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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

Successful responses:

- devote roughly equal time to both sections of the paper
- respond to the specific demands of the question
- use relevant textual references to substantiate their arguments
- analyse sensitively and in detail the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- manage time inefficiently across the two questions
- work through 'themes' candidates have studied whatever the focus of the question
- have a limited knowledge of texts
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely label writers' techniques without analysing them

General comments

There was evidence of outstanding work this session, in which candidates showed insight and individuality in their sustained explorations of texts, in particular the poems candidates had studied. Examiners reported a slight increase in the number of candidates writing excessively long answers to their first question, leading to unfinished or rushed second answers. Candidates should recognise the need to manage time carefully across this 90-minute paper.

Textual knowledge

The most successful answers showed an extensive knowledge of the text, with candidates interweaving concise textual references to support their ideas. In answers to extract questions, these candidates used the detail of the extract to support their ideas and to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Less successful responses were often characterised by overly assertive comments with little textual reference. Some quotations were excessively long, with the link between quotation and comment unclear. Some candidates offered quotations that were abridged, with an ellipsis used to indicate words that had been omitted; often the omitted words were the very ones integral to supporting the comment made.

Focus on the question

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question. Less successful answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the text but without achieving a clear focus on the question. This was evident in many answers to poetry or extract questions where candidates simply worked through the text in order without addressing the question's key words.

Writers' effects

The most convincing responses sustained a critical analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. These responses referred in detail to the printed text in poetry and prose extract questions and were able to select relevant material they had learned for prose general essay questions. Less successful responses catalogued features such as enjambment, caesura and anaphora without close analysis of the precise ways in which writers achieve their effects.

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Personal response

The strongest answers explored with perception a wide range of relevant detail from the texts in answering the questions set. Less successful responses offered personal interpretations that were not adequately rooted in the detail of the text, lacking convincing substantiation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1
Most candidates were able to comment on the references to the changes in the natural world and how Millay linked these to the lover's feelings for the speaker 'hushed so soon'. The strongest responses explored the imagery of the blossom, the moon, the tide and the wreckage and the effects created in conveying the transience of love. These responses captured the abrupt shift from 'Pity me not' to 'Pity me' in the final couplet and appreciated the contrast the speaker makes between mind and heart. Less successful responses catalogued the features of the sonnet and described the rhyme scheme without productive and specific analysis.

Question 2

This was an extremely popular question, and most answers acknowledged the contrast between the past and present. The most successful responses showed an appreciation of the change in perspective in how the child and the adult viewed the 'mean' mother who had been struggling to keep things together without burdening her children with the details. The strongest answers wrote about the symbolism of the water, not so plentiful then, though cascading now to the 'sybarite' in the present day. Because many candidates clearly enjoyed their study of this poem, there was a tendency to offer stanza-by-stanza commentaries rather than select material that focused on the key words 'conveys the speaker's thoughts and feelings'.

Question 3

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 4

The most successful responses explored the unpleasant sensuous imagery, the symbolism of the grave and the pervading sense of hopelessness. They noted the effects of the rooms on the emotional state of the two, the room where they 'lie dead'. More than any of the other poetry questions, this question attracted much information on the writer, her family and biographical details. However, this was often included in response at the expense of addressing the focus of the question: 'the ways in which Mew makes [this] such a sad poem'.

Question 5

Most responses touched on the suffering the photographer has witnessed, the emotional toll it has taken on him and the way he suppresses his feelings (his 'impassive stare'). The most successful responses explored Duffy's portrayal of the supplement's editor and the readers. These answers sustained a clear critical focus on the 'ways in which Duffy makes you feel sorry for the photographer'. Several responses were unclear about the references to pre-digital aspects of developing photographs: the darkroom, the red darkroom light and film spools.

Question 6

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

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Section B

Question 7

Most answers included comment on Papa's brutality and callousness at odds with his stated love of Kambili and on the inflexible nature of his brand of religion. They noted the fear of the mother who does not intervene though tries to comfort her daughter. The most successful responses explored Adichie's building of tension in making this moment so horrifying. Less successful responses explained what is happening in the extract and made basic comments about what they found horrifying.

Question 8

Most candidates mentioned the shortages of food and water, the poor condition of the furnishings, and the overcrowding. More successful responses explored Adichie's depiction of the resilience of Aunty Ifeoma and her family and of their lack of complaints. These responses were able to deploy textual references to support their observations. This was lacking in less successful responses which tended to rely excessively on narration and explanation rather than close and detailed analysis of the ways in which Adichie depicts life in Aunty Ifeoma's house.

Question 9

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 10

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

Most candidates understood the significance of this being Gogol's first birthday away from his parents even though he is twenty-seven and how this formed a part of the process of discovering his own identity. Many considered the stereotypical assumptions of Pamela and Lydia's lack of awareness, alongside the contrast between this and previous birthdays, and how all of this reinforced the idea that he was not a part of American culture. Stronger candidates noted the superficiality of the evening and how he has been known by these people for only one evening and will be forgotten the next day. References to isolation such as the repetition of 'alone', 'on her own', the fact that his parents have no means of contacting him yet he dreams of the 'phone ringing persistently' and the relevance of 'he is free' – all reinforce his uncertainty about his identity.

Question 16

Candidates tended to contrast the marriages of Ashoke and Ashima with that of Gogol and Moushumi. It was understood that the parents' marriage was an arranged one with no open display of affection, but which nevertheless endured because it was based on mutual loyalty and respect. The lack of awareness and, ultimately, commitment was recognised in the second marriage. The circumstances as well as ideas about marriage for both Gogol and Moushumi prior to the start of their relationship were complicated, and these two proved to be ultimately not compatible.

