

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/11 Poetry and Prose 11</p>
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Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- show a clear understanding of the detail of texts
- select material that addresses the question
- integrate well-selected references to support their responses
- explore sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects
- write personal responses to texts, informed by relevant textual detail.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- show only a basic grasp of surface meanings
- unload 'themes' they have prepared without focusing on the question's key words
- use long quotations or a list of shorter quotations without analysis of specific words
- spot writing devices without exploring the effects created
- are overly dependent on explanation and assertion.

General comments

There was some evidence of outstanding work this session in which the most successful candidates explored texts with insight and individuality. There were some examples of candidates who spent too much time on their first response, which adversely affected their performance on their second question. Some candidates showed confidence in answering their poetry question where they could refer to the poem printed in the question paper but wrote less successfully on their general essay question which required the memorising of relevant textual detail.

Although most candidates were familiar with the layout of the paper, there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. There were instances, too, of candidates relying exclusively on the extracts printed in the prose passage-based questions when answering the prose general essay questions; this approach was self-limiting. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses were those in which candidates addressed the question. As explained in previous reports, this is an essential aspect of the examination: questions are not to be regarded as mere prompts for candidates to unload exhaustively their knowledge of the poem or character or theme mentioned in the question. Candidates should tailor their material to meet the specific demands of the question.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Those candidates who wrote a brief plan (often using a bulleted list or mind map) before starting their answer tended to produce more clearly organised responses. There were again this session candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material that simply delayed the actual start of their answer to the question. Again, some candidates were determined to state the themes they had studied at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. This approach wastes candidates' time.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many students had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to explore ways in which writers use language. The least successful responses to these questions were characterised by an over-reliance on unsupported assertion.

Teachers should remind candidates of their responsibility to provide specific supporting detail from the text and not simply line references. There were instances of candidates directing Examiners to lines in poems and extracts without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. Some candidates used ellipses in the middle of quotations, presumably to shorten them, but they left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. These candidates would have benefited from quoting the word(s) they needed to support their point and avoiding the use of ellipsis altogether.

There was again this session much evidence of logging features without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers uses these devices to create *specific* effects. As was the case in previous sessions, the most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with unsupported generalisations made about speeding up or slowing down the pace of a poem.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was undoubtedly a popular choice amongst candidates. More successful answers responded thoughtfully to elements such as the pathos of the first stanza and the universal human experience of losing someone, the parallels between the father's experience of grief and the son's and the possible meaning and implications of love being 'raw'. Several commented on the symbolism of the routine actions described, especially the contextual connotations of warmth and the implications of being 'disconnected'. Less successful answers demonstrated a basic personal response to the father's grief, labelling him as 'crazy' or 'weak'. A small number of candidates confused the speaker with the father and were unsure of who was grieving whom.

Question 2

Successful answers responded sympathetically to the speaker's frustration and nightmares. They commented on striking elements of the language such as the extended metaphors related to water and animals, the use of repetition and exclamations. Also considered were the structure and form of the poem, including the two-sonnet structure and the shift to 'light' and salvation at the end of the poem together with the changes in emotional tone particularly in response to his wife. One also commented on the irony of writing a poem about writer's block. Less successful answers diagnosed the speaker's medical condition, sometimes in confusion with the Thom Gunn poem, as AIDS and made unsupported assertions about it. Other assertions were made about the speaker's problems or writer's block without reference to the poem itself. Some took the dead child literally, misunderstood the embalming imagery and ignored the existence of a structure and rhyme scheme completely.

Question 3

The more successful responses sustained a personal response to the speaker's mix of feelings of rejection, ambition and delusion, some with a critical grasp of the genre. They responded to Swinburne's presentation of the journey out of love and into acceptance, through sensual and natural imagery. These candidates understood the structure and form of the poem, including the repetition of command phrases, dynamic verbs and collective address. Too many responses saw this poem as a simple 'break-up' of a relationship and overlooked the 'singing/song' aspect of the persona's craft. The richness of the metaphors was ignored, and the focus was instead on the mechanistic responses to the anaphora and general assertions about unrequited love. Many responses also merely identified, labelled and noted the appearance of 'repetition' and 'anaphora', without fully exploring the effect or impact of the refrain. Some candidates believed that the plural 'us' referred to a competing lover whilst others confused the speaker with the woman.

