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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- sustain a clear focus on the key words of the questions
- use relevant textual references to support their arguments
- analyse sensitively and in detail the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- write informed personal responses to texts.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- work through 'themes' they have studied regardless of the actual focus of the question
- have only a basic grasp of surface meanings
- make comments that are overly reliant on assertion rather than a close analysis of the writing
- merely label writers' techniques without analysing them.

General comments

There was some evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where candidates showed insight and individuality in their sustained explorations of poems.

Some candidates began their answers with general introductions, some quite lengthy, that did not address the question and ended their answers, also at length, by repeating points already made within the main body of the answer. There is no merit in producing material that is not relevant to the question nor in repeating points. This is an unproductive use of candidates' time; every sentence should contribute to a candidate's response to the question. Extraneous background information is not rewarded.

Textual knowledge

The most successful answers showed an extensive knowledge of the text, with candidates integrating concise textual references to support their ideas. In answers to extract and poetry questions, these candidates took advantage of the opportunities offered them by having the extract or poem printed in the question paper. They selected relevant detail to support their ideas; they used the words in their direct quotations to probe critically 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. Sometimes a vague phrase such as 'This shows …' followed a lengthy quotation., where it was unclear what 'This' referred to. Again, this session, some candidates offered quotations that were abridged, with an ellipsis used to indicate words that had been omitted in the middle of the quotation; often, however, the omitted words were the very ones candidates needed to support the point being made.

Focus on the question

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question. Less successful answers sometimes demonstrated a clear understanding of the text but without achieving a clear focus. This was evident in many answers to poetry or extract questions where candidates simply worked through the text in order, often at length, without careful selection of material that would address the question's key words.

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Many candidates began their answers by announcing a list of themes in the text, regardless of the topic of the question. Candidates should appreciate that questions require their ideas to be tailored to meet the specific focus of the question; questions are not simply prompts for them to unload everything they know about the text and the themes they have studied.

Writers' effects

The most convincing responses sustained a critical analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Many candidates had memorised an impressive range of direct quotation which enabled them to explore in detail ways the writer's craft.

Less successful responses to poetry merely logged features such as enjambment, caesura and anaphora without close analysis of *precise* ways in which poets use these devices to create *specific* effects. The most assertive and least effective comments, again this session, related to rhyme schemes which flowed or did not flow, and which slowed or increased the pace of the writing. Some opening paragraphs included sentences which simply listed in a random way the devices the writer uses.

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 overly assertive, not adequately rooted in the detail of the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The most successful responses offered detailed analysis of the rich language and showed appreciation of how effects are created. Most candidates acknowledged the irony of the once colossal empire, the power and size of the statue that now lies 'shattered', and the words on the pedestal. Many candidates also commented on the mastery of the sculptor and how the details of the king's face captured his arrogance. A few candidates misunderstood the phrase 'the heart that fed' and commented that Ozymandias was a kind king who looked after his people.

Question 2

Most candidates identified some of Atwood's strong emotions such as anger and offence and the reasons behind these, for example, the careless decisions of the planners and their perceived attempts to control lives. Stronger answers analysed convincingly many of the writing features such as the language of protest and diction associated with sickness, insanity and blindness. Most candidates commented on the implications of the words 'sanities', 'pedantic', 'rebuke' and 'rational whine'. Some of the less successful responses spent too long on general introductions with too many biographical and contextual details.

Question 3

Many candidates provided an engaged response, showing awareness of the contrasting beautiful setting and the downcast thoughts and feelings of the speaker, grasping the speaker's lack of enjoyment of life. The strongest answers focused sharply on the question and made clear links between the beautiful setting and the speaker's frame of mind. The strongest answers explored with sensitivity the vivid use of sound, visual imagery and the personification of nature. Some candidates, intrigued by the tragic personal life of the poet, were distracted into offering lengthy biographies of the poet, often at the start of their responses, without relating their material to the specific requirements of the question.

Question 4

The strongest answers clearly understood the position of the speaker in her society and remained focused on the question. These understood how the speaker made the best of her life, did not succumb to despair and that the poem provides a degree of optimism, with comments supported by apt textual reference. There was much engaged comment on the symbolism of the eagle and antelope. Many candidates expressed their

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admiration for the speaker. There were, however, many responses that strayed from the detail of the poem, offering instead general observations about the oppression of women.

Question 5

Candidates understood the drama of the ferocity and violence of the wind and its threat to the house and people within. Stronger responses successfully explored many of the writing features such as onomatopoeia ('crashing', 'booming') and striking visual imagery, for example, 'Blade-light, luminous black and emerald' and 'black-Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly'. Less successful responses tended simply to describe the setting and people in it rather than engage with the detail and drama of the ways in which Hughes achieves his effects.

Question 6

Candidates seemed to enjoy this poem and demonstrated strong engagement; they understood that the football game was being played in pouring rain yet that did not detract from the good humour of the players and the excitement of the match. Most responses provided relevant comments on the atmosphere, the setting and the description of the players. Many commented on the effects of Hughes' use of language: 'bunting colours', 'merry-coloured men', 'Spouted', 'puddle glitter' and 'flew horizontal'. Less successful responses adopted a descriptive rather than analytical approach to the writing.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates showed an understanding of the immediate context: Jaja has spent the previous three years in jail, taking the blame for the murder of his father and that this is Kambili's final visit before his release from prison. Candidates focused on the presentation of Jaja, Mama and Kambili in the extract, with more confident candidates exploring the significance of Kambili's revelations about her dreams. The strongest responses tailored their material to the specific focus of the question: the extent to which Adichie makes this a satisfying ending to the novel. These responses commented on some sense of optimism for the future and the symbol of the purple hibiscus as a sign of hope and rebirth (despite the mother's unsteady mental state and her son hardened by his time in jail).

