B** with too few responses on option **(a)** to be able to make general comments

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b)** This was a relatively popular choice, with nearly every answer showing some knowledge of the poem, though some very weak answers did appear to be approaching the poem as an 'unseen', limiting the depth of their response. Limited answers were able to offer a paraphrase of the poem, with some personal response, often criticising the subject of the poem for his corruption and chauvinism. Better answers at this level showed some understanding of the poet's concerns, some noting that 'this is unusual in being an overtly political poem,' while for others 'the absence of references to Wales is remarkable,' as one put it. Better answers explored Sheers's characterisation, his choices of language and imagery and often linked this to 'other dominating men in his poetry like the blacksmith and the fishmonger', as one noted. Good answers developed the analysis across a range of poetic methods, analysing the effects of the descriptors, as well as considering poetic form and his use of half rhymes and enjambement. Where appropriate contexts were integrated into the argument, with apposite reference to the poem, the answers often did well.

### Question 7

#### *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with a more or less even split between the two options.

- (a)** Most learners were able to select two relevant poems with which to address the task. Very weak answers seemed to be constrained to use poems that they could remember however removed from religious content or the Sassoon poem set for the **(b)** question. Such choices unfortunately severely limited the effectiveness of the responses. It is important that learners have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the text to be able to make relevant and informed choices in addressing questions, particularly **(a)** option essays. More successful answers at this level offered summaries of their selected poems, evidencing at least partial knowledge and basic understanding. Where contrasting poems were chosen, the learners at least implicitly explored contrasts and



comparisons in the poets' concerns. More competent answers considered the 'ways in which' directly, often contrasting the language and imagery used. Some considered different poetic forms and the use of rhyme and rhythm as well. Where such points were supported by apposite quotation, the answers often became confident, especially where appropriate contextual references were integrated into the discussion. Very good answers often had a clear structured argument, sometimes directly contrasting the attitudes shown in their selected poems. This led some learners into perceptive analysis of the effects of different choices, often with detailed support and insightful commentary.

- (b) This was the most popular question in **Section B** with one third of the entry choosing it. Most answers revealed at least a basic knowledge of the poem and some understanding of Sassoon's concerns and the contexts within which he was writing. Very weak answers, however, often appeared confused by the situation in the poem and their essays suggested that this was not a poem they had been studying previously. Better answers at this level did understand the situation and were able to paraphrase the poem with some awareness of its significance and at times of 'Sassoon's anti-war stance and his anger at the waste of young lives', as one put it. At this level personal comment was sometimes directed at war generally or the perceived 'unfairness of sending people off to die far from home', as one put it. However, without some clear links to details in the given poem these were often generalised and restricted in quality. More competent answers did look closely at Sassoon's methods, especially his use of language and imagery, noting the 'contrasting use of nature to emphasise the tragic circumstances', as one learner suggested. Others noted the use of 'contrasting language of violence and kindness, to suggest to the reader the emotions of both soldier and medical staff', as one essay stated. Good answers focused on the nuances of narrative here, how 'the poet provides different views of the soldier, from the blind, agonised victim, to the patient that needs care, to the selected choice of Death', as one candidate said, with many answers at this level showing sensitive personal response and perceptive analysis of the poetic methods. Very good answers developed such analysis by considering how 'Sassoon use the verse form and the structure to build the reader's response to the soldier, so that his death in the end comes as a shock, but also a release', as one essay suggested. At this level there was often a sharp understanding of the effects of the poetic choices, as well as very good appreciation of relevant contexts.

## Question 8

### GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice of text in **Section B** with too few responses on option (a) to be able to make general comments.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) This was very much a minority choice, with only a few essays seen. Weaker answers offered a paraphrase of some of the details of the poem, with some basic awareness of Clarke's concerns, usually the nature but also time passing and changes. There was some confusion over the meaning of the title at times, which restricted the relevance of some responses. More competent answers were able to explore the language and imagery with some understanding, noting how 'Clarke creates a world that is under attack by the coming winter', as one put it. Others noted her 'typical use of specific detail in the "leaf" and the "rose", showing her close observation of the world around her', as one essay expressed it. Good answers considered the effects of the imagery and the language in detail, often with some contextual awareness in support. There were, however, very few attempts to explore other key poetic methods, such as Clarke's choices of form and structure, which limited the overall depth of the analysis and therefore the success of the essay.

## Section C: Prose

### Question 9

#### IAN McEWAN: *Atonement*

This was a minority text in **Section C**, with the majority of learners choosing option **(a)**, the passage question.

- (a)** Nearly every learner was able to summarise what happened to Robbie, often in great detail, with some relevant personal response. Invariably learners agreed with the given quotation and saw 'Robbie as a victim of great injustice,' as one summed it up. Better answers were able to exemplify the ways in which he suffers, whether in prison, losing Cecilia or dying in the war. There was some confusion between the different narrative voices and whether he had in fact got together with Cecilia by the end. More competent answers did have a sound knowledge of the structure, showing clear understanding of the various twists in the plot, which enable a more balanced judgement on Robbie's presentation. Good answers looked more closely at McEwan's style, and how Robbie is presented, with some very good interpretations of his role, from 'a symbol of working class oppression' to 'frustrated intellectual' and 'a key element in McEwan's exploration of how a novel can mislead its readers,' as some noted. Very good answers were able to analyse the narrative voices, could unpick the effects of the metafiction and were alive to 'McEwan's narrative games, leading to deliberate confusion in his readers as to what really happened in the novel,' as one suggested. Where such points were well supported from the text the answers did very well.
- (b)** There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.

### Question 10

#### NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O: *Petals of Blood*

There were too few responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance on either option.