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Question 17

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 18

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

This extract-based question was significantly more popular than the general essay question on *1984*. Candidates understood that the relationship was completely over and neither Winston nor Julia had any interest in the other. It was noted how this was reinforced by the descriptions of the weather and surroundings: 'vile biting day'; 'all the grass seemed dead'. Many compared this with how at the start of their relationship it was a golden time with 'dappled light', 'pools of gold' and 'misty with bluebells'. Some candidates compared the way in which Winston regarded Julia's body to how Winston had earlier regarded that of his wife Katherine and how this signalled the end of any desire for Julia. Their admission of their mutual betrayal was contrasted with their earlier promises to always be true to each other and how that commitment was destroyed by the brutal regime.

Question 20

The focus for most candidates was a character study of O'Brien rather than how Orwell orchestrates the reader's feelings towards O'Brien. Candidates explained how Winston was completely fooled by O'Brien, and many considered the irony of this in regard to his hopes of meeting in the 'place with no darkness'. Sound, rather than detailed, knowledge of the text was generally evident in responses.

Question 21

All candidates were able to comment on how the language used created a disturbing atmosphere by considering the implications of the unpleasant vocabulary and imagery such as 'desolate flotsam', 'like the shadow of a bursting bomb' and 'the furniture was chipped and bruised'. Stronger candidates were able to contextualise the young man's long and futile search for Eloise and comment on the significance of the landlady's later conversation. These candidates explored the language in greater detail and considered the lives of the previous tenants with the pitiful stories that they had left behind.

Question 22

This was a less popular answer. Most candidates worked through the story providing a commentary and pointing out reasons to be sympathetic towards the boy: for example, he was impoverished, and he came from an unstable background where he had few opportunities. Almost all candidates explored the transformation in him in that despite having the opportunity to steal the pocketbook in the house he resolutely did not, not wanting, 'to be mistrusted now'. Less successful responses lacked a knowledge of the detail of the story which resulted in essays that were narrative and overly assertive in approach.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/22
Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.

Useful opening paragraphs were brief, referenced the question and avoided lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.

In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly contextualised the passage, selected the most relevant material from across the whole passage, including the ending, and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.

Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and used a range of precise textual references from across the whole text.

Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.

An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

General comments

Candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts and an engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, and made perceptive comments on characterisation, stagecraft, mood and tone. The most popular texts were *Twelfth Night* and *The Crucible* with a smaller number choosing to write about *Journey's End*. There were two new texts this series, *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*: whilst the former proved to be a popular choice, very few wrote on the Nottage.

Candidates should be reminded that it is not a productive use of examination time to introduce responses to *The Crucible* with lengthy introductions about the religious, social, and historical background of Salem, or the political context of McCarthyism in the United States in the 1950's, in response to questions on this text. There were also many lengthy introductions to Shakespeare's times and the role of women in the Elizabethan era, much of which was in the form of generalisations and frequently inaccurate.

To write a successful answer, candidates need to deconstruct the question carefully, focusing on the key terms, for example, 'disturbing', 'dramatic', 'revealing' or 'entertaining' and to sustain a link to the question throughout their answer. Briefly referencing the question in the introduction, or asserting it at the end of the answer, losing focus on the question in the body of the response, is unlikely to achieve high reward. A brief plan to select the most important points to include, and the most suitable material to use to support these points, is helpful. Many candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot or listing irrelevant social, cultural, historical or biographical details of the writer. Others wrote a list of the things to cover including a list of the techniques the writer had used, including punctuation, which they would be analysing in their answer. In an examination with 45 minutes to write a response these are unproductive ways to start an answer. The most successful answers wrote a brief introduction, referencing the question, with some key points which they then developed in detail and supported with brief, well-selected references or quotations, analysing the references fully. In answering a passage-based question, a few sentences to contextualise the passage before exploring the passage itself in detail, was helpful in demonstrating a candidate's understanding of the structure of the text.

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A common approach for less successful answers was where candidates wrote all they knew about a text with little or no attempt to link this to the question. The tendency to retell the plot up to the start of a specific passage before attempting to focus on the question wasted valuable time which should have been spent answering the question.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts.

The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. To achieve high reward, any literary techniques identified should be supported and the effects created by the writer analysed. It is unhelpful for candidates to state the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language' or 'diction' to convey ideas or to write a list of techniques they will be writing about in their introduction.

There were some rubric infringements on component 2 where candidates answered on two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based question and one discursive. In these instances, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded. Though there were many lengthy responses, very few candidates appeared to run out of time. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text and to remember to label their answers clearly with the question number at the top of the response.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate

ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible*

Question 2

(a) This was a very popular text and question. To achieve highly, candidates needed to comment on the writing, characters, situation and how the author made the moment 'powerfully dramatic'. Stronger candidates were able to analyse and evaluate this extract in depth, giving the context where Proctor has brought Mary Warren's deposition admitting she lied about seeing the Devil with various people thereby denouncing Abigail and the girls as liars, and their fainting and screaming as *'only sport'*. These candidates understood the dramatic context with Proctor keen to have his wife released and to prevent others being wrongly put to death by exposing the girls had lied. There was close focus on the passage: Mary's inability to faint at will and fear of Abigail; Danforth's hesitant speech where he is '*weakening'* and considers he may have been wrong, and Abigail's threatening and intimidatory behaviour towards both Danforth and Mary. Abigail's theatrics in pretending to feel cold and '*shivering visibly*' and ultimately terrifying Mary Warren into attempting to run away were explored with close attention to the stage directions.