Question 8

Most responses were aware that Papa-Nnukwu lives in a 'native compound' and is a traditionalist, regarded by his unforgiving son as a pagan. Candidates showed some understanding of the lack of contact between father and son, how Kambili and Jaja are permitted only minimal contact with him, which contrasts with Papa-Nnukwu's relationship with his daughter and her children. The strongest responses probed critically ways in which Adichie makes Papa-Nnukwu such a 'memorable character'. These responses included precise well-selected direct quotations candidates had memorised from the novel to support their ideas and to explore the writer's effects closely. Without quotation, many responses relied on unsupported assertion.

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.

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Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

Most candidates wrote about the sudden slip by Moushumi and Gogol's instant understanding of her infidelity, followed by his desire to be 'as physically as far away from her as possible'. The most successful responses focused on the key words 'dramatic' and 'sad', exploring the ways in which Lahiri conveys Gogol's feelings of 'bewilderment, anger, humiliation, failure, shame' and the chill of her secrecy 'like a poison'. These responses commented on the settings: 'the disturbing pitch-black evening' on the train and the melancholy of Venice. Less successful responses re-told the content of the extract with insufficient regard to the question.

Question 16

This was significantly less popular than the extract question. Candidates had a greater chance of success if they chose two suitable moments in the novel and defined those moments clearly. Suitable moments included the birth of Gogol, the death of her father, the move to the suburbs, her being alone while Ashoka is away working and Ashoka' death. Less successful responses tended to narrate the moments often without the use of textual evidence to support points made; without textual reference, candidates were unable to explore closely ways in which Adichie creates sympathy for Ashima. Less successful responses did not identify or define two clear moments.

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

Most candidates were confidently able to place this extract in context and to appreciate its entertaining and serious qualities. Most candidates understood the seriousness of Father's determination to shock his children into respect for dangerous animals, and most were amused by Pi's attempts to shift the blame for an unknown crime onto his brother Ravi. The most successful responses explored the terrifying description of the tiger and the irony of Father's lengthy instructions about avoiding tigers and of Pi's exaggerated agreement. These responses probed in considerable detail ways in which Martel achieves his effects in this extract. Less successful responses tended to describe and explain the content of the extract, often without supporting detail from the text.

Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Many candidates approached this question with enthusiasm, showing understanding of the extract. They were able to identify Sharma's shortcomings; many picked up on his laziness, his excuses for his lateness, his argumentativeness. The more successful responses explored closely details from the extract which demonstrate his arrogance and the unpleasant way in which he attempted to humiliate Mahesh as he 'surveyed his delighted audience'; these responses explored the effects of the dialogue (for example, 'a pipsqueak like you') and Sharma's actions such as snapping his fingers in front of Mahesh's face. Only the strongest answers addressed the key words 'striking introduction to Sharma', exploring ways in which the character's traits are established for the rest of the story. The weakest answers wrote a character sketch of Sharma without focusing on the question, often giving stereotypical comments about Indian workers.

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Question 22

This was less popular than the extract question on *Stories of Ourselves*. The most successful responses showed a wide command of pertinent detail from the story, which often revealed candidates' enjoyment of this tale of wilfully badly behaved oldies. Most candidates showed some understanding of the consequences of drinking the water from the Fountain of Youth, the four friends' belief that this can restore them to youth and their devastation when the effect wears off. The strongest responses explored with amusement the descriptions of the oldies' feverish dancing and cavorting and their determination to repeat the experiment, focusing directly on the question. Less successful responses lacked an adequate range of textual reference needed for support.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/22
Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully. Attempting to link an answer to the question in the concluding paragraph is an unproductive response to the set task.

Candidates would be advised to write brief introductions which avoid lengthy historical background, plot summary and the listing of the writer's techniques to be addressed, and to focus on central points in response to the specific terms of the question. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.

The selection of reference material from the text was key to the most successful answers; material needs to be directly relevant to the question and accompanied by a comment, making it clear how it relates the answer to the question.

An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

General comments

Many 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 *Othello* with a smaller number choosing to write about *Journey's End.* It was pleasing to see that the new text this series*, Death and the King's Horseman,* was studied by a number of centres. There were too few responses seen to *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, to make meaningful comment.

There is no requirement that candidates write a thesis statement or retell the plot before answering the specific question. Too often, there were lengthy introductions of extraneous information running into one or two pages before any reference to the question was made. In some cases, these 'introductions' comprised the whole essay, with an attempt to link the writing to the question, in the concluding paragraph, simply asserting that 'this makes it dramatic', or whatever the focus of the question was, without exploring 'how' this is so. With 45 minutes per essay, it is vital that candidates use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. Too often the time spent on a lengthy introduction meant that a candidate did not write about much of the passage and the final part of passages was frequently missed completely, therefore sometimes missing key points. Others wrote a list of literary features, seemingly chosen at random, as ways in which a passage was made amusing or dramatic, for example. The most successful introductions briefly summarised a number of points that were then developed in the main body of the essay. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text without focus on the terms of the question is unlikely to achieve high reward.

Whilst most candidates showed knowledge of and engagement with their set texts, many responses remained generalised, without demonstrating detailed knowledge and close reading. This was often revealed by misreading of the passages or in trying to find themes in them, rather than answering the question. Working through a number of themes, stage directions, punctuation or by starting a point with a random quotation is also unlikely to achieve high reward unless explored in context and relevant to the question.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage informed the most successful answers. These responses looked at the text from an audience perspective and commented on author's intentions in regard to the audience and commented in detail on the dramatic impact created. They were aware that,

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although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation in the stage directions seems unproductive.

The strongest answers to the passage-based questions were able to briefly contextualise the passage before moving on to explore the passage in detail. In discursive questions, they selected a range of material from the whole text, supporting points with quotation or very specific textual reference. The ability to integrate brief, well-selected reference to the text is often a key discriminator as indicated in the Level Descriptors. However, these should be fully explored rather than remain inert.

In questions on the paper asking 'How far' a candidate agreed with a statement about a character in the text, candidates are free to argue on one side or the other, but the strongest responses demonstrated understanding that views may differ and wrote a balanced argument, supported by textual detail, before communicating a personal view.