### Question 11

#### *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

This was a minority choice in this session with most learners choosing option **(b)**

- (a)** This was a minority choice of question in **Section C**. Nearly all learners who chose this option were able to select two relevant stories on which to base their essays. Popular choices were *Stability*, *A Warning to the Curious*, *The Plantation* and *Haywards Heath*. Weaker answers tended to summarise their chosen stories in detail, showing basic knowledge of the events and the characters. Better answers at this level did focus more on the 'significant discovery', offering some personal response on the nature of the discovery and at times partial understanding of its significance. More competent answers made the discoveries the central focus of their essays, and often had sound ideas on how the discoveries were used by the writers to develop both plot and characterisation. One essay for example said, 'Namidi's discovery of the oil brings out the selfish weaknesses in his character, which changes his life and the village's life for ever'. Good essays considered the writers' choices in a more detailed way, analysing such elements as narrative voice, language and symbolism, for example 'the different narrative voices in *A Warning to the Curious* from the first person narrator to Paxton's account of finding the crown and the rector's telling of its history, are used to create a "documentary effect" on the reader, so that we believe the events and the tragic outcome', as one put it. Very good answers developed the analysis of style and content to explore the effects in more detail, with often precise and telling reference to the stories, but always considering how the significant discoveries are presented and their importance to the story as a whole.
- (b)** This was by far the most popular **Section C** question. Nearly every answer could explore the 'deteriorating situation' at least partially. Weaker answers tended to focus on Mrs Burridge, with some retelling the whole of her story. Better answer at this level were aware that the deteriorating situation was revealed 'more through her thoughts and reactions than as actual facts', as one put it.

At this level though answers rarely moved beyond paraphrasing the events and making some general comments about the characters involved. More competent answers explored the nature of the deterioration, 'as it moves from broken telephones to loading guns to loss of electricity and eventually columns of smoke', as one noted. Others tried to tease out 'how much of it is "real" and how much simply in her head', as one put it, though better answers at this level started to look at some of the writer's methods. These essays moved up the levels, with good answers exploring the narrative voice, the 'confusing and therefore blurring changes of tense and focus', as one noted, the writer's choice of language and sentence structure for, as one noted, 'as Mrs Burridge's fear grow for herself and her family the sentences become short and almost breathless'. Very good answers developed such points, carefully noting the effects that reveal the deteriorating situation and often supporting their analysis with precise apposite references from the passage and some contextual support from the wider text.

## Question 12

### MARK TWAIN: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

This was a minority choice of text in this session, with only a few responses seen on either option.

- (a) There were only a very few answers to this question. Weaker answers retold more or less relevant parts of the story, with nearly every answer mentioning the King and the Duke and their part in Huck and Jim's journey. More competent answers distinguished between positive and negative effects of lying, some wondering for example 'why Tom lied about Jim's freedom'. Other answers noted how Huck's lying changes throughout the novel, so that 'by the end he is morally much sounder, through the influence perhaps of the honest slave, Jim', as one put it. Where such points were supported by close reference to the text and some awareness of appropriate contexts the answers did well.
- (b) This was a slightly more popular option on this text. Weaker answers were unsure of the precise context and tended to narrate the events preceding the four characters getting onto the raft. Better answers at this level did consider the various relationships, though usually by reference to the wider text with too little focus on the given passage. More competent answers did look at the interactions here in detail, noting for example how the 'selfishness of the king and duke is in stark contrast to the kindness and even goodness of Jim towards Huck'. Good answers looked at the style more closely, contrasting the 'grandiose language of the two charlatans with the more down to earth words of Huck himself', as one noted. Others analysed Twain's 'evocative description of the raft and the river, with Huck's almost poetic response to the power of the storm', while other good answers were aware of the humour, 'the mockery of the pretentious, the simpleness of the runaways and the physical comedy of Huck going overboard', as one good answer summarised it. Where such points were supported by precise references and some awareness of appropriate contexts the answers did very well.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/22  
Drama, Poetry and Prose

## Key messages

1. Learners should ensure they address the idea of ‘presentation’ in appropriate questions.
2. Learners should avoid ‘feature-spotting’ at the expense of analysis in their essays.

## General comments

There were responses seen at every level of the mark scheme to every text on the paper. The large majority of learners showed evidence of appropriate preparation, with at least a sound basic knowledge of their two texts. Many learners had evidently worked hard to acquire their knowledge and understanding of the texts and these learners were always able to select relevant material to address the given tasks. There were few rubric errors in this session, but it is important that learners understand the optionality on the paper if they are to achieve the best mark possible. The quality of the expression was generally appropriate to the task, with some excellent examples of essay writing seen. Some learners, on the other hand, are at times disadvantaged by a lack of clarity in their writing.

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

1. Many of the questions on this paper refer to the writer’s ‘presentation’ of a specific element in the text or in the passage from the text. Learners should note this requires them to consider the writer’s choices, which may include genre-specific methods such as stage directions, or more general matters of style such as choices of imagery and language. Many less successful answers would be improved by ensuring that these points are considered fully, along with providing evidence of knowledge and understanding of the text.
2. There were a number of learners in this session who used a list of literary terms as a way of structuring their response, particularly on **(b)** questions on poetry. This can be a useful way of approaching the text, but learners should also remember that these terms are not in and of themselves ‘analysis’ of the text. There were many occasions when a term such as ‘asyndeton’ or ‘metonymy’ was followed by an example from the text without any other comment, so that it seemed the learner was ‘feature-spotting’ rather than analysing the effects of the writer’s choices. Learners should always have the effects of the writing, especially in passage questions, as the main focus of their essay.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section A: Drama

#### Question 1

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons***

- (a)** This question was a relatively popular choice. Most learners were able to select relevant material from the text with which to address the task. Some weaker answers did however focus on ‘women’s attitudes’ rather than ‘attitudes to women’, with a consequent loss of relevance and focus. Other weaker answers retold the narratives of particularly Kate Keller and Anne Deever, often in great detail, though not always able to consider the different attitudes to them. Better answers at this level were able to identify different aspects of their stories, for example the

contrasting views of Chris, Joe and Anne to Kate's belief in Larry's survival. More competent answers developed such approaches into a structured survey of these contrasting attitudes. For example, in terms of 'how the men see the role of a woman, such as Frank's belittling of Lydia', as well as the 'reactions of women as different as Anne and Sue to Jim's desire to do medical research', as one answer suggested. Good answers analysed how Miller uses the different attitudes to develop his characterisation, so that 'Kate, at first a sympathetic grieving mother, gradually turns into a manipulative and deceptive wife, as the truth of her part in the cover up is dramatically revealed', as one essay put it. Other good answers explored the role of Anne in detail, noting how 'Larry, Chris and George all see her as "theirs" and an ally, whereas Kate and Joe are afraid of her and what she represents', as one essay said. Very good answers supported such ideas by close reference to the text, analysing for example Miller's use of symbols and 'stage directions to reinforce his dramatic message'. Other very good answers explored the language used, the 'aggressive diction of Kate and Sue contrasting sharply with the gentler, softer words used by Chris and even Joe', for example. Where such ideas were supported by relevant contexts and an effective structure the answers did very well.

