

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/11 Drama and Poetry</p>

Key messages

- 1 Candidates should have a sound basic knowledge and understanding of their chosen texts.
- 2 Candidates should plan their essays and reflect their decisions in their opening paragraphs.

General comments

There were responses seen at every level of the mark scheme to every text on the paper. The large majority of candidates showed evidence of appropriate preparation, with at least a sound basic knowledge of their two texts and some ability to select relevant material to address the given tasks. There were some rubric errors in this session, with candidates either answering too many questions or answering two questions from the same section. It is important that candidates 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, though some candidates are at times disadvantaged by a lack of clarity in their writing.

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

- 1 In this session, there were a number of answers seen to passage questions in both the drama and the poetry sections where the candidates seemed to have little knowledge of the textual context or understanding of its significance to the wider text. At this level of assessment, it is fundamental to a successful answer that candidates will know their texts well and have some understanding of the basic elements of the text in its genre. Some essays, for example, were unsure who Larry was or what was Ann's relationship to him when considering the passage in **Question 1(b)**. In the poetry, some answers on the Browning passage, **5(b)**, seemed very unsure of the situation the author was describing, through the music, and there were similar uncertainties on just about every passage question. Inevitably without the necessary knowledge and understanding as foundations on which to build an interpretation, the essays were at best generalised and restricted and severely limited in their success.
- 2 Candidates should always spend some time in planning their response and deciding what material is relevant to their interpretation before beginning to write their essay. This planning might lead neatly to an opening paragraph in which the candidate addresses the key terms of the task and is able to set the direction of their essay in a controlled and focused way. Without such moments of preplanning and forethought, the opening of an essay can become too generalised and easily drift into contextual speculation from which it is sometimes difficult to regain the appropriate focus on the given task.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Question 1

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

- (a) Weaker answers retold Chris's story, often showing detailed knowledge of the text, though some were unable to select relevant material on which to focus. At this level, better answers had some understanding of key moments when audience responses to Chris might develop. For example 'Chris is human and not a caricature of a morally superior being, he is stubborn and short-tempered,' as one essay described him. More competent essays started with Miller's presentation, exploring how Chris's 'complex series of insecurities is revealed', through his dialogue, 'as his understanding of the real situation grows,' as one suggested. Many saw him as a 'tragic hero, whose hamartia is his naivety,' as another suggested. Textual knowledge at this level was supported by understanding of Miller's concerns and the way the author uses Chris's role to develop them. Good answers developed such ideas by looking at dramatic methods closely, with good focus and how an 'audience response might be shaped,' : Miller's use of language, the increase and release of tension, dramatic action and 'Miller's ability to change the tone of a scene with apparently simple things, such as George drinking the juice,' as one candidate remarked. Where such answers were supported by appropriate context, often historical, and reference to and quotation from the text, the answers did very well.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper with over half of the entry choosing it. Weaker answers very often did not know the dramatic context to this passage and were unsure of the cause of the evident tensions between Ann and the Kellers at this point in the play. Better answers at this level were able to discuss the nature of the relationships, with some candidates able to outline 'Ann's strange situation of being a fiancée to two brothers at the same time, so far as Kate is concerned,' as one stated. However some essays spent too long explaining the complexities of the situation, with a consequent lack of focus on the detail of the passage. Others tried to interpret the passage on a piecemeal basis, trying to explain what momentary events 'might show' often leading to contradictory interpretations. For example for one candidate, 'Ann is clearly like a member of the family and Joe and Kate want to look after,' and a little later, 'Kate obviously hates Ann now for even being there.' More competent essays often outlined the textual context relevantly, Chris's absence and the significance of the letter, for example, as a framework for explaining why Ann's relationship with the Kellers was changing dramatically at this point in the play. Other candidates explored and contrasted 'the inner turmoil in each of the characters at this point in the play,' as a way of structuring their responses, with many fully aware of 'the minefield of emotions that Ann is trying to pick her way through,' as one candidate put it. Good answers were focused on Miller's presentation throughout, often the contrasting dramatic language, 'where Ann to Kate is a "good girl" and then a liar,' as one essay suggested. Other answers noted the dramatic action, as the characters 'shifting attitudes and emotions are reflected in their movements on stage.' Ann's attempt to protect Joe from the truth about Larry was often well explored, with some noting how 'the larger than life joker at the start of the play is now a crushed, uncertain figure, as the two women argue over his sons,' as one essay put it. Where such arguments were supported by appropriate reference to the passage and appropriate context, the answers did well.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

- (a) This was the most popular (a) question on the paper, with some 10 per cent of the entry choosing it. Nearly every candidate had some relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers narrated Hero and Beatrice's 'stories', often ignoring the key words 'attitudes to men'. Essays at this level often had clear knowledge, though limited understanding of the relevant concerns. Better answers at this level did find appropriate, basic contrasts between the two main female characters, as 'Hero is all subservience and obedience, whereas Beatrice is all aggression and defiance,' as one response suggested. More competent answers moved beyond the narrative, exploring, for example, how Shakespeare used their attitudes to develop characterisation and 'crucially create the conflict from which came Hero's near tragedy and Beatrice's comic reversal,' as one candidate put it. Other competent answers contrasted female attitudes more widely, including Margaret's 'more earthy views,' as well as 'considering what men think women's attitudes

are and their consequences, as Leonato admonishes Beatrice for her shrewishness,' as one candidate argued. Good answers consider 'Shakespeare's presentation' in detail, exploring the effects of language, such as Hero's self-abasement in the church scene and Beatrice's 'witty but cutting attacks on men in general and Benedick in particular,' as one said. Dramatic action, use of contrasts, as well as the verbal sparring were all analysed well at times, with some insightful comments on the dramatic effects created. Beatrice was often the main focus and 'the sharpness of her commentary and reluctance to yield even to the Prince, Don Pedro, are directly contrasted by Shakespeare to Hero's submissive acceptance of the very man who had betrayed her on her wedding day,' as one candidate put it. Where such arguments were supported by close reference to the text, and some awareness of appropriate contexts, the answers did very well.

- (b) This was a popular choice on the paper, with nearly 20 per cent of the entry choosing it. Weaker answers often did not know the context and had uneven knowledge of the relationship between Borachio and Don John and their relationship to the rest of the characters. This inevitably limited the success of the answers. Better answers at this level were able to give a narrative summary of Don John's disaffection and of the proposed deceptions, with some, at times generalised, comments on what this revealed about the two characters. More competent answers recognised the significance of the passage to the play's plot and dramatic structure, with some arguing that Don John's 'malevolence was simply not credible,' as one candidate put it, while others noted that Borachio 'is the main schemer, with Don John acting like his rather dumb sidekick in asking so many questions.' More successful answers at this level started to explore Shakespeare's concerns, for example the hierarchy of the society, the fragility of a woman's reputation and 'the gullibility of Don Pedro's court that falls for such a simple deception,' as one essay noted. Good answers explored the language and dialogue in detail, noting the question-and-answer approach as 'a dramatic tool to ensure the audience understands that Hero is always innocent,' as one candidate remarked. Other answers explored the effects of Don John's diction and imagery of sickness and illness, both in 'how it reveals his true nature, but also casts a shadow over the comedy of the deceptions of Benedick and Beatrice.' Others noted that 'money is only mentioned near end so we can assume Borachio simply wanted to please his master by slandering an innocent woman,' as one put it. Very good answers were able to develop such analysis into considering the dramatic effects in detail, with appropriate supporting reference to the passage.

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) Most answers were able to find some relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to focus on the religious characters, especially Jero. Least successful were answers which simply retold Jero's story and charted his successful rise in status and power. Better answers at this level recognised his role as a 'humble beach prophet who becomes the leader of the Salvation Army, through his manipulation of his followers,' as one essay suggested. Sounder answers explored Soyinka's presentation of the other prophets as well as Jero, noting 'how Soyinka shows their "unsuitability for any sort of religious office",' as one candidate put it. Answers which contrasted these characters in the context of the play's wider concerns often did better, with some developing arguments that encompassed not only the prophets, but also 'the gullibility and often self-centred desires of their followers'. Good answers considered Soyinka's methods of presentation: language, for example Jero's slip of calling the worshippers 'customers', the nature of the prophets' promises, the use of violence, especially towards women and how religion was shown 'in contrast to politics as even more corrupted and abusive,' as one essay argued. Very good answers considered the dramatic effects of these methods in detail, with some perceptive analysis of both language and action, especially in the context of where and when Soyinka was writing the play.
- (b) Weaker answers tended either to summarise the preceding events or to narrate Jero's story in detail, often with little reference to the passage. Better answers at this level saw how Soyinka 'deliberately makes Jero talk about things that seem improper in a prophet, such as money and lust,' as one essay suggested. More competent responses were able to explore Soyinka's concerns with some understanding, often showing awareness of the satirical tone of the presentation, with a few responses able to note some lighter more comic touches in the passage. Good answers analysed both the language and the action in detail – Jero's search for an appropriate title, his sense of his own dignity and pride in his superiority and his acknowledgement

of his weaknesses were all discussed and seen as key elements in Soyinka's dramatic approach. Very good answers considered the dramatic effects of Soyinka's choices, with some suggesting that an 'audience might be appalled at this words and actions, yet at the same time find him quite appealing,' exploring perceptively the importance of this dramatic monologue to the plays' development and structure.

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) Most answers were able to select relevant material, with which to address the question. Weaker answers offered narrative summaries, usually of the relationship between De Flores and Beatrice, often showing sound knowledge of the text and, in the more accomplished essays at this level, some understanding of the nature of the crimes and the appropriateness of the punishments. Better answers ranged more widely in the text, with some, for example, suggesting that Vermandero 'is also guilty in the way he tries to force his daughter into accepting a husband she doesn't want and ends up with the punishment of losing his daughter,' as one candidate suggested. Competent answers considered the presentation of crime – some arguing that 'De Flores and Beatrice are caught in an all-consuming passion that destroys them and those around them,' though others were less sympathetic seeing them as 'fundamentally selfish and for the sake of their desires, willing to commit anything, including murder,' as one essay argued. Good answers supported such arguments with analysis of the language, 'often sexual and or commercial as they trick each other into destruction,' as one candidate put it. Other good answers considered the actions, such as the murders of Piraquo and Diaphanta, and how the 'dramatist ensures that we see the pitiless way they are perpetrated, so that in the end the villains get no sympathy.' Where analysis was supported by close reference to the text and some awareness of contexts the answers often did very well.
- (b) Weaker answers retold the story of the relationship throughout the play, often with clear knowledge of the text and in more successful answers some understanding of 'how it develops from the antagonism and obsession revealed in the extract,' as one stated. Better answers looked more closely at the passage itself, often noting the 'threatening language and ominous imagery,' with some sound answers exploring the effect of the 'asides' on how the audience might respond. Good answers developed such arguments into considering the action and the interplay between the characters as well, often analysing the effects with some insight. Beatrice's 'this ominous ill-faced fellow,' was often discussed in detail, with good understanding of how she 'sets up the development of the relationship.' De Flores' obsessional language was also well explored, with some seeing him 'as helpless in his lust, provoked by her harsh words into desperation and ultimately ready to commit murder to win her,' as one essay put it. Where such points were developed by close reference to the text and some contextual awareness, the answers did very well.

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) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant poems to discuss, though weaker answers were sometimes uneven in their knowledge of the text. More successful answers at this level were able to provide a summary of their chosen poems, with some understanding of the different human relationships presented. Where contrasting poems were chosen, for example *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister* and *A Light Woman*, candidates were able to address the 'in what ways' of the question with confidence, often leading easily into a consideration of some of Browning's poetic methods. Other popular and successful choices were *Porphyria's Lover* and *My Last Duchess*. More competent answers focused on the methods more, with some sound analysis of Browning's use of language and verse form seen. Good answers developed these ideas into a consideration of the 'effects' created, with some confident interpretations of Browning's concerns and also tone.

This enabled some candidates to make contrasts between ‘his satirical attitude, often to religious figures, and the more romantic feeling created in *Love in a Life*,’ by perceptive analysis of imagery and diction. Others for example noted that ‘the excitement of the narrators in *Confessions* and *Meeting at Night* at the secret meetings themselves seemed more important than the relationships.’ At this level there was often appropriate reference to context, especially biographical, and some impressively detailed quotation in support of the interpretations offered.

- (b) Weaker answers sometimes struggled with some of the details of the poem, at times suggesting the extract was being discussed as an unseen. This inevitably limited the success of any interpretation offered. More capable responses did have knowledge of the poem and, at times, understanding enough to discuss some of the points made by the speaker in response to the music. Where candidates had some knowledge of the context, their arguments were often more directed and focused, and could move beyond paraphrase and summary. Competent answers were alive to the shifting moods of the speaker, and where this was supported by awareness of Browning’s choices of language and imagery, the answers did well. Good answers were more wide ranging in the choice of poetic methods analysed, with some able to link the poetic metre to the rhythm of the music with some insight. As awareness of the effects of the poetic choices became more analytical, such as how the ‘language of musical theory used suggests and defines the variety of the speaker’s responses,’ as one essay remarked, before exploring those responses in detail, so did the answers become more successful. Very good answers combined a thorough knowledge and understanding of the poem, with perceptive analysis, shaped to the question and supported by well selected contextual details.

Question 6

OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

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

- (a) There were only a very few answers on this question. Most candidates were able to select relevant poems to address the task, with quite a wide range of poems chosen, though *The Hill Fort* and *Hedge School* were popular choices. Weaker answers tended to summarise their selected poems, often showing clear knowledge of the text and sometimes understanding of Sheers’s concerns and themes, but undeveloped and basic. More competent answers chose their poems wisely in order to address the ‘compare ways’ in the question, with many, for example, contrasting how the ‘individual in the countryside, such as the man remembering his son, or the boy coming home from school, are often contrasted with the grandeur or the power of the countryside around them,’ as one essay suggested. Others found helpful ideas in relevant contexts, such as how ‘Sheers’s interest in his Welsh heritage is reflected in the countryside he writes about, such as Y Gaer and the valley in *Liable to Floods*’. Good answers developed such ideas by analysing closely some of Sheers’s poetic choices. The poet’s use of language and choice of tercets, for example, was often discussed and exemplified. Others considered Sheers’s use of imagery to ‘evoke the grandeur of the Welsh countryside,’ as one put it. Very good answers drew all these points together, often integrating textual and contextual references seamlessly, but always carefully considering the effects of the poet’s choices on the reader.
- (b) This was a popular choice and inspired some very good analytical responses. Weaker answers were unsure of the meaning of the poem, suggesting a lack of knowledge, though some basic responses were able to offer a broad general summary of the poem, with some occasional moments of understanding of Sheers’s concerns. More competent responses were comfortable with explaining the situation and alive to how the ‘cutting of the keys’ was symbolic of the end of the relationship. Many at this level noted Sheers’s concerns of love and separation, togetherness and breaking up and the ‘inevitable sexual references when writing about couples,’ as one essay suggested. Good answers found plenty to analyse in the poet’s choice of language and imagery, with many exploring in detail the ‘extended metaphor of locks and keys, suggesting opening and closing, and fitting together and coming apart,’ as one stated. For some this was symbolic of ‘the strength of the relationships to start with,’ whereas others saw ‘a lot of sexual symbolism in some of the images, quite typical of Sheers,’ as another candidate expressed it. Other good answers also analysed the metre and form, with good analysis of the closing couplet, as well as recognition of the ‘circularity of the poem beginning and ending with ‘strange,’ as one said. Very good answers put the poem into its context, as well as exploring in detail the effects of the different poetic choices identified, often with a perceptive sense of Sheers’s wider concerns.

Question 7

Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

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

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question, with a wide range of poems chosen for discussion. Popular choices were Wordsworth's *A Complaint*, Yeats's *When You are Old*, Sassoon's *The Death-Bed*, Shakespeare's *Sonnet 19* and Hardy's *A Wife in London*. Weaker answers often summarised their chosen poems, with some at this level showing implicit understanding of the poets' concerns and able to broadly discuss differences in the poetic choices. Sounder answers had secure knowledge and understanding of the text, with understanding of and awareness of how a poet might 'explore' a topic within a poetic structure. Competent answers often considered language and imagery and made comparisons between their chosen poets, which was sometimes informed by an awareness of context. Good answers considered a range of poetic methods, including form and rhythm, with some insight into possible effects. This was developed in very good answers into an analytical comparison of poetic choices, informed by precise references and supporting contextual details.
- (b) This was the second most popular question on the paper with almost half of the entry choosing this option. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a general summary with some generally relevant comments on Byron's view of darkness. Better answers at this level were aware that it was 'about the finality of the destruction of the world' and that it had an 'apocalyptic atmosphere,' as one essay suggested. Knowledge of the historical context helped some answers to understand Byron's concerns, which were often well developed by consideration of poetic methods, particularly the 'sinister and ominous darkness of heaven and earth,' as one candidate put it. Good answers noted the use of 'irregular free verse, the lack of rhyme and jolting rhythm,' all of which 'conveyed the effect of panic and doom,' as one said. Good answers identified how the atmosphere becomes 'metaphorically darker as Byron describes how humans of all classes were reverting to a primitive state,' as one suggested. Other good answers integrated the contextual background with awareness of Byron's 'politics' and could interpret this poem as a 'manifestation of his depressive and negative views on life and humanity,' as one put it. With detailed textual support and developed analysis of how Byron achieved such poetic effects, these interpretations did very well.

Question 8

GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice overall, with most candidates choosing the (b) passage option.

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, with weaker answers tending to discuss poems with which they were familiar rather than poems which directly addressed the task. Better answers at this level did discuss relevant poems, often showing clear knowledge of the text and some understanding. Judicious choice of poems enabled contrasts in Clarke's exploration of time passing to be discussed at least implicitly, with either of the *Sunday* poems popular choices and usefully discussed alongside *Lunchtime Lecture* or *Ichthyosaur*. More competent response discussed how time passing informed many of Clarke's concerns – relationships, nature and families were often discussed, with some noting the 'timelessness of the landscapes compared to the fragility of living things,' as one put it. Good answers looked closely at Clarke's poetic choices, diction and imagery most commonly, but some noted the poet's use of different poetic forms and how 'the structure of *Ram* creates the sense of how much time has passed since death,' as one suggested. Some answers were able to integrate contextual points, for example when discussing *Catrin*. Where the answers were able to integrate context and textual references by analysis of the poetic methods, the answers often did very well.

- (b) This was the third most popular choice from **Section B**, with some very impressive responses seen at the highest level. Some weak answers had little knowledge of the poem and appeared to be responding as to an unseen, with limited success. Most answers though were able to address the task with some knowledge of the poem. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the poem, at times showing personal engagement with the task, though often speculating as to the causes of ‘the speaker’s problem with the baby – jealousy, a previous cot death, or inexperience of babies?’ as one candidate summarised it. Better answers at this level did show some understanding of the situation, noting how the ‘focus is on the babysitter’s feelings to start with, but then moves to what the baby might feel,’ as one put it. More competent answers developed such interpretations by looking at some of the poetic methods, with language and diction proving to be fruitful areas for analysis. Many noted ‘the hostile language – ‘strange’, ‘rage’, ‘disgusting’ – and the hard verbs ‘hate’ and ‘afraid’,’ as one response summed it up. Others noted how the speaker is imagining ‘the baby’s reaction in order to explain her own emotions,’ before using adult imagery to try and ‘explain how the baby might feel, like an abandoned lover or a bereaved woman.’ Good answers also considered the verse form and the poetic methods such as alliteration and enjambement, which ‘enabled Clarke to really hammer home the speaker’s emotions,’ even though as some noted ‘the baby remains peacefully sleeping.’ Very good answers noted the poetic structure and were often able to integrate appropriate contextual references.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/12 Drama and Poetry</p>

Key messages

- 1 Candidates should plan their essays and reflect their decisions in their opening paragraphs.
- 2 When analysing the literary methods of a writer, candidates should explore the effects of the methods as well.

General comments

There were responses seen on nearly every text in **Section A** and **Section B**. *All My Sons* and *Much Ado About Nothing* were the most popular **Section A** texts. The selection from *Songs of Ourselves* was the most popular **Section B** text, with a more or less equal spread across the other three texts in this section. The large majority of candidates showed evidence of appropriate preparation, with at least a sound basic knowledge of their two texts and some ability to select relevant material to address the given tasks. There were some rubric errors in this session, with candidates either answering on too many questions or answering two questions from the same section. It is important that candidates 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, though some candidates are at times disadvantaged by a lack of clarity in their writing.