There were a few 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.

Centres are reminded that the set texts change for 2024 with *Journey's End* and *Twelfth Night*, replaced by Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire* and William Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Comments on Specific Questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

There were too few seen to make meaningful comment.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 2

(a) This was the most popular question on this text. Most candidates engaged with the intensity of Stanhope and Raleigh's reactions to Osborne's death and focused discussion on their mutual misunderstanding, and the tension between them building to an unbearable point. They understood Stanhope's anger, but better answers established from the start that both Stanhope and Raleigh are shattered by Osborne's death but are reacting to it differently. Better answers commented on Raleigh's character development as he finally reacts and voices his thoughts that Stanhope resents his presence. There was close detail to the passage and language, with some perceptive exploration of stage directions and how the characters' broken speech and the ominous final imagery contributed to the intensity of the scene. Stronger responses connected with the tragedy of the scene, sympathising with both characters and understanding Osborne's important role in their lives, and that it is the first time Raleigh sees Stanhope's vulnerability. These responses understood how Raleigh's earlier naivety and anticipation of the excitement of combat is now quickly erased, as he faces the reality of Stanhope's suffering, and the bleakness of the loss of Osborne.

Less successful responses did not set the passage in context and there was some misunderstanding that Stanhope is angry with Raleigh because he blames him for Osborne's death; a few did not refer to Osborne's death at all. Weaker responses were quite general, lacking sufficient textual detail and development of ideas, recounting who said what without much comment. Working through a passage focusing on themes, stage directions and punctuation, with little understanding of them in context, was a feature of many weaker answers.

(b) Successful responses were wide-ranging and engaged with the various positive aspects of Trotter's character, often contrasting him with other characters and relating him to the themes of the play. They discussed his coping mechanisms, food and his chart; his accent revealing social class and his hard work in rising up the ranks. His reassuring nature and reliability were referenced and genuine affection for and empathy with the character was apparent. Better answers explored his dramatic impact and the light relief his jokes provided from the constant stress of danger and the anticipated big attack.

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Weaker answers tended to focus on a limited number of aspects, such as his chart and love of food. Although candidates were able to engage with Trotter's likeable character, responses often lacked detailed textual support and listed aspects of Trotter's character without developing ideas. Some responses became too focused on a general discussion of the soldiers' coping mechanisms.

WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

Question 3

(a) The best answers were able to place the passage in its context, that Amusa has been summoned to give his account of the market women rioting and of his failure to arrest Elesin for criminal intent, to prevent his ritual suicide. Almost all candidates recognised the patronising attitudes and behaviour towards Amusa revealed by Pilkings, the Resident and Jane. The best answers supported points with well-selected references and close examination of the text and language. Candidates generally showed an understanding of their refusal to accept, and value Yoruba customs, and were able to discuss how their language and attitudes are offensive to Amusa and to the local community. Better answers commented on the realisation of the passing of time, and the sound of midnight striking with the dramatic effect of the impending ritual suicide on the British. Most dealt with the reference to pork and Amusa, but often overlooked his horrified response to the disrespectful use of the culturally significant Egungun costumes. There was some confusion regarding Amusa's roots and his religion.

Less successful responses discussed colonialism at great length, resulting in limited coverage of the passage or worked through the passage explaining the situation but without exploring what it revealed.

(b) Most candidates had good knowledge of the plot and character, Elesin. All candidates understood that Elesin enjoyed life and gave examples, but focus on 'dramatically compelling', how it drives the plot, was not as evident. Responses were wide-ranging, exploring his enjoyment and interaction with the market women, his appetites for food, clothes, dancing and women. Only the best answers gave detailed evidence to show his enjoyment of life, and failure to fulfil his duty, had grave consequences for the wider Yoruba community, and his own family, leading his son, Olunde, to commit ritual suicide in place of his father. There were some engaging personal responses showing contempt for Elesin's selfish lifestyle, supported by textual references and detail to how his language changes throughout the play, to reflect his fall from grace. Stronger responses discussed the effect of the drumming heard throughout the play.

Less successful responses did not explore the consequences of Elesin's selfish actions for the wider Yoruba community and tended to write character studies, narrating rather than exploring and supporting comments with textual evidence. Weaker answers retold the plot with generalised comments on his enjoyment of women, nice clothes and his status, but with little specific textual detail or understanding of the demands of the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Twelfth Night*

Question 4

(a) This was the most popular text and question. Many candidates did not make the best use of time, beginning rather generally, giving detailed accounts of the plot before focusing on Antonio and Sebastian. Successful answers engaged effectively with the character of Antonio, his love for Sebastian, and how he is willing to risk his personal safety to accompany Sebastian. However, a surprising number of candidates did not understand that Antonio has rescued Sebastian from the shipwreck and assumed the two had just met. This resulted in some responses focusing entirely on the 'intriguing' relationship between Antonio and Sebastian. Many candidates did not connect with the one-sided nature of the relationship, stating that the two men are in love with each other and that Sebastian reciprocates Antonio's adoration. His use of the word '*crave*' was often interpreted as an expression of his desire for Antonio, rather than his request that Antonio allow him to bear his troubles alone.

Better candidates engaged with the audience's anticipation of the future meeting of Viola and Sebastian, and the likely confusion and joy created by this. They were able to discuss the future implications of the revelation that Sebastian is alive, engaging with dramatic irony and the structure of the play. They considered the parallels with Viola's shipwreck and the significance of Sebastian's

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remark on how they look alike, in light of his intent to go to Orsino's court. There was some discussion of the nature of Antonio and Sebastian's relationship, with many candidates having clearly been taught about the potential homoerotic aspect of the relationship, but with no development or support of this idea.

Weaker answers tended to speculate on the nature of the relationship between Antonio and Sebastian, and Elizabethan attitudes towards homosexuality, at the expense of examining other material in the passage. It was not always clear that candidates understood 'intriguing' and they worked through the passage, retelling what was happening but with little understanding of the significance in the play.