- (b) This was the most popular question in **Section A**, with responses seen at every assessment level. Nearly every learner had knowledge of Joe's role and characterisation in the play as a whole, with which to address the task. However more limited responses often seemed unsure about the context and at times were unable to link their ideas about Joe generally to the given passage. Weak answers tended to summarise Joe's narrative, often in detail. Better answers at this level were aware of some of the tensions in the passage and were able to explore the relationships and what they reveal about Joe. More competent answers made this the focus of the essay, noting, for example, how 'Anne's attitude to her supposedly guilty father leads to Joe's outburst about his son, foreshadowing the tragic ending of the play'. Other sound responses tracked Joe's comments, as 'he tentatively leads up to his offers about Steve and George, revealing his anxiety about how they might react when they see him again', as one suggested. Many sound answers explored how Miller presents his fears and his guilt in this passage, with some also noting his enduring love for his son, 'and that underneath he is still grieving for his lost son, Larry', as one said. Good answers developed such points with close reference to the text, noting Miller's use of stage directions, the change in 'tone from relaxed chatting to angry outbursts', and the contrasting language of Joe's 'forced casual flippancy about education to Anne and Chris's more serious responses', for example. Very good answers were alive to the subtext, Joe's fears and guilt, Anne's hiding of Larry's suicide note and Chris's intensity in his desire for Anne and marriage. Where such analysis was developed, with supporting contexts, as well as apposite reference to the wider text, the answers did very well.

## Question 2

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

- (a) This was a relatively popular question, with most learners agreeing with the quotation and finding relevant material with which to support their views. Weaker responses summarised the main relationship between Claudio and Hero, often finding this to be particularly shallow, with 'Claudio falling in and out of love without any real knowledge of her and Hero simply doing what her father told her', as one suggested. Nearly every answer was 'appalled that she could eventually accept him after the way he had treated her in the church', finding this to be 'strong evidence of just how shallow and superficial they both were', as one learner argued. Better answers at this level also dealt with Beatrice and Benedick's relationship, with some finding this to be 'more substantial as they at least knew each other well', though others thought them equally shallow in that 'they are simply tricked into a marriage that neither of them previously seemed to want', as one essay stated. More competent answers moved beyond the straightforward narratives, for example considering how Shakespeare 'contrasts the two couples in terms of the knowledge of each other and their ability to talk to each other'. Other sound answers compared the characterisations involved, how Benedick and Beatrice develop 'in stark contrast to the static shallowness of Hero and Claudio', as one suggested. Good answers widened the range of reference and the depth of their understanding, noting how Margaret and Borachio, for example, reflect 'the more typical male dominated relationship of the period'. Some answers remembered Don Pedro's proposal and its comic rejection by Beatrice, 'which perhaps Shakespeare saw as the reason Pedro wanted to make a mockery of her and Benedick in the deception scenes,' according to one candidate. Very good answers looked closely at the presentation of the couples, noting, for example, the comic undertones in much of their interaction and how this was used to 'emphasise the shock of Hero's



shaming in the church. There was some insightful analysis of language, imagery and tone at this level, with apt quotations and integrated contextual support. Such essays did very well.

- (b) This was the less popular choice for *Much Ado About Nothing*. Weaker answers were at times confused by the context and what in fact it was that Dogberry and Verges were trying to report to Leonato. Better answers at this level were able to summarise the contextual narrative and show some understanding of how the comedy is created by 'Dogberry's misuse of words and Leonato's impatient, good humour', as one argued. As the essays became more competent so did the narrative context become a backdrop to the actual situation here, 'a comic trope of the bungling servant and the tolerant master', as one suggested. Other sound answers considered the language, particularly, in detail, with clear analysis of how the comedy worked. Better answers also considered other dramatic methods as well, the interactions between Dogberry and Verges and the possible staging to reveal Leonato's impatience, for example. Good answers were alive to the irony of the situation, 'with Leonato so close to foiling Don John's malicious plan to shame his daughter, but losing the chance much to the audience's likely horror', as one said. Other good answers explored how this 'comic form of justice was significant to Shakespeare's presentation of justice more generally', linking this scene to 'Don John's previous mischief making and his eventual capture and threatened punishment', as one argued. Very good answers developed the analysis with insight, often exploring the malapropisms, the comic interactions and Leonato's responses in great depth. Where such essays were supported by appropriate contexts and precise references to the text, they often did very well.

### Question 3

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

This was not a popular choice of text, with a more or less even split between the two options.

- (a) Nearly every answer appropriately focused on Jero himself. Weaker answers summarised the various 'tricks he uses to get his own way, whether to avoid paying his debts, to control followers like Chume or to baffle the politicians', as one summarised it. Better answers at this level did find some development in his deceptions across the two plays, as 'his power and therefore his ambition grows', as one said. Sound answers explored the way Soyinka 'uses the different types of deception to develop his themes', ranging from 'corruption in religion and politics to personal greed and the naivety of the followers like Rebecca', as one suggested. Other sound answers developed such ideas by reference to other characters such as the Ananias and Shadrach, seeing different types of deception and exploring how Soyinka used them to 'create comedy and tension in both plays', for example. Good answers explored the language in detail as well as some of the comic exchanges, showing good understanding of Soyinka's dramatic methods and often noting how he developed these across the two plays so that 'the tone of *Metamorphosis* is much darker than the previous play', as one stated. Where such arguments were supported by appropriate contexts and specific reference to the text the answers did well.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to retell Rebecca's story in great detail, but with at best intermittent reference to the given passage. Other weaker answers offered a summary of the events of the passage, often showing some basic understanding of the situation and the characters. Better answers were able to focus more on Rebecca and her role here 'in bamboozling the Executive, by her show on innocence and religious belief', as one suggested. Competent answers looked more closely at Soyinka's methods, noting for example 'the comedy in how Rebecca talks at cross purposes to the Executive', whilst other sound answers considered the dramatic action, analysing the stage directions and what these suggested about the staging of the play. Good answers noted how Rebecca develops in this passage, becoming 'a true mouthpiece for Jero's preaching, her language reflecting his closely', as one said, 'though her pursuit of the Executive as her "inspiration" grows is both comical and serious, as corrupt religion seeks to impose itself on corrupt politics', as one summarised it. Very good answers explored the religious language in detail, with some able to integrate telling contextual references effectively.