Many less successful answers started with a lengthy recap of the play, Miller's intentions in writing the play with reference to Senator McCarthy and Communism, and the history of the Salem Witch trials themselves. Others worked through the passage, commenting on the situation and stage directions but with little reference to the question itself. Where quotations were used, they supported a narrative approach with little awareness of the drama here. Some digressed from the passage after a few initial points and wrote about Abigail's motives and affair with John Proctor.

The weakest answers retold the play, or the passage, with little or no awareness of the question or the drama of the moment. There was some confusion about what was happening in the scene.

There was often a focus on the stage directions or punctuation – commas, pauses and exclamation marks but without references or comment on the context.

(b) This was a less popular question. The most successful answers engaged with the question and traced Hale's arrival in Salem, at the behest of Parris, as a recognised expert on witches. There

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was reference to his previous experience and successes and the impact of the piles of books he carried. His confidence and success with getting the girls to denounce others at the start was contrasted to the later scenes. Here, his feelings slowly change following his visit to the Proctor household and the subsequent trials where he loses confidence with the girls' testimony and the number of deaths. There was close detail to his attempts to convince Proctor and others accused, to lie to save their own lives. His guilt, sorrow and anger as he denounces the girls' accusations as lies and the trials as unlawful, was seen as a pivotal moment in his '*changing feelings'*, especially when Proctor is accused. Only the very best explored the irony of him, as a man of God, advising the accused to lie to save their lives.

Less successful answers knew the character well but were not always as adept in linking points to the question. Some could see that after a confident start, he becomes disillusioned with the trials and Danforth's persistent belief in Abigail, but these tended to be narrative in approach needing more specific textual reference. The weakest answers struggled with Hale's character, confusing him with both Parris and Danforth at times, were narrative in approach and lacked focus on Hale's feelings completely.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 3

(a) There were comparatively few answers to this text. The most successful candidates knew the context of the passage well, some including reference to the fact the audience had not yet met Stanhope so Hardy and Osborne's contrasting views were dramatically revealing as a first introduction to the character's background and behaviour. There was close focus on both the question and passage with critical understanding of what was revealed including: Stanhope's character and drinking habits; Osborne and Stanhope's relationship and the text's themes of the futility of war and the soldiers' coping mechanisms. There was much well-selected reference to support Stanhope's excessive drinking, '*like a fish'* and ability to drink *'a whole bottle (of whisky) in one hour fourteen minutes.'* There was understanding of the different opinions of Stanhope revealed by Hardy and Osborne: Hardy seeing his drinking as a source of entertainment, '*something to liven people up*' and '*amuse*', and Osborne's admiration and respect for him as '*the best company commander we've got'*, defending Stanhope's drinking as he never went on leave and '*stuck it till his nerves have got battered'*. There was sensitive detail to Osborne's fierce loyalty throughout but very few understood his sarcastic tone in addressing Hardy's amusement at Stanhope's drinking escapades.

Weaker answers provided narrative accounts of the passage or asserted it was a '*revealing'* moment and then paraphrased what was being said without fully understanding what had been revealed. There was a tendency to drift away from the passage to retell other parts of the play they were more familiar with.

(b) There were some detailed and sensitive answers to this question. The most successful responses were able to contextualise and engage with their chosen moments to fully explore *how* the writer made them '*shocking*.' The most popular choices were the deaths of both Osborne and Raleigh. Raleigh's first meeting with Stanhope was also popular but with some focusing on '*surprising'* as they did not expect Stanhope to greet an '*old friend'* so '*coldly'* rather than how the moment impacted dramatically with the audience. Responses to Stanhope's outburst to Raleigh after Osborne's death, and his behaviour towards Raleigh's letter home, were detailed and well supported. The shocking and dramatic impact of the loss of friends and the fears and stress of life in the trenches were highlighted. Relevant background and specific textual support were features of these responses. For example, the close relationship between Stanhope and Osborne was analysed to demonstrate the dramatic and shocking impact of Osborne's death on Stanhope. Stanhope's sensitive treatment of Raleigh and the irony of him laying the fatally wounded Raleigh on Osborne's bed, after his 'shocking' outburst at Raleigh for previously sitting on the bed, were examples of some thoughtful and engaged personal responses.

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Other answers chose less obvious *'moments*' and struggled to recall relevant material, quickly moving on to cover several less relevant sections of the text. There were examples of misreading of the text where a few candidates chose the scene of the 'earwig' racing as a '*shocking*' example of the men creating their own entertainment. Candidates erroneously referred to the insects as 'cockroaches' and digressed from the question, commenting on them being the only creatures able to survive nuclear war.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Twelfth Night*

Question 4

(a) This was the most popular text and question. There were some very impressive answers but also many of the weakest on this paper. This is a pivotal scene where Malvolio has found Maria's fake letter setting in motion the sub-plot and Malvolio's downfall in a most amusing manner. There was little, if any, sympathy expressed for Malvolio but considerable enjoyment at the success of the prank. It is dramatically effective and entertaining where the audience, and the group of friends, hidden from sight behind bushes, observe Malvolio's ridiculous and pompous attempts to apply the contents of the letter to himself as an object of Olivia's love. The lack of stage directions caused confusion for some candidates who failed to understand the dramatic irony of the situation. Candidates would do well to engage carefully with the opening lines of chosen passages rather than plunging into the passage as some candidates did, thinking Malvolio was discussing the letter with Fabian, and sometimes, the other characters too.