(b) This was a popular question but though there were some very impressive answers, there were also many of the weakest on this paper. All candidates understood that Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are drinking companions and add humour to the play in their drunken scenes. Better answers established from the start that Sir Toby is using and manipulating Sir Andrew for his money, with the absurd notion that he is a suitable suitor for Olivia. They examined the relationship in that light and engaged with the comic nature of their relationship, with close textual reference and analysis of the language, situations and comic relief their interactions create.

Less successful responses were general with little supporting textual reference. Some asserted it was *amusing* but without specific textual detail or exploring how their relationship was made so. Many were narrative in approach and lost focus on the terms of the question. There was an attempt to explore the significance of their names with '*belch*' and '*aguecheek*' interpreted in various ways, but rarely linked to how this contributes to make their relationship amusing.

The weakest answers ignored the question and retold the plot. Some candidates demonstrated insecure understanding of the text and characters, and confused the two men and the nature of their relationship. They did not identify the idea of Sir Toby using Sir Andrew for money and made general comments about them being the best of friends and supportive of each other. Their exploits were often listed with little, or no textual support.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Othello*

Question 5

(a) There were some impressive responses to this question. Many candidates engaged with the chaotic and shocking nature of the passage, with some strong responses to Iago's calculated actions, commenting on how his evil words and plans have now transformed into physical actions. They recognised Iago's duplicity and cunning, with better answers exploring his quick thinking when Roderigo fails to kill Cassio, commenting on the dramatic impact of his exit and re-entry, the darkness on stage and the chaos it creates. There was critical understanding of the staging and the entrances and exits of other characters, creating confusion and drama onstage. Close consideration of Othello's comments, Lodovico and Gratiano's contribution, and the significance of Roderigo's final comment were features of stronger responses.

Weaker answers tended to narrate what happened with little comment on '*shocking*' and some confusion as to who stabbed whom, thinking that both Cassio and Roderigo were dead by the end of the passage. Some responses summarised the whole plot, making general statements about the themes with scant reference to either the question or passage.

(b) There were some very sympathetic responses. The best answers explored the 'How far' Shakespeare encourages the audience to sympathise with Othello in considerable detail. They presented a balanced argument of the reasons, for and against sympathising, looking at Othello's insecurities, and the reasons for them, but also considering his jealousy and gullibility as the play progresses. There was clear understanding of the racism towards Othello; Iago's manipulation of his insecurities and his jealousy, supported by specific textual detail and close analysis of the language.

Successful responses were able to track Othello's character through the play, examining how he is seen in different ways from the perspectives of various characters, but how the audience is able to make up its own mind about him. His internalised sense of inadequacy, because of his race, was also identified in these responses. There were well-argued cases which discussed how the

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audience is unable to sympathise with Othello, by the end of the play, because of the violence we have witnessed against Desdemona.

Weaker answers tended to focus on Iago's manipulation, often recounting this in great detail and sympathising with him because of this. Others wrote a character study of Othello or narrated the plot, lacking specific textual detail or focus on the question. There were many examples of this approach with an attempt to link the response to the question, in the final lines of the response with a simple, '*and this makes the audience sympathise with Othello'*. This is an unproductive way to answer questions and unlikely to receive high reward.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/32
Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully. Attempting to link an answer to the question in the concluding paragraph is an unproductive response to the set task.

Candidates would be advised to write brief introductions which avoid lengthy historical background, plot summary and the listing of the writer's techniques to be addressed, and to focus on central points in response to the specific terms of the question. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.

The selection of reference material from the text was key to the most successful answers; material needs to be directly relevant to the question and accompanied by a comment, making it clear how it relates the answer to the question.

An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

General comments

Many 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 *Othello* with a smaller number choosing to write about *Journey's End.* It was pleasing to see that the new text this series*, Death and the King's Horseman,* was studied by a number of centres. There were too few responses seen to *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, to make meaningful comment.

There is no requirement that candidates write a thesis statement or retell the plot before answering the specific question. Too often, there were lengthy introductions of extraneous information running into one or two pages before any reference to the question was made. In some cases, these 'introductions' comprised the whole essay, with an attempt to link the writing to the question, in the concluding paragraph, simply asserting that 'this makes it dramatic', or whatever the focus of the question was, without exploring 'how' this is so. With 45 minutes per essay, it is vital that candidates use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. Too often the time spent on a lengthy introduction meant that a candidate did not write about much of the passage and the final part of passages was frequently missed completely, therefore sometimes missing key points. Others wrote a list of literary features, seemingly chosen at random, as ways in which a passage was made amusing or dramatic, for example. The most successful introductions briefly summarised a number of points that were then developed in the main body of the essay. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text without focus on the terms of the question is unlikely to achieve high reward.

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An awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage informed the most successful answers. These responses looked at the text from an audience perspective and commented on author's intentions in regard to the audience and commented in detail on the dramatic impact created. They were aware that,

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although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the punctuation in the stage directions seems unproductive.

The strongest answers to the passage-based questions were able to briefly contextualise the passage before moving on to explore the passage in detail. In discursive questions, they selected a range of material from the whole text, supporting points with quotation or very specific textual reference. The ability to integrate brief, well-selected reference to the text is often a key discriminator as indicated in the Level Descriptors. However, these should be fully explored rather than remain inert.

In questions on the paper asking 'How far' a candidate agreed with a statement about a character in the text, candidates are free to argue on one side or the other, but the strongest responses demonstrated understanding that views may differ and wrote a balanced argument, supported by textual detail, before communicating a personal view.

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.