#### Question 4

##### THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

This was the least popular text on the paper with very few responses on either option.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance

#### Section B: Poetry

#### Question 5

##### ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

This was the least popular text in **Section B** with only a small minority of responses, evenly split across the two options.

- (a) Most learners were able to select relevant poems with which to address the task. Popular choices were *A Woman's Last Word*, *Confessions*, *Life in a Love*, *Love in a Life*, *Meeting at Night*, *Porphyria's Lover* and *My Last Duchess*. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the chosen poems, often showing clear knowledge of the text and some understanding of Browning's concerns. Learners who chose contrasting poems were able to show awareness of Browning's methods in discussing the meaning of the poems. Better answers at this level used such contrasts as a way of structuring their essays. These became competent as responses focused at least partly on some of his poetic methods, most usually language and imagery, so that 'the soft imagery of the sea side and nature in *Meeting at Night* creates an image of a gentle loving relationship compared to the storms and violence of for example *Porphyria's Lover*', as one answer put it. Good answers considered a wider range of methods, noting for example the different uses of the first-person narrators and their contrasting effects. Other good answers analysed some of the imagery in great detail, showing the range of types of love that Browning presents, 'from tender romance of gentle firesides after storms to the sensuality of hair and its violent uses', according to one candidate. Very good answers developed such ideas, considering, for example, how 'the rhythms of the exhilarating *Last Ride Together* are contrasted to the more jagged and jerky rhythms of *The Lost Mistress*. Very good answers also supported arguments and analysis with close reference to the poems and a confident awareness of contexts.
- (b) Nearly every answer had some views on the Bishop to share and was able to develop a relevant response. Weaker answers tended to summarise the extract, though some were distracted into presenting their opinions on the hypocrisy of religion, with only brief and general reference to the poem. Better answers at this level did support their comments by some reference to the poem. More competent responses knew the poem well and could refer appropriately to the rest of the poem. Answers at this level also showed some understanding of Browning's concerns, could select relevant details to support their comments and were alive to the irony of some of the Bishop's words. Good answers developed the analysis, showing confident awareness of Browning's use of dramatic monologue, his use of rhythm and choice of verse form, for example. Other good answers considered the tone of the Bishop's words, exploring how Browning reveals his envy and jealousy of Gandolf for example and his avarice through his obsession with the lapis lazuli. Other very good responses noted some of the dramatic elements in the poem – 'the use of hidden dialogue, the reported actions and the Bishop's breaking off and lack of coherence at times all bring the scene to life for the reader', as one suggested. Where such arguments were supported by detailed reference to the passage and the text, with awareness of contexts, the responses often did very well.

## Question 6

### OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was a minority choice in this session with a slight majority opting for the passage question option (b).

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question. Popular poems for discussion were *Winter Swans*, *History*, *Skirrid Fawr*, *Liable to Floods* and *Mametz Wood*. Weaker answers summarised their chosen poems, often in detail, with better answers at this level distinguishing between the human and natural elements in the poems. Sounder answers showed understanding of some of Sheers's concerns – 'the grandeur of nature and the frailty of humans', as one suggested, as well as secure knowledge of the poems. Good answers always looked at some of the poetic methods, with Sheers's use of tercets a popular discussion point. Other answers noted his use of symbols, imagery and language, often contrasting his choices across the two poems. Very good answers were able to explore some of the effects of these choices, with a clear focus on the human response to the natural world, and appropriate support from the poems. There was often in the best essays a perceptive grasp of Sheer's concerns as well as some insightful use of relevant contexts.
- (b) This was the slightly more popular choice on this question. Weaker answers often presented a general summary of the poem, with too little focus on the relationship. Other essays at this level roamed more widely in the text, often showing some knowledge, but with too little focus on the given poem. More competent answers had a sound understanding of the poem, with some appreciation of the wider text, linking to other similar poems such as *Landmark* and *Keyways*. Better answers at this level were aware of his 'usual concern with sexual relations, where there is always a sort of distant intimacy revealed', as one candidate said. Good answers explored some of the poetic methods in detail: for example, 'the body as a landscape, the dying lights reflecting the dying relationship and his use of the first person', as one suggested, 'all typical of his style'. Other good answers noted the imagery in more detail, as well as the verse form and the use of rhythm. Such points were developed in very good essays through analysis of the effects of the methods and how that 'informs the reader's view of the couple', though some saw 'a close relationship bonded by their physical intimacy', others thought 'the dying lights and the girl leaving him were signs of a dying relationship'. Some very good answers noted the effects of the speaker's voice, 'how as an observer of the relationship he makes it feel like a clip from a film, cold and unemotional, with both of them too aware of performing to be really close', as one summarised it. Where such arguments were supported by close reference to the poem and appropriate contexts the answers did very well.

## Question 7

### *Songs of Ourselves*, Volume 2

This was the most popular **Section B** text, though the vast majority of learners chose the passage (b) option.