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

- 1 Candidates should always spend some time in planning their response and deciding what material is relevant to their interpretation before beginning to write their essay. This planning might lead neatly to an opening paragraph in which the candidate addresses the key terms of the task and is able to set the direction of their essay in a controlled and focused way. Without such moments of preplanning and forethought, the opening of an essay can become too generalised and easily drift into contextual speculation from which it is sometimes difficult to regain the appropriate focus on the given task.
- 2 In passage questions, candidates are required to analyse some of the choices made by the writer. Most candidates in this session were able to discuss such technical issues as alliteration, enjambement and rhyme schemes. It is important that such discussions do not simply become a mechanical checklist. To reach the higher levels of assessment candidates need to explore the **effects** of the methods identified on an audience or reader. They might also consider how the effects might be different on different audiences and readers and in this way explore different, sometimes contrasting, interpretations of their chosen text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Question 1

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to summarise some of the marriages, both actual and potential, often showing clear knowledge of the text and some understanding of the differences between, for example, the Baylisses and the Kellers. Better answers at this level had some awareness of 'different attitudes', comparing Sue Bayliss and Kate Keller, for example, and were able to select discussion points relevantly. Sounder essays often focused on the characters' attitudes to their partners or less commonly their marriage. Chris and Ann provoked a wide range of responses, from 'theirs is the only positive relationship, based on love and respect for each other,' to a 'shock that they could be so insensitive to their families, already broken by death and imprisonment.' Good answers saw how Miller used different and even changing attitudes as a key method of characterisation, noting, for example, 'Chris's reluctance to confront his mother until it is almost too late.' Others explored how attitudes to marriage were essential to the play's structure and plot – Joe's determination to protect his compared to George's intention to prevent Chris and Ann's, for example. Very good answers supported such arguments with specific textual references and a good grasp of appropriate contexts.
- (b) Some weaker answers were unsure of the context to this passage and in some cases even George's relationships with the other characters. Other answers at this level often paraphrased some of the exchanges or explained George's back story and situation in detail, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage, though often showing sound knowledge of the text. More competent answers had secure understanding of the significance of the passage, and George's role as the 'agent of destruction of the Kellers' false front,' as one candidate suggested, though others thought 'George is the vehicle whereby Miller is able to move the plot forward and build tension.' His relationships with his father and sister were much discussed, with some seeing 'the guilt for abandoning his father,' as Miller's way of developing audience sympathy to his cause. Other answers though saw the lawyer in his 'forensic cross examination of Chris to reveal his insecurities.' Good answers explored the dramatic methods closely: the stage action, the linguistic tension, the use of tone, the effect of the stage directions and the movement of the actors were all well explored, along with the language and dialogue. Very good answers focused on Miller's presentation in their analysis of these methods, showing excellent understanding of George's situation and 'his moral dilemma of choosing between father, his sister and his boyhood hero, with the consequent destruction of the Kellers and potentially his sister,' as one put it.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

- (a) This was a minority choice, with only a very small number of candidates answering this question. Weaker answers mostly retold Don Pedro's involvement in the play, often in great detail, showing clear knowledge of the text, though little understanding or awareness of Shakespeare's methods. Better answers were able to identify different aspects of Don Pedro's role and characterisation, 'for we see him,' as one response expressed it, 'initially as a warrior prince, defeating his enemies, then as leader, putting his subjects at ease, before turning into a sort of cupid, helping the lovers get together.' More competent responses showed understanding of how Shakespeare develops his role, 'perhaps creating sympathy through Don John's hatred and Beatrice's rejection of him' as one candidate suggested. Other sound answers explored how he is important in revealing some of the play's main concerns: loyalty, love and attitudes to women were often well discussed. Good answers analysed his relationships in more detail, often exploring the language well, from 'his soothing tone with Leonato, to his wooing of Hero and Beatrice, and his comic jesting with Benedick and Claudio,' as one noted. Where such arguments were supported by apposite quotation and awareness of context, the answers did very well.

- (b) This was the second most popular question in the **Drama** section. Nearly every answer knew the context clearly and was able to respond to Hero's situation with engagement. Weaker answers offered a narrative summary of the preceding events, as well as the passage. More focused answers at this level could explore the significance of the passage to the play's concerns, at least in general terms. Many were exercised by 'Leonato's totally selfish response to Hero's situation, not showing any care or sympathy and even wishing she were dead,' as one candidate summarised it. Competent answers contrasted his response with those of Beatrice, Benedick and especially the Friar, with many making sound contextual points about the patriarchy and attitudes to daughters and women in general. Most answers were very sympathetic to Hero's situation, though only a few pointed out that the audience is already assured of her innocence. Others noted the 'hyperbolic plea, including torture and death, she makes to her father,' often noting her weakness in contrast to Beatrice's strength. Good answers considered the language in detail, analysing the effects of Leonato's 'pit of ink' for example, contrasted to the more measured language of the Friar. Others noted the change in mood, 'to tragic so that the denouement might be more satisfying,' as one essay suggested, with many discussing Benedick's perceptiveness in identifying Don John as the villain, in 'contrast to Leonato's trust in his hierarchical masters.' Many answers at this level integrated appropriate contexts into the body of the analysis and often did very well.

Question 3

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

This was a minority choice of text in **Section A**, with about an equal split of responses on the two options.

- (a) Weaker answers tended to retell everything they knew about Jero, with many answers showing clear knowledge of the text and some understanding of Soyinka's basic concerns, though often lacking direction and focus on the specifics of the task. Better answers at this level noted that Soyinka shows different aspects of Jero to influence his audience, 'so that although he comes across as corrupt and egotistical, he seems better than that in comparison to the other prophets and the politicians,' as one response put it. Competent answers were able to select relevant material from both plays to develop such arguments, with some exploring the plays' dramatic structures and 'how Soyinka includes comedy and violent action to show the audience the real Jero, such as him jumping out of the window and then preaching in his robes on the beach,' as one candidate summarised it. Other sound answers considered the language, with some identifying the 'different voices that Jero has, depending on who he is speaking to,' or looking in detail at his words – 'religious for Chume, political for the minister and always gentle and inviting for Rebecca,' as one essay suggested. Good answers looked in detail at the dramatic methods, with some analysis of the effects of Soyinka's choices and often a good grasp of the significance of contexts to Soyinka's satirical comedy.
- (b) Weaker answers were not always sure of the textual context to this passage, but often had detailed knowledge of the relationship and how it developed. Some answers spent too long summarising the events generally with a consequent lack of focus on the passage itself, though there was some understanding of the significance of this exchange to the overall plot of the play. More competent answers saw how Soyinka sets up the antagonism between them and, indirectly, the connection to Jero, as a 'way of developing the characterisation to lead to the dramatic entrance of Chume near the end of the play,' as one put it. Other sound answers considered some of the dramatic methods, such as Soyinka's use of stage directions, choice of language and the visual impact of the couple on the stage, often recognising how these methods created the 'feeling of a hen-pecked man totally under the control of his dominating wife,' as one candidate saw it. Good answers noted the effects of these choices and how they helped Soyinka develop his concerns through the relationship – marriage, attitudes to men, the role of women and for many candidates the 'important comic element in an otherwise serious play,' as one suggested. Answers which analysed the language in detail, with appropriate reference to the passage, often did very well.

Question 4

THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

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

Section B: Poetry

Question 5

ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

This was a relatively popular choice in this session with an even split between the two options.

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant poems with which to address the question. Weaker answers were sometimes unsure in their knowledge of the text, which limited the development of the response. More successful answers at this level were able to provide a summary of their chosen poems, with some understanding of the different attitudes to death presented. Choosing contrasting poems, for example *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St Praxed's Church* and *Porphyria's Lover*, popular choices, enabled candidates at least partly, to consider different types of presentation with confidence, often leading easily into a consideration of some of Browning's poetic methods. More competent answers focused on the methods, with some sound analysis of Browning's use of language and verse form seen. They were also more wide ranging in the text, with *Confessions* and *The Confessional* offering different kinds of narrative approaches to discuss. Many were able to explore the effects of the first person narrator, recognising that, 'though the speakers were jealous lovers or holy bishops or simply victims of deception, the outcome, death, was the same,' as one response put it. Good answers developed these ideas into a consideration of the language in more detail, noting how Browning's choices enable the creation of 'a vivid picture of the speaker's mental state whether jealousy or outrage or regret,' as one essay noted. Other good answers were able to explore tone, often through the language analysis, noting Browning's use of satire and irony, for example, to good effect. Very good answers often considered other poetic methods such as poetic form and rhythm and where such points were supported by precise quotation and some analytical awareness, the answers were very successful.
- (b) Weaker answers at times struggled with some of the details of the poem, so that it seemed the extract was being discussed as an unseen. This inevitably limited the success of any interpretation offered. More capable responses did have knowledge of the poem and, at times, understanding enough to discuss some of the points made by the speaker in response to the artist. Knowledge of the context was very useful in informing the interpretation and helped candidates move beyond paraphrase and summary. Competent answers were at least in part able to discuss the emotions and the moods of the speaker with some awareness of the effects of the language. Good answers considered other poetic methods, with some able to analyse the poetic metre, for example, in terms of the speaker's shifting moods. Others focused more on imagery, noting the 'use of abstracts to convey the speaker's obsession with human faces,' as one put it. Very good answers often had perceptive analysis, which was supported by well selected quotations and some appropriate contextual details.

Question 6

OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was not a popular choice in this session, with the majority who chose this text responding to the passage (b) question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) This was a more popular choice and inspired some very good analytical responses. Weaker answers were unsure of the meaning of the poem, suggesting a lack of knowledge, though some basic responses were able to offer a broad general summary, with some occasional moments of understanding of the poem. Better answers were able to move beyond summarising the poem, into a more detailed consideration of Sheers's concerns: growing up, the countryside, childhood and, for some, 'latent sexuality.' Others noted the poet's use of 'disturbing language and imagery to show the violence and passions just below the surface of a young boy,' as one candidate put it. Good answers looked more closely at the 'effects' of these poetic choices, with some considering rhythm and verse form as well. Some answers were able to integrate contextual points – Sheers's love of the countryside and Wales – into their interpretations and where this was supported by developed analysis and precise references to the poem, the answers did well.

Question 7

Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

This was the most popular text on the paper, though all but a small minority opted for the passage (b) question.

- (a) Nearly every response was able to select relevant poems to discuss, with a wide range of the selection offering suitable choices. Weaker answers tended to summarise their chosen poems with only a general awareness of the demands of the question. With a more considered selection of contrasting poems, better answers were, at least implicitly, able to see contrasts and comparisons in the poetic choices. For example ‘the stylised posturing of Dryden’s abandoned woman in *Farewell, Ungrateful Traitor* seems quite empty when compared to the real agony of the new widow in Hardy’s *A Wife in London*,’ as one noted. Better answers developed such insights by looking closely at language and imagery, for example Wordsworth’s use of the fountain in *A Complaint* with the fireside in Yeats’s *When You are Old*. Good answers often considered other poetic methods such as form and rhythm in their comparisons, and where these explored the different effects of the choices, the answers were very successful. One common aspect of the good answers was how easily the candidates could refer to their chosen poems to find appropriate supporting quotations.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper with almost two thirds of the entry choosing this option. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a general summary with some generally relevant comments on the atmosphere of the wedding. Better answers at this level were able to explore the meaning of Alvi’s poem, often showing understanding of ‘the conflict caused by the diaspora,’ as one suggested. Sound answers were aware of the cultural clashes and were able to explain them in detail, with more competent responses linking such ideas to the poetic methods, often focusing on language and imagery, for example. Others explored the tone, noticing the ‘harshness of the English culture compared to the dreaminess of the Pakistani references,’ as one put it. Other responses noted that Alvi ‘slips in references to colonisation – “sandalwood smugglers” and “England spilled out” – to address the roots of why her identity is split in two.’ Good answers developed such interpretations by close reference to the details of Alvi’s poetic methods, with very good responses exploring the different effects of the poet’s choices and how this created the reader’s ‘sense of the confusion and perhaps fear felt by the bride on what ought to be her special day,’ as one essay put it. For example, one candidate noted that it is ‘called the wedding and not my wedding, so that the reader feels the bride’s separation from the event.’ Other very good responses looked closely at how Alvi creates ‘the difference between the dream and the reality, so that the reader shares the speaker’s feelings intensely,’ as one said, with some perceptive analysis of the imagery such as the ‘buffaloes under water’ and the vivid colours. Where such ideas were supported by appropriately integrated contextual references the answers often did very well.

Question 8

GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was not a very popular text in this session, with almost no answers seen to **Question (a)**. There were though a reasonable minority who chose the passage (b) question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to offer a narrative summary of the poem, often speculating on the situation, with little regard to the poem’s title. Better answers at this level were able to show knowledge of the poem’s meaning and some understanding of Clarke’s concerns, ‘the past and the present, death and how the living cope with mortality,’ as one response stated. Competent answers moved beyond narrative and were able to explore some of Clarke’s methods, most often language and diction, with some awareness of the imagery and partly its effects, ‘with ‘the shroud of silence’, capturing both the morbidity of a dead body, but also how it would keep its secrets,’ as one put it. More analytical answers noted how the language and rhythm of the poem changed in each stanza, ‘as the speaker moves from a listener to looker and then a responder,’ as one suggested. Good answers also noted the poetic voice, so that the first stanza is ‘an indirect quotation of the lecturer, whereas the second and third stanza reflect the speaker’s responses moving from imagining finding the skull to recreating its life,’ as one noted. Very good answers developed such arguments

with close reference to supporting details, exploring the closing 'extended metaphor of the tree, suggesting permanence in the female experience but also how it has its seasons and changes,' as one candidate said. Others were able to see how the presentation here 'enabled Clarke to explore her concerns in a moving way,' with some sharp analyses of rhythm and stanza form seen in the best answers.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/13 Drama and Poetry</p>

Key messages

- 1 Candidates should plan their essays and reflect their decisions in their opening paragraphs.
- 2 When analysing the literary methods of a writer, candidates should explore the effects of the methods as well.

General comments

There were responses seen on nearly every text in **Section A** and **Section B**. *All My Sons* and *Much Ado About Nothing* were the most popular **Section A** texts. The selection from *Songs of Ourselves* was the most popular **Section B** text, with a more or less equal spread across the other three texts in this section. The large majority of candidates showed evidence of appropriate preparation, with at least a sound basic knowledge of their two texts and some ability to select relevant material to address the given tasks. There were some rubric errors in this session, with candidates either answering on too many questions or answering two questions from the same section. It is important that candidates 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, though some candidates are at times disadvantaged by a lack of clarity in their writing.

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

- 1 Candidates should always spend some time in planning their response and deciding what material is relevant to their interpretation before beginning to write their essay. This planning might lead neatly to an opening paragraph in which the candidate addresses the key terms of the task and is able to set the direction of their essay in a controlled and focused way. Without such moments of preplanning and forethought, the opening of an essay can become too generalised and easily drift into contextual speculation from which it is sometimes difficult to regain the appropriate focus on the given task.
- 2 In passage questions, candidates are required to analyse some of the choices made by the writer. Most candidates in this session were able to discuss such technical issues as alliteration, enjambement and rhyme schemes. It is important that such discussions do not simply become a mechanical checklist. To reach the higher levels of assessment candidates need to explore the **effects** of the methods identified on an audience or reader. They might also consider how the effects might be different on different audiences and readers and in this way explore different, sometimes contrasting, interpretations of their chosen text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Question 1

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

- (a) Weaker answers tended to retell more or less relevant parts of the plot, often focusing on Joe's 'setting up of Steve to take the blame for his selfish decisions,' as one suggested. Success at this level was dependent on a sound knowledge of the text and appropriate selection of relevant material to address the task. As awareness of and focus on different attitudes to reputation increased so did the success of the response. More competent answers were able to set up contrasts, such as Joe with his son, Chris or Kate with Ann and build an argument around 'Miller's development of moral conflicts built on each character's secret deceptions,' as one essay suggested. Better answers explored how reputation and a character's attitude to it was a crucial 'tool in Miller's dramatic characterisations,' with many answers seeing Chris and Ann's relationship as symbolic of how 'reputation could both attract and destroy the well-intentioned,' as one candidate said. Good answers developed such ideas by close reference to Miller's dramatic methods, noting, for example, how the plot and the structure of the play was built on 'the destruction of Joe Keller's carefully constructed false image' and the 'consequent effects on the rest of the characters,' as one essay suggested. Where such arguments were supported by apposite close reference to the text and some awareness of appropriate contexts, the answers did very well.
- (b) A secure knowledge of the dramatic context was key to answering this question successfully. Weaker answers were often unsure of the relationships presented, with some unaware of who George was and what precisely Chris and Ann were going to tell Kate. Better answers at this level did have knowledge of the dramatic situation and were able to retell some of the significant issues between Kate and Chris, with some aware of the threat that George and, for some, Ann posed to the Kellers generally. More competent answers were able to explore how the issues of the damaged engine parts, the death of Larry and Chris and Ann's relationship were developed in these exchanges to 'show the underlying tensions between Chris and his mother, each hiding an important truth from the other,' as one suggested. Good answers focused on Miller's presentation, analysing the dramatic methods. Many answers noted 'Miller's use of stilted dialogue, the tense pauses and meaningful language,' as one aptly summarised it. Others explored the symbol of the tree in great detail, as 'Chris clears away the constant reminder of Larry, so that Kate might finally see things more clearly,' as one candidate put it. The effects of such details as George's grape juice, Mother undressed, Joe sleeping off troubles and Chris stripped for action, were all well explored at this level. Where candidates focused on the significance of the development of the relationship to Miller's dramatic concerns, especially where there was also integrated, illuminating context, such as 'the post-war troubles for so many bereaved families coming to terms with loss,' as one essay suggested, the answers did very well indeed.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

- (a) Nearly all answers had sufficient knowledge of the text to select some relevant material to address the question. Weaker answers were most comfortable with the main relationships of Benedick, Claudio and Don Pedro or Beatrice, Hero and Margaret, often paraphrasing relevant events, with some able to explore the significance of the 'tricks' to the play's main concerns, though rarely discussing how Shakespeare presents the friendships. Better, more competent, answers often ranged more widely in the text, noting how, for example, the 'comedy of the watch is in part created by the friendships,' as one suggested. Other sound answers explored how 'friendships led to some moral ambiguities for the audience, the deceiving of Benedick and Beatrice, for example,' with others focusing on Benedick's dilemma in choosing between Claudio and Beatrice. Good answers saw how Shakespeare used friendships as a tool of characterisation, so that, for example, in 'choosing to support Hero and rejecting Claudio, Benedick reveals his growth as a character,' as one essay stated. Good answers were well focused on how Shakespeare presents friendship, often exploring language and imagery, often with apposite quotation. Where such answers integrated appropriate contextual points, they often did very well.

- (b) Nearly every candidate was able to see how an audience might respond to the passage, with most answers focusing on Beatrice. Weaker answers were often unsure of the context, with many thinking it came after the masked ball. Other answers at this level tended to summarise what they knew about Beatrice generally, with too little focus on the details of the passage. Better answers at this level saw the contrast between Beatrice and Hero, particularly in their relationship with the men here, many candidates thinking that Beatrice's 'pertness towards Leonato would be a huge shock to an Elizabethan audience used to submissive women,' as one candidate put it. More competent answers also discussed some of the play's concerns, as revealed in the passage: attitudes to love, marriage, family and the other sex were all well explored, with more developed responses considering possible audience reactions and showing understanding of some of the comedy created. Good answers analysed details of language, tone and dramatic dialogue, focusing on the contrasting attitudes revealed by Shakespeare's choices. Other good answers also explored how Beatrice's attitudes and language might affect an audience's response to her, both here and in the wider text, 'for her antagonistic views on men are simply Shakespeare building up to the high comedy of the deception scene later in the play,' as one answer suggested. Where such ideas were supported by appropriate context and quotation, the essays often did very well.