Question 4

There was a limited number of responses to this question. Stronger answers did not try to present a whole reading of the poem, instead singling out particularly noticeable elements of language such as the rain, the bleaching bedsheet, and the address to John Figueroa. One particularly good answer understood that the nature and purpose of poetry itself was being questioned. The least successful of these tended to demonstrate a basic personal response to Walcott's feelings and focused only on how he did not want to be old. They misunderstood the imagery and the representation of ageing.

Question 5

Of the few answers to this question, the more successful ones understood that the poem was one of admiration and noticed elements such as antithesis and the relative simplicity of the subject matter. Less successful answers identified the family relationship between the poet and the shearer; they talked about the effort involved in the work and fretted about the damage caused by nicotine. There was little acknowledgement of the crafting of language into poetry in this or in 'Telegraph Wires'.

Question 6

There were few answers to this poem and most of them were in the lower levels. The stronger responses were characterised by having read the question thoroughly and understood the meaning of 'intriguing'. Some candidates were able to respond to the musical metaphors and the provocative phrasing of 'comes alive in your ear' and several were able to consider the different ways in which the wires might affect someone's life, for good or ill. Other answers focused on the wonders of technology or the problems of the weather interrupting a connection and tended to be quite assertive. There was very little acknowledgement of the poetic elements of the text.

Section B

Question 7

More successful answers chose and explored one or more of the particularly powerful elements of the extract, such as Kambili's thought processes and her determination to stand up for herself at the end, Mama's shocking tendency to keep defending Papa and what this implied about their relationship, Auntie Ifeoma's practicality and strong-mindedness, and the ways in which the narrative suggests this will be a turning-point in the novel as a whole. There were some good personal responses to the use of Kambili's perspective and her fragile state of consciousness, the significance of the crucifix, and the ways in which Auntie Ifeoma's 'house on fire' metaphor was effective at depicting the situation in Kambili's family. Less successful answers paraphrased the extract and often explained how every element of the narrative proved how badly hurt Kambili was. Thus, 'Father Amadi's voice was deeper, less melodious than in my dreams' because one candidate believed that 'Kambili could not even hear very well thanks to the damage Eugene caused'. Some candidates either explicitly or implicitly used the 'importance of Auntie Ifeoma to Kambili' (in **Question 8**) as the focus of discussion.

Question 8

Answers to this question were rarely as successful as those to **Question 7** as they lacked detailed exploration of the text. Candidates often had a clear grasp of Auntie Ifeoma and the significant role she played in Kambili's life but expressed this as a series of assertions about her encouragement, supportiveness and role model status without reference to any specific actions or episodes in the text. Many answers were presented as answers to **Question 8** but discussed the extract extensively or exclusively despite being instructed not to use the extract printed for **Question 7** in answering **Question 8**. This approach was self-limiting.

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

More successful answers had a variety of different approaches, reflecting how rich this extract was. Some explored how the narrative drew on Gothic conventions to scare the reader with the use of sudden darkness, the narrator being caught in a room she was not supposed to enter, and the sudden apparition of Mrs Danvers. Some suggested the spirit of Rebecca haunted the room and its things with one candidate even responding to the motif of the 'tall sloping R'. Some responded to elements of language such as the use of short sentences, the mixture of orders and rhetorical questions in Mrs Danvers's speeches, and the sensuous descriptions of Rebecca's luxurious clothes and trimmings. The most successful ones explored Mrs Danvers' inability to let Rebecca go, the implications of her having kept the room and all Rebecca's things in such pristine condition, the faux ingratiating familiarity of her voice and disturbing intimacy of her behaviour, and occasionally her challenges to the narrator's authority. Less successful responses called the narrator Rebecca and appeared to be very confused about the novel's characters and events. They were unable to appreciate either the context or the significance of the moment, speculating instead about why Rebecca had not returned or even who she was.

Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

The very few responses to this question tended to paraphrase the extract and did not explore any of James's subtleties and ironies. An awareness of the wider novel was not apparent.

Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

The strongest answers were able to identify ways in which Ashima's situational loneliness was visualised and enhanced through vivid narrative choices, such as the emphatic whiteness of the hospital in stark contrast to the colours of Ashima's household; the similar contrast between her 'matrimonial' and hospital bracelets, and her nostalgia for 'Indian time' and her parents' routine at the end of the extract. They tended to have a sense of the wider novel and understood the stages and form of the extract as a high point of Ashima's loneliness in the novel and the shift to her realisation that India is in her past and this is her present and future as reflected in the chronological narrative of the wider novel. Less successful answers paraphrased or directly quoted the extract's comments about Ashima's physical isolation from the other women, the American desire for privacy and the different traditions of childbirth in India. Most answers were able to make some comments about Ashima's sense of being disconnected from the American culture around her, sometimes supported by evidence such as the symbolically closed curtains or the non-appearance of a nurse to help.

Question 16

The more successful answers to this question drew on specific moments from the novel to consider how Maxine's importance to Gogol is inextricably bound up with his ongoing exploration of his own cultural identity. They considered Lahiri's presentation of the characters including the contrasts in each of their house/home, relationship with their own/each other's parents, cultural and social expectations of a relationship. Less successful answers demonstrated a basic personal response to the relationship and tended to narrate the novel or describe episodes in their relationship.

Question 17

There were few responses to this question but of these the majority were able to identify and explain the tension existing between headmistress and ex-candidate in the passage, but less so how Lindsay creates it. Some candidates were able to show a rudimentary understanding of free indirect discourse with the point of view oscillating between Mrs Appleyard's preoccupation with 'money' and 'power', and Irma Leopold showing her contempt for Mrs Appleyard by belittling the importance of 'spelling' through banging the desk and by offering a 'glacial handshake.' Some were able to develop this idea and see it as a turning point in the novel, a moment of high tension and the shift of power from the authority of the headmistress to the contempt of the heiress.

Question 18

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

More successful extract answers understood the context and who is interviewing whom; they responded with similar enthusiasm to the author's amazement at seeing a photograph of Richard Parker and explored the implications of Pi's attempts to remember details about the occasions in the photographs. Several commented on the significance of the swimming pool and the role of Mamaji in Pi's life. There were some sympathetic personal responses to the later photographs which demonstrated how Pi had been able to rebuild his life after the loss of his family and his traumas at sea. Most of these answers were able to comment on some obvious elements of the narrative, such as the short sentences, the author's careful visual descriptions of the photos, and the symbolic resonance of Pi closing the book at the end. Less successful answers made general comments about Pi's culture, his religions, his tragic story, and how sad it was that he could not remember his mother. One wrote about the ways in which the extract was 'moving' because it moved between different times in Pi's life.

Question 20

There were few responses to this question. Some candidates were able to make a few descriptive comments about the school and the zoo, but specific textual support was lacking. There were also scripts that failed to discuss India completely and instead discussed the passage set for **Question 19**, an approach that was self-limiting.

Question 21

More successful answers had a good clear understanding of the patriarchal structures within which Dolly is operating and, in some cases, the extent to which she has evidently internalised their standards and responded thoughtfully to the stages of her humiliation in the extract. They also had a thorough understanding of the context of the extract within the wider story and how much the event had been built up in Dolly's mind, using this to comment on elements such as her distress about her apparently ill-advised choice of dress, the speed and extent of her downfall, from wishing she was picked to wishing that she was old or at home to wishing that she were dead. Auntie Cha's unvoiced but very evident disappointment and irritation was noted. There was some effective analysis of the narration of Dolly's thought processes, though few answers understood and commented on the use of free indirect discourse itself. Less successful answers paraphrased or quoted Dolly's own words on how distressing it was to be overlooked time after time, the general 'unfairness' of her experience, and how near she is to crying.