- (a) Nearly every response to this question was able to select relevant poems with which to address the task. Popular poems selected included *Song*, *When We Two Parted*, *Farewell*, *Ungrateful Traitor*, *Sonnet 19*, *The Pride of Lions*, *The Wedding*, *If Thou Must Love Me*, *A Song of Faith Forsworn*, *Waterfall* and *A Wife in London*. Weaker essays showed some knowledge of their chosen poems, with better answers at this level having a partial and straightforward understanding of the poems' meaning. More competent answers often made sound choices of contrasting poems, enabling some contrasts and comparisons in terms of content and at times poetic methods. Some learners at this level were able to support their points with relevant quotations. Good answers had a very secure knowledge and understanding of their chosen poems, often offering a well-balanced argument and giving equal weight to each poem. They also focused on 'presentation' often exploring poetic methods such as language and imagery with some insightful analysis. Very good answers developed this further, with perceptive analysis of the methods and their effects, with some able to compare the poems in forming their arguments. Where such essays had detailed references to the poems and some awareness of appropriate contexts, to support the arguments made, they did very well.
- (b) This was the most popular question in **Section B** with over half of the entry offering a response. Weaker answers often had a general understanding of Jove and the Day of Judgement, though some were confused by some of the references such as 'armed with terrors' and 'you're bit', as

though they were responding to an unseen poem. Better answers at this level did know the poem and were able to explore some of the meaning and some of Swift's concerns, though answers that remembered that it is his 'vision' did better in discussing the tone of the poem. Competent answers noted the details that 'brought all of humanity to the same point, despite their religion', as one noted. There were some detailed and developed responses to Jove's presentation, with one pointing out that Swift paints a picture of reaction towards Jove's presence before his actual appearance. Some learners commented on the use of first person and other features of form such as asyndeton. Other sound answers discussed the ways in which humanity has offended, 'in their arrogance and their pride', so that many essays had some grasp of Swift's intentions. Good answers explored the style in detail; the verse form, the rhymes and the imagery were often well discussed. Very good answers analysed poetic methods in detail and were able to explore their effects with insight and perception, so that some answers at this level showed very good understanding of Swift's tone and were able to explore 'the humour of his satirical attacks on religion and humanity in general', as one suggested. Where such insights were supported by precise textual support and some appreciation of appropriate contexts the answers did very well.

## Question 8

### GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice overall, with the vast majority of learners choosing the **(b)** passage option.

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.
- (b)** This was a relatively popular choice. Nearly every answer had some relevant points to make on Clarke's presentation of the mother and daughter. Weaker answers tended to offer generalised summaries of the poem, often with some engaged personal response, though at times too far removed from the poem itself. Better answers at this level did see the conflict in the relationships, though were at times confused by some of the imagery. For example, the birth was understood by the majority, but many missed these implications and struggled to grasp the imagery of the umbilical cord. More competent responses offered quite diverse readings of the mood with many seeing the mother as conflicted between love or protection and resentment or fight for identity. There was generally more attention to the mother with fewer comments on the presentation of the daughter, though some considered her to have a 'strong will' as reflected in the description of her hair. Good answers considered the tone of the poem. One, for example, thought 'the atmosphere cold and spiteful', whilst another felt there was a 'stern mood as though the mother resented the girl'. Appropriate context did help some learners who knew of Clarke's daughter and some other wider knowledge was brought in at this level, such as links to *Babysitting*. Good answers were able to explore the structure of the poem, 'starting in the birthing suite of the hospital and ending at home, but still battling to become separate', as one put it. Other good answers analysed the metaphor of the umbilical cord in detail, Clarke's use of the 'language of conflict – defiant, struggle, fierce, fighting – all suggesting that there is ongoing issues between them', as one noted. Very good answers explored the tone in detail, with some noting the 'bathos of what has triggered this particular stand off – an extra hour's skating!' as one commented. Very good answers always explored the effects of Clarke's choices in detail – the verse form, the structure, the rhythm and her use of free verse. Many at this level also had a firm appreciation of relevant contexts and were able to structure their thoughts on the poem effectively.

## Section C: Prose

### Question 9

#### IAN McEWAN: *Atonement*

This was a popular text in **Section C**, with the majority of learners choosing option **(b)**, the passage question.

- (a)** Nearly every answer was able to discuss Lola and her role in the novel and had some relevant knowledge of the text. Weaker answers retold her part in the events, often in detail, though some answers had a weak grasp on the changes in narrator and the overall narrative structure of the text. Very weak answers were unsure of some textual basics, suggesting, for example, that 'Lola's marriage to Robbie was unhappy because he was killed in the war'. Most answers at this level, as well as appropriate knowledge, also had some personal responses to share: 'It seems very odd

that she marries her rapist and I can not understand why she would do that', one commented, for example. Better answers at this level did have some understanding, as 'we only really get Briony's view of her and she does not like her from the start', as one put it. More competent answers developed this, noting how 'McEwan deliberately contrasts the two young girls, using Lola to highlight Briony's faults,' as one said. Other sound answers did explore at least some of the effects of the complex narrative structure, developing for example how much the reader's view of Lola is shaped by Briony. Good answers were more aware of the given quotation, with most taking issue with the idea of Lola's 'centrality', but aware of 'her lack of voice or inner revelations throughout the novel', as one suggested. Answers at this level also explored McEwan's methods of presenting her, particularly language and dialogue, often quoting from *The Trials of Arabella*.

- (b) This was a popular choice overall. Weaker answers often wrote about Briony herself, often summarising her story in the novel, with some general understanding of her role. Better answers at this level did focus on the passage to some extent at least, noting how she is 'always so aware of herself even at 13', as one suggested. More competent answers had a better focus on the question, noting how her attitude to writing had developed from 'the childish *The Trials of Arabella* to an awareness of the novelist's job in using real stories', as one put it. Others wondered at the narrative voice itself and how far 'Briony and McEwan have become one voice'. Good answers looked at the detail of the passage, analysing for example 'the contrast between 13 year old Briony and the aged author looking back on her career', as one essay stated. Other good answers saw how this passage 'led to the ending, where everything is a fiction', as one noted. Very good answers explored the language and tone carefully, recognising how McEwan manipulates the reader, through language and blurring the lines between fiction and metafiction. For some though the 'tone was jarring, as though McEwan was trying to justify himself perhaps', as one commented. Where such points were supported by precise references and some appreciation of context the answers did well.

## Question 10

### NGŪGĪ WA THIONG'O: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) This was a minority choice of question, with only a few answers seen. Weaker answers retold Wanja's story, often in detail, though with too little focus on the passage. Better answers at this level had relevant points to make about the character from the passage, for example 'her business sense and her attraction made her a central figure in the developing town', as one suggested. Others noted her aloofness, especially from Munira, with some summarising her various relationships with Karega, Munira and Abdulla as a way of discussing her influence. More competent answers tended to focus on the variety of ways in which she is important, 'like the village she is ever-changing and all-important to the local people', as one said, though some thought that 'she generally had a bad effect on those around her, especially with the sale of sex and Theng'eta', as one suggested. Good answers explored Ngugi's methods, particularly his use of language and the narrative voice, how he 'reveals her business acumen with precise details, the all-female band, for example', though others again noted how the writer uses 'Munira's decline, described in detail here, with negative words such as "unwanted", "excluded" and "trembling" hands', to reveal her negative impact on those around her', as one put it. Very good answers were able to analyse such details perceptively, often with appropriate contextual support from the wider text.