The most successful answers remained focused on the question and passage, contextualising the situation briefly, as following on from Malvolio's fantasising about being Olivia's husband and an opportunity, provided by Maria's fake letter, for the lower household to get their revenge on the pompous steward. Candidates conveyed their knowledge and enjoyment as Malvolio falls for the trick and ponders on the meaning of the letter. There was well-selected reference to the passage and close analysis of how the writer achieved the dramatic effects with detail to: the setting, dramatic irony, use of prose and interaction between the characters listening to and observing Malvolio's words and actions. Malvolio's egotism in arranging the letters and content to fit him and repeated use of '*me, I'* was well documented together with his plans to do all the ridiculous things the letter asked. The puns from Fabian and Sir Toby were clearly understood and candidates were entertained at the prospect of Olivia and the rest of the household witnessing Malvolio's first appearance in '*yellow stockings, and cross-garter'd', 'smiling'.*

Less successful responses were very general with little supporting textual reference. Some asserted it was '*entertaining*' but without exploring how it was made so. The weakest answers ignored the question and passage and retold the plot with insecure understanding of the text, situation and characters. Others were confused by the concept of him being previously described as a Puritan and attempted to discuss the religious implications of this but without relating it to the passage or the ridiculous dress-code and behaviour he was asked to follow.

(b) There were fewer answers to this question. The most successful responses were balanced in approach and expressed strong feelings about Olivia. Admirable qualities included: as a Countess she is of high status and consistent in her refusal of Orsino's declarations of love; a devoted daughter and sister, willing to mourn for seven years; rules her household well; is witty and intelligent in verbal exchanges with Feste the Clown and Cesario, and her determined pursuit of who she wants – Cesario. Her considerable beauty was determined by many men wanting to marry her, with the best responses exploring how the writer creates effects through the audience hearing a lot about her before she appears and the dramatic irony of Cesario's disguise. Her less admirable qualities received less attention and included quickly unveiling herself once she meets Cesario, her deceitful behaviour in 'returning' the ring and her abrupt transfer of her love from Cesario to Sebastian. Considerable knowledge of the text and character was demonstrated though not always supported by close reference to the text.

Other candidates wrote a character study of Olivia with scant reference to her qualities whether '*admirable*' or not. Some drifted into general discussion of the role of women in Shakespeare's day with lengthy introductions and unsubstantiated generalisations. Others wrote summaries of the plot or Olivia's character with minimal textual detail or support. There was also some confusion between Olivia and Viola at various stages of the plot.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Othello*

Question 5

(a) This was the most popular of the questions on this text. There were some engaging responses with the most successful candidates able to contextualise the extract. Much was written about Iago's manipulation of Othello, his lies regarding Cassio and Desdemona's alleged infidelity, and Othello's violent response. Stronger answers went on to explore the language and images and the significance of this moment in the play. Focus on Othello's violent language was effective, and candidates often expressed genuine disgust at Iago's methods and frustration with Othello's trusting nature. There was a close focus on what was *'disturbing'* with detail to the fabricated dream as Iago planted the idea of their affair in Othello's mind, leading to the 'proof' of the handkerchief.

Less successful answers selected relevant references and expressions of extreme emotions: jealousy, grief and violence, but often these supported a narrative approach and were not analysed fully.

Weaker candidates adopted a narrative approach to this question. Many told the story of the whole play up to this point and how Iago's manipulation resulted in Othello killing Desdemona and himself but did not focus on how it was '*disturbing'*.

(b) There were very few responses to this question but most of those who did attempt it, demonstrated varying degrees of textual knowledge and understanding of Roderigo's gullibility, referring to several relevant examples from the play. All candidates agreed that he was an a '*silly gentleman'*. Weaker responses were very general and often became focused on Iago rather than Roderigo. Better answers provided a balanced, if over-sympathetic view of a lovesick man, manipulated by Iago who was solely interested in obtaining Roderigo's money and achieving his own ends, not in helping Roderigo to win Desdemona. For some, he was redeemed by the fact that Iago managed to manipulate everyone: Othello, Cassio and Emilia as well as Roderigo, so Roderigo was not entirely at fault for believing Iago's excuses and reasoning. Only a few responses commented on the discovery of Roderigo's letter, at the end of the play, which possibly saved Roderigo's reputation with his cunningness in exposing Iago as the villain.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/32
Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

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General comments

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Comments on specific questions

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ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible*

Question 2

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The weakest answers retold the play, or the passage, with little or no awareness of the question or the drama of the moment. There was some confusion about what was happening in the scene.

There was often a focus on the stage directions or punctuation – commas, pauses and exclamation marks but without references or comment on the context.

(b) This was a less popular question. The most successful answers engaged with the question and traced Hale's arrival in Salem, at the behest of Parris, as a recognised expert on witches. There was reference to his previous experience and successes and the impact of the piles of books he carried. His confidence and success with getting the girls to denounce others at the start was

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contrasted to the later scenes. Here, his feelings slowly change following his visit to the Proctor household and the subsequent trials where he loses confidence with the girls' testimony and the number of deaths. There was close detail to his attempts to convince Proctor and others accused, to lie to save their own lives. His guilt, sorrow and anger as he denounces the girls' accusations as lies and the trials as unlawful, was seen as a pivotal moment in his '*changing feelings'*, especially when Proctor is accused. Only the very best explored the irony of him, as a man of God, advising the accused to lie to save their lives.