Question 3

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

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

Question 4

THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

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

Section B: Poetry

Question 5

ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

This was the second most popular text in **Section B**, with nearly a third of the entry choosing it. Option (b), the passage question, was the popular choice.

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant poems to discuss, though weaker answers were sometimes uneven in their knowledge of the text. More successful answers at this level were able to provide a summary of their chosen poems, with some understanding of the different kinds of conflict presented. Where contrasting poems were chosen, for example *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister* and *My Last Duchess*, candidates were able to address the 'in what ways' part of the question with confidence, often leading easily into a consideration of some of Browning's poetic methods in more competent answers. Many answers considered language, for example, and Browning's use of the first-person narrator was often discussed: 'so that the reader often only hears one side of the story and the duchess and Brother Lawrence remain silent,' as one candidate noted. Other sound answers explored the nature of the conflicts, as many noted, 'often rooted in a destructive human emotion, jealousy or passion or revenge.' Where these interpretations were supported by analysis of Browning's poetic methods, addressing more directly, the 'with what effects', of the question, the answers often became confident and secure, able to integrate useful contextual points along with the clear and precise references to the poems.
- (b) Weaker answers at times struggled with some of the details of the poem, puzzled by the references to the bottles, for example, so that it seemed the extract was being discussed as an unseen. This inevitably limited the success of any interpretation offered. More capable responses did have knowledge of the poem and, at times, understanding enough to discuss the situation and the speaker's attitudes. More competent answers moved beyond narrative summary and paraphrase into discussing some of Browning's concerns, the 'hypocrisy of the church, the power of passion, the importance of memories, all central themes in his poetry, are obvious here,' as one essay suggested, with some answers referencing a wide range of other poems, most frequently *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St Praxed's Church*, as supporting context to their interpretations. Better answers analysed some of the details of the language, the use of indirect dialogue, and the

'way Browning puts the reader inside the head of the speaker's death bed wanderings,' as one summarised it. Good answers considered a range of poetic methods, including form and rhythm and versification, often with perceptive analysis of the effects of Browning's choices. Other good answers were able to integrate some appropriate contextual references, with well chosen quotations from the given poem and often did very well.

Question 6

OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was the least popular text in **Section B** with only a very small minority offering the **(a)** option.

- (a)** Nearly every response was able to select relevant poems to discuss. Weaker answers tended to retell their chosen poems, often in some detail, though without directly 'comparing' the methods and effects of the chosen poems. Better answers at this level were able to explore, at least implicitly, some of Sheers's concerns. More competent answers often chose contrasting poems to discuss how Sheers presents love, with *Keyways* and *Landmark* both popular choices. Most answers discussed love, as presented through poems about human relationships, though some candidates did consider his 'love of the Welsh countryside in which he lived, as seen in *Y Gaer* and *Skirrid Fawr*,' as one put it. Good answers were able to develop a comparison of the content of the poems through analysis of their contrasting methods, for example, the tercets of *Y Gaer* and 'the more complex verse form of *Keyways*,' enabled some candidates to find interesting points on Sheers's poetic choices. Other good answers looked at the language and imagery in detail, contrasting the 'strength of the landscapes with the intimacy of his emotions,' as one put it. Very good answers were able to integrate analytical and contextual points into the body of the interpretation and, where supported by precise reference to the poems, the answers did well.
- (b)** Weaker answers tended to retell the narrative of the poem, with little regard to the given task, often showing some knowledge of the meaning and some undeveloped understanding of Sheers's concerns. Better answers saw the contrast between the simplicity of the farmer and the land and the 'sophisticated arrogance of the American soldiers,' as one essay put it. Competent answers explored such concerns in more detail, often focusing on 'the way the power of the river and the land strips bare the superficial strength of humanity,' as one candidate suggested. Other answers considered the language – 'greenhorns' was often noted as 'ironic,' – and how 'the strength of the countryside is revealed bit by bit, until its ferocity is reflected in the predatory personification,' as one candidate said. Good answers developed this, exploring Sheers's philosophical commentary on the events and how 'the reader is encouraged to think about the frailty and impermanence of human activity compared to the power and permanence of the hills and the river,' as one response put it. Some answers were able to find relevant contexts to support their interpretations and good answers invariably focused on the poetic methods through detailed reference to the poem itself.

Question 7

Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

- (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 on the paper with over one third of the entry choosing this option. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a general summary with some generally relevant comments on the effects of war. Better answers at this level were able to explore the meaning of Owen's poem, often showing understanding of some of the key themes in it, with many noticing how Owen used the effects of the sun as a 'life-giving force to show the futility of war,' as one suggested. Better answers linked such ideas to the poetic methods, often focusing on language and imagery, for example, the personification of the sun. Others explored the rhythms and Owen's use of rhyme, with some noticing the changes from half to full rhymes – 'emphasising key ideas like the sun "knowing" what to do,' as one answer put it. Good answers developed their interpretations by analysing some of the details of Owen's poetic methods, with very good responses exploring the different effects of Owen's choices, such as the 'kind old sun', or the contrast between the snow and the sun and warmth and coldness. Where such discussions were structured and focused on the task with some contextual support, the answers often did very well.

Question 8

GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice of text in this session, with nearly every candidate choosing the **(b)** option.

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b)** Some weak answers had little knowledge of the poem and appeared to be responding as to an unseen, with limited success. Most answers though were able to address the task with some knowledge of the poem. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the poem, often ignoring the final stanzas. Better answers noted how Clarke contrasts the ‘girl in the water and the speaker and their experiences,’ as one suggested. More competent answers did consider the whole poem and were able to discuss some of Clarke’s poetic choices, such as language, noting that ‘Clarke uses dark and sinister words such as “death”, “silent” and “bleating”, so that the reader is drawn into the emotion of the near drowning,’ as one said. Others developed the contrast between the girl and the speaker, where ‘my mother the hero and life saver contrasts sharply with the “thrashing for nearly drowning” in the poor household,’ with most answers at this level making similar comparisons between the two families. Good answers considered other poetic methods, such as Clarke’s use of enjambement and verse form – ‘irregular like the rhythm in places and capturing the speaker’s uncertainty “was I there?”’ as one essay suggested. Some good answers wrestled with the closing stanzas, wondering ‘what was below the surface of the speaker’s memory,’ or ‘how the swans might be symbolic of something beautiful and yet disturbing,’ as one suggested. Others at this level noticed the effect of the closing couplet, ‘the finality of the thought that in seeing the drowning incident, the speaker, Clarke perhaps, had somehow lost something, perhaps her innocence,’ as one candidate remarked. Such arguments were often well supported by specific references to the text and appropriate contexts.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/21
Prose and Unseen

Key messages

- Successful responses focus on how the authors communicate the meaning and content through their writing choices.
- Responses summarising the content of texts or extracts are not successful.
- Successful responses employ specific references and quotations to support points in essays. In **(a)** questions, candidates need to make secure selections from the text to support their answer to the question.
- Successful responses to **(b)** passage questions analyse the writing of the selected extract in great detail.
- In the Unseen, successful responses show how the literary features of the specific text type communicate the meaning and contribute to the reader's understanding of the passage or poem.

General comments

There was a higher number of rubric errors this series, with some candidates attempting rudimentary answers on every question on the paper. Candidates should be reminded to answer only one question from each section of the paper. It is also important for them to make a clear choice between the **(a)** and the **(b)** question in **Section A**. A substantial number of candidates confused the two and limited their chances of success by doing so.

Examiners saw responses to all the set texts, although *Atonement* and *Stories of Ourselves* were the most popular. Responses to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* suggested that candidates had read, enjoyed and understood the central ideas of the text. A number of responses to passage-based questions on *Stories of Ourselves*, on the other hand, suggested a limited knowledge and understanding of how the passage related to the wider story. With this text it is important for candidates only to use stories set for study in their answers. A surprising number used *The Furnished Room*, which is not set and for which, therefore, no credit could be given by Examiners. With all the texts, candidates' attainment was limited when they concentrated on characters, discussing them and their choices almost as if they are real people, omitting an awareness of how they are created and presented by the writers. Candidates should be encouraged to answer **(a)** questions in a way which engages with analysis of literary methods; they should be accustomed to using subject-specific terminology to discuss the writers' craft – setting, imagery, structure and characterisation, for example, can all be discussed confidently in a closed book examination. In **(b)** questions, Examiners noted a tendency in a number of answers to select details of the passage without exploring them in relation to their context within the passage. Candidates are more successful when they show an appreciation of how the different elements of a passage work together to develop an effect for the reader.

In responses to the Unseen, awareness of text-type was most confident in relation to Poetry. Answers to Drama were markedly more successful when candidates demonstrated their awareness of performance and audience. In Prose responses, narrative point of view is often a good place to start, though many candidates were insecure in their discrimination between second and third person, omniscient and limited perspective.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Prose

Question 1 – Ian McEwan: *Atonement*

- (a) Most responses concentrated on the early part of the novel, which was understandable, but some also included discussion of the children and parents present at the final performance of *The Trials of Arabella* in the final pages, which expanded the argument in an insightful way. Most essays naturally focused on the Tallis parents, and the impact of their absences on Leon, but particularly Cecilia and Briony. There was thoughtful discussion of Emily Tallis' infantilising of Briony as she attempts to cling onto motherhood, while McEwan presents her as a woman of little real awareness or understanding of her children. Many candidates broadened their scope to explore the Quincey parents, quite literally absent from the novel, considering the parenting role which Lola assumes with the twins and the part parental absence plays in her own story. Confident responses contrasted the neglect of the Tallises and Quinceys to the fierce love and loyalty demonstrated by Robbie's mother after his father's disappearance, with some developing the significance of social class in relation to this. Some considered Jack Tallis' financial support of Robbie's education as a kind of surrogate parenting, which proves to be shallow when Robbie is arrested. Effective responses used specific references to support the points made, with 'the Parents', Emily Tallis' migraines and Mrs Turner's 'Liars! Liars! Liars!' being frequently cited. Less successful responses tended to be descriptive in approach, identifying and describing the various relationships but not using this understanding to shape a line of argument in relation to the topic, or showing awareness of how McEwan presents these aspects of the novel.
- (b) This was a very popular question but one which demonstrated the importance of training candidates to engage closely with details within a passage. Many answers gave a generalised account of Cecilia's character and situation, showing understanding of the novel but failing to demonstrate the key skills of answering a passage-based question. A number of candidates looked a little more closely at McEwan's writing and tended to select the same three or four quotations to support points about Cecilia's maternal role in the household and her desire to escape but did not go beyond that. More confident responses discussed the tension between what is expected of Cecilia and what she wants and explored McEwan's use of the details of her surroundings, looking at the adjectives 'sham' and 'fake' to indicate the nature of the Tallises' world. There was also some awareness of the symbolic position of Cecilia hesitating at the top of the stairs, a point of transition. Few answers discussed the structure of the passage and McEwan's development of ideas within it or about the way individual sentences/ideas were constructed. Some were aware of the irony of Cecilia's views of the future, considering the later events of the evening. Some candidates wrote well and with degrees of sophistication about the fact that McEwan later reveals that the narrator is in fact Briony and wove her perception into the answer. Other candidates tried to discuss this aspect but had difficulty in elucidating it clearly.

Question 2 – Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) The few candidates responding to this question demonstrated a reasonably secure knowledge of the text and character, though several responses did not focus as firmly as necessary on Munira's role as a teacher as directed in the question. Those with more successful focus considered Munira's arrival at the school, its development, his employment of Karega and Ngũgĩ's exploration of the different educational philosophies of the two teachers.
- (b) Stronger responses to the question on the ceremony discussed and analysed the details of its presentation, such as the lines of the song, its 'call and response' style, the image of the broken thread and the community involvement as different characters take up the song and respond to it. Many noticed the 'But suddenly...' at the beginning of l.17 and the shift in tone with 'the slight tremor' in Nyakinyua's voice. Most candidates wrote well about Ilmorog's recent history, the historical struggles of the Kenyan people and their significance for the 'newly circumcised youth'. These discussions were often capably informed by knowledge of colonial history and the postcolonial context.

Question 3 – *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) This was quite a popular question and candidates were able to use a wide range of stories to construct their answers. The most popular were *The Lady's Maid's Bell*, *A Warning to the Curious*, *Gabriel-Ernest* and *The Tower*, though others also appeared. The nature of the mysteries and puzzles also varied and the strongest responses focused clearly on how they were created by the writers of the stories and what effects they have on the reader. With *The Lady's Maid's Bell*, for example, there was careful consideration not only of the identity and role of Emma Saxon's ghost and Mrs Brympton's relationship with Mr Ranford, but also of the uncertainties of Hartley's narration itself. Essays on *A Warning to the Curious* too were very successful when they explored the layering of the narratives as well as the supernatural event around the crown. The growing mystery and terror in *The Tower* was sometimes discussed well, candidates attempting to tease out the apparent connections between Caroline and Giovanna di Ferramano. Less successful responses relied on narrative summary and assertion of the puzzles.
- (b) This was an extremely popular question, where full understanding of the passage depended on a grasp of the whole story. While direct reference to other parts of the story is not required, a lack of knowledge limits the comprehension of the passage. It was apparent that a substantial number of candidates did not know *Haywards Heath* and therefore made assumptions about Attila which were erroneous. Many assumed he is a very aged man and suggested that he is both rich and arrogant because he drives a luxury car, missing the detail of why he is 'driving a Jaguar XJ from the Prestige range for the same price' as he paid the rental company for a more modest vehicle. Stronger and more confident answers had a fuller understanding of the situation and the purpose of Attila's journey, often making reference to the story's sad ending and Rosie's dementia. Paying close attention to the writing, some candidates noted that although the narrative is third person, it uses a lexis appropriate to Attila's profession, with references to 'cranium', 'scalp' and 'follicles', for example, before there are references to 'his patients'. Some carefully explained how the narrative gradually reveals that Attila is not English by a series of little clues. Some picked up on the fact that 'He drew no stares' indicated that he is Black and that there is now greater acceptance of different races. There was also comment on the image of Rosie feeling 'the mark of his gaze on her skin, like a touch on the back of her neck', showing their initial attraction. Surprisingly few answers recognised that this memory occurs in a flashback and some wrote about it as if it were happening in the car. Candidates who paid close attention to Forna's writing and the techniques of the narrative wrote some impressively strong answers to this question.

Question 4 – Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

- (a) Answers to this question varied considerably. Much less successful were those which gave a narrative account of the novel, describing Huck's sense of freedom gained with his separation from mainstream society. More focused responses looked at Widow Douglas' and Miss Watson's attempts to 'civilize' Huck and his ultimate rejection of these constraints, preferring not to wear shoes, to smoke and reject religion, for example. Accomplished essays considered these aspects but also contrasted Huck's freedom and behaviour with those who are apparently 'civilised', including his father, the Duke and the King and the killers and lynch mobs he encounters. There was thoughtful discussion of Huck's and Jim's apparently uncivilised behaviour and the embedded injustice and racism of apparently civilised society. The ironies of Huck's narrative voice came into focus in the strongest responses, with particular attention to his decision to 'go to hell' rather than abandon Jim.
- (b) This passage presented problems for candidates who did not have confident grasp of the novel. Some did not recognise that Twain presents four claimants in the passage – two contrasting pairs – which limited understanding considerably. Others did not read closely enough and confused the two pairs. The strongest responses focused on how Twain uses Huck's narrative voice to suggest that the newcomers are genuine and to expose the levels of the Duke and King's fraudulent behaviour. Candidates picked up on Huck's recognition of the quality of the newcomer's English accent compared with the King's, and on the brothers' patience compared with the way the King 'blethers'. Some essays included interesting comments on Twain's satire about people's inability to discern truth from deception and how they can be swayed by a showman who plays to the crowd. The ironies of the King's comments about 'frauds and rascals' were explored, compared with Huck's comment that he 'didn't see no joke about it'. Few candidates commented on the effects of the last sentence, but some observant essays considered the way that the structure, with increasing numbers of people who did not laugh with the King, gradually exposed the crowd's doubt in his veracity.

Section B: Unseen

Question 5 – Prose

This was a passage which repaid careful reading. Candidates who did not read carefully were led into a number of errors, for example seeing the scene as a conversation between a husband and wife or set in a hospital and a discussion between a doctor and patient. Others assumed that the man and the woman are engaged in an on-going extra-marital affair. On the other hand, there were some remarkably subtle readings of the passage and the nascent relationship it depicts. There was thoughtful discussion of the ways the writer portrays the unnamed woman who ‘...brightened... was fascinated... voice quickened... laughed... flushed...’ throughout the extract, identifying the attraction she feels towards the man. The simile of her ‘standing on the edge of another country’ received a lot of attention, with its suggestion of new, unexplored prospects. Candidates noted the references to the absent husband and the woman’s feelings of disloyalty to him, commenting on the symbolism of the waistcoat. While some candidates omitted the child from their discussions, many noted Sid’s easy manner with her and while the nuances of the jokes about the ring were not always fully grasped, the tenor of them was appreciated. Strong responses looked at the piece specifically as a prose passage, commenting on the limited third person point of view which gives the reader access to the woman’s thoughts, while Sid has to be judged from her perception of him and his dialogue only. Others commented on the interplay between narrative and dialogue and the way the man and more specifically the woman are characterised by their manner of speech.

Question 6 – Poetry

The question on the poem *Why the old woman limps* was the most frequently answered question on the paper and it proved highly accessible to all levels of attainment. Even the more narrative and descriptive responses noted the structural patterning of the stanzas and the variation in the final one, though some focused on a sympathetic description of the woman rather than discussing the ways in which she is presented. Some were highly critical of her children for abandoning the grandchildren to her, while others saw a family trait of self-sacrifice for the good of the youngest, in a rural area where local employment might be difficult to obtain. Candidates commented on the woman’s anonymity, often suggesting that this makes her a symbolic representation of the plight of such women, and there was discussion of the close association between ‘six’ and ‘sixty’ to emphasise her age and the responsibilities which she carries. Successful answers not only noted the question-and-answer patterning of the stanzas, but also other repeated ideas, like the ‘goat’ in each stanza which provides a constant thread of her work and care. Others noted the progression from ‘sings’ (care, tradition and nurture), through ‘sleeps’ (noting that the speaker seems in awe of what she does and cannot possibly find time to sleep) to ‘limps’ (an unsurprising result of her tireless labours). Other elements of structure were discussed to good effect, like the enjambment which leads to the delayed emphatic ‘Tomorrow’ in l.10 and the seemingly endless listing of the woman’s jobs from l.11–13, ended by the ellipsis. Some also noted the imperatives of ‘she’s to...’ and ‘has to be...’ here. There was much comment on the distances travelled in the final stanza. Comments on these distances were often accompanied by observation about the indented lines which emphasise the different journeys. There was much to discuss in an apparently simple poem and many candidates clearly enjoyed the opportunity.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/22 Prose and Unseen</p>

Key messages

- Successful responses focus on how the authors communicate the meaning and content through their writing choices.
- Responses summarising the content of texts or extracts are not successful.
- Successful responses employ specific references and quotations to support points in essays. In **(a)** questions, candidates need to make secure selections from the text to support their answer to the question.
- Successful responses to **(b)** passage questions analyse the writing of the selected extract in great detail.
- In the Unseen, successful responses show how the literary features of the specific text type communicate the meaning and contribute to the reader's understanding of the passage or poem.

General comments

There was a higher number of rubric errors this series, with some candidates attempting rudimentary answers on every question on the paper. Candidates should be reminded to answer only one question from each section of the paper. It is also important for them to make a clear choice between the **(a)** and the **(b)** question in **Section A**. A substantial number of candidates confused the two and limited their chances of success by doing so.

Examiners saw responses to all the set texts, although *Atonement* and *Stories of Ourselves* were the most popular. Responses to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* suggested that candidates had read, enjoyed and understood the central ideas of the text. A number of responses to passage-based questions on *Stories of Ourselves*, on the other hand, suggested a limited knowledge and understanding of how the passage related to the wider story. With this text it is important for candidates only to use stories set for study in their answers. A surprising number used *The Furnished Room*, which is not set and for which, therefore, no credit could be given by Examiners. With all the texts, candidates' attainment was limited when they concentrated on characters, discussing them and their choices almost as if they are real people, omitting an awareness of how they are created and presented by the writers. Candidates should be encouraged to answer **(a)** questions in a way which engages with analysis of literary methods; they should be accustomed to using subject-specific terminology to discuss the writers' craft – setting, imagery, structure and characterisation, for example, can all be discussed confidently in a closed book examination. In **(b)** questions, Examiners noted a tendency in several answers to select details from the passage without exploring them in relation to their context within the passage. Candidates are more successful when they show an appreciation of how the different elements of a passage work together to develop an effect for the reader.