## Question 11

### *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

This was a minority choice in this session with very few answers seen.

- (a) There were very few answers seen to this question, though nearly every response was able to choose relevant stories on which to base their essay. Weaker answers retold the event in their selected stories, with *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, *When It Happens* and *The Lady's Maid's Bell* being popular choices. Some competent answers were able to find contrasts in narrative and character across the stories, which enable them implicitly to consider the 'presentation' of the characters' responses, though most answers tended to concentrate on the



problems rather than the responses. Good answers did consider the writers' choices, often the narrative voice and language. Where such points were developed to consider the effects of those choices the answers did well.

- (b) This was a more popular choice on this text. Weaker answers summarised the relationship from the whole story, with too little attention to the passage itself, though many did show personal engagement with Phyllis's plight. More competent answers recognised the context and were able to analyse how Hardy 'gets the reader's interest here at the start of the story by detailing the loneliness and shyness of the two main character', as one suggested. Others looked at some of the details of language such as 'although a third person narrative, the reader sees the Hussar through Phyllis's eyes, his uniform, his height and his sadness are important details in her falling for him', one commented. Good answers looked at other methods, the narrative voice, Hardy's use of paragraphs and 'how he suggests the tragic ending by his references to Desdemona and the chronic homesickness', as one noted. Good answers were also alive to the nuances of language how the relationship 'develops through the senses – ears, then eyes and then lips – so that the growing intimacy is suggested rather than stated', as one put it. Very good answers explored the effects of the choices as well, finding relevant contextual support. Often such answers were well-structured and kept Hardy's methods of presentation as the main focus throughout.

### Question 12

#### **MARK TWAIN: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

This was a minority choice of text in this session, with very few responses seen on either question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/23  
Drama, Poetry and Prose

## Key messages

1. Learners should ensure they address the idea of ‘presentation’ in appropriate questions.
2. Learners should avoid ‘feature-spotting’ at the expense of analysis in their essays.

## General comments

There were responses seen at every level of the mark scheme to every text on the paper. The large majority of learners showed evidence of appropriate preparation, with at least a sound basic knowledge of their two texts. Many learners had evidently worked hard to acquire their knowledge and understanding of the texts and these learners were always able to select relevant material to address the given tasks. There were few rubric errors in this session, but it is important that learners understand the optionality on the paper if they are to achieve the best mark possible. The quality of the expression was generally appropriate to the task, with some excellent examples of essay writing seen. Some learners, on the other hand, are at times disadvantaged by a lack of clarity in their writing.

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

1. Many of the questions on this paper refer to the writer’s ‘presentation’ of a specific element in the text or in the passage from the text. Learners should note this requires them to consider the writer’s choices, which may include genre-specific methods such as stage directions, or more general matters of style such as choices of imagery and language. Many less successful answers would be improved by ensuring that these points are considered fully, along with providing evidence of knowledge and understanding of the text.
2. There were a number of learners in this session who used a list of literary terms as a way of structuring their response, particularly on **(b)** questions on poetry. This can be a useful way of approaching the text, but learners should also remember that these terms are not in and of themselves ‘analysis’ of the text. There were many occasions when a term such as ‘asyndeton’ or ‘metonymy’ was followed by an example from the text without any other comment, so that it seemed the learner was ‘feature-spotting’ rather than analysing the effects of the writer’s choices. Learners should always have the effects of the writing, especially in passage questions, as the main focus of their essay.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section A: Drama

#### Question 1

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons***

- (a)** This question was the minority choice on this text. Nearly every response found relevant material with which to discuss Joe Keller, though only the more capable responses could shape their essays to address the given quotation. Weaker answers retold Joe’s story, often in detail, with better answers at this level aware of some of the responses his actions and words might create in an audience, ‘from happiness at his easy way with his neighbours of all ages, to sadness at his tragic suicide’, as one essay concluded. More competent answers were aware of the ‘underlying

tension in Joe what ever he is doing, whether worrying about Kate's clinging to her hopes about Larry or in his exchanges with Chris and Anne about George', with many exploring the 'long terms effects of his lies and treachery to Steve Deever'. Better answers were aware of some of Miller's dramatic methods, such as the contrasting of his relationships, the use of stage directions and the language, 'carefully chosen to create the image of a naïve uneducated businessman, misled by his partner', as one suggested. Good answers developed such arguments with apposite reference to the text and some well-integrated contextual points, often around the post-war culture and the American Dream. At this level answers were always informed by the given quotation and presented well-structured arguments and often thoughtful conclusions, with a wide range of interpretations, so that for some Joe could never be sympathetic 'as he is simply a dishonest selfish man and the play reveals how that dishonesty destroys both him and his family', according to one candidate. Others felt that 'the power of the tragedy comes from the fact that we can sympathise with him, but recognise the inevitability of his fate'. Some very good answers were informed by a perceptive grasp of tragic theory, showing how 'a great man is destroyed because of his tragic flaw, with Miller adhering to the three 'rules' of time, space and character', as one argued. Where such points were supported by close reference to the text the answers did very well indeed.