Less successful answers knew the character well but were not always as adept in linking points to the question. Some could see that after a confident start, he becomes disillusioned with the trials and Danforth's persistent belief in Abigail, but these tended to be narrative in approach needing more specific textual reference. The weakest answers struggled with Hale's character, confusing him with both Parris and Danforth at times, were narrative in approach and lacked focus on Hale's feelings completely.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 3

(a) There were comparatively few answers to this text. The most successful candidates knew the context of the passage well, some including reference to the fact the audience had not yet met Stanhope so Hardy and Osborne's contrasting views were dramatically revealing as a first introduction to the character's background and behaviour. There was close focus on both the question and passage with critical understanding of what was revealed including: Stanhope's character and drinking habits; Osborne and Stanhope's relationship and the text's themes of the futility of war and the soldiers' coping mechanisms. There was much well-selected reference to support Stanhope's excessive drinking, '*like a fish'* and ability to drink *'a whole bottle (of whisky) in one hour fourteen minutes.'* There was understanding of the different opinions of Stanhope revealed by Hardy and Osborne: Hardy seeing his drinking as a source of entertainment, '*something to liven people up*' and '*amuse*', and Osborne's admiration and respect for him as '*the best company commander we've got'*, defending Stanhope's drinking as he never went on leave and '*stuck it till his nerves have got battered'*. There was sensitive detail to Osborne's fierce loyalty throughout but very few understood his sarcastic tone in addressing Hardy's amusement at Stanhope's drinking escapades.

Weaker answers provided narrative accounts of the passage or asserted it was a '*revealing'* moment and then paraphrased what was being said without fully understanding what had been revealed. There was a tendency to drift away from the passage to retell other parts of the play they were more familiar with.

(b) There were some detailed and sensitive answers to this question. The most successful responses were able to contextualise and engage with their chosen moments to fully explore *how* the writer made them '*shocking*.' The most popular choices were the deaths of both Osborne and Raleigh. Raleigh's first meeting with Stanhope was also popular but with some focusing on '*surprising'* as they did not expect Stanhope to greet an '*old friend'* so '*coldly'* rather than how the moment impacted dramatically with the audience. Responses to Stanhope's outburst to Raleigh after Osborne's death, and his behaviour towards Raleigh's letter home, were detailed and well supported. The shocking and dramatic impact of the loss of friends and the fears and stress of life in the trenches were highlighted. Relevant background and specific textual support were features of these responses. For example, the close relationship between Stanhope and Osborne was analysed to demonstrate the dramatic and shocking impact of Osborne's death on Stanhope. Stanhope's sensitive treatment of Raleigh and the irony of him laying the fatally wounded Raleigh on Osborne's bed, after his 'shocking' outburst at Raleigh for previously sitting on the bed, were examples of some thoughtful and engaged personal responses.

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Other answers chose less obvious *'moments*' and struggled to recall relevant material, quickly moving on to cover several less relevant sections of the text. There were examples of misreading of the text where a few candidates chose the scene of the 'earwig' racing as a '*shocking*' example of the men creating their own entertainment. Candidates erroneously referred to the insects as 'cockroaches' and digressed from the question, commenting on them being the only creatures able to survive nuclear war.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Twelfth Night*

Question 4

(a) This was the most popular text and question. There were some very impressive answers but also many of the weakest on this paper. This is a pivotal scene where Malvolio has found Maria's fake letter setting in motion the sub-plot and Malvolio's downfall in a most amusing manner. There was little, if any, sympathy expressed for Malvolio but considerable enjoyment at the success of the prank. It is dramatically effective and entertaining where the audience, and the group of friends, hidden from sight behind bushes, observe Malvolio's ridiculous and pompous attempts to apply the contents of the letter to himself as an object of Olivia's love. The lack of stage directions caused confusion for some candidates who failed to understand the dramatic irony of the situation. Candidates would do well to engage carefully with the opening lines of chosen passages rather than plunging into the passage as some candidates did, thinking Malvolio was discussing the letter with Fabian, and sometimes, the other characters too.

The most successful answers remained focused on the question and passage, contextualising the situation briefly, as following on from Malvolio's fantasising about being Olivia's husband and an opportunity, provided by Maria's fake letter, for the lower household to get their revenge on the pompous steward. Candidates conveyed their knowledge and enjoyment as Malvolio falls for the trick and ponders on the meaning of the letter. There was well-selected reference to the passage and close analysis of how the writer achieved the dramatic effects with detail to: the setting, dramatic irony, use of prose and interaction between the characters listening to and observing Malvolio's words and actions. Malvolio's egotism in arranging the letters and content to fit him and repeated use of '*me, I'* was well documented together with his plans to do all the ridiculous things the letter asked. The puns from Fabian and Sir Toby were clearly understood and candidates were entertained at the prospect of Olivia and the rest of the household witnessing Malvolio's first appearance in '*yellow stockings, and cross-garter'd', 'smiling'.*

Less successful responses were very general with little supporting textual reference. Some asserted it was '*entertaining*' but without exploring how it was made so. The weakest answers ignored the question and passage and retold the plot with insecure understanding of the text, situation and characters. Others were confused by the concept of him being previously described as a Puritan and attempted to discuss the religious implications of this but without relating it to the passage or the ridiculous dress-code and behaviour he was asked to follow.

(b) There were fewer answers to this question. The most successful responses were balanced in approach and expressed strong feelings about Olivia. Admirable qualities included: as a Countess she is of high status and consistent in her refusal of Orsino's declarations of love; a devoted daughter and sister, willing to mourn for seven years; rules her household well; is witty and intelligent in verbal exchanges with Feste the Clown and Cesario, and her determined pursuit of who she wants – Cesario. Her considerable beauty was determined by many men wanting to marry her, with the best responses exploring how the writer creates effects through the audience hearing a lot about her before she appears and the dramatic irony of Cesario's disguise. Her less admirable qualities received less attention and included quickly unveiling herself once she meets Cesario, her deceitful behaviour in 'returning' the ring and her abrupt transfer of her love from Cesario to Sebastian. Considerable knowledge of the text and character was demonstrated though not always supported by close reference to the text.