Centres are reminded that the set texts change for 2024 with *Journey's End* and *Twelfth Night*, replaced by Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire* and William Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Comments on Specific Questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

There were too few seen to make meaningful comment.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 2

(a) This was the most popular question on this text. Most candidates engaged with the intensity of Stanhope and Raleigh's reactions to Osborne's death and focused discussion on their mutual misunderstanding, and the tension between them building to an unbearable point. They understood Stanhope's anger, but better answers established from the start that both Stanhope and Raleigh are shattered by Osborne's death but are reacting to it differently. Better answers commented on Raleigh's character development as he finally reacts and voices his thoughts that Stanhope resents his presence. There was close detail to the passage and language, with some perceptive exploration of stage directions and how the characters' broken speech and the ominous final imagery contributed to the intensity of the scene. Stronger responses connected with the tragedy of the scene, sympathising with both characters and understanding Osborne's important role in their lives, and that it is the first time Raleigh sees Stanhope's vulnerability. These responses understood how Raleigh's earlier naivety and anticipation of the excitement of combat is now quickly erased, as he faces the reality of Stanhope's suffering, and the bleakness of the loss of Osborne.

Less successful responses did not set the passage in context and there was some misunderstanding that Stanhope is angry with Raleigh because he blames him for Osborne's death; a few did not refer to Osborne's death at all. Weaker responses were quite general, lacking sufficient textual detail and development of ideas, recounting who said what without much comment. Working through a passage focusing on themes, stage directions and punctuation, with little understanding of them in context, was a feature of many weaker answers.

(b) Successful responses were wide-ranging and engaged with the various positive aspects of Trotter's character, often contrasting him with other characters and relating him to the themes of the play. They discussed his coping mechanisms, food and his chart; his accent revealing social class and his hard work in rising up the ranks. His reassuring nature and reliability were referenced and genuine affection for and empathy with the character was apparent. Better answers explored his dramatic impact and the light relief his jokes provided from the constant stress of danger and the anticipated big attack.

Weaker answers tended to focus on a limited number of aspects, such as his chart and love of food. Although candidates were able to engage with Trotter's likeable character, responses often lacked detailed

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textual support and listed aspects of Trotter's character without developing ideas. Some responses became too focused on a general discussion of the soldiers' coping mechanisms.

WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

Question 3

(a) The best answers were able to place the passage in its context, that Amusa has been summoned to give his account of the market women rioting and of his failure to arrest Elesin for criminal intent, to prevent his ritual suicide. Almost all candidates recognised the patronising attitudes and behaviour towards Amusa revealed by Pilkings, the Resident and Jane. The best answers supported points with well-selected references and close examination of the text and language. Candidates generally showed an understanding of their refusal to accept, and value Yoruba customs, and were able to discuss how their language and attitudes are offensive to Amusa and to the local community. Better answers commented on the realisation of the passing of time, and the sound of midnight striking with the dramatic effect of the impending ritual suicide on the British. Most dealt with the reference to pork and Amusa, but often overlooked his horrified response to the disrespectful use of the culturally significant Egungun costumes. There was some confusion regarding Amusa's roots and his religion.

Less successful responses discussed colonialism at great length, resulting in limited coverage of the passage or worked through the passage explaining the situation but without exploring what it revealed.

(b) Most candidates had good knowledge of the plot and character, Elesin. All candidates understood that Elesin enjoyed life and gave examples, but focus on 'dramatically compelling', how it drives the plot, was not as evident. Responses were wide-ranging, exploring his enjoyment and interaction with the market women, his appetites for food, clothes, dancing and women. Only the best answers gave detailed evidence to show his enjoyment of life, and failure to fulfil his duty, had grave consequences for the wider Yoruba community, and his own family, leading his son, Olunde, to commit ritual suicide in place of his father. There were some engaging personal responses showing contempt for Elesin's selfish lifestyle, supported by textual references and detail to how his language changes throughout the play, to reflect his fall from grace. Stronger responses discussed the effect of the drumming heard throughout the play.

Less successful responses did not explore the consequences of Elesin's selfish actions for the wider Yoruba community and tended to write character studies, narrating rather than exploring and supporting comments with textual evidence. Weaker answers retold the plot with generalised comments on his enjoyment of women, nice clothes and his status, but with little specific textual detail or understanding of the demands of the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Twelfth Night*

Question 4

(a) This was the most popular text and question. Many candidates did not make the best use of time, beginning rather generally, giving detailed accounts of the plot before focusing on Antonio and Sebastian. Successful answers engaged effectively with the character of Antonio, his love for Sebastian, and how he is willing to risk his personal safety to accompany Sebastian. However, a surprising number of candidates did not understand that Antonio has rescued Sebastian from the shipwreck and assumed the two had just met. This resulted in some responses focusing entirely on the 'intriguing' relationship between Antonio and Sebastian. Many candidates did not connect with the one-sided nature of the relationship, stating that the two men are in love with each other and that Sebastian reciprocates Antonio's adoration. His use of the word '*crave*' was often interpreted as an expression of his desire for Antonio, rather than his request that Antonio allow him to bear his troubles alone.

Better candidates engaged with the audience's anticipation of the future meeting of Viola and Sebastian, and the likely confusion and joy created by this. They were able to discuss the future implications of the revelation that Sebastian is alive, engaging with dramatic irony and the structure of the play. They considered the parallels with Viola's shipwreck and the significance of Sebastian's remark on how they look alike, in light of his intent to go to Orsino's court. There was some discussion of the nature of Antonio and Sebastian's relationship, with many candidates having

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clearly been taught about the potential homoerotic aspect of the relationship, but with no development or support of this idea.

Weaker answers tended to speculate on the nature of the relationship between Antonio and Sebastian, and Elizabethan attitudes towards homosexuality, at the expense of examining other material in the passage. It was not always clear that candidates understood 'intriguing' and they worked through the passage, retelling what was happening but with little understanding of the significance in the play.

(b) This was a popular question but though there were some very impressive answers, there were also many of the weakest on this paper. All candidates understood that Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are drinking companions and add humour to the play in their drunken scenes. Better answers established from the start that Sir Toby is using and manipulating Sir Andrew for his money, with the absurd notion that he is a suitable suitor for Olivia. They examined the relationship in that light and engaged with the comic nature of their relationship, with close textual reference and analysis of the language, situations and comic relief their interactions create.