- (b) This was the most popular **Section B** question on the paper with over one third of the entry choosing it. Weaker answers were often unsure of the context and of the relationship between Ann and Sue, though nearly every answer did find relevant points about Ann to discuss from within the passage. Many weaker answers retold Ann's story, often in detail, with some supporting general comments about her role and characterisation, so that she was for some 'a gentle caring woman, out of place in the Keller's selfish world', though for others she was as 'manipulative as Joe, moving from one brother to the other far too easily'. More competent answers were better focused on the passage, noting her 'kind civility to Sue at first, which changes as Sue reveals her true feelings about the Kellers, especially Chris', as one said. Many answers at this level followed her 'changing attitudes and responses, as she gradually reveals her loyalty and strength through the passage', as one noted. Good answers were able to link these developments to specific dramatic methods, noting 'Miller's use of dialogue as Sue cuts across Ann's comments with patronising interjections, like "dear" and "darling" so that eventually even Ann "bursts out" in frustration', as one summarised it. Other good answers noted the use of stage directions and the contrasts between the two women's attitudes which serve to highlight the positives of Ann's optimistic characterisation', as one suggested. Very good answers noted how 'Ann's innocent responses to Sue develop a sense of uneasiness in the audience, that something is "wrong" in the Keller household after all', with consequent development of dramatic tension and the plot. Some perceptive answers, remembering Larry's letter which Ann has with her, wondered if she 'is as innocent and optimistic as Miller depicts her, or is it simply desperation to achieve some sort of closure, so that Chris has to be perfect and moral for her?' Many very good answers were able to refer to the wider text perceptively as well as supporting their arguments by close reference to the passage and to the wider context of post war American society.

## Question 2

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing***

- (a) This was a fairly popular choice of question, with about one fifth of the entry choosing it. Weaker answers listed the various marriages and explained how they had come about during the course of the play, with some awareness of the different characters involved, enabling better answers at this level to consider at least implicitly the contrasts between Hero/Claudio and Beatrice/Benedick. More competent answers developed this further by noting the different attitudes 'these central characters represented, from Hero's submissiveness to Beatrice's independence', as one stated. Such contrasting attitudes were often well explored with supporting quotations from the text. Most answers had opinions on Hero's eventual 'acceptance of Claudio, despite what he had done to her in the church', and saw it as 'evidence of the domination of perhaps even abuse of, women in that period', as one suggested. Good answers analysed the language and dramatic methods in more depth, often finding contrasting quotations to support their arguments or comparing the comic deceptions of Benedick and Beatrice and 'what they reveal about the hidden attitudes towards marriage', as one candidate argued. Very good answers often ranged more widely in the text, noting how 'Don Pedro almost sees tricking Benedick and Beatrice into marriage as a punishment, perhaps as revenge for her rejection of him', for example. Others noted the parental attitudes of Leonato, for example, and how 'Claudio saw the marriage ceremony as the most appropriate place to publicly reveal Hero's "corruption"'. Inevitably, answers which focused on Shakespeare's

dramatic presentation of these different attitudes, through analysis of language, imagery and action, did very well.

- (b) This was a popular choice with over quarter of the entry offering responses to this question. Nearly every answer recognised the context and had some relevant personal response to the passage. Weaker answers tended to give too much context in summarising the events before and after this extract, but nevertheless often had engaged and lively responses to 'Hero's despicable treatment by those she trusted', as one candidate noted. Better answers at this level saw the different responses to her plight, contrasting the 'fury and rage of her father (to) the care and wisdom of the Friar', for example. Competent answers analysed the 'extremes of response with the violence of Hero and her father's words contrasted with the more measured, thoughtful speeches from Benedick and the Friar', as one suggested. Good answers also noted the setting, wondered about Beatrice, 'strangely silent at this point', and commented on how 'Benedick is now clearly aligned with Beatrice and her family in his rejection of Claudio and the Prince'. Very good answers explored how 'these discussions enable Shakespeare to develop the plot as well as the characterisations', whereas others explored the 'tone which is hardly comedic and with the constant threats of violence might leave the audience wondering if this really is going to have a comic ending', as one said. Very good answers were also aware of how the audience 'already aware of Hero's innocence might be relieved to see her family rallying around her', where others thought a more modern 'feminist audience might be appalled at her lack of fight, Beatrice's silence and their reliance on the men to sort the situation', as one commented. Where such arguments were supported by close reference to the passage and appropriate contexts, the answers did very well.

### Question 3

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

This was very much a minority choice on the paper with very few responses on either option.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.

### Question 4

#### **THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling***

This was the least popular text on the paper with very few responses on either option.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.

## **Section B: Poetry**

### Question 5

#### **ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems**

This was a minority choice of text in **Section B** with only a small number of responses, the overwhelming majority of which opted for the (b) passage question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.
- (b) Nearly every answer had some relevant ideas with which to address the task. Weaker responses retold the story of the poem in their own words, with some comments on the speaker of the poem, 'who seems to be narcissistic and delusional throughout', as one suggested. Better answers at this level noted that Porphyria 'does not have a voice at all and so we see the events from the

speaker's point of view only', but most answers at this level tended to focus on the characters and the narrative, with only passing mention of Browning's poetic methods. More competent answers noted how 'the speaker moves between describing what Porphyria did and his own sullen mood', with some charting 'his changing moods from heart break, silence, joy, murderous control and final perverse acceptance', as one suggested. Good answers moved beyond character points, exploring Browning's use of pathetic fallacy, the contrast between the 'homeliness of the cottage and the violence of its owner', his use of language and imagery and how 'the "tenderness" of the closing scene, Porphyria apparently asleep on her lover's shoulder creates a terrifying Hitchcock like horror, in the reader', as one said. Very good answers considered a wide range of poetic methods, analysing Browning's use of dramatic monologue, changes of tone and tense, his narrative versification and use of 'rhymes to emphasize the shock of the action for the reader', as one noted. Such answers invariably supported their arguments with precise quotation and a clear understanding of appropriate contexts.

### Question 6

#### OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was a relatively popular choice in this session, though the overwhelming majority opted for the passage question option (b).

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. Most answers were able to select relevant poems to discuss, with popular choices being *Amazon*, *The Hill Fort*, *Late Spring*, *Trees* and *Inheritance*. Most learners were at least able to summarise their selected poems, showing some understanding of Sheers's concerns. Better answers did consider his methods, though often in a partial, generalised way. The few better answers seen did have some awareness of his choice of language and imagery, and occasionally some appreciation of appropriate contexts.
- (b) This was much more popular with over one fifth of the entry answering this question. Nearly every answer had some knowledge and understanding of the poem, with many also aware of appropriate social and historical contexts. Weaker answers tended to offer a general summary of the poem's content or a line-by-line paraphrase. The success of these approaches depended on the supporting comments and the understanding of the concerns explored in the poem, with unemployment, change and nature the most common discussion points. Competent answers were able to explore Sheers's use of contrast for example, in more detail, often focusing on the 'how he describes the factory as "dead" and "lifeless", but full of the natural life such as sheep and birds', as one suggested. Other answers saw the 'contrast between the work in the factory and the work out in the gym', as one cleverly noted. Answers which considered his poetic methods in detail did better. Language and imagery were often well analysed, as was his use of tercets. Very good answers looked at the effects of these choices, supporting points with precise references to the detail of the poem and appropriate contexts.