Other candidates wrote a character study of Olivia with scant reference to her qualities whether '*admirable*' or not. Some drifted into general discussion of the role of women in Shakespeare's day with lengthy introductions and unsubstantiated generalisations. Others wrote summaries of the plot or Olivia's character with minimal textual detail or support. There was also some confusion between Olivia and Viola at various stages of the plot.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Othello*

Question 5

(a) This was the most popular of the questions on this text. There were some engaging responses with the most successful candidates able to contextualise the extract. Much was written about Iago's manipulation of Othello, his lies regarding Cassio and Desdemona's alleged infidelity, and Othello's violent response. Stronger answers went on to explore the language and images and the significance of this moment in the play. Focus on Othello's violent language was effective, and candidates often expressed genuine disgust at Iago's methods and frustration with Othello's trusting nature. There was a close focus on what was *'disturbing'* with detail to the fabricated dream as Iago planted the idea of their affair in Othello's mind, leading to the 'proof' of the handkerchief.

Less successful answers selected relevant references and expressions of extreme emotions: jealousy, grief and violence, but often these supported a narrative approach and were not analysed fully.

Weaker candidates adopted a narrative approach to this question. Many told the story of the whole play up to this point and how Iago's manipulation resulted in Othello killing Desdemona and himself but did not focus on how it was '*disturbing'*.

(b) There were very few responses to this question but most of those who did attempt it, demonstrated varying degrees of textual knowledge and understanding of Roderigo's gullibility, referring to several relevant examples from the play. All candidates agreed that he was an a '*silly gentleman'*. Weaker responses were very general and often became focused on Iago rather than Roderigo. Better answers provided a balanced, if over-sympathetic view of a lovesick man, manipulated by Iago who was solely interested in obtaining Roderigo's money and achieving his own ends, not in helping Roderigo to win Desdemona. For some, he was redeemed by the fact that Iago managed to manipulate everyone: Othello, Cassio and Emilia as well as Roderigo, so Roderigo was not entirely at fault for believing Iago's excuses and reasoning. Only a few responses commented on the discovery of Roderigo's letter, at the end of the play, which possibly saved Roderigo's reputation with his cunningness in exposing Iago as the villain.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/42
Unseen

Key messages

- This paper tests all of the Assessment Objectives for English Literature and applies them to texts the candidates have not been taught
- It tests skills of understanding and interpretation as well as response to language
- Structure and form are also part of the assessment
- Interpretation and argument are both important but need to be strongly grounded in the text.

General comments

This session produced a pleasing quantity of strong and very strong scripts. Candidates found the texts accessible and interesting and most managed to work their way through the entire poem or extract. The bullet points are suggestions to help candidates to progress through the text and ensure they address each of the Assessment Objectives for Literature in English. As the ultimate test of candidates' close reading ability and application of all the Literature skills of analysis, evaluation and interpretation, the Unseen paper is a fitting conclusion to their literary studies at this level.

Strong candidates are aware of the need to demonstrate textual knowledge and understanding, and not just to look for literary devices and features of the writing. The introductory rubric sets the scene and aims to prevent candidates becoming confused about what is happening or described. The stem question focuses on the writing and on candidates' personal responses to it. It is important to work with the details of the text before coming to an interpretative conclusion; so good work shows clear evidence of planning and a structured argument and response to different stages of the poem or narrative.

Assessment Objective 1 (textual knowledge) is largely assessed through the choice of quotations and clarity of exposition of the surface narrative and is closely connected with AO2: understanding going beyond surface meaning and exploring underlying implications or contexts. It is important that a reading of the text appreciates both explicit and implicit meaning: often, the reader's response to poetry is to its sensuous surfaces, and a reader of narrative responds to the excitement and detail of events and descriptions. Candidates at this level are sometimes too eager to demonstrate their appreciation of possible 'hidden meanings' and miss details of the surface text. Stronger responses work sensitively and carefully through details of expression and come to conclusions based on close analysis.

The unseen is particularly a test of response to language (AO3), developing a critical appreciation of the writer's style and purpose through close analysis of their methods. The quality of interpretative comment that follows a quotation, in particular exploration of the effect on the reader, usually guides examiners to place a response within a Band from the Mark Scheme. However, language and imagery should not be viewed in isolation. Strong scripts show an appreciation of the text as a whole and its structure and its development. These candidates therefore understand how individual details contribute to the overall style of the text. Interpretation of the meaning of the text is thus closely related to its structure and form as well as the impact of its language.

The final Assessment Objective (AO4) is the candidate's personal response to the writing, and this is a strand always valued highly. However, it is important to remember that all Assessment Objectives have a notional equal weight, and that essays are marked holistically. Good understanding of explicit and implicit meaning, and careful interpretation of details of language and form should build towards an interpretation which is strongly grounded in the text and is not speculative or purely personal. All the clues for an appropriate response are provided in the language of the text. Strong responses are critical evaluations of different possibilities and come to conclusions based on textual evidence. They should show awareness of

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the effects of the tone of the writing on the mood of the reader, and appreciation of the voice of the speaker or narrator. Behind the speaker of the poem or the narrator of a prose text lies the purpose of the writer which we can begin to explore through the evidence of the writing.