Less successful responses were general with little supporting textual reference. Some asserted it was *amusing* but without specific textual detail or exploring how their relationship was made so. Many were narrative in approach and lost focus on the terms of the question. There was an attempt to explore the significance of their names with '*belch*' and '*aguecheek*' interpreted in various ways, but rarely linked to how this contributes to make their relationship amusing.

The weakest answers ignored the question and retold the plot. Some candidates demonstrated insecure understanding of the text and characters, and confused the two men and the nature of their relationship. They did not identify the idea of Sir Toby using Sir Andrew for money and made general comments about them being the best of friends and supportive of each other. Their exploits were often listed with little, or no textual support.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*: Othello*

Question 5

(a) There were some impressive responses to this question. Many candidates engaged with the chaotic and shocking nature of the passage, with some strong responses to Iago's calculated actions, commenting on how his evil words and plans have now transformed into physical actions. They recognised Iago's duplicity and cunning, with better answers exploring his quick thinking when Roderigo fails to kill Cassio, commenting on the dramatic impact of his exit and re-entry, the darkness on stage and the chaos it creates. There was critical understanding of the staging and the entrances and exits of other characters, creating confusion and drama onstage. Close consideration of Othello's comments, Lodovico and Gratiano's contribution, and the significance of Roderigo's final comment were features of stronger responses.

Weaker answers tended to narrate what happened with little comment on '*shocking*' and some confusion as to who stabbed whom, thinking that both Cassio and Roderigo were dead by the end of the passage. Some responses summarised the whole plot, making general statements about the themes with scant reference to either the question or passage.

(b) There were some very sympathetic responses. The best answers explored the 'How far' Shakespeare encourages the audience to sympathise with Othello in considerable detail. They presented a balanced argument of the reasons, for and against sympathising, looking at Othello's insecurities, and the reasons for them, but also considering his jealousy and gullibility as the play progresses. There was clear understanding of the racism towards Othello; Iago's manipulation of his insecurities and his jealousy, supported by specific textual detail and close analysis of the language.

Successful responses were able to track Othello's character through the play, examining how he is seen in different ways from the perspectives of various characters, but how the audience is able to make up its own mind about him. His internalised sense of inadequacy, because of his race, was also identified in these responses. There were well-argued cases which discussed how the audience is unable to sympathise with Othello, by the end of the play, because of the violence we have witnessed against Desdemona.

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Weaker answers tended to focus on Iago's manipulation, often recounting this in great detail and sympathising with him because of this. Others wrote a character study of Othello or narrated the plot, lacking specific textual detail or focus on the question. There were many examples of this approach with an attempt to link the response to the question, in the final lines of the response with a simple, '*and this makes the audience sympathise with Othello'*. This is an unproductive way to answer questions and unlikely to receive high reward.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/42
Unseen

Key Messages

- All Assessment Objectives are equally weighted so that the paper tests candidates' skills in reading Literature in English.
- Stronger responses benefit from good use of reading and planning time.
- Both poetry and prose responses require exploration of the writer's methods and techniques.
- Reading and interpretation should be firmly grounded in the text itself.

General Comments

This year produced an increase in the quantity of entries for this component but no decrease in quality. The prose extract proved almost as popular as the poem and candidates showed confidence in tackling both genres unseen. Stronger answers had clear understanding of both the surface narrative of each text and underlying ideas and attitudes revealed through tone and mood. Most candidates found plenty to say about the language choices of the writer and what they revealed. The best responses had a conceptualised and critical approach to the text, structuring an argument based on close analysis of language and evaluation of the form, structure and purpose of the text. Most candidates made good use of the introductory rubric to assist their understanding and the bullet points to structure their arguments.

Some candidates struggled to explore later sections of each text in as much depth and detail as the opening or initial descriptions and developments in the poem or passage. Candidates would benefit from making good use of the recommended reading time to annotate their texts and plan their answers. They are expected to cover the texts comprehensively but selectively, with a clear focus on the writer's methods and use of language. Understanding the structure of the text and how it ends, enables a better planned interpretative argument. Candidates can use the third bullet point for a concluding evaluation of the whole text. If candidates draw up a brief checklist or plan, it would also help them with timing: no paragraph should require more than 10 to 15 minutes of writing time.

Most candidates understand the importance of concise and accurate quotation to support their understanding of both text and subtext. However, it is the quality of comment *after* the quotation which usually distinguishes stronger from weaker scripts. Levels 6 and above require developed and critical comment on the writer's choices of language, structure and form. This is just as important when analysing a prose text, and candidates would benefit from more practice in commentary on narrative structure, viewpoint, change of focus, possible allegory or symbolism and the implications and effects of descriptive detail. As with a poem, it helps to ask not just who is speaking but who might they be speaking to. That enables candidates to comment intelligently on tone, and the mood created for the reader.

Most candidates found the texts engaging and wanted to construct a personal response of their own. However, stronger candidates give careful consideration to the writer's possible purpose, through the evidence of the text in front of them. Less impressive scripts showed speculation about what the text means to the candidate on a purely personal level, or produced an ingenious but tangential interpretation, at odds with the text's primary meaning. The meaning of the text resides in its words rather than the reader's assumptions. There are still some responses with lengthy personal codas drawing personal moral lessons about life at large, when time would have been better spent on more detailed examination of the writer's methods.

The Unseen is a test of reading skills which candidates should have acquired throughout their Literature course. However, candidates benefit from opportunities to read a wide variety of poems and prose extracts

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which go beyond their set texts, and deepen their understanding of different genres, styles and literary traditions. Texts which have been selected for this syllabus have long come from a very diverse range of cultures and from writers writing in English within a global literary tradition. While this sometimes includes texts from the English or American literary heritage, there is a strong focus on contemporary literature that reflects the variety of interesting writing emerging from different parts of the English-speaking world today. Some knowledge of traditional literary forms, such as the sonnet or the omniscient narrator should therefore be combined with attentiveness to the rhythms of contemporary verse, and the use of close third- or first-person narrative voice within a fictional narrative. Candidates should be able to distinguish between poet and speaker or between writer and narrator to develop a critical purchase on their reading.