Question 22

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/12 Poetry and Prose 12</p>
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Key messages

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General comments

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most responses showed an understanding of the speaker's fear that death is always close and his regret that people leave so few 'lovely' memories. Many commented on the bleakness of the diction: 'crushed', 'doom', 'death', 'peril'. Less successful responses did not recognise that 'some hand' refers to an anonymous person and that the speaker is reflecting on that person's accidental killing of a fly. The more successful responses explored the language used to convey the speaker's fascination with the fly's wings ('gleam out', 'lustre') and were able to offer some interpretation of 'fair monument' and 'pure relics of a blameless life'. There was much confident analysis of the contrast between the fly and humans.

Question 2

Many candidates were able to make supported references to the precise and detailed descriptions of the baby. They understood the contrast between the complexity of the baby and the simplicity and crudeness of the spirit. Less successful responses tended to work through the poem explaining its content, though without achieving a clear focus on the question. The most successful responses tailored their material to address the key words 'fascinating poem', exploring ways in which Stevenson conveys feelings and passions as inaccurate and unskilful. They also explored the use of command words in capturing the speaker's tone of voice.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to understand the idea that learning more leads to a better understanding of the world in contrast to the idea in the first line: 'A little learning is a dangerous thing'. Less successful responses tended to rely on a study guide approach of what the poem (or rather this extract from a longer poem) is about. Explanation and assertion predominated in these responses with little specific reference to the detail of the poem or to the key words 'vividly convey'. By contrast, the more successful responses selected useful concise quotations from the poem to explore ways in which Pope achieves his effects, for example, through the imagery of drinking and intoxication, the use of mountain scenery and references to heights.

Question 4

There was in most responses a recognition that the speaker is searching through the house for his wife, that she constantly eludes him though he is determined to persist with his quest. Less successful responses provided narrative accounts, often adopting a line-by-line approach. The most successful responses explored the memorable implication that, however well we know someone, there will always be something that cannot be known about them. Some argued that love makes the quest for the essence of the person exciting. The strongest responses explored the use of language and tone in making the poem 'memorable': for example, the image of the house and all its doors, the impressions of what her presence has left behind, and the way the speaker's state of mind is conveyed.

Question 5

Most answers commented on the magical nature of the experience, in particular, the moment the deer do not move but merely stare at the poet. There was generally an understanding that the experience seems to take the poet into a different dimension, almost unearthly. Stronger responses commented on the metaphor 'the curtain had blown aside for a moment' and how it captured the poet's sense of awe. Some answers explored with some sensitivity the structure of the poem, for example, by charting the movement within the poem, from '(the roe-deer) had happened in my dimension' to 'stared at me' to 'back to the ordinary'.

Question 6

Most responses recognised that the title refers to the anniversary of the death of the speaker's mother and that Hughes imagines her and her dead sister together, with his mother narrating details from her past. There was reference to the mother's preference for her other son, though this was often asserted rather than supported. Stronger responses explored the way Hughes uses language and tone to convey strong emotions: for example, the images of heaven and angels, the mother's conversational tone and the speaker's reverential and loving tone. The most successful answers selected relevant material from this relatively long poem to address the question's key words 'movingly convey strong emotions'; the least successful responses adopted simple narrative approaches.