The difference between good mid-range answers and the highest mark Bands can be clearly worked out from the mark scheme. Good scripts require clarity and insight of critical understanding with detailed textual support; sensitive analysis of the writer's effects and perceptive, detailed and convincing personal interpretation and evaluation of the text. Candidates do not need to look for an overall individual reading of the text related to their own lives or ideas: interpretation of the text needs to be related to the writing and how it works its effect on the reader. It is not necessary to make any reference to other texts or look for meaning beyond the text itself. Strong answers have lots of embedded textual reference and integrate skills of analysis and evaluation with fluency and purpose.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Stephen Spender's poem 'The Express' discriminated well between candidates, who enjoyed both the train's journey and its effect on the speaker. The task allowed for personal response, and the clear introductory rubric ensured that candidates were not confused by the historical context of the steam train. Stronger responses were aware of the impression the train makes on the speaker, or poetic persona, even though it is never quite clear where that speaker is. Some thought the poet was a passenger on the train, although he seems to see each stage of her journey from outside. This was not necessarily a problem, as long as candidates engaged with the physical description of the train's sounds and appearance. Stronger answers focussed on the details of description and their sensuous qualities in order to explain the poet's growing rapture and appreciated the sequence of the journey described, without too much speculative interpretation of its meaning. This was a text which required a degree of Keatsian 'Negative Capability'. The strongest argument it presents is how man-made objects can acquire the beauty of nature.

The train's journey can be divided into several sections, and good candidates often made use of this in order to shape their answers. One strong candidate, for instance, began their second paragraph by stating '*any train's journey begins at the station*'. This train is not at the station for long and departs 'without more fuss' but the imagery used to describe the train's departure was interesting to candidates. Most commented on her stately initial progress 'gliding like a queen' as showing her movement to be majestic or commanding, humbling the nearby houses and reducing the urban scenery to mere onlookers. Some commented on the alliterative pumping force of the 'powerful plain' statement of intent from the 'pistons', and a few heard the hiss of steam in the poet's sibilance. Some connected the grandeur of the simile with the regal status of an 'express' while others saw a more workmanlike, or even a more sinister allusion in the 'black statement' and 'plain manifesto' of locomotive power. Those candidates who were eager to see the whole train journey as a metaphor for life were keen to make much of the 'heavy page/Of death' and the gravestones in the cemetery which the train passes. However, neither the poet nor the train itself seem to make much of these images of human mortality: they are simply things the express pushes past while gradually gathering speed through the enjambed lines of the poem.

Stronger responses to this poem usually appreciated the way it imitates the steam train by gradually gathering pace and momentum, leaving heaviness and urban scenery behind as it powers towards 'open country'. The poet's lineation in this section of the poem shows increasing pace through enjambment and the iambic rhythms of the text become more prominent. It would be good to see more technical analysis of the forms and rhythms of poetry, as sound effects are just as important as imagery. Candidates tend to confuse 'free verse' with unrhymed poetry and miss the regularity of the poetic beat when there is no regular rhyme or stanza pattern to help them. This poem is in tetrameters with a regular beat which imitates the rhythm of the train, although the number of unstressed syllables varies in order to mimic 'gathering speed'. Although the train is initially personified and referred to throughout the poem as 'she', it is the power of the manufactured which this poem especially celebrates, together with the joy of the journey itself. There is remarkably little concern about the train's destination. An intriguing metaphor which candidates wrestled with compares the train to 'the luminous self-possession of ships on ocean'. This image might have encouraged them to look more at the voyage for its own sake than its meaning, while the adjective 'luminous' relates both to the lights of the train at evening (it is clearly a long-distance sleeper) and to the way the express, like a huge ocean liner, generates its own power and image of self-sufficiency. This might well be the 'mystery' the poet says the train acquires.

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Stronger responses were as alert to the sounds as the sights of the express train. The poet uses the present tense throughout the poem to give the reader an immediate sense of the train's growing momentum, and once beyond the town she 'sings'. Candidates enjoyed the music the train produces, contrasting the 'low' with the 'jazzy madness' and the 'screaming' of her whistle. Stronger responses reflected on the choice of words and images to imitate these noises and the movement of the train over the tracks. Listing the features of the permanent way enumerates the train's journey across open country. Many noticed the self-referential nature of the comparison of the train's rhythms to those of a poem. Appreciation of 'elate metre' and its expression through the rhythms of this particular line would certainly have helped candidates to write with sensitivity and insight about this poem.

Candidates were more confident in exploring the metaphorical possibilities of the train's journey than the technical details of its rhythmic expression. Many were excited by the idea of 'new eras of wild happiness' and wanted to see the journey as a journey of, or beyond, life itself. However those who attended to the details of the 'strange shapes, broad curves/And parallels' of the trackwork were probably closer to the purposes of the poet. Those able to relate this to the lines and of the poem itself, with its distinct lack of end-stopping at this point, were able to comment effectively on structure and form as well as advance personal responses. Many picked up the slightly disturbing image of 'like the steel of guns' but it develops the poet's praise of the manufactured, like the 'black statement of pistons' and imitates the clean parallel lines of the poem itself. Good candidates could hear the train 'steaming through metal landscape on her lines' and pick up the way the poet imitates her progress.

As noted above, the destination of this express remains unclear: she moves 'beyond the crest of the world'. Candidates enjoyed the surreal elements of this long day's journey into night, and many saw it as a metaphor for life beyond death, or saw the poem as a commentary on time, on human life, the lives of celebrities or the lives of women in particular. These rather speculative readings, while interesting, tended to lack secure grounding in the text itself. The poet himself, in the final section of the poem, remains more interested in the light the train radiates 'like a comet through flame' and the sound of the train's mechanical 'music'. What is interesting, and the focus of the final bullet point, is the poet's assertion that this music cannot be equalled by the sounds of nature. A few candidates picked up on this anti-Romantic sentiment, and the surprising ways in which the poem celebrates the man-made and (then) modern in contrast with how poets more often celebrate 'bird song' and 'honey buds'. However, reading the poem without context, candidates were more likely to find the image of a steam train quite nostalgic and often referenced their own childhood journeys and reflected on them. Quite a few picked up the magical or dream-like qualities of the poem's final lines as the train moves 'entranced' and 'wrapt' in its own music. Most appreciated the poet's 'Ah' as an expression of his admiration and some commented on the way the train becomes a celestial object, transcending nature or humanity through the beauty of her song. The strongest answers were those which showed a strong appreciation of the visual and auditory qualities of the train's journey.