Centres are encouraged to draw on past papers to test and develop their students' close reading skills, using the level descriptors for assessment and feedback. Past examiner reports are a helpful reminder not just of what examiners are looking for, but also valid interpretative responses to past texts and questions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The poem by the great Barbadian writer Edward Kamau Brathwaite was a popular choice, despite its unconventional appearance. Brathwaite also spent time in Ghana, and reflected on the African diaspora tradition both on his return to the Caribbean and in academic posts in the UK and USA. These verses are in fact just an extract from a much longer poem which introduces the whole volume *Masks*, which was published in 1968. However, it stands alone as an invocation of the fertility goddess and a prayer for good fortune and a good yield. Candidates were right to explore meanings beyond the literal and to explore underlying ideas and attitudes, but it was also important to pay attention to the surface meaning of the speaker's words and aspirations, and to the techniques that made them memorable.

The poem begins by addressing Asase Yaa directly as 'Mother of Earth'. Most candidates found the tone reverential, and many felt the writer's choice of form, using short lines, much enjambment and just two very long sentences, added to the atmosphere of prayer. However, many liked the quite literally down-to-earth approach of the speaker, picking on his references to his 'tools' and his repeated vow to work hard, as the season for planting had come round 'again'. Most thought he was probably a farmer and had a personal understanding of the annual cycle which informed the hopes and fears expressed later in the poem. Repetition was frequently understood as a key feature of the language of the text: some saw this as reflecting the fervency of the farmer's prayer, some saw it as reflecting the repeated patterns of the seasons and some felt it reflected the ritualistic nature of his worship of the earth goddess. Several felt the enjambment reflected how both his labours and his prayers are continuous. Many wrote about the way the 'dust' of the earth is personified as a 'thirsty mouth' needing water for the seed to grow, and some appreciated that this might be a precious commodity in the context of the poem. Several commented on how the earth and the goddess appear to be conflated: she requires water and food, just as the soil does, if the farmer is to have his prayers answered. Some went on to comment on the sacrificial way in which the speaker brings his offerings and his own promise to work the land. There was effective comment on the use of short lines and imperative verbs – 'drink', 'eat' – and the repeated short line 'again' to communicate both ritual pattern and urgency to the speaker's words and actions.

Candidates who appreciated the syntax of the poem were better able to divide it into sections and plan their own interpretative response accordingly. The long second sentence is highly visual and dramatises both the hopes and the fears of the speaker. Candidates were usually more successful and more detailed in exploration of the first than the second. Once again it is important to emphasise the necessity to plan a response to allow detailed consideration of each part of an unseen poem: the writer chose to give more space to the speaker's fear than to his hopes, and that might be very significant. More successful candidates realised this and inferred that the speaker had a lot of experience of bad harvests, hostile winds and the destructive elements of nature which his initial prayers were intended to appease.

Those who appreciated the darker sub-text of the poem saw significance in the speaker's hope that 'this year of all years' would be fruitful, picking up the urgency of the poet's repetition as an implication that past years had been less than successful. Candidates enjoyed the pun on 'fruit of your labour' and the idea that hard work could enable seeds to become fruit. Some strong scripts appreciated the changing pronouns of the poem, noticing that here it was the Earth, not the farmer, who was labouring, but that in the final lines of the poem this becomes 'our labour' and perhaps the hope that a joint enterprise will not be overcome by the many natural threats to a fruitful outcome. Others noticed a range of alliterative patterns, the sensuousness of descriptions of 'shoots' and 'juice' or wondered if 'green' here is an adjective or a verb.

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The image of the 'knife' or 'the blades' of the cutlass dominate the later lines of the poem, and some appreciated not just the ways in which individual words are cut by the line breaks ('cut-lass', 'harm-attan') to bring out their destructive potential, but also the possibility that all the lines of the poem enact a promised harvest cut short. Good responses contrasted 'shoots faithful' with 'shoots break' and noticed the transition from a possible future to the dangers of a destructive present tense in which the speaker sees 'green wither and 'winds shatter'. Sounds are harsher too, whether through alliteration ('blunt', break', 'tunnelling termites'), internal rhyme 'rot', 'hot', 'not') or assonance 'harm-', 'come', 'tunnelling'). It was crucial for 'clear understanding' that candidates appreciated that nature could bring harm as well nurture and is personified here through active and malevolent verbs. The threat comes not just from the wind but also the termites: some candidates saw their 'red monuments' as warning signs or indications that the destructive aspect of nature had triumphed. At the end of the poem, their 'graves' seem to have been set 'above' the farmers' labours as a sign of their victory over green growth and fertile fruit.

Stronger answers needed to grasp the impact of this disturbing vision in contrast to the piety and hope of the speaker, and good responses had a balanced appreciation of his mixture of thoughts and feelings. All candidates were able to celebrate the speaker's close relationship with the land, but better responses were alert to how vulnerable this made him and were able to work out why his initial prayers were so urgent that he may be appeasing a deity who can be very hostile, as well as offering libations to the fruitful earth. Although this poem looks superficially quite simple, there was a depth in its details, imagery, rhetoric and deeper implications which allowed discrimination between responses and provided plenty to reward in the very strongest. Like the speaker, the candidates needed to dig deep and make careful observations about patterns of language to appreciate his past, present and future concerns.

Question 2

Many candidates chose the prose, perhaps attracted by its superficially more accessible language and presentation. However, this was an extract from a novel, not a memoir, *Actress* by Anne Enright (2020) and the narrator is a fictional character herself, whose ironic tone is being carefully manipulated by the writer to reveal complex emotions about the 'mother' – the imagined famous actress Katherine O'Dell. Candidates were intrigued and attracted by the idea of what it would be like to be the child of a celebrity and found it easy to engage with the text at a contemporary level. Although some candidates took Katherine's assertion that 'everything was marvellous' at face value and read the daughter's attitude as one of hero worship, most dug deeper and were able to see a more disturbing sub-text.