In responses to the Unseen, awareness of text-type was most confident in relation to Poetry. Answers to Drama were markedly more successful when candidates demonstrated their awareness of performance and audience. In Prose responses, narrative point of view is often a good place to start, though many candidates were insecure in their discrimination between second and third person, omniscient and limited perspective.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Prose

Question 1 – Ian McEwan: *Atonement*

- (a) There were few responses to the question on McEwan's presentation of brothers and sisters. Most focused entirely on the Tallis family, and further, on Briony and Cecilia. Many answers were narrative and descriptive in approach, with less focus on how McEwan presents the relationships. Useful approaches might have been a comparison between the Tallis siblings and the Quincey siblings, noting the mothering role depicted in both Cecilia and Lola. Essays too could have considered McEwan's portrayal of the relationship between Cecilia and Briony, developing from that mothering role, and considered the relative detachment of Leon, though warmly viewed by both his sisters. Robbie's lack of siblings, and the surrogate sibling role he plays with Briony, might also have been useful for discussion. Thoughtful candidates might have considered how all these relationships are presented to the reader through McEwan's use of Briony's controlling narration, which shapes the view of the relationships as she wants them to be seen.
- (b) Many more candidates chose the passage and were able to contextualise this war section appropriately, commenting on the rift between Cecilia and her family and Robbie's resolve to try to encourage her to heal it. There was some useful comment to on the structuring of the sentences in the first paragraph, building the frustration caused by repeated changes, resulting in the couple repeatedly missing each other. Some candidates focused on the horrors of war and of Robbie's experience in France, but many of these responses concentrated on the idea of the boredom that Robbie experienced, rather than how McEwan presents the experience itself. Few responses really probed the subtleties of the writing, however, missing the 'farical' activities, the failures of the 'long bitter winter' and the dullness of 'day-long marches'. The paragraph including ll.23–33 rewarded careful consideration of language and sentence structure, and the final paragraph, with its touches of the natural world, reflects Robbie's urge for reconciliation. Very few candidates acknowledged that this section is entirely Briony's invention, as she imagines Robbie's wartime experiences.

Question 2 – Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. It is often useful with this novel to identify narrative points of view within the novel and this certainly applied to this passage. Successful candidates noted the first-person narration which immerses the reader in Munira's experience. A number of responses featured careful writing on the first paragraph but were less focused on the second longer paragraph, with the result that analysis became rather generalised. The importance of the lawyer and the shock of his death was noted by most candidates, though occasionally the fact that 'We talked about everything else but the murder' was misread as a sign of callousness. Some noted Munira's questions at the beginning of the second paragraph, preparing the reader for his rejection of religion before the sudden change with Lillian's appearance, the shift noted in 'And then suddenly I saw the group.' The short sentence 'I stopped to listen' was sometimes noted as the point of significant shift, though more could have been said by most candidates on how Munira remembers Lillian and her entourage. Ngũgĩ's presentation of Munira's train of thought, with its choices of language and syntax, merited more careful discussion. Very few responses looked at the final lines of the passage and Munira's Damascene moment.

Question 3 – *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) The 'surprises' of the question were interpreted in a variety of ways. Candidates often chose stories where the surprise is a fundamental part of the narrative, like *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, *Gabriel-Ernest* or *The Tower*, though stories such as *The Lady's Maid's Bell*, *The Axe*, *When It Happens*, *The Doll's House* and *The Paper Menagerie* were also used successfully. Less successful responses offered narrative summary and an assertion of the surprise created in their chosen stories. More confident answers considered the importance of the surprise to the narrative and how it is placed, which led to discussions of structure. The sudden final surprises of *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* and *The Tower*, for example, were compared with the steady hints provided by Saki throughout *Gabriel-Ernest*, so that the reader is surprised that Van Cheele is surprised by the ending. Liu's use of the letter to create the final revelations was discussed in *The*

Paper Menagerie, whereas the role of Kezia, disrupting social expectations, was a focus on *The Doll's House*.

- (b) This was a popular question. Most candidates responding to it demonstrated a secure grasp of the plot of the story and were able to write knowledgeably about the genre, often with information about the author. Some confident responses carefully considered James' layering of the narrative, with different stories told by the narrator, Paxton and the old man, though few remembered that the narrator of the passage is not the story's primary narrator. Some linked this to genre, suggesting the unreliability and uncertainty characteristic of ghost stories. There was some careful observation of the physical description of Paxton, particularly the description of his as 'a rabbit anaemic subject', as well as discussion of the ways in which James emphasises the isolation of the characters. Perceptive candidates wrote well about the shift to the old man's part in the story, commenting thoughtfully on the effect of the use of dialect here, adding authenticity to Paxton's story. Candidates who were confident in their knowledge of the rest of the story were able to use this to their advantage, noting the ways in which James builds up the significance and mystery of the three crowns shortly before Paxton fatefully introduces the one he has found to the narrator and his companion.

Question 4 – Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, most of which tended to explore the early parts of the novel, and Twain's use of the river as a symbol. There was discussion of camping, life in the open air and fishing, compared with the life in various towns which Huck and Jim visit. Curiously, however, there was very little consideration that Jim's freedom could be seen as one of the attractions for him of 'a life outside organised society'.
- (b) A slightly greater number answered on the passage question, featuring Huck and Jim tricking Aunt Sally with the spoons. Some took a very moral view and considered their trickery to be shameful, but most showed some appreciation of how Twain presents the episode almost as a play, with very clear description of actions interspersed with dialogue. In this way readers can appreciate Tom and Huck's skill in manipulation, while Aunt Sally's speeches are increasingly frustrated and her actions increasingly angry, with verbs like 'grabbed' and 'slammed'. Thoughtful answers compared the lasting effects on Aunt Sally, who 'wouldn't count them again not to save her life', and Huck and Tom, who without conscience are 'very well satisfied with this business'.

Section B: Unseen

Question 5 – Drama

While fewer candidates opted for the Drama passage, it produced some of the best answers. Candidates who were equipped to discuss the genre did so with real confidence, with stronger responses looking at the shifts between the chorus and the named characters as well as the narrator-like role of Katsaki. Many commented too on the structure, shifting from Ampelos' recounting of his story to the waking of Dionysos as his part of the tale is retold. The symbolism of the bloody mask and the white bull were effectively considered too. Some candidates clearly visualised how the passage could appear and sound to an audience, making full use of the details of the stage directions, such as the '*horrific, bloody mask*'. They considered the potential impact of the chorus, with the drumming and the rhythmic chanting of the verse section. In terms of language, there was some thoughtful consideration of the use of the first-person pronoun in Ampelos' story as he narrated his search for a gift for Dionysos. The description of the bull, 'Pure white... most magnificent' received much comment, with some noting the uneasy foreshadowing first created by Ampelos' mask and then by images of 'hot breath' and 'heat ...like a great oven burning'. The language and sentence structures of extreme violence in the Chorus' verse was the subject of perceptive observations, with comments on 'rears... buckles... exploding... terrible earthquake... smashing... Gored and stamped and thumped and pounded' and the neologism 'jerkthumped'. Strong responses considered the pathos of the final nature of Ampelos' gift to Dionysos. A few candidates with knowledge of Greek mythology were able to link this with the violent cults of Dionysos in Ancient Greece. There was much to discuss in the passage and many candidates engaged enthusiastically with it.

Question 6 – Prose

This was a popular passage with candidates, nearly all of whom were able to make something of the tension between the two brothers. Many looked at the passage closely, picking up on some interesting nuances of the passage. For example, many candidates chose to discuss the significance of the water as a cleansing or religious symbol in the passage. They also discussed the nuance of the relationship between the brothers, comparing the violent and aggressive start of the passage with the immediate change in energy as the narrator attempts to clean up Tifty. Thoughtful responses noted that the narrative was one-sided and clearly biased, even though the narration is graphically honest about the actions committed. There was discussion that there may have been events prior to this incident that had led to a justified response, and that the one-sided nature of the narration meant that readers were unaware of the full context of the situation. Some noted the idea that the statement that 'I have never hit a man from the back before' suggests that it is the position of the attack rather than the violence itself which is new. The conflict within the narrator – 'the murderer and the Samaritan' – was noted and analysed, with attention paid to the tension between the act of violence and the binding of the wound. Many candidates also picked up on the tone of the passage and the detail which contributed to it, notably the narrator's envisioning of the funeral but also the way the sentence structure contributes to a disturbingly detached tone. Strong responses looked at the return to the house, and the contrastingly mundane depiction of daily life within the household, as well as the lack of dialogue within the passage apart from Tifty's words at the beginning and end. There was also effective consideration of the use of setting and the impact of the arrival of the bloody brother in a quiet household conversing about a flower show.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/23
Prose and Unseen

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- Successful responses employ specific references and quotations to support points in essays. In **(a)** questions, candidates need to make secure selections from the text to support their answer to the question.
- Successful responses to **(b)** passage questions analyse the writing of the selected extract in great detail.
- In the Unseen, successful responses show how the literary features of the specific text type communicate the meaning and contribute to the reader's understanding of the passage or poem.

General comments

There was a higher number of rubric errors this series, with some candidates attempting rudimentary answers on every question on the paper. Candidates should be reminded to answer only one question from each section of the paper. It is also important for them to make a clear choice between the **(a)** and the **(b)** question in **Section A**. A substantial number of candidates confused the two and limited their chances of success by doing so.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A: Prose

Question 1 – Ian McEwan: *Atonement*

- (a) There were some sound discussions of the ways in which McEwan presents childhood, which mainly focused on the early sections of the novel. Less successful answers relied on summary of Briony's experiences as a child, with some reference to Lola and the Quincey boys. While these showed some knowledge of the text, they were less developed in terms of showing understanding of McEwan's presentation. Stronger answers were supported by specific references and often focused on the nature of Briony's perspective, who does not understand what she is witnessing. The childish enthusiasm for *The Trials of Arabella*, Briony's idolising of Robbie, the twins' running away were all part of the focus of various essays, as well as the effects of absent parents.
- (b) Candidates usually understood the significance of this passage in relation to the presentation of Emily Tallis in the novel as a whole, commenting on her isolation and the ways in which her relationships with her family are depicted. The metaphor of the ghost received due attention as McEwan presents her sense of her own childhood compared with her children. There was interesting discussion of the gender expectations which emerge through her thoughts in the focalised narrative, while others also commented on her sense of ageing. Thoughtful answers noted how her detachment is portrayed in phrases such as 'She floated above them' and 'absently braiding them'. Many answers ignored her thoughts about Robbie and therefore missed key opportunities for developed discussion. Stronger responses developed the significance of how she thinks of him in relation to Jack, and the assumptions she makes about him. Candidates picked up the phrase 'a hobby of Jack's', considering its dehumanising nature, and her judgement that paying for his education is 'meddling', portraying her sense of class divisions. It was noted that these divisions are very apparent in the later treatment of Robbie. The irony of the last line of the extract, though, was frequently overlooked, as was the descriptive detail of the setting, with McEwan's language and imagery contributing so much to the languorous, lethargic mood of the passage.

Question 2 – Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were not many responses to this question. Essays noted the changes in Kamiritho, with some focus on the range of activities in the first paragraph, and there was some acknowledgment of the range of paintings in the bar, described in the final paragraph. Most of these responses were narrative and descriptive; few candidates looked closely at Ngũgĩ's presentation of these aspects, or Munira's response to them. The long sentences and listing effects in the first paragraph were worthy of attention, as well as the portrayal of Munira's indecision in paragraphs two and three, with references to his 'past humiliation' and ending with him hiding in the bar. Perceptive candidates noted that Munira becomes 'engrossed in the fantasy world' of the art, which leads to Ngũgĩ's long dream-like sentences depicting the range of strange paintings, with phrases such as 'amused... in harmony... surreal images... A surreal world... beautiful women... suddenly disappeared'. Even Wanja's appearance is dreamlike – 'he could not believe his eyes'. Successful responses needed this kind of close observation of the details of the writing of the passage.

Question 3 – *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) The passage from *The Doll's House* was the favoured question on the short stories. Responses tended to focus on the class disparity between the Burnell and Kelvey children. Candidates often concentrated on the use of the dolls' house itself as a symbol of the social differences between the two families. Strong responses noted the pompous self-importance of Isabel's dialogue and the way she is portrayed as confident at the centre of the school's social circle, noting such phrases as 'the girls... nearly fought to put their arms about her' and 'Nudging, giggling together'. Many responses noted the ways in which Mansfield presents the social disparities in the final two paragraphs, noting that the social 'line... was drawn at the Kelveys' and the nature of the rumours and unanswered questions about the Kelvey parents. Candidates noted that 'Even the teacher had a special voice for them' and a few noted that this sometimes extends to the narrative voice itself,

although the final paragraph gives details of Mrs Kelvey's resourcefulness and care for her children. Less confident answers relied on narrative summary, lacking detail or analysis.

Question 4 – Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question and most candidates who attempted it took a narrative approach, describing Huck's adventures beyond the boundaries of society. There were a very few answers which developed from Huck's sense of personal freedom to explore Jim's freedom from slavery, a much more significant freedom in the novel. Even here the approach was dominated by narrative with very few responses considering how Twain presents freedom.
- (b) While few candidates answered on *Huckleberry Finn*, those who studied the text much preferred the passage-based question. The essays demonstrated appreciation of ways in which the surprise of both characters is described and contrasted Huck's 'I bet I was glad to see him' with Jim's 'Doan' hurt me – don't!' They noted how Huck and Jim are able to pool their resources and some noted the sharing of the burdens described by Twain, Jim building and tending the fire while Huck fetches food. A few noted Huck's disparaging way of referring to Jim at this stage of the novel, before his experiences teach him to alter his view. However, most acknowledge the relaxed idyllic nature of the final lines of the passage as 'we laid off and lazied'.

Section B: Unseen

Question 5 – Poetry

The overwhelming majority of candidates opted to answer the question of *The Three Lads*. Most responses dealt with language and the simpler elements of structure, for example, discussing the parallelism between the stanzas and noting the changes. Most candidates noted that the parallels allow the reader to appreciate that war is war no matter what the soldier's nationality or what they are fighting for. More careful responses also noted how each stanza makes subtle changes to discriminate between the different soldiers, giving a sense of their different background through landscape and ruler, while all are bound by their romantic aspirations for 'a pair of blue eyes'. Although their ultimate rulers are different – 'good old God', 'noble tzar' and 'honest king' – all are remote and detached. Stronger answers depended on this level of close, detailed analysis. Candidates also discussed the idea of jingoism and patriotism being used as a motivating factor for war across cultures and countries. Some candidates developed this by commenting effectively on the poem's lively rhythm and rhyme scheme, suggesting that it was mimetic of the galloping of horses, creating an energetic optimism when it was likely that the 'lads' were riding towards their deaths, prefaced by 'the distance grey'.

Question 6 – Prose

Sadly for such an excellent passage of writing, the prose option had far fewer takers. There were, however, some excellent responses which focused on the power of the character's imagination linked to very specific auditory details, such as 'grasshoppers and cicadas', 'distant bare footsteps', 'the slap and wash of the water in the bucket' and the ability to pinpoint sound and translate it into visual images, such as 'a star of early light shining' and the bucket which is carried 'on her head'. Candidates appreciated how the writer leads the reader to understand a blind person's perspective and the way they interpret the world around them, despite the acknowledgement that 'he is dying.' The determination of the old man was admired, with note of the final sentence of the extract and the sense of determination despite the 'unfamiliar body' and 'empty eye socket'.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Shakespeare and Drama

Key messages

- All assessment objectives are equally weighted; all must be given equal attention.
- Candidates need to pay particular attention to genre if they are to gain high marks.
- Candidates should not be shy about naming the author of a text and talking explicitly about the author's strategic choices.

General comments

There were a small number of responses which did not follow the rubric, with candidates sometimes writing twice on the same text, or writing twice about texts from the same section. There were a small number of candidates who did not make effective use of time in the examination, writing extensively in one question and then writing hardly anything for the second. This is clearly not recommended.

The vast majority of candidates had plainly enjoyed reading and thinking about the texts they had studied, with only a few failing to engage with the texts in a suitable way. There had obviously been many lively discussions in class.

The most popular texts were *King Lear* and *Indian Ink*. Those who had studied *Indian Ink* or *An Experiment with an Air Pump* largely favoured the **(b)** question.

Although popular with candidates, **(b)** questions pose very particular challenges, both in terms of close reading and an ability to link the passage to the rest of the text. Candidates should be aware that simply having a bit of the text in front of them does not make this the easier option. If a passage is provided, it is there for in-depth analysis, not merely as a springboard for a general essay.

It is impossible to begin an answer without some knowledge and understanding. However, to rise up through the mark scale, responses should move from simple knowledge of events to understanding of character, theme, and dramatic presentation and the ways in which all three link together to create meaning in a text. Candidates should be particularly aware that in a drama paper, they need to think hard about how a text fits into its genre, of the genre's conventions, of how it might be interpreted on a stage. Many candidates are rather reticent about discussing the role of the author as the crafter of what is going on: some responses give the impression that a text exists independently of its creator. In their responses, candidates should make clear and constant reference to the language that is being used by the characters. In order to be rewarded for the quality of their analysis, there should be specific, forensic exploration of particular moments, with a clear understanding of genre in the background. Candidates are required to discuss contexts in their responses. These may be literary, cultural, political, scientific. But the central point is that they must be relevant and integrated into arguments. Thus, for example, the sources of inspiration for Shakespeare when writing *King Lear* may be interesting, but they do not really provide an insight into the play as a lived experience when seen in the theatre. On the other hand, knowledge of the system of apartheid in Fugard, or some acquaintance with Anglo-Indian history and experience in Stoppard is vital to a successful response, whatever the question asked. In other words, teachers would be advised to only teach contexts which have a bearing on the central issues or techniques of a text. And if contexts such as Brechtian techniques are to be taught, candidates might explore what this means in dramatic terms, rather than simply dropping Brecht's name into a response. In other words, candidates must demonstrate understanding of the contexts they choose to include.

The assessment objectives for this paper call for a ‘personal response.’ For weaker candidates, this sometimes simply amounts to relating aspects of the text to their own view of life. Other candidates simply want to express their personal reaction to one of the themes or characters. Stronger candidates understand — and demonstrate — that they have thought about the texts for themselves. This comes through in the choice of examples, the quality of writing, and, with the best candidates, the originality of the ideas put forward. In **(b)** questions the central discriminator is often the technique that a candidate chooses to adopt. A line-by-line approach undoubtedly gives coverage of the passage, but it often prevents an overall, strategic view of the passage from emerging. Questions often ask about the writer’s ‘dramatic methods and concerns’ and this is an explicit nudge towards technique, not content. In **(b)** questions it is important, too, that candidates demonstrate an ability to range across the text, as well as offering a close reading of the extract provided.

A literature examination is, of course, about what a candidate knows about a text. But it is also about the effectiveness of the way in which this knowledge and understanding is conveyed to a reader. It is, in this sense, a writing exercise. Consequently, it is vital that candidates plan what they have to say, making sure that every paragraph is relevant to the question asked. All too often with less able candidates, there is a tendency to overgeneralise. Of course, there are some very good long answers; but for some candidates who choose to write at length, the quantity seems more important than the quality. The tendency for these responses is for a reliance on narrative or paraphrase, combined with little focus on authorial techniques. Fewer points, fully substantiated and dealing constantly with literary matters, tend to do better. It is clear that many centres spend time teaching the discourse markers (‘on the other hand,’ ‘another aspect,’ ‘in addition’) suitable for academic essays. This is a commendably good practice. Discourse markers are — as Steven Pinker points out — the ‘unsung heroes of prose’ because they give fluency and flexibility to arguments.