Question 2

The extract from Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904) was challenging and proved less popular than the poem. It was only attempted by just over a quarter of the entry. However, it is essentially a chase sequence with drama, tension and suspense. The reader follows the thoughts and feelings of the character Decoud in close third person narrative, so like him we are plunged in darkness, and at the mercy of the elements in a confusing situation. The introductory rubric should have helped to clarify the situation, some of the nautical jargon and who is who. The steamer is fast catching up with the small lighter and collides with it in the passage, which goes on to describe the ensuing panic and desperation. As one candidate put it '*due to little visual description, the reader is forced to navigate the text by imagining the scene with only auditory and tactile cues*'. As this strong candidate realised, this encourages the reader to empathise with Decoud's situation and emotions.

Many candidates found the descriptive language of the opening an inviting if ominous start. The rain seems to have independent agency ('a heavier touch') while the 'hiss and thump' of the approaching steamship is onomatopoeically conveyed as a foreshadowing of the impending collision. The unexpected nature of the collision is conveyed through onomatopoeic monosyllables such as 'lurch', 'broke', 'crack' and (repeated) 'shock'. The cacophony of sound effects gave good opportunities for detailed comment. Some candidates thoughtfully suggested that the metaphor of 'an angry hand laying hold of the lighter and dragging it along to destruction' suggested the hand of fate, or some kind of supernatural punishment for having stolen the treasure. A few thought Decoud himself was feeling guilty. The intensity of the writing certainly suggests fury and revenge. The metaphor also emphasises the vulnerability of the lighter and of the men's position.

Some candidates struggled a little to work out who was who, but that is appropriate to the novel's description of a scene in the dark, where Decoud is struggling to work out what has happened. Nostromo himself is also

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known as ‘the Capataz’ and his true character and identity are not obvious in this passage. It is Decoud’s thoughts and sensations which dominate and the second bullet point was designed to assist candidates here. Some commented on his stoical nature: ‘he kept his teeth hard set all the time’. Others noted a degree of panic in the exclamation ‘It was a collision!’ and despair in the comment that Nostromo thought ‘this was perhaps the end of his desperate adventure.’ Several commented on how the men appear to have been hunted down and were now, like the lighter ‘half swamped’ by superior forces. There was some strong analysis of how the writing conveys the loss of control not just for the boat but for the men in this alarming situation. Nostromo has been ‘flung away from the long tiller’ which indicates he is temporarily no longer in command of the boat or its fate.

The next moment was less clear to some of the candidates, who found Conrad’s prose as difficult to disentangle here as the two boats. More perceptive readings appreciated that this is deliberate: the lighter and the steamer have become attached, so, instead of being left to ‘sink or swim’, the lighter and its crew are bound together with the pursuing steamer. However, some confusion is understandable here, as the writer tells us Decoud himself found the cause of this ‘inexplicable’ at the time. The writing did allow candidates to focus clearly on Decoud’s feelings, as the bullet point suggested and explored both how he ‘had no time to think’ and yet remained ‘in complete possession of himself’ and recognised this as a response to emergency. Some contrasted his wordless calm with the shrieks from Senor Hirsch. Others found it interesting that he falls with open arms on the ‘pile of treasure boxes’ to suggest that his chief priority remains keeping a firm hold of the loot. Candidates differed in their personal responses to Decoud, some finding him brave and others cynical. The ‘dragging’ feeling seems to suggest his personal despair and yet he seems calm amidst the tension and suspense of this potentially fatal situation.

The contrasting ‘shrieks’ and then silence and stillness of the final paragraph certainly add to the feelings of suspense and terror as their source is uncertain and the outcome of the collision is unclear. Figurative language was observed as adding to the terror ‘as if some spirit in the night were mocking’ them, but Nostromo seems at this moment to regain command as his ‘groping hands’ take hold of Decoud’s ‘bruised side’ to suggest all is not over yet. Several commented perceptively on the comparison of the collision to ‘a bizarre and agitated dream’ to suggest that in this passage it is difficult, in the dark, to disentangle facts from fantasy. Decoud relies on his instincts and ‘apprehension’ while the reader also waits expectantly for enlightenment. Good answers remained close to the text and the writer’s techniques for delaying revelation and keeping the reader in the dark with the characters, linking their emotions in a chain of empathy.

Good answers were not only clear about the surface details of the narrative and its literal meaning, but sensitively alert to the figurative language conveying Decoud’s feelings. Many were able to relate the tension, panic, despair and expectant silence to details of the situation, as the men are on the run, their activity is transgressive, and we do not know whether they will be able to keep hold of their treasure. Strong responses navigated thoughtfully between literal and metaphorical description and were alert both to what was happening and its possible figurative meaning. As with the poem, there was a strong descriptive emphasis on sounds as the scene takes place in the dark, and this allowed some thoughtful response to language choices and their effect on the reader. Some felt the nightmare analogy made this nautical scene ‘relatable to the readers’, while others appreciated this was a nightmare which had actually come true, and the crew are still waiting for it to end at the close of the passage. The silence and relative calm of the final sentences are in sharp juxtaposition to the storm and panic of the earlier sections of the passage, but it is not a calm which suggests peace. The curt and urgent dialogue and exclamations sustain the tension and keep the reader focused on what might happen next. As one strong answer put it: the writer omits the chaos that we grew comfortable with ... disorientating us and building up dread and suspense.’

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