### Question 7

#### *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

This was the most popular **Section B** text, though the vast majority of learners chose the passage (b) option.

- (a) This was a minority choice overall. Most learners were able to select relevant poems to discuss with Wilfred Owen's *Futility*, Siegfried Sassoon's *The Death-Bed*, Thomas Hardy's *A Wife in London* and George Gordon, Lord Byron's *Darkness* all popular choices. Weaker answers summarised and paraphrased their chosen poems, often in detail, and with some implicit comparisons, at least. Better answers at this level chose contrasting poems so that some awareness of different poetic methods was more easily discussed. Competent answers often structured their essays around a series of contrasts, of subject, concern and methods most typically. Good answers were able to analyse the methods more closely with some supporting details from the poems, with often engaged personal responses. Very good answers developed such ideas by exploring the effects of the writers' choices, Byron's use of the night and Owen's use of the sun, for example. Contextual support was quite rare but in some very good essays enabled the learners to show perceptive understanding of how style and context can work together to create meanings, but in different ways with different poets.



- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper, with around half of the entry choosing it. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase some of the details of the poem or offer general responses discussing relationships, often with personal engagement. At this level there was, in nearly every case, some evidence of knowledge of the poem and at times understanding of some of Browning's concerns. Few though were able to explore the overall 'argument' of the poem or Browning's poetic choices with confidence. More competent answers often noted the poetic form, a sonnet, and were able to make some relevant contextual points. At this level there was a clearer grasp of the structure of the poem and how Browning moves from 'ordinary reasons such as beauty or pity for love, to love for love's sake', as one summarised it. Language, imagery and poetic form were often discussed at this level, though without a clear grasp of the effects of those choices on the reader. Good answers were able to explore the effects, as well as offering a more developed analysis, often showing perceptive understanding of the overall purpose of the poem. There was also some very well focused contextual support at this level, most often biographical, but crucially shaped specifically to the poem itself. Very good answers did all of this within a well-developed structured essay, often presenting a personal, but analytical interpretation of the poem, noting, for example, 'the intimacy of the personal tone, how the speaker is at the same time individual and universal, in cutting through the usual tropes of love poetry to argue for a love everlasting'. Where such arguments were supported by precise reference to the poem and supporting contextual detail, the responses did very well.

### Question 8

#### GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice of text in **Section B** with only a small number of responses, the overwhelming majority of which opted for the (b) passage question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make general comments on performance.
- (b) This was a relatively popular choice overall. Most learners were able to discuss the relationship in some detail, often showing knowledge of the text and some understanding of Clarke's general concerns. Weak answers often paraphrased the poem, with some basic comments on the meaning lifting answers at this level. There were a number of unusual interpretations, with some learners seeing 'her guilt over these early sexual experiences', as 'proven by the shelling of peas together', as one suggested. More convincing responses were able to follow the development of the relationship, leading up to 'her disappointment at only being funny', as one commented. Competent answers explored, for example, Clarke's use of telling detail such as the Aertex shirt and the smell of the saltfish, with some linking this to appropriate contextual points. Other sound essays explored some of the poetic method, most commonly the use of language, the poetic form of the poem and the imagery 'of nature and green highlighting the naturalness and innocence of their relationship', as one suggested. Good answers were alive to the shifting narrative voice 'from adult nostalgia looking back to childish disappointment', as one said. Others confidently considered the use of pronouns, the way Clarke depicts the setting and 'how she creates a sense of time past, of the speaker's yearning for lost innocence', for example. Very good answers offered a structured argument, developing the analysis perceptively and using it to explore the effects with sustained insights into possible interpretations.

### Section C: Prose

#### Question 9

#### IAN McEWAN: *Atonement*

This was a popular text in **Section C**, with the overwhelming majority of learners choosing option (b), the passage question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) This was the most popular question in **Section C**, with almost half of the entry choosing it. Weaker answers were unsure of the context for this passage and often of the structure of the novel more generally. Better answers at this level were able to offer at least a general paraphrase of the events

in the passage with some understanding of why these events are significant to Briony and to the novel in general. More competent responses developed their ideas with some awareness of Briony's need for atonement, how this hospital scene connected to Robbie's experiences and at least a partial awareness of the 'unreliable narrator who is telling us this to redeem herself in the reader's eyes', as one suggested. Good answers explored the narrative structure in the passage in detail, as well as considering McEwan's use of 'horrific and even bizarre imagery, such as the soup and the exotic fruits,' with some very good answers wondering if this was McEwan's or Briony's description. Many good answers considered the descriptive detail, the use of language and found telling links to the wider novel. When such interpretations were supported by appropriate contexts and precise references to the passage and the text, the answers did very well.

#### Question 10

##### NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O: *Petals of Blood*

There were too few responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance on either question.

#### Question 11

##### *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

This was a minority choice in this session with very few answers seen on option (a).

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) This was the second most popular question in **Section C**. Weak answers often seemed to be confused by some of the details, for example the relationship between Singlebury and the narrator and responded as to an 'unseen' passage. Better answers at this level did show knowledge of the story and often retold the events preceding and following this passage in detail. Such responses were lifted by some commentary on the learner's response to Singlebury's situation. More competent responses considered the narrator and how his perspective on Singlebury might be significant. Others looked more closely at some of the detail, which 'creates a picture of the poverty of Singlebury's life and the hardships he is facing as a result of the redundancy', as one suggested. Others noted the positive impressions 'surprising given that the narrator is not really on his side, honesty, integrity, loyalty and his sadness,' as one commented. Good answers analysed some of the effects of Fitzgerald's choice of language and narrator, how 'the contrasts between him and his boss in terms of intelligence and decency create a positive image for the reader', as one essay stated. Very good answers focused on such effects, supporting points with precise references to the passage and the wider text, with at least some awareness of contexts.

#### Question 12

##### MARK TWAIN: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

There were too few responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance on either question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.