The syllabus requires candidates at A level to have read around their texts and engaged with others’ views of them. This sounds more formidable than it needs to be. At a basic level, a candidate can simply note that it might be possible to see a character or a situation in a variety of ways. More sophisticated responses engage with what critics have said. In a drama paper it is perfectly acceptable, too, for candidates to discuss a particular director’s interpretations. To receive the highest marks, however, candidates need to integrate and make use of the insights they have gained from others into their own arguments. This can be through disagreement or by using a critic’s view as a means of sharpening or furthering the candidate’s arguments. The central issue is that the critic’s view needs to be there for a reason, not simply as an add on. Candidates should be wary of using generalised phrasing (‘From a feminist viewpoint; a Marxist might argue’) because this simply signals a school of criticism, without demonstrating any considered knowledge or understanding.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Shakespeare

Question 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

- (a)** Most responses were able to describe what goes on, stronger answers were then able to see that being physically disguised as men gives Portia and Nerissa the opportunity to speak with different voices and participate in the world in a different way. The best responses paid close attention to detail of the trial scene and the revelation scene at the end, noting that the women can play the patriarchy at its own game — and win. There were some interesting discussions of how the two women have to disguise their feelings at times. Appropriately, there was much focus on the love tests.
- (b)** Some candidates simply offered a narrative discussion of the passage. More sophisticated responses were able to link this scene to the bigger themes of the play such as materialism or self-interest. There was some discussion of Portia as working the system which had been conferred on her by the patriarchy in the form of her father’s will in order to get the outcome that she wants. Ranging across the play, some candidates chose to look at the other casket scenes; others linked the scene to discussions of the role of women in society or to other moments where someone’s choice is fundamental to the action.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) Many responses were highly biased towards exploring the love test at the beginning, with little said about the role of Cordelia as victim or saviour at the end. There was always clear contrast between her as an embodiment of good, as opposed to her sisters as evil self-servers. A few responses engaged with her as intransigent and politically naïve in the early scenes. There was often engagement with the thematic links between Cordelia and the Fool elsewhere. Links were often made to the sub-plot too, with Cordelia and Edgar seen as having parallel roles.
- (b) The best answers analysed the extract in detail; less able responses wrote simply about the two brothers as being opposites (ie one a villain, one a good person). There were a few which were clearly confused about the astrological references and what Edmund was claiming in the opening soliloquy. Many responses explored the passage well and found much to discuss in it, including the nature of the dialogue and the ways in which Edgar was being manipulated. Occasionally, the quantity of rich material for exploration in the passage meant that candidates did not discuss 'elsewhere' very much, if at all. Candidates that did take a wider view were often able to make connections to the parallels between the two plots in the play.

Section B: Drama

Question 3

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Train Driver and Other Plays*

- (a) Most responses focused on *The Train Driver*. They were able to see how the protagonist feels guilty whilst at the same time feels that he should not personally bear the whole responsibility for a tragedy caused by apartheid and prejudice. Some candidates — with varying success — saw Roelf as embodying Fugard's own guilt. A limitation of some answers was a failure to engage with both the plays mentioned in the question.
- (b) The technical focus of this question allowed able candidates to discuss the writer's ability to use a monologue as a means of a character sharing inner thoughts and feelings with an audience, so that when we see them interact with others our judgement of the character can be more fully rounded — we can see their hopes, fears, aspirations in a different context. Some candidates self-penalised by forgetting to write about more than one play, as requested in the question.

Question 4

SHELAGH STEPHENSON: *An Experiment with an Air Pump*

- (a) The question provided the stimulus for a wide variety of responses. Some focused very much on technical matters — the doubling up of characters, the play's structure. Others were structured more around matters of theme — the changing role of science in society, the role of women, ethics. The best responses were able to give specific examples from the text, often making use of Joseph Wright's painting or the opening scene as a starting point for discussions of how women's roles in society have changed and developed.
- (b) Most responses focused on the role of women and attitudes towards marriage and sex as explored in this scene. Most were able to make something of the fact that, despite her frustrations, Susannah is clearly very much Fenwick's intellectual equal. There was often discussion of how their attitudes are an expression of the times in which they live, with her language infused with romantic sentiment, his unemotional and with a longing for exactitude ('I do not know what you want me to say, Susannah'). Having established Joseph as cold and scientific, many responses did not engage with Joseph's more passionate outburst at the end of the passage. There was much discussion of Susannah's feeling that she is a victim of her times: 'I never had the freedom to choose as you did.' There was admiration, too, for the precision of her almost scientific analysis of the possible relationships available between women and men at this time: 'That is what young women do ... they wait to be loved, they wait for a man to bestow his mysterious gift upon them.' Looking more widely across the play, many responses made useful comparison of Susannah and Joseph's marriage to that of Ellen and Tom in the modern scenes.

Question 5

TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) Virtually all responses indicated that they were aware of contextual and historical details. Able responses focused on how the British were conscious that they were 'English' and different from the Indians. Flora's view of India was contrasted to that of other English characters. It was significantly underlined that Flora's views change throughout the play and her interactions with various characters contribute to her growing understanding. The key discriminator in the question was 'Flora's view,' which invited a specific focus. The best responses were able to see that Flora's attitudes are profoundly ambiguous — she likes to feel as though she has a liberal, open attitude towards India and its people, and yet at the same time she is still willing to take advantage of the system for her own comfort. Some very good responses were able to characterise the limitations of her understanding of the situation she finds herself in.
- (b) Some answers to this question did not go beyond rather literal line by line discussion of the extract, with little sense that a strategic approach might be more fruitful. Better responses were able to focus on the implications of the discussion about Indian/Indian painters, the symbolism of the cakes, and the difference between appearing in shop window or an art gallery. A few candidates made connections and contrasts between Mrs Swan and Anish and Flora and Nirad and focused on the importance of context. There were many different views of Mrs Swan expressed. Some responses saw her as patronising and unwilling to engage with Anish, particularly when she closes him down by offering cake when the conversation gets awkward. Although, that is part of the presentation, the best responses were also able to see Mrs Swan's light self-deprecation ('beyond my fondest hopes for my dotage') and her slightly teasing humorous tone. Most answers ranged across the play too, seeing this exchange as one of Stoppard's methods for exploring the issue of colonialism through the retrospective lens of its legacy. Some candidates pointed out that the scene could be viewed as an example of how fixed mind sets may not be much changed by the passing of time.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/32 Shakespeare and Drama</p>
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Key messages

- All assessment objectives are equally weighted; all must be given equal attention.
- Candidates need to pay particular attention to genre if they are to gain high marks.
- Candidates should not be shy about naming the author of a text and talking explicitly about the author's strategic choices.

General comments

There were a small number of responses which did not follow the rubric, with candidates sometimes writing twice on the same text, or writing twice about texts from the same section. There were a small number of candidates who did not make effective use of time in the examination, writing extensively in one question and then writing hardly anything for the second. This is clearly not recommended.

The vast majority of candidates had plainly enjoyed reading and thinking about the texts they had studied, with only a few failing to engage with the texts in a suitable way. There had obviously been many lively discussions in class.

The most popular texts were *King Lear* and *Indian Ink*. On the whole, candidates preferred **(b)** to **(a)** type questions, possibly because the presence of printed text offers security.

Although popular with candidates, **(b)** questions pose very particular challenges, both in terms of close reading and an ability to link the passage to the rest of the text. Candidates should be aware that simply having a bit of the text in front of them does not make this the easier option. If a passage is provided, it is there for in-depth analysis, not merely as a springboard for a general essay.

It is impossible to begin an answer without some knowledge and understanding. However, to rise up through the mark scale, responses should move from simple knowledge of events to understanding of character, theme, and dramatic presentation and the ways in which all three link together to create meaning in a text. Candidates should be particularly aware that in a drama paper, they need to think hard about how a text fits into its genre, of the genre's conventions, of how it might be interpreted on a stage. Many candidates are rather reticent about discussing the role of the author as the crafter of what is going on: some responses give the impression that a text exists independently of its creator. In their responses, candidates should make clear and constant reference to the language that is being used by the characters. In order to be rewarded for the quality of their analysis, there should be specific, forensic exploration of particular moments, with a clear understanding of genre in the background. Candidates are required to discuss contexts in their responses. These may be literary, cultural, political, scientific. But the central point is that the must be relevant and integrated into arguments. Thus, for example, the sources of inspiration for Shakespeare when writing *King Lear* may be interesting, but they do not really provide an insight into the play as a lived experience when seen in the theatre. On the other hand, knowledge of the system of apartheid in Fugard, or some acquaintance with Anglo-Indian history and experience in Stoppard is vital to a successful response, whatever the question asked. In other words, teachers should be careful to only teach contexts which have a bearing on the central issues or techniques of a text. And if contexts such as Brechtian techniques are to be taught, candidates might explore what this means in dramatic terms, rather than simply dropping Brecht's name into a response. In other words, candidates must demonstrate understanding of the contexts they choose to include.

The assessment objectives for this paper call for a 'personal response.' For weaker candidates, this sometimes simply amounts to relating aspects of the text to their own view of life. Other candidates simply want to express their personal reaction to one of the themes or characters. Stronger candidates understand

— and demonstrate — that they have thought about the texts for themselves. This comes through in the choice of examples, the quality of writing, and, with the best candidates, the originality of the ideas put forward. In **(b)** questions the central discriminator is often the technique that a candidate chooses to adopt. A line-by-line approach undoubtedly gives coverage of the passage, but it often prevents an overall, strategic view of the passage from emerging. Questions often ask about the writer's 'dramatic methods and concerns' and this is an explicit nudge towards technique, not content. In **(b)** questions it is important, too, that candidates demonstrate an ability to range across the text, as well as offering a close reading of the extract provided.

A literature examination is, of course, about what a candidate knows about a text. But it is also about the effectiveness of the way in which this knowledge and understanding is conveyed to a reader. It is, in this sense, a writing exercise. Consequently, it is vital that candidates plan what they have to say, making sure that every paragraph is relevant to the question asked. All too often with less able candidates, there is a tendency to overgeneralise. Of course, there are some very good long answers; but for some candidates who choose to write at length, the quantity seems more important than the quality. The tendency for these responses is for a reliance on narrative or paraphrase, combined with little focus on authorial techniques. Fewer points, fully substantiated and dealing constantly with literary matters, tend to do better. It is clear that many centres spend time teaching the discourse markers ('on the other hand,' 'another aspect,' 'in addition') suitable for academic essays. This is a commendably good practice. Discourse markers are — as Steven Pinker points out — the 'unsung heroes of prose' because they give fluency and flexibility to arguments.

The syllabus requires candidates at A level to have read around their texts and engaged with others' views of them. This sounds more formidable than it needs to be. At a basic level, a candidate can simply note that it might be possible to see a character or a situation in a variety of ways. More sophisticated responses, , engage with what critics have said. In a drama paper it is perfectly acceptable, too, for candidates to discuss a particular director's interpretations. To receive the highest marks, however, candidates need to integrate and make use of the insights they have gained from others into their own arguments. This can be through disagreement or by using a critic's view as a means of sharpening or furthering the candidate's arguments. The central issue is that the critic's view needs to be there for a reason, not simply as an add on. Candidates should be wary of using generalised phrasing ('From a feminist viewpoint; a Marxist might argue') because this simply signals a school of criticism, without demonstrating any considered knowledge or understanding.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Shakespeare

Question 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

- (a)** Although the issue of trade and business is fundamental to the play, few candidates took up this question. Those that did were able to see that even marriage is seen as a trade between people, with the language of business often used in conventionally 'romantic' scenes. Many responses worked on the more obvious aspects of the question, particularly in relation to Shylock and his dealings with the Christians. The best answers saw how 'hazard' permeates all aspects of the play in terms of personal ambition and self-enrichment, both monetary and emotional terms. Many rightly saw the world view where everything has a price, nothing a value, as corrupting even the most upright of the characters to a moment where Portia and Nerissa have to test the value of the love that is felt for them.
- (b)** There was some very good work on this task which used detailed textual and contextual understanding to support convincing analyses of Antonio and Bassanio, their spoken and hidden agendas, and the latter's intentions towards Portia as well as Antonio's private thoughts. Less effective work over-focussed on issues of their sexuality and the nature of their friendship, often with little more than assertions to substantiate the claim. The weakest answers often failed to deal substantially with the text provided and simply provided character studies of the two. There were some interesting ideas expressed about how the relationship is transactional, not always one of affection. Some candidates saw that there were connections to be made with Shylock and his attitudes: in a sense Bassanio exacts his pound of flesh from his friend whilst giving the appearance that all is done in good faith and in the best of all possible taste. The best responses engaged with the hopes and aspirations of the pair and looked across the play as a whole for examples of where their relationship is further— and differently— explored.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) For many candidates, the most important thing to concentrate on was the opening scene, where the issue — real and pretend love — is at its most vivid. There was much discussion of Cordelia's integrity as opposed to her sisters' power grabbing insincerity. Some answers focused almost entirely on Cordelia and provided a character study rather than a shaped discussion of the particular issue raised. There were often useful discussions of the use of the word 'nothing' in the scene. Better answers were able to range more widely across the play, considering Gloucester and his sons as well, or the tough love that a mad Lear inspires from the Fool. There were some interesting reactions to the moment where Lear is reunited with Cordelia at the end. Many candidates were able to integrate insights about the wheel of fortune and the upsetting of nature into their responses. With some weaker responses there was a great deal of discussion of the source material of the play or of the historical circumstances (the transfer of power from Elizabeth to James) in which the play was first written. Neither of these proved particularly fruitful in terms of relevant discussion of the issue raised.
- (b) Weaker responses simply gave a running commentary on the scene. Better responses were able to link the passage to the wider issues of the play such as filial love, or the ways in which both Gloucester and Lear have been cast aside by society and must now confront their different types of blindness. Some candidates failed to comment on the role of the Old Man as an intermediary in the scene, whilst others failed to recognise the difference in tone and language of Edgar's aside remarks, when compared to those expressed openly as Poor Tom. The best candidates, saw how Edgar is sorely tried here, and comparisons were often made between his role and situation and that of Cordelia. Many candidates also made connections between the parallel journeys of self-discovery that Lear and Gloucester undergo. There was often relevant discussion of the tension between character and fate, with Gloucester's view about the gods who 'kill us for their sport' set against discussions of how both Lear and Gloucester (to an extent) are agents in their own downfalls, not victims of external forces.

Section B: Drama

Question 3

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Train Driver and Other Plays*

- (a) This question appealed to only a small number of candidates. Most responses were able to see that Fugard deals with prejudice in a variety of forms and situations in these plays. The best answers were able to engage fully with at least two of the plays and show an understanding of ways in which prejudice can be both implicit and explicit. There were some very interesting explorations of antisemitism in 'Have You Seen Us?', with links to apartheid clearly and tellingly adduced. All candidates showed awareness of historical background when dealing with 'The Train Driver.'
- (b) Candidate responses were able to analyse Mannetje's burst of emotion in the extract and Alfred's lengthy, guilt-filled response. Most were able to relate this moment to the wider context of this particular play, though discussions of connections to the other texts were often rather restricted. The best answers were able to see that Fugard deals with all kinds of different conflict, from that between black and white to the more personal, as seen here. These answers were able to characterise conflict through close analysis of tensions and, in this case, resolutions.

Question 4

SHELAGH STEPHENSON: *An Experiment with an Air Pump*

- (a) This question was chosen by only a small number of candidates. They were able to link the structural time shifts to the themes of scientific development and the presentation of the female characters. Many gave detailed and counterbalanced analyses of Susannah and her family, set against discussions of the relationship between Tom and Ellen, both in terms of family dynamics and belief systems. More straightforward responses took a largely binary view, arguing that women were repressed in 1799, liberated in 1999. These responses did not always see the complexity of

the 'modern' liberation where women have to balance family and professional life and thus are constrained in different ways.

- (b) The best responses contextualized the passage and were able to use references to both language and history to explore the tension between Susannah and Fenwick. There were some able discussions of the language, though some candidates seemed slightly perplexed by the frankness of the content and its explicitness. The best responses often saw Susannah's point about the male gaze and masculine, exclusive language as central to the discussion. Less insightful answers tracked the passage and focused on the fact that the characters are arguing. Candidates awarded at the lower end of the mark scheme wrote general responses about Susannah and Fenwick. One or two very able responses suggested that the conversation is inauthentic in feel, with both characters articulating ideas that show awareness of 20th century gender politics.

Question 5

TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) Nearly all responses were able to make something of the different time periods of the play. Responses often commented on the retrospective distancing that the post-independence discussions supply. Many candidates chose to tackle the subject through the contrasting of characters — Flora with Mrs Swan, Anish with Das. Many looked in detail at the ways in which the conversations developed differently in the different eras, with Mrs Swan's conversations with Das seen as based on a much firmer sense of equality between the two. Some responses noted that, in many ways, attitudes seem not to have changed nearly far enough. There were a few answers that focused on Eldon Pike and his longing to catalogue the past. The candidates understood the historical context of *Empire* and were able to integrate it well into their discussions.
- (b) Responses at the lower levels tended to give an account of the 'relationship' between Flora and Durance in terms of him being an aspiring courtier keen to impress with the car. More sophisticated responses saw that for all his friendliness (and perhaps his romantic intentions) Durance remains a police officer and representative of the Raj. These candidates also understood Durance's uneasiness with being cut in the street and the perplexity he feels over Flora's intimacy with the Rajah ('But do not you see....'). Responses were usually able to make telling comparisons between the stiff upper lip of the Raj and Flora's openness to new experiences and the amused banter ('Oh heavens') with which she dismisses his concerns. The best candidates were able to make connections with other parts of the play.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/33
Shakespeare and Drama

Key messages

- All assessment objectives are equally weighted; all must be given equal attention.
- Candidates need to pay particular attention to genre if they are to gain high marks.
- Candidates should not be shy about naming the author of a text and talking explicitly about the author's strategic choices.

General comments

This paper is taken by only a very small cohort of candidates. It follows, therefore, that the question specific observations may not be taken from a wide reading across the whole ability range. The **(b)** questions on *The Merchant of Venice* and *Indian Ink* were by far the most popular on the paper.

There were a small number of responses which did not follow the rubric, with candidates sometimes writing twice on the same text, or writing twice about texts from the same section. There were a small number of candidates who did not make effective use of their time in the examination, writing extensively in one question and then writing hardly anything for the second. This is clearly not recommended.

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want to express their personal reaction to one of the themes or characters. Stronger candidates understand — and demonstrate — that they have thought about the texts for themselves. This comes through in the choice of examples, the quality of writing, and, with the best candidates, the originality of the ideas put forward. In **(b)** questions the central discriminator is often the technique that a candidate chooses to adopt. A line-by-line approach undoubtedly gives coverage of the passage, but it often prevents an overall, strategic view of the passage from emerging. Questions often ask about the writer's 'dramatic methods and concerns' and this is an explicit nudge towards technique, not content. In **(b)** questions it is important, too, that candidates demonstrate an ability to range across the text, as well as offering a close reading of the extract provided.

A literature examination is, of course, about what a candidate knows about a text. But it is also about the effectiveness of the way in which this knowledge and understanding is conveyed to a reader. It is, in this sense, a writing exercise. Consequently, it is vital that candidates plan what they have to say, making sure that every paragraph is relevant to the question asked. All too often with less able candidates, there is a tendency to overgeneralise. Of course, there are some very good long answers; but for some candidates who choose to write at length, the quantity seems more important than the quality. The tendency for these responses is for a reliance on narrative or paraphrase, combined with little focus on authorial techniques. Fewer points, fully substantiated and dealing constantly with literary matters, tend to do better. It is clear that many centres spend time teaching the discourse markers ('on the other hand,' 'another aspect,' 'in addition') suitable for academic essays. This is a commendably good practice. Discourse markers are — as Steven Pinker points out — the 'unsung heroes of prose' because they give fluency and flexibility to arguments.