Candidates would benefit from identifying what is of literary interest in the passage before simply working through it. Here, it was very much the retrospective mood: the narrator is looking back at her earlier life with her mother at some distance of time, and uses a sequence of memories, aided by a couple of photographs. The writer is clearly establishing the characters of the narrator, and indeed Kitty, as well as the mother. The more we discover their relationships, the more complex and puzzling they become, and the extract sets up several unanswered questions, to pique the interest of the reader in what the novel might reveal. For critical understanding of the text, it is important to appreciate its genre, and the writer's narrative craft: these are not real people but interesting creations. One aspect of narrative control is the choice of tense, and the writer's choice of the present for much of the extract suggests that the memories are still alive, even if the mother no longer is.

Candidates enjoyed speculating about the mother-child relationship. Some were shocked that Katherine would chain-smoke and drink in front of an eight- or nine-year old child, and thought her actions were those of an addict, whose life was less glamorous and more troubled than appeared to be the case from the outside. Some picked up on the period details, such as the 'long clapped-out curly cord' of the telephone and realised that this was a memory of a distant period in time. Stronger responses noted the theatricality of the mother's behaviour: the wink, the 'pointed finger' and 'rolling hand' and suggest that she was as much an actress at home as on the stage. The young child is involved in her own drama, including her mysterious search 'for justice' as she looked up to the ceiling. A few begun to question why there is no mention of a father. Others thought she was just concentrating on learning her lines. Others were disturbed by the lack of attention to the child, or the surprisingly adult nature of their relationship. Some noticed that the dog was 'like a dog in the movies' and related this to the mother's film career, alongside the 'pink cotton dress brought back from America'. The strongest answers suggested that the daughter too is expected to play a role in the mother's personal drama, and were disturbed by the mother's more abrupt behaviour, and apparent recklessness.

Answers were divided between those which sympathised with the mother as a single woman making her own way successfully in a very competitive world and trying her best to involve her daughter in her life,

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culminating in the twenty-first birthday party, and those who were much more critical of her attitude to her child. Guided by the bullet points, most focused initially on the mother, then looked in more detail at the party before trying to deduce the narrator's feelings. However, many rightly singled out the repeated assurance that Katherine was a 'star' 'not just on screen or on the stage, but at the breakfast table also' as the key to her mother's personality and to others' reaction to her. Many thought her egocentric, selfish and spoiled, unable to make the breakfast or do the washing up without Kitty to help her. They noticed the mess she makes and that 'someone else will dispose of all that' just as they might on a film set. Some were disturbed by the erratic behaviour, such as throwing the toast out of the window or cracking the plate on the edge of the sink. Only a few candidates linked this to the writer's use of short sentences – 'she exhales' – to communicate tension, both the mother's and that of the watching daughter. Some thought 'the toast is dead to her now' was a metaphor for how little holds her attention for long, including her own child. Just a few noticed how deliberate and theatrical a lot of her behaviour is.

Kitty is the link between the earlier and later memories: she is absent during the first of them and is rewarded with 'one of the first dishwashers in the country' in the second, the day of the narrator's twenty-first birthday party. Many noticed the affection both mother and daughter seem to express for the housekeeper Kitty and deduced that she was an important figure for both of them. Some felt this was indicative of the mother's neglect of her parental duties, and a few noticed that. even on a significant birthday, the narrator is in danger of being upstaged by a household appliance. A few noticed the mother's volatile temper: Kitty is cursed in her absence, even if she is 'nursing her cancerous sister' but 'a treasure who must be courted a~
The narrator's thoughts were usually felt to be emerge more clearly through the memories of the party. Good responses tended to focus on various inappropriate dresses the mother has 'put' her child into, even when she is as old as 21. They noticed that the child is uncomfortable in the role her mother wants her to play; some also noticed that the mother seems to want to deny her daughter independence and maturity. The dress the narrator says, with retrospective irony, she 'sports' is a 'swamp-green and sickish pink thing' that she clearly despises. All her clothes are chosen to make her look childish. Many noticed that even on the child's special day, it is the mother who is the centre of everyone's attention, dressed glamorously, but perhaps ominously in 'black'. The best responses did not ignore the significance of the clothes outlined in the description of the photographs, or the narrator's uncomfortable self-image: 'too tall' with 'mottled white arms'. A deliberate contrast is set up with the implied glamour and attractiveness of the mother who is the cynosure of everyone's 'star struck' gaze.

The short single sentence paragraphs – '*star struck'* is a single paragraph on its own – are a novelist's technique to control the pace and focus of the narrative, and it would have been good to have seen more critical attention to this use of language, structure and form. The prose, as well as the remembered 'photograph' intensify the reader's gaze at these words and their implications, asking us to consider what it means to be 'struck' by the presence of a 'star'. Their feelings are clearly ambiguous, in the eyes of the narrator: the 'mask of delight' conceals feelings of 'envy' of Katherine's allure, and women in particular feel insecure about their own appearance in Katherine's presence. Stronger answers spent some time on analysis of the 'painful stretch to some of the smiles'. Some linked this to the possible pain behind the narrator's memories, or her own physical discomfort and the presence of her mother's apparent physical perfection. Syntax draws attention to this: 'Especially the women'.

Most candidates made much of the contrast between mother and child: the narrator observes her own face at twenty-one 'dreading the limelight'. There was sophisticated analysis of her ambiguous feelings as she is 'sweetened' by reassurance that she and her mother are together against 'the fervent and the savage' who surround her, while nevertheless sensing tension and difference between them. They were able to understand that the daughter looks back with nostalgia to a moment when she reluctantly shared the limelight with her mother and that her feelings about her are interestingly mixed. There was disappointingly little analysis of the writer's craft and it would have been good to have seen more exploration of the writer at work, creating characters and shaping the prose. Nevertheless, there was much implicit appreciation and evaluation of the writing through exploration of its details and their implicit meaning. Most understood the ironic tone of the retrospective memories, and the ambiguous, but undeniably theatrical, mood they evoke.

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