The syllabus requires candidates at A level to have read around their texts and engaged with others' views of them. This sounds more formidable than it needs to be. At a basic level, a candidate can simply note that it might be possible to see a character or a situation in a variety of ways. More sophisticated responses, engage with what critics have said. In a drama paper it is perfectly acceptable, too, for candidates to discuss a particular director's interpretations. To receive the highest marks, however, candidates need to integrate and make use of the insights they have gained from others into their own arguments. This can be through disagreement or by using a critic's view as a means of sharpening or furthering the candidate's arguments. The central issue is that the critic's view needs to be there for a reason, not simply as an add on. Candidates should be wary of using generalised phrasing ('From a feminist viewpoint; a Marxist might argue') because this simply signals a school of criticism, without demonstrating any considered knowledge or understanding.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Shakespeare

Question 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

- (a)** On the whole, candidates were able to give an account of the various disguises in the play. There was often discussion of the caskets as concealing their true content. But the centre of the question was the disguises of Portia and Nerissa. Most responses were able to describe what goes on, better answers were then able to see that being disguised as men gives the women the opportunity to speak with different voices and participate in the world in a different way. The best responses paid close attention to detail of the trial scene and the revelation scene at the end, noting that the women can play the patriarchy at its own game — and win.
- (b)** The best responses explored both what is said about Shylock and his own speech and actions. Many answers simply engaged with the passage from Shylock's entry, thus losing opportunities to comment on ways in which Shylock is seen — even by those in authority — as unworthy of justice. A number of responses commented on Shylock's calm and intelligent unpicking of the Duke's prejudice which he sees as undermining his legal authority. There was some comment, too, on how Shylock's restraint turns itself into impassioned sarcasm by line 50. Candidates often differed sharply in their response to Shylock at this moment, with some seeing him as victim, others happy to share the Duke's view that he is 'an inhuman wretch.' The best responses, as always, dealt closely with the details of the text.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) There was engagement with the causes of Lear's madness in these responses, but on the whole the complexity of the storm scenes themselves was not fully explored. Very few responses engaged with the storm as a mirror of Lear's inner turmoil. Some responses looked at Lear as 'unaccommodated man' and wrote — with some success — as madness leading to self-knowledge and Lear's new understanding of himself in the final scenes.
- (b) Responses were usually able to make something of discussing Cordelia's role in the play as a whole. Much was written about her as a saint-like and forgiving figure. However, very few responses fully engaged with the detail of the passage set. The best were able to analyse Lear's feelings of rage and disappointment, which sometimes presented itself in terms of a contrast to his attitude towards Cordelia at the end of the play. There were some fine answers that looked closely at the imagery of commerce in the passage ('She was dear to us,' 'She is herself a dowry') or at the simplicity of Cordelia's language and tone as she confronts her father's rage.

Section B: Drama

Question 3

ATHOL FUGARD: *The Train Driver and Other Plays*

- (a) Too few responses to comment.
- (b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 4

SHELAGH STEPHENSON: *An Experiment with an Air Pump*

- (a) Too few responses to comment.
- (b) Too few responses to comment.

Question 5

TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) There were only a small number of responses to this question. Answers were able to point out how Eldon Pike wants to pin down Flora for reasons of his own career and ego. The best responses dealt with Mrs Swan's delight in undermining and making fun of both him and his professional ambitions.
- (b) All candidates were able to contextualise this passage in terms of the history of the British empire. Flora was almost always seen as a liberal, keen to understand India and make something of her perceptions in terms of her writing. Stronger responses were able to make a more complex point, often suggesting that Flora exploits her position by being unaware of Indian sensibilities and thus embarrassing Das in this scene ('DAS, who then steps back rather further than necessary'). There was much to be said about the stage directions in this extract, and many responses dealt fully with them. Much was also made of the difference of attitude towards servants that Flora and Das demonstrate towards the end of the extract. Most candidates were able to make clear links to moments elsewhere in the play. There was some attention at times to others' views of the play, though this was sometimes included simply for agreement, rather than as a way of moving an argument forward. Some very good responses dealt with critics who, although not writing specifically about this play, had provided insight into differences between western and eastern sensibilities. Discussion of this point often centred round Flora's attempts to understand *rasa* and Indian art. Some responses suggested that Flora's is fundamentally a tourist's view of India — she can retreat into the comfort of her own world view, with both her behaviour and speech those of a colonialist when it suits her. There was sometimes useful contrasting of Flora with Mrs Swan or Durance as different embodiments of colonial attitudes. Some candidates insightfully pointed out

that Das is, in a sense, a co-conspirator because of his willingness to accept and internalise British culture as in some ways more important than his own.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- The best answers are strategically planned and candidates select information rather than including everything they know.
- Remember that texts and characters are constructs and should not be referred to as if they are real people. Keep the writer in view and consider their intentions in making choices in form, structure and language.
- All assessment objectives are important and should be addressed clearly.
- Analysis of a writer's use of punctuation or capital letters should be carefully applied and should not form the basis of a core analytical approach.

General comments

The quality of many answers was very encouraging and there was evidence of enthusiastic engagement with texts leading to some original and well-structured answers. Enjoyment of study and hard work were evident in many answers and reflected the skill and professionalism of centres in selecting texts, encouraging discussion and teaching approaches that gave candidates the confidence to write their best answers in the exams. Use of detail, ability to comment on contexts and wider reading were successfully used in many answers. Less successful answers lacked detailed knowledge of texts, and some seemed to rely on summaries or film productions of texts. These can never act as a replacement for the texts themselves.

Unfortunately, there were rubric infringements on this paper once again. These consisted of candidates only answering one question on the paper, answering two poetry questions, answering on two prose texts or answering on two texts pre 1900 or post 1900. An example is that *The Knight's Tale* is poetry but is sometimes combined erroneously with Spender or Bhatt.

The best answers show close and accurate reading of the question, focus on the demands of all assessment objectives, plan strategically to select relevant information for use and judiciously choose supporting detail in the form of quotation or textual reference. Examiners saw some very long answers this series where the additional pages written did not add to the success of the answer. There are certainly some exceptionally good long answers, but also answers that throw everything they know at the question without clearly planning how this addresses the question.

Knowledge and understanding lie at the heart of textual study. Planning is essential and is a skill that should be explicitly taught. There is no one way to plan, as evidenced by the wide range of approaches we see on exam papers, but the basics of timing, selection of material, development of argument and sequencing are key to ensuring candidates approach planning with confidence and effective application. Genre is important and candidates should ensure they keep it in view throughout their answer. Discussion of contexts is an important part of each answer and should be relevant to the question. All too often candidates include material of little or no relevance. Sometimes context is presented as fact when it is really speculation. Emily Dickinson's mental health, views on religion and sexuality are examples of three areas that should be handled with care in answers on **Question 4**. Literary contexts are valuable aspects of this element of the paper and some insightful discussion has been seen on texts such as *The Handmaid's Tale* (as a dystopian text). Another example is reference to the gothic and Bildungsroman in relation to *Oliver Twist*. Quotations should be integrated into answers and should not be too long. Judicious selection of quotations and relevant use lead to successful responses. Some straightforward answers lacked detail, and this restricted the effectiveness and complexity of their arguments. General comments or those that lack support don't get to the heart of a text's meaning; this was noted in answers to both **(a)** and **(b)** questions.

Some very interesting and insightful analysis was seen this series. Analysis should respond to the terms of the question and use terminology that is both accurate and relevant. Importantly, analysis cannot be divorced from effect on the reader. Examiners read a great deal about rhyme schemes in poetry. When this is done well, analysis of rhyme and rhythm is accurate, focused, specific and linked to effect on the reader. Name dropping different types of rhyme such as 'iambic pentameter' without comment or with vague reference to 'an effect on the reader' is unhelpful. This year examiners saw a great many attempts to analyse punctuation, particularly in the case of Emily Dickinson's poetry. For the most part, this did not reflect anything more than partial or limited analytical engagement. Speculation about why punctuation has been chosen by a writer is no replacement for specific analysis of language or structure. Generalised remarks on caesura, dashes, capitalisation or semi-colons without close examination tended to be unhelpful.

In terms of personal response, the best candidates offered lucid and well-integrated personal responses that demonstrated relevant understanding and application of thoughtful reflection. These were sometimes well-linked to examples of other interpretations and responses including critical views. Candidates working at the lower levels of achievement tended to reflect on the significance of, for example, a character's plight or a moral situation. This could be seen clearly in answers on texts such as *The Poisonwood Bible*, *Oliver Twist* and *Persuasion*. Some impressively original and well-argued personal responses were evident in the most successful answers.

Clarity of communication varied significantly in answers seen. As a minimum, candidates should ensure their work is planned, organised clearly and that a little time is left to proofread before the end of the exam. The clearest work is organised into paragraphs and always keeps the question in view.

In terms of considering and evaluating varying opinions and interpretations, examiners saw some good examples including focused use of critical views and specific quotations from critics but also acknowledgement that there are different ways of viewing literary texts. This came in the form of 'some might think' approaches which were used well in several answers. The best answers integrate comments within their arguments rather than bolting them on to the end. It is fine to refer to feminist or Marxist critical views, but these should not be generalised and must be linked specifically to the argument.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 1 – Jane Austen: *Persuasion*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Austen develops the role and characterisation of Anne Elliot through her relationship with different men. This question was rather less popular than the (b) option. Answers tended to be good with some very impressive critical interpretations shared. Answers working in the mid-range of marks tended to focus on Ann's relationships with Wentworth and Sir Walter with sound arguments and support. Some impressive responses were seen that thoroughly and perceptively explored a range of men and relationships with impressive levels of detail. Some extended their discussion into Musgrove and Harville. Crucially these answers focused on what the relationships revealed about Anne's character with reference to aspects such as her role as a heroine, her contrast to other female characters and her actions. The least successful responses summarised Anne's relationships with Wentworth, her father and Admiral Croft. Context related to Austen was sometimes misunderstood with references to the sixteenth century and as late as the 1920s. Some answers lacked an understanding of Austen's era and the limitations experienced by women.
- (b) This passage-based question required candidates to discuss Austen's presentation of Sir Walter and Elizabeth in an extract from Volume 2 Chapter 3 and in the wider novel. This question was more popular than the (a) option. On the whole, the question was well-handled with some detailed understanding and knowledge of Sir Walter and Elizabeth's vanity and snobbery. Some dealt well with the humour in the situation and understood the subtlety of Austen's craft as a writer. Less successful answers narrated the story of Elizabeth and Sir Walter or offered commentaries on the passage, often relying on paraphrase. Better responses explored details such as Anne's role in shaping our view of Sir Walter and Elizabeth, both in her dread of them and her regret at their evident pride in showing off the house and their 'popularity'. Other good answers considered the use of language, e.g. Mrs Clay 'would pretend what was proper' and compliments 'which Anne could not pay'. The most effective answers were able to combine examples to develop arguments related to Austen's narrative methods. As in 1(a) comments relating to context lacked confidence

and there were numerous examples of inaccurate or generalised points including discussion of the role of the navy, social mores and the landed gentry.

Question 2 – Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about how Chaucer presents different kinds of love. Some impressive answers were seen, commenting on the context of chivalry and courtly love with use of quotations to show the initial betrayal of the vow of 'brotherly' love between Arcite and Palamon for the pair's love-at-first sight of Emelye. Some answers included the significance of prayers to the different gods and the reconciliation at the death of Arcite. Moderately successful answers tended to take a formulaic approach to the question that tracked through instances of courtly and romantic love or compared brotherly love and romantic love in general terms. Some misunderstood the concept of courtly love, coming up with alternatives such as 'disdaining love', 'vanity love', 'ordinary love' and self-love'. A few answers confined their argument to the idea that, given that the men did not know Emelye, their love was merely infatuation; the extent to which she was a focus for competition was ridiculous and that, given she would have preferred to remain a virgin, she shouldn't have had to commit to any of her suitors. Some candidates handled this feminist perspective well and used contextual comparison to consolidate lines of argument. In all but the best answers there was little competent analysis of Chaucer's writing. The weakest answers focused on narrative approaches with very little understanding of Chaucer's craft as a writer. These answers tended to list different kinds of love with little textual support or development of ideas.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse an extract from *The Knight's Tale*. The best answers wrote about context, focusing on the emphasis in the passage on the characters' equality in terms of 'worthynesse' and 'estaaat'. and were able to discuss poetic methods. These candidates were clearly aware of the genre and analysed details accordingly, linking them to examples from the wider text. There was some useful analysis of the references to the gates and banners. One example referred to Arcite entering from the west foreshadowing his demise because that is where the sun sets and is the colour of blood. There was some selection of effective phrases from the battle scene, commenting on the use of alliteration and sound effects of some of the verbs. Weaker candidates struggled with the extract and there was evidence of some misreading of the extract. The least successful answers featured frequent repetition and general descriptions of the battlefield and procession.

Question 3 – Charles Dickens: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways in which Dickens shapes a reader's response to the character Oliver Twist. This was a relatively popular text but the (a) question was less popular than the (b) option. Answers were seen across the ability range, the least successful of which wrote descriptively about the plot, often focusing on episodes where Dickens demonstrated the most pity for Oliver. Some of these answers struggled to discriminate between characters, suggesting for example, that Nancy is Fagin's sister or that Dodger was Oliver's true friend. Better answers structured their answer around specific character traits including determination, bravery, innocence, resilience and gratitude. The best answers saw the arc of Oliver's development and progress to happiness. Some of these answers responded well to the 'shapes a reader's response' aspect of the question developing an argument that focused on Oliver's relationships including his relationship with Nancy and his dialogues with Noah.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse a passage from Chapter 47, showing what it adds to Dickens's presentation of Fagin and Sikes in the novel as a whole. This question was more popular than 3(a). Some strong responses were seen, offering detailed analysis of both Fagin and Sikes. These effective answers balanced scrutiny of language, form and structure in the extract with wider knowledge of the novel. Moderately successful answers wrote detailed answers but tended to focus the majority of their answer on Fagin. The best answers explored the dialogue between Noah and Fagin, referring to specific details such as repetition and the use of 'triumphantly'. These very good answers showed evidence of close reading and analysis. Some of the weakest answers struggled to differentiate between Fagin and Sikes and wrote about them as if they were one. There was a good deal of misunderstanding about the context relating to Fagin. A significant number of candidates thought that Dickens was racist and failed to identify the accurate context of the Victorian era. Very few candidates mentioned the Industrial Revolution or Darwinism. The majority tended to comment generally on a time of poverty where workhouses were discussed as 'options' for the poor rather than the prisons they effectively were.

Question 4 – Emily Dickinson: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to explore how Dickinson presents loss in her poetry using three poems. The poems of Emily Dickinson are very popular on this paper and this question attracted many answers, although fewer than the (b) option. Popular choices of poems to use for this question included: *I measure every Grief I meet, After great pain, a formal feeling comes* -, and *As Imperceptibly as Grief*. The best answers created an overarching thesis that led to insightful discussion and focused argument. These were able to access quotations and comment on details such as imagery and sound effects. Less successful responses overinvested in generalised assertions about the use and meaning of capitalisation and dashes. Some candidates tried to shoehorn poems such as *A narrow Fellow in the Grass* into their answer with limited success. Some candidates presented answers that were effectively three mini essays on each poem with little cohesive argument or interpretation. Context tended to be misunderstood or focused on speculative explorations of Emily Dickinson's life and beliefs.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the poem *A still – Volcano – Life*. This was an extremely popular question with a wide range of approaches and interpretations. Many excellent responses were seen; these investigated with skill and subtlety the metaphorical and symbolic power and significance of Dickinson's imagery. These answers saw the poem in terms of the speaker on the edge of erupting, repressed emotions, many linking this to Dickinson's sister-in-law, exploring the poem in detail with original personal interpretations. Contextual reference was relevant and focused, largely linked to details of Dickinson's life. Moderate responses grasped the symbolic connection between volcanoes and feeling but some became bogged down in repetition. Straightforward responses analysed the volcano imagery at face value which had some merit, while some struggled to grasp a cohesive way forward and wrote in vague terms about earthquakes and eruptions. Many candidates listed literary devices such as dashes, capitalisation, anaphora and personification without analysing how the devices created effects and opened up the poem in terms of meaning and interpretation. Attempts to analyse dashes were seldom successful with comments such as 'the poem is littered with dashes' and 'Dickinson uses random dashes' proving unhelpful and vague. If a poetic technique is named, it is vitally important to refer to how it is used to create an effect and provide an example. Some good answers wrote about the effects of half rhyme, broken syntax and rhythm with clear examples as part of a strategic argument. Connections to other poems were made, such as discussion of *I have never seen "Volcanos"* -, although weaker answers tended to write about the given poem in isolation.

Question 5 – John Milton: *Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Milton's presentation of different attitudes to God in *Paradise Lost* Books IX and X. This proved to be fairly popular text but the (a) question attracted fewer answers than the (b) option. There were few weak answers and candidates who chose this question tended to be confident and knowledgeable. There were some excellent responses on different attitudes towards God such as 'just, fair, merciful, loving, forgiving, compassionate, quick to anger and omnipotent'. These answers offered confident language analysis with relevant supporting detail. Some candidates offered different perspectives for Eve, Adam and Satan on God, using this approach as a means of structuring their answers. Some candidates focused exclusively on the attitudes of Adam and Eve tending to focus their arguments around free will and leaving Satan out of the mix. The most successful answers were able to make insightful connections to context in terms of allegory and links to the Bible as well as Milton's intention and message.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss an extract from Book 9, showing what it adds to Milton's presentation of the relationship between Adam and Eve. This question was considerably more popular than the (a) option. Answers across the range of marks were seen including some excellent work on the links between the relationship and Milton's beliefs. Explanations about the Fall and Eve's part in it were well documented as well as her regret. There was also some very positive discussion around gender roles and Milton's attitudes to women including discussion of misogyny. The best responses were sensitive to the changing nature of Adam and Eve's relationship and considered Milton's use of poetic methods to convey this, focusing particularly on language and tone. They considered in detail Eve's powers of persuasion here compared to her argument with Adam to be allowed to work alone and how she persuades him to eat the apple. They also considered Adam's responses to Eve's arguments at various points. There was some good analysis of phrases such as 'still a lifeless rib' and the irony of the 'fruitless hours'. Some

explored sentence structure and the use of key words placed at the beginning or end of lines. Less successful answers tended to rely on paraphrase of the scene or a contextual approach with some summary of content.

Question 6 – Bram Stoker: *Dracula*

- (a) This question required candidates to respond to a stimulus about female characters as victims in the novel. This is quite a popular text, but this question was less popular than the (b) option. A range of achievement was seen with weaker answers tending to work through summaries of Mina and Lucy, offering basic character descriptions and some comment as to how far each was a victim. Some straightforward and partial answers struggled to move beyond the idea of gender stereotypes and narrative recall, arguing for Lucy as completely a victim and Mina falling victim and requiring rescue. Most answers, however, answered the question well and there were some very good investigations of Mina, Lucy and the three female vampires (variously referred to by some candidates as ‘Vampirettes’, ‘Vampirellas’ or ‘Vamps’). There were interesting discussions that drew on psychoanalytical critiques and socio-cultural and contextual understanding. Independent and original responses were well done on this question. Most answers argued that Lucy was not a victim by the end of the story and ‘represented the sexual repression of Victorian ladies’. Some convincing arguments were made about the three female vampires. They had been victims but became aggressive predators under Dracula’s control. There was mention of patriarchy ruling from beyond the grave. The most successful answers used relevant detail in the form of quotations and textual references to build convincing arguments. There was some focused evaluation of how Stoker’s characterisation of the female characters contributed to the novel through ideas of male heroism, concepts of romantic love, fidelity and devotion and the creation of gothic horror via the sleepwalking and bedroom scenes.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse a passage from Chapter 2 of the novel, showing what it adds to Stoker’s presentation of Count Dracula in the novel as a whole. This question was more popular than the (a) option. Less successful answers tended to become repetitive, and these candidates struggled to find sufficient material for comment and relied too much on their knowledge of the novel as a whole. Conversely, some candidates found it difficult to relate Dracula’s presentation here to the wider novel except in very general terms. Because this passage is Harker’s first-person narrative, weaker candidates also struggled with how to explain something that we as modern, vampire savvy readers know about the Count, but that Harker and the original first reader doesn’t, at that stage in the novel, know or understand. Moderately successful answers were able to comment on the duplicitous nature of Dracula in this extract and better answers linked this to contexts such as imperialism of the time and the exoticism of the ‘other’. Detailed and intelligent answers were seen that analysed language effectively, commenting for example on the language surrounding the Count’s hospitality and the irony of the description of the hand. Some of these responses also considered Harker’s suspicion about the driver and Dracula’s excuse that he does ‘not sup’. A few answers referred to the use of sentence structure, such as polysyndeton giving an effect of a winding journey through the castle’s passages and Dracula’s strength in carrying the bags all the way. Some commented on the foreshadowing of later events in the novel, but few commented on details such as the important issue in the wider novel of being invited over the threshold.

Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 7 – Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid’s Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to compare and contrast Atwood’s presentation of Offred’s relationship with the Commander and Nick. There were many answers to this question on the most popular prose text on this paper. Very good answers were able to compare and contrast the relationships confidently, making interesting observations about how the two are similar. Some considered how the relationships are both unnatural and forced due to Offred’s lack of control over her situation. Context was very well done by many candidates and the awareness of the dystopian genre as a literary context was usually effective and relevant. Useful links to topical issues such as Roe versus Wade, Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban, Nazi Germany and North Korea featured as well as discussions on free speech, rights to protest and the influence of patriarchal views. Knowledge and understanding of the novel and Atwood’s concerns were largely secure. Weaker answers retold the story of Offred’s two relationships with varying degrees of detail. The strongest of these weaker answers brought out points of comparison, sometimes implicitly. Few answers were able to explore Offred’s ambivalent feelings towards the Commander and the way

she develops closeness to Nick. Better answers explored differences and similarities more fully commenting on aspects such as imprisonment, sexuality, masculinity and freedom. Some took an approach more related to the structure of the narrative. Many were able to produce at least a straightforward comparison of how both relationships reflected elements of risk, suspicion, pragmatism and choice. Good answers were able to develop discussion with judiciously chosen details related to language, form and structure including the use of first-person narrator, the unreliability of the narrator, imagery and symbolism such as the Scrabble game. The best answers used their arguments to explore Atwood's contexts at a sophisticated level of understanding including consideration of feminism, right wing reactionaries and religious fundamentalism.

- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of writing in a passage from Chapter 23 of the novel, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Atwood's narrative methods and concerns. This was an extremely popular question, and all levels of achievement were seen. Some candidates really struggled with the extract and seized on Offred's hope for escape or offered vague discussion of the role of a Handmaid in Gilead. The weakest answers relied on narrative summary or paraphrase, some attempting to select elements more relevant to the question but with little success. Some focused almost solely on the idea of 'reconstruction' and the idea of Offred as an unreliable narrator with varying success. These answers also struggled with context, many making general and tenuous remarks about feminism that were unrelated to the passage. Answers in the middle of the mark range explained Offred's situation and often discussed aspects including reconstruction, forgiveness, power and the duties of a Handmaid to provide hope in the form of a baby, usually in general terms and tending to neglect the effects of the writing or reference to the wider text. Some of these moderately effective answers also tended to drift from the passage into material of tangential significance, losing a line of argument in the process. Better answers to this question referred to a range of concerns and also demonstrated a confident awareness of Offred's use of memory, her situation and the significance of this moment to the wider text. Good answers referred to Atwood's style including narrative voice and its unreliability, use of broken thoughts, the sense of unease and Offred's understanding of her own vulnerability. These answers understood the meaning of reconstruction well. The best answers covered a great deal of detail from the passage and combined excellent understanding with sophisticated and focused analysis. These integrated reference to the wider text, drawing in the historical notes and symbolism such as the 'kiss'. In terms of evaluation of varying interpretations and critical responses, some candidates did not include any reference at all. Some mentioned the term 'écriture féminine' with varying levels of explanation but candidates should be encouraged to assess the critics they cite in more critical terms against the evidence of the text itself.

Question 8 – Sujata Bhatt: Selected poems from *Point No Point*

- (a) This question required candidates to explore how far they agree with a stimulus quotation, 'Bhatt presents a dialogue with herself in her poems', using three poems in their answer. There were very few answers to this question. Candidates could have used any poems where Bhatt does not assume a persona, but reflects on her heritage and identity, family and childhood experiences as well as displacement or world events. Some candidates answered using poems that are not in the given selection. Candidates tended to use their varying knowledge of context to discuss their interpretations. Weaker answers tended to provide more biographical or generalised responses.
- (b) The question required candidates to write a critical analysis to the poem, *Marie Curie to Her Husband*. It was more popular than the (a) option and there was a wider range of answers seen. Most answers reflected generally satisfactory performance. Some interpreted 'You've managed to slip inside me' as a sexual reference and many failed to understand that narcissus was a flower, yellow to add to the yellow scientific imagery associated with research in radioactivity. These answers went too far down a Greek mythology route to Narcissus and Pan. Few candidates were able to refer to the wider text; they could have chosen poems relating to the theme of loss, use of personae or the interest in science for example. Better essays took the idea of loss and discussed some of the ways it is shown in the poem, particularly in terms of Curie's sense of her husband's continued physical presence, use of memories and pride in the continuation of his work. Comments on language used included reference to intimacy and passionate attachment such as the use of colour and the effects of 'I now crave grey' and the impact of the last line. The weakest answers tended to stick to context-based discussions of the work of the Curie's and death of Pierre but did not really engage with the detail of the poem.

Question 9 – Jackie Kay: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) This question required candidates to compare some of the ways Kay presents victims of violence in her poems using three poems from the selection. Kay's poetry is quite popular but the (b) option was chosen by most candidates answering on it this series. Hence, few answers were seen to this question. The tendency amongst most who answered was to write three separate essays on such poems as *Teeth*, *Gambia*, *Church Invisible*, *Dressing Up* and *Blues*. Better answers created a link to explore the theme of power, race or Kay's use of different points of view and voices, applying some relevant quotations for analysis of poetic effects. Answers in the middle of the mark range tended to summarise events and situations. Context discussion tended to focus on Kay's campaigning for women's rights and personal experience of discrimination. The weakest responses were broadly contextual in nature and tended to be repetitive and partially supported.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of *The Same Note*, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Kay's methods and concerns. Many responses were seen to this popular question and most candidates understood the association with Bessie Smith and the Blues. Very good responses combined strong and relevant contextual knowledge with detailed, developed analysis of the central metaphor. Moderate answers responded with strong personal arguments but rather less secure understanding of context. They focused on aspects of heritage and power of the Blues. These answers tended to spot features, picking out details of anaphora, hyperbole and simile but not exploring the specific effects of these features on the reader. Several responses overplayed the idea of instructions to runaway slaves being communicated through songs and Kay's mixed race heritage. The least effective responses circled around the idea of the power of an unidentified woman's voice. There were instances where it was clear that the poem was analysed as if unseen, for example 'Perhaps this poem is about a lady singing that brings everyone together, her voice is so strong it is like a roof shelter'. There was rarely more than passing reference to the wider text with links referenced through vague allusion to 'those poems where women have no voice or are victims of abuse'. A few good answers referred to *The Right Season* and *Blues* with one answer contrasting the voice having the power to 'knock down a tree' with trees as witnesses to racial violence in *Even the trees*, bending and asking for forgiveness. Good answers tended to work through the poem systematically and looked at specific examples of imagery, repetition and how Kay varies tone and rhythm to create specific effects.

Question 10 – Barbara Kingsolver: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about how Kingsolver presents political ideas in the novel. This was not a popular text and the (b) option was more frequently chosen by those answering on it. Few answers were seen to this question. Some pleasing responses were seen but some candidates focused almost exclusively on attitudes to religion as a way into political ideas and some confused the historical context of the Congo. Candidates tended to compare the political instability with the USA and the views by Nathan on Christianity and being a missionary. A few suggested that Nathan is a 'dictator' or referred to his arrogance to support their arguments. Better essays focused on the presentation of colonialism through the attempts to impose religious and cultural ideas on Kilanga; the Belgian government and the CIA's interference in the struggles for independence; the racial tensions and exploitation of the country's natural resources. Some details used included Axelroot's role as an informer and smuggler and the imprisonment of Anatole. Few answers showed any detailed analysis of the attitudes of particular characters or argued that the whole novel can be viewed as a political allegory or a reflection of American arrogance and Marxist beliefs.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of the writing in a passage from Rachel, Book 2: The Revelation. Few candidates demonstrated awareness of the context of the passage and only good responses discussed the significance of Rachel as narrator here. Most answers had knowledge of the differences between Anatole and Nathan and could tell the story of the missionaries. Better responses were able to explore the antagonism in terms of religious, political and familial concerns. More successful answers explored what is revealed about Nathan in the extract and commented on the smashing of the plate revealing the volatility of his character. Some were able to write about how Kingsolver uses this to shape the response of readers to Christianity and the attitudes of the white communities, the male assumptions of superiority or underlying tones of violence and threat throughout the novel. This approach proved effective. Some good answers were able to write about the importance of narrative voice here and in the wider novel with a number picking out examples of Rachel's disrespectful language. Less successful answers failed to

use the whole passage and concentrated on parts such as the Price's marriage and Nathan's destructive behaviour. Few candidates felt confident about examining the effects of the writing.

Question 11 – Stephen Spender: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways in which Spender presents feelings about social differences in three poems from the selection. This text was quite popular though few candidates chose the (a) option. Less successful answers gave generalised overviews of Spender and his social concerns and experience in the war, but few were able to illustrate their points with quotations from their chosen poems. These tended to paraphrase poems and cover aspects such as the rich/poor divide, educated versus uneducated, family and isolation, hope and despair among others. This proved limiting in enabling discussion of how language and tone expressed Spender's emotions. Better answers were able to furnish their arguments with support and apply a wide range of points with knowledgeable references to context and societal issues.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of *XIII* considering in what ways Spender presents attitudes to war here and elsewhere in the selection. The best responses focused on language and imagery, showing appreciation of Spender's methods and in some cases referring to the wider text through inclusion of reference to poems such as *A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map* if only briefly. Some were able to explore the use of repetition in the development of ideas to highlight the naivety of the persona's expectations. Although most answers demonstrated understanding of the general idea behind the poem, many struggled to analyse the language in any depth or with insight into how the imagery works. Some answers seemed to be approaching the poem as an unseen text with mixed success. The least successful responses tended to be vague and descriptive.

Question 12 – Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Woolf's presentation of women in the light of a comment, 'In the novel, women are limited by their place in society.' This is a popular text but the (b) option attracted far more answers than this question. Most candidates were able to comment on the main female characters and there was some useful discussion of gender roles and expectations. Woolf's stream of consciousness was identified by almost every candidate and handled with varying degrees of relevance and understanding. A few candidates focused on the suppressed sexual feelings of Clarissa towards women and for Peter. Some struggled with the idea that marriage was a necessity and social status at the time. Good answers discussed to what extent various female characters felt they had power and influence and what they could do with it, for example considering the patriarchal nature of society and the experience of being wives.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of the writing in the given passage, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Woolf's presentation of Peter Walsh here and in the wider novel. This was a very popular question and most responses offered at least a moderately effective discussion of Peter Walsh's character. They explained his prior relationship with Clarissa, how he is still attracted to women and how his thoughts turn to Clarissa as per the extract. Most working at this level did not make much reference to the wider novel. Good answers tended to explain the context of Peter's situation and suggested that the pursuit of the unknown girl had been a failed attempt to escape Clarissa's injunction to remember her party. They commented on the choice of words in the stream of consciousness showing Peter as a self-dramatist, a 'romantic buccaneer' and how the details of the streets lent urgency to the pursuit. Some reflected on the significance of the 'pocket knife' here and in the scene with Clarissa, the effects created by the description of the cloak, and the effects created by the use of parenthesis.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- The best answers are strategically planned and candidates select information rather than including everything they know.
- Remember that texts and characters are constructs and should not be referred to as if they are real people. Keep the writer in view and consider their intentions in making choices in form, structure and language.
- All assessment objectives are important and should be addressed clearly.
- Analysis of a writer's use of punctuation or capital letters should be carefully applied and should not form the basis of a core analytical approach.

General comments

The quality of many answers was very encouraging and there was evidence of enthusiastic engagement with texts leading to some original and well-structured answers. Enjoyment of study and hard work were evident in many answers and reflected the skill and professionalism of centres in selecting texts, encouraging discussion and teaching approaches that gave candidates the confidence to write their best answers in the exams. Use of detail, ability to comment on contexts and wider reading were successfully seen in many answers. Less successful answers lacked detailed knowledge of texts, and some seemed to rely on summaries or film productions of texts. These can never act as a replacement for the texts themselves.

Unfortunately, there were rubric infringements on this paper once again. These consisted of candidates only answering one question on the paper, answering two poetry questions, answering on two prose texts or answering on two texts pre 1900 or post 1900. An example is that *The Knight's Tale* is poetry but is sometimes combined erroneously with Spender or Bhatt.

The best answers show close and accurate reading of the question, focus on the demands of all assessment objectives, plan strategically to select relevant information for use and judiciously choose supporting detail in the form of quotation or textual reference. Examiners saw some very long answers this series where the additional pages written did not add to the success of the answer. There are certainly some exceptionally good long answers, but also answers that throw everything they know at the question without clearly planning how this addresses the question.

Knowledge and understanding lie at the heart of textual study. Planning is essential in this and is a skill that should be explicitly taught. There is no one way to plan, as evidenced by the wide range of approaches we see on exam papers, but the basics of timing, selection of material, development of argument and sequencing are key to ensuring candidates approach planning with confidence and effective application. Genre is important and candidates should ensure they keep it in view throughout their answer. Discussion of contexts is an important part of each answer and should be relevant to the question. All too often candidates include material of little or no relevance. Sometimes context is presented as fact when it is really speculation. Emily Dickinson's mental health, views on religion and sexuality are examples of three areas that should be handled with care in answers on **Question 4**. Literary contexts are valuable aspects of this element of the paper and some insightful discussion has been seen on texts such as *The Handmaid's Tale* (as a dystopian text). Another example is reference to the gothic and Bildungsroman in relation to *Oliver Twist*. Quotations should be integrated into answers and should not be too long. Judicious selection of quotations and relevant use lead to successful responses. Some straightforward answers lacked detail, and this restricted the effectiveness and complexity of their arguments. General comments or those that lack support don't get to the heart of a text's meaning; this was noted in answers to both **(a)** and **(b)** questions.

Some very interesting and insightful analysis was seen this series. Analysis should respond to the terms of the question and use terminology that is both accurate and relevant. Importantly, analysis cannot be divorced from effect on the reader. Examiners read a great deal about rhyme schemes in poetry. When this is done well, analysis of rhyme and rhythm is accurate, focused, specific and linked to effect on the reader. Name dropping different types of rhyme such as 'iambic pentameter' without comment or with vague reference to 'an effect on the reader' is unhelpful. This year examiners saw a great many attempts to analyse punctuation, particularly in the case of Emily Dickinson's poetry. For the most part, this did not reflect anything more than partial or limited analytical engagement. Speculation about why punctuation has been chosen by a writer is no replacement for specific analysis of language or structure. Generalised remarks on caesura, dashes, capitalisation or semi-colons without close examination tended to be unhelpful.

In terms of personal response, the best candidates offered lucid and well-integrated personal responses that demonstrated relevant understanding and application of thoughtful reflection. These were sometimes well-linked to examples of other interpretations and responses including critical views. Candidates working at the lower levels of achievement tended to reflect on the significance of, for example, a character's plight or a moral situation. This could be seen clearly in answers on texts such as *The Poisonwood Bible*, *Oliver Twist* and *Persuasion*. Some impressively original and well-argued personal responses were evident in the most successful answers.

Clarity of communication varied significantly in answers seen. As a minimum, candidates should ensure their work is planned, organised clearly and that a little time is left to proofread before the end of the exam. The clearest work is organised into paragraphs and always keeps the question in view.

In terms of considering and evaluating varying opinions and interpretations, examiners saw some good examples including focused use of critical views and specific quotations from critics but also acknowledgement that there are different ways of viewing literary texts. This came in the form of 'some might think' approaches which were used well in a number of answers. The best answers integrate comments within their arguments rather than bolting them on to the end. It is fine to refer to feminist or Marxist critical views, but these should not be generalised and must be linked specifically to the argument.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 1 – Jane Austen: *Persuasion*

- (a) The question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Austen's presentation of different attitudes to money and wealth. This was not a popular question, and few answers were seen. Weaker responses tended to narrate the history of Anne and her relationships with Wentworth and Sir Walter. Better responses at this level had solid knowledge and understanding of concerns, seeing money problems as important to the wider narrative and commenting on those who were extravagant, using specific examples such as Sir Walter's resistance to renting out Kellynch and his and Elizabeth's pride in their Bath house, as well as William Elliot's treatment of Mrs Smith. There was discussion of the relationship between money and relationships, including choosing a marriage partner and the extent to which this mattered to particular characters. Contrasts were drawn between Mrs Clay trying to marry for money and status and Mrs Smith, poor through no fault of her own. Good answers understood how attitudes to money and wealth were key to Austen's characterisation and some excellent examples were seen that dealt with this. Contextual reference was rarely seen in all but the best answers to this question.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss a passage from Volume 2 Chapter 1 of the novel, showing what it adds to Austen's presentation of Admiral Croft. More candidates studying the text chose this question. Weaker answers tended to offer general summaries of the story, the Admiral and his connection to Anne or a general paraphrase of the passage. Better responses at this level saw how he is different to the ladies in his view of the incident with Louisa, noted his empathy towards Anne and his humour. Better responses also developed his contrasts to Sir Walter and grasped Admiral Croft's warmth, investigating ways in which it marked him out against other characters. Good responses were able to explore Croft's sensitivity and tact, some using his attitude to the number of looking glasses to point out the contrast with the vanity of Sir Walter and how in noting Anne's approval commented that the presentation of the Crofts' relationship encouraged Anne to consider how she might enjoy life with a man from the navy. Very good answers linked their points to the wider text and aspects of context seamlessly and commented on

analytical details such as reference to the use of dialogue and free indirect discourse providing Anne's view throughout.

Question 2 – Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Chaucer's presentation of death and dying, keeping a quotation from Theseus in mind. This text was the least popular on Paper 42 and few responses were seen. Very few answers seemed confident with the quotation to examine the idea of reputation or dying for love and the chivalric code. One good answer talked about the description of the fights in the woods and the lists and how Theseus tried to prevent death while at the same time showing the importance of appropriate funeral rites.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss how Chaucer presents the character of Arcite in *The Knight's Tale*. This was slightly more popular than the (a) option but not many answers were seen. Most knew the context and sketched out the back story accurately. Weaker answers retold the story of the love triangle, largely ignoring the passage. Better responses at this level discussed the other temple visits and compared them with this one. Very few had the confidence to deal with Chaucer's poetic methods. Answers working towards the lower middle range of the mark scheme understood concerns such as love, war, rivalry and chivalry but rarely dealt with religion. Better answers focused on Arcite, remembering his role in the wider tale and why this prayer to Mars was 'so typical of his attitudes to life, love and friendship'. Some felt he did not deserve to win Emily. Some good answers were seen that explored some of Chaucer's methods including language, imagery and symbolism. Very few went so far as to deal with rhythm, metre and rhyme.

Question 3 – Charles Dickens: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about how Dickens explores different kinds of love in the novel. Some answers were seen across the ability range. Different kinds of love were explored including Oliver's love for his mother which leads to his only act of violence, attacking Noah. Some wrote about Bill and Nancy, arguing that while the relationship was abusive, he still loved her, and she loved him. Mr Brownlow's love for Oliver also saw some discussion. Fagin's love of money was considered by some candidates, but few answers extended this to focus on ideas of love of power or status or self-preservation. Weaker answers retold Oliver's story, with some drawing in different kinds of love. Better answers contrasted different relationships while good responses saw the rarity and unexpectedness of love as a key theme of the novel. The best answers discussed Dickens's methods and how these might invite different responses from readers.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss a passage from Chapter 26, showing its significance to the novel as a whole. There were few answers to this question including some interesting approaches, but some candidates clearly did not understand the role of Monks in the novel. The weakest answers thought the Jew was not Fagin. Good answers discussed the theme of nature vs nurture and how Oliver cannot be corrupted. Those who knew of Monks's role in the plot explained it and some discussed Fagin's difficulty in training Oliver. Good answers made reference to the descriptive detail of the passage and commented on Dickens's concerns about poverty and how he delayed the revelation of Monks's name. Some answers wrote generally about Dickens's attitudes to criminality and poverty using contextual material and critics more than the text itself.

Question 4 – Emily Dickinson: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Dickinson's presentation of animals in three poems from the selection. There were few answers to this question on a very popular text. Poems used included *A Bird came down the Walk* and *A narrow Fellow in the Grass*. Better answers tried to create a connecting idea to link their chosen poems including the idea of a sense of wonder or the symbolism of birds. Some chose to address the violence found in the natural world. As in Paper 41, analytical focus on the use of dashes and capitalisation proved a distraction from insightful analysis. Weaker answers struggled to link poems and wrote three individual essays rather than dealing with them organically.

- (b) This question required candidates to discuss Dickinson's presentation of grief in *I measure every Grief I meet*. This was a very popular question, and the full range of achievement was seen. Weaker answers reiterated ideas repetitively with little development or summarised the poem. Some candidates worked systematically through the stanzas. While not a bad approach, this strategy does lose sight of the question and the overall meaning of grief in the poem and in Dickinson's wider work. Again, there were examples of candidates writing about features in isolation with no link to an effect or to the terms of the question, for example, 'On line 2 Dickinson uses a dash which shows she is pausing'. Some candidates overinvested in displays of contextual knowledge, using references from the text such as 'Banishment from native eyes' to explain Dickinson's health problems, seclusion in her bedroom or whether she was suicidal. Better answers were more selective, offering a commentary on the poem linking their points specifically to grief as they moved through chronologically. In the mid mark range, there was more reference to context with numerous references to Susan. Good answers integrated their interpretation with analysis of a range of poetic elements including rhyme, enjambment and rhythm with some very good insights into Dickinson's use of imagery. References to 'an imitation of Light/that has so little Oil', 'Centuries of Nerve', 'piercing Comfort' and 'Calvary' were explored. The best answers were also able to keep other opinions and interpretations in view throughout their arguments, integrating wider references to other work by the poet. Some were able to contrast the desire to make grief tangible and the discursive development of the poem with the more fragmented and impressionistic *After great pain a formal feeling comes* -.

Question 5 – John Milton: *Paradise Lost Books IX and X*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Milton shapes a response to Adam in *Paradise Lost Books IX and X*. This was quite a popular text, but most candidates chose the (b) option on this paper. Most who answered on this question were well prepared and had knowledge of the text, including relevant quotations, that they used to show Adam as a tragic hero – drawing out his internal struggles to come to terms with events, his levelheadedness and the range of his emotions. They discussed the concept of Free Will, God's views and contextual and critical material to explore the gender politics and issues surrounding Milton's misogyny.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss Milton's presentation of the role and characterisation of Eve in *Book X* of the text. This answer attracted more answers than the (a) option. Most responses seen were well done. Good answers constructed detailed and balanced responses, usually demonstrating ways in which Eve tries to manipulate Adam and linking her capacity for argument to earlier scenes. The best picked out specific phrases for analysis such as Milton's use of rhythm and emphasis in the first four lines of Eve's speech, the image of their children being 'Food for so foul a monster' and the various examples of word play such as 'miserable it is/To be to others cause of misery'. Less effective answers wrote in more general terms about Eve's role in the Fall of Man, some referring to contextual details about religious beliefs at the time Milton was writing. Once again, Milton's attitudes to women were raised frequently. Most candidates were sympathetic to the character of Eve.

Question 6 – Bram Stoker: *Dracula*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by symbols and symbolism in the novel. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment meaningfully on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse a passage from Chapter 23 considering what it adds to understanding of Stoker's methods and concerns. There were very few answers to this question. Weaker answers offered repetitive or generalised summaries of the scene with little reference to the wider text or use of different narrative voices. Some attempted to apply a little knowledge of context. Better responses commented on how Stoker presents Dracula as 'unhuman', focusing on the animal imagery and reactions to the crucifix and wafer. Some of these referred to the gothic here and how Stoker builds and releases tension.

Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 7 – Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about the extent to which they agreed with a statement about Offred's description of herself as a narrator: 'One detaches oneself. One describes'. This was a very popular text, but candidates seemed to find this question challenging and many opted for the (b) choice. Weaker answers simply retold Offred's story, often with secure knowledge but limited understanding. Better answers recognised that she is an unreliable narrator and that she uses narration as something of a 'coping' strategy. Some of these answers used the revelation of the tapes in the Historical Notes to cast doubt on the truthfulness of her experience, arguing that she gave a biased account of life in Gilead and offered some alternative possibilities of what happened to Luke or the first meeting with Nick. This led to Offred being judged to be a liar, out to protect herself. This view seemed to stem from a popular critic and tended not to be challenged or supported. Good answers discussed Offred's self-consciousness as a narrator and argued that her use of description and close attention to detail and language, is a way for her to deal with her emotions and experiences. Some applied relevant supporting quotation from the Ceremony and the visit to the Wall to illustrate Offred's attempts to detach herself and describe things objectively. This objective approach thus emphasises the horror for the reader. Some very good answers explored why Atwood might want readers to mistrust Offred's account, exploring themes such as sexism, fundamentalism and sexual politics through this prism.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of the writing in a passage from the Historical Notes, considering in what ways it adds to Atwood's presentation of Gilead. This was a very popular question attracting answers from across the ability range. Most candidates were aware of the nature and location in the novel of the Historical Notes. Weaker answers struggled with the 'Gilead' part of the question and tended to write generally about Gilead, retelling parts of the novel and struggling to find focus on the given passage. Better answers noted that even though Gilead has gone, little has changed in men's attitudes. Parallels were drawn to historical revisions of Nazi treatment of Jews and Holocaust denial as well as recent changes to abortion laws in America (Roe versus Wade). Many comments were made on the patriarchy and contextual references to the underground railway. Some of these answers suggested Pieixoto might be 'changing the game for some readers' by questioning whether Offred really existed. This meta reader approach to the novelist's art showed impressive originality. Good answers also developed doubts about Gilead into wider explorations about the reliability of history. Some concluded that it was completely ironic that that so many years later the validity of a woman's testimony should be subverted by a man, especially as Atwood had said that she hadn't written about anything that hadn't happened already, for example the confiscation of children in Argentina. Some candidates discussed Waterford and Judd's responsibilities for the design of Gilead's institutions and practices and did not engage with the detail of the last paragraph. Some excellent responses embraced Atwood's postmodern narrative methods to investigate the wider understanding of Gilead filtered through the revelations of the passage.

Question 8 – Sujata Bhatt: Selected Poems from *Point No Point*

- (a) This question required candidates to explore Bhatt's presentation of history and historical figures in three poems from the selection. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment meaningfully on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse a passage from a longer poem, *Go to Ahmedabad*, considering ways in which it is characteristic of Bhatt's poetic methods and concerns. There were a good number of responses to this question and a wide range of ability was seen. Weaker candidates struggled to understand where they were in the poem, who was saying it and what impact it was having on them. Some attempted to paraphrase the poem or adopted a piecemeal approach that lacked an overview of the poem. Some used generalised knowledge of Bhatt's Indian heritage and feelings of displacement. Better answers were able to deploy some references to context and details of Bhatt's life story, typically with awareness of the cultural clashes experienced. Most understood the ambivalence of realising she cannot live in Ahmedabad but cannot write in America. Some answers focused on the contrasts, the variety and vivacity of Bhatt's vision. Good answers noted poetic techniques including repetition to emphasise the key points and language including the use of dialogue and the 'absence of imagery but so many details of life in Ahmedabad that bring it alive,' as one answer commented. Some of the best answers drew in other

poems including *Walking Across the Brooklyn Bridge, July 1990* and *A Story for Pearse* but there was little reference to other parts of this poem.

Question 9 – Jackie Kay: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Kay's presentation of outsiders in three poems from the selection. There were very few responses to this question. These were largely very good answers which adopted a sensitive and empathic appreciation of Kay's writing with some very thoughtful personal response in evidence.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of *From Stranraer, South*, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Kay's presentation of family relationships. The poem was readily understood by most candidates with sympathetic handling of the issues raised including the hidden meanings of heartache, missed opportunity and wasted life unearthed with telling insight in many responses. Most restricted themselves to the given poem with only a couple making brief references to *My Grandmother*, *Dressing Up* and *Love Nest*. Some candidates appeared to be doing the poem as an unseen and relied on paraphrase and general approaches. Others had some contextual knowledge and used it to comment on Kay's experience as a gay, mixed-race person in an adopted family in Scotland. Good answers balanced a discussion of feelings with analysis of the effects and how they are achieved. The main debate was around the fifth stanza, reconciling the 'expression of satisfaction' in the previous stanza which to most sounded somewhat bitter, with the persona's reflection in the mirror, smiling her 'mother's smile, /complicit, apologetic', and judging the degree of acceptance of her role – as 'a good daughter' and her feelings for her mother – given the reaction to the same sex relationship and how that was presented. The best answers covered details such as the open-ended, suggestive imagery of the final stanza, the structure of lines and variation of emphasis. Some very good answers considered the effects of brevity and the grammatical parallelism of the actions in stanza 6. It was clear that many candidates enjoyed Kay's writing and were able to develop a convincing personal response.

Question 10 – Barbara Kingsolver: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Kingsolver's presentation of Orleana in the light of a comment, 'Orleana is a weak and naïve woman.' Very few responses were seen to this question. Most argued that the character is neither weak nor naïve, but simply a 'victim of abuse'. Weaker answers retold parts of her story while better answers were aware of her role as a counterpoint to Nathan, a grieving mother and a 'sensitive touchstone to what is ok and what is not as far as Africa is concerned'. Good responses noted Orleana's development and how Kingsolver 'reveals it layer by layer through her narrative choices'. One good answer focused on why Orleana married and stayed with her violent husband and how she discovered the strength to leave and make a new life for herself.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of the writing in a passage from Leah: Book 3, *The Judges*. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.

Question 11 – Stephen Spender: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Spender's presentation of pain and suffering in his poems. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of *XXVI The Express*, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Spender's poetic methods and concerns. This was not a popular text, but some answers were seen to this (b) option. Most found the poem easy to understand. Candidates were able to connect with other poems relating to modern technology such as *XXVIII The Pylons*. They wrote about Spender's admiring tone, the grace in the gathering of speed, the use of listing in line 14 and alliteration in line 19. Some candidates were able to contribute some contextual knowledge about Spender's experience in the war. Good responses explored how patterns of language in this poem and Spender's wider work create effects. They explored aural and visual imagery and the manipulation of rhythm. Weaker answers treated the poem as an unseen text or paraphrased the poem with perhaps some general comments on the use of free verse.

Question 12 – Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Woolf's presentation of married relationships in the novel. There were very few answers on this question. Weaker answers retold the stories of Septimus and Rezia and Clarissa and Richard with better ones here noticing a few of the differences and similarities. Better answers saw how Woolf shapes the narrative to ensure the reader sees the 'misery of marriage for women' with some exploring the proto feminist views. Good essays were able to integrate context such as the effect of war for example on how men and women viewed each other – with some awareness of Woolf's narrative style. Better essays compared Septimus's omniscient narrator with Clarissa's stream of consciousness. These were most successful when supported by telling and apposite quotation, but this was rare.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of the writing in a passage taken from the novel. The question attracted more answers than the **a)** option on this text. Weaker answers were unable to offer context and often summarised the passage or retold some of the key events in Clarissa's day with little reference to the detail of the passage. Better essays explored what is revealed through the narrative here – Clarissa's insecurities, her 'hatred of Kilman and longing to connect with her daughter' – with some able to link to the wider text. Some excellent investigations of the adversarial encounter between Clarissa and Miss Kilman were seen. Skilful handling of Woolf's shifting narrative perspective was also in evidence alongside frequent in depth, detached analysis of Clarissa's psychological and social status with strong critical and textual support. Many noted the religious notions regarding Miss Kilman and commented on the function of the recurring references to Big Ben.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- The best answers are strategically planned and candidates select information rather than including everything they know.
- Remember that texts and characters are constructs and should not be referred to as if they are real people. Keep the writer in view and consider their intentions in making choices in form, structure and language.
- All assessment objectives are important and should be addressed clearly.
- Analysis of a writer's use of punctuation or capital letters should be carefully applied and should not form the basis of a core analytical approach.

General comments

The quality of many answers was very encouraging and there was evidence of enthusiastic engagement with texts leading to some original and well-structured answers. Enjoyment of study and hard work were evident in many answers and reflected the skill and professionalism of centres in selecting texts, encouraging discussion and teaching approaches that gave candidates the confidence to write their best answers in the exams. Use of detail, ability to comment on contexts and wider reading were successfully used in many answers. Less successful answers lacked detailed knowledge of texts, and some seemed to rely on summaries or film productions of texts. These can never act as a replacement for the texts themselves.

Unfortunately, there were rubric infringements on this paper once again. These consisted of candidates only answering one question on the paper, answering two poetry questions, answering on two prose texts or answering on two texts pre 1900 or post 1900. An example is that *The Knight's Tale* is poetry but is sometimes combined erroneously with Spender or Bhatt.

The best answers show close and accurate reading of the question, focus on the demands of all assessment objectives, plan strategically to select relevant information for use and judiciously choose supporting detail in the form of quotation or textual reference. Examiners saw some very long answers this series where the additional pages written did not add to the success of the answer. There are certainly some exceptionally good long answers, but also answers that throw everything they know at the question without clearly planning how this addresses the question.

Knowledge and understanding lie at the heart of textual study. Planning is essential and is a skill that should be explicitly taught. There is no one way to plan, as evidenced by the wide range of approaches we see on exam papers, but the basics of timing, selection of material, development of argument and sequencing are key to ensuring candidates approach planning with confidence and effective application. Genre is important and candidates should ensure they keep it in view throughout their answer. Discussion of contexts is an important part of each answer and should be relevant to the question. All too often candidates include material of little or no relevance. Sometimes context is presented as fact when it is really speculation. Emily Dickinson's mental health, views on religion and sexuality are examples of three areas that should be handled with care in answers on **Question 4**. Literary contexts are valuable aspects of this element of the paper and some insightful discussion has been seen on texts such as *The Handmaid's Tale* (as a dystopian text). Another example is reference to the gothic and Bildungsroman in relation to *Oliver Twist*. Quotations should be integrated into answers and should not be too long. Judicious selection of quotations and relevant use lead to successful responses. Some straightforward answers lacked detail, and this restricted the effectiveness and complexity of their arguments. General comments or those that lack support don't get to the heart of a text's meaning; this was noted in answers to both **(a)** and **(b)** questions.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 1 – Jane Austen: *Persuasion*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Austen shapes a reader's response to Anne Elliot through her relationships with different women. This question attracted few answers. Weaker responses were disappointingly narrative, working through descriptions of different female characters and commenting briefly on their links to Anne. Better answers were able to write about Lady Russell and her influence on Anne. Few wrote about Mary or Mrs Smith and answers were limited by lack of development in some cases.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse a passage from Volume 1 Chapter 11 of the novel. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in this examination.

Question 2 – Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Chaucer's presentation of relationships between Gods and humans in the text. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse an extract from *The Knight's Tale*. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.

Question 3 – Charles Dickens: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Dickens's presentation of crime and its punishment in the novel. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of a passage from Chapter 2 of the novel. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.

Question 4 – Emily Dickinson: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Dickinson’s presentation of despair in three poems from the selection. Very few answers were seen to this question. Most struggled with the terms of the question. A couple worked through ideas of grief and the seven stages with little analysis or comment on context. Personal response was attempted but there was very little knowledge of Dickinson’s poetry evident in answers seen to this question.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the poem, *I’m Nobody! Who are You?* This was a relatively popular question on this paper. Some candidates treated the poem as an unseen text and struggled with understanding. Some answers started well with arguments about Dickinson’s fame or success and her wanting to remain a ‘nobody’, however these ideas remained undeveloped and there was little attempt to analyse the text. The brevity of the poem posed a challenge for some candidates who struggled to find points to write about and lacked the knowledge to link ideas to Dickinson’s wider work. Some tried to write about the dashes but this was prey to dislocated commentary on Dickinson’s desire to pause in her poetry. A couple of better responses were seen that focused on the idea of identity and how Dickinson defined her own existence with some reference to her life and times.

Question 5 – John Milton: *Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X

- (a) This question required candidates to compare and contrast Milton’s presentation of Hell and the Garden of Eden in the text. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss an extract from Book 9 showing what it adds to Milton’s presentation of Adam’s relationship with Eve in the text. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.

Question 6 – Bram Stoker: *Dracula*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about ways in which Stoker presents desire in the novel. Very few answers were seen to this question. Answers tended to be working at Level 3 and below. Candidates wrote about the three vampire women and Harker’s response to them. Dracula’s attacks were viewed as sexual with the least successful answers misunderstanding the meaning of desire as it is presented in the novel and using the term to apply to general wishes of the characters that were of limited relevance, for example, ‘Jonathan desires business, then desires to leave’.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse a passage from Chapters 14 and 15 of the novel, showing what it adds to Stoker’s presentation of Van Helsing. Very few responses were seen. Weaker answers paraphrased the extract with little development of ideas or analysis of specific details. Slightly better responses showed some understanding of character and Van Helsing’s relationship with Seward and how he attempts to shield him from the truth about Lucy. These answers tended to be self-limiting by lack of development. There were few connections to the wider text. One better response wrote about Van Helsing as a teacher, working through different ways he is presented, for example as caring and clever, a man of logic. He was referred to as a foil to Dracula.

Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 7 – Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid’s Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Atwood’s presentation of Gilead’s attitudes to women in the novel. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the presentation of Offred in an extract from Chapter 36. This question attracted several answers. Weaker answers relied on paraphrase and narrative accounts of Offred’s relationship with the Commander. Better answers offered in depth analyses of the passage and explored the use of dialogue and ‘witness literature’, using a reference to Anne Frank as context in comprehensive handling of the extract. Some focused use of critical views

supported better answers such as the use of a critic to argue that there is a 'lack of character' in Offred's character.

Question 8 – Sujata Bhatt: Selected Poems from *Point No Point*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Bhatt's creation of different personas and their voices in three poems from the selection. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of *The Writer*. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.

Question 9 – Jackie Kay: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about how Kay uses her poems to tell different people's stories in three poems. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of *Got You* considering how far it is characteristic of Kay's poetic methods and concerns. There were some answers to this question. The weakest answers treated the poem as unseen and struggled to understand the premise behind it. Those who understood the family dynamics did well, but few saw the humour in 'The dog / licks you'. Moderately achieving responses showed knowledge and understanding of the poem and argued with support. They reflected on Kay's use of tension and how she saw herself in relation to her sibling. Lack of development and analysis limited the achievement of candidates for the most part.

Question 10 – Barbara Kingsolver: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Kingsolver's presentation of different attitudes to religion in the novel. Some responses were seen to this question. On the whole the question was well handled with good knowledge of the novel and confidence writing about religion. Better candidates wrote about the shifting presentations of religion from various perspectives and its significance to the narrative arc. Weaker answers offered basic responses focused on Christianity and the fact that Nathan is a poor Christian in terms of how he treats his family.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of the writing in an extract from Rachel: Book 4, Bel and the Serpent. Very few answers were seen. These tended to be well-handled with knowledge, understanding and insight into 'Father' and the ways in which the house 'shuddered under his rule'. Personal responses were supported and relevant. Weaker responses were short and undeveloped, relying heavily on paraphrase with some showing a little understanding of the fear shown of Father and Kingsolver's use of tone. There were few links to the wider text.

Question 11 – Stephen Spender: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Spender's presentation of progress in three poems from the selection. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of '*That girl who laughed and had black eyes*'. Insufficient answers were seen on this question to comment on performance in the examination.

Question 12 – Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Woolf explores different types of love in the novel. There were very few answers to this question. These were well handled with some deft treatment of the similarities between Septimus and Clarissa and their experiences of love. These answers reflected sensitive treatment of Woolf's methods including reference to stream of consciousness as a 'perfect medium to relay the nature of love'. Contextual points were well-linked to arguments and varying interpretations were integrated effectively into arguments.

- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects in a passage from the novel. A few responses were seen offering sensitive appreciation of Septimus's trauma and ordeal with some strong examples of contextual support. These answers offered sophisticated analysis of the passage including the use of dialogue and comments on Woolf's use of language such as the description of the 'appalling staircase' and 'the rather melodramatic business of opening the window'.