Question 7

Most candidates were aware of the immediate context: that Kambili is staying with Auntie Ifeoma and has met and is entranced by Father Amadi. He asks her about her life and about her father though clearly knows her problems. More successful responses argued that Father Amadi is trying to lift her spirits and her self-esteem and appreciated that this is a key moment in her rite of passage. The strongest responses explored the way Adichie describes the attractiveness of Amadi, their physical closeness and the sense of Kambili being overwhelmed by her attraction to him. Explaining why the moment in the extract is memorable necessarily requires reference to elsewhere in the text, for example, what leads up to this moment or what follows it. Those responses that focused solely on the extract were self-limiting.

Question 8

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

Most candidates recognised the contrast between his confidence that Bidy will agree to marry him and his disappointment that all is not as he expected: the schoolhouse empty, the forge closed though the house is so alive and pretty. The most convincing responses addressed the key word 'vividly' when exploring how Dickens conveys Pip's thoughts and feelings. These responses considered the way Pip's changing feelings are conveyed leading up to the revelation and shock that Joe and Bidy are married. These stronger answers also explored the descriptions of the schoolhouse, forge and house as not matching his expectations. Less successful responses adopted a narrative approach, often not referring to 'Pip's thoughts and feelings' at all.

Question 10

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

Most candidates were aware of the immediate context: Mrs Van Hopper has decided to return to America and orders the narrator to pack for the journey; Maxim asks the narrator to marry him. There was an understanding of her sense of panic. The more successful responses suggested that Maxim's apparent lack of interest (filing his nails) conceals deeper feelings, and they explored the violence of Maxim's reaction to the news of her departure in what it reveals about his character. There were convincing assessments of the casualness of the proposal which, some said, was not really a proposal. Some commented on the patronising tone of 'No, I am asking you to marry me, you little fool.' The strongest responses sustained personal and evaluative engagement with the question, the detail of the extract and relevant links to elsewhere in the novel that makes this extract so 'memorable'. The weakest responses re-told the story of the extract.

Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 14

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

There was some understanding in most responses that the Ratliffs do not treat Gogol as a guest even though they are meeting him for the first time and that the food and wine are unfamiliar to him. Most candidates made comparisons with meals that the Gangulis provided for guests, though this focus led some to stray too far from the question's key words 'vividly portray Gogol/Nikhil' to offer general contextual knowledge (prepared before the exam) about differences in culture. The more successful responses sustained a clear focus on the question, with exploration of ways in which Lahiri conveys, for example, Gogol's thoughts about the nature of the meal and his feelings of pleasure at his lucky situation.

Question 16

Responses were generally characterised by description and assertion. They recognised the importance of Paris and her academic career to Moushumi, her affair with Dimitri and the moment she unwittingly reveals this to Gogol. Much was made of the contrast between her and Gogol: both from the same Bengali background, though she is very much her own person, feeling free to pursue her own life. Responses generally needed to focus more clearly on the key word 'striking' and to use a greater range of textual references to support their responses.

Question 17

Most candidates recognised that Miranda and Irma are established as important characters, that Mrs Appleyard is a figure of authority and power and that the Rock represents some sort of threat. The strongest responses explored ways in which Lindsay conveys these impressions. There was much sensitive exploration in these responses of Sara portrayed as victim of Appleyard's cruelty. These responses focused on the extravagant description of the latter's figure ('an immense purposeful figure...swimming and billowing in grey silk taffeta') and on the force of her address to the girls (forbidding them to 'engage in any tomboy foolery'). The least successful responses lacked a clear understanding of who the characters are and what situation they are in.

Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

Most candidates understood the drama of Pi's rescue and the tension of whether Richard Parker would make it. They also commented productively on the structure of the extract, noting the contrast between wanting to save Richard Parker and then wanting to drown him, and the humour arising from this. The most convincing responses were able to contextualise the extract's position within the novel to explore what makes this extract so entertaining. These responses analysed the effect of the repetition in Pi's dialogue and his sudden change of tone in 'Have I gone mad?' Those candidates who interpreted the key word 'entertaining' too narrowly, as perhaps 'hilariously', tended to limit their response.

Question 20

Most responses showed at least some understanding of the lushness of the island after being so long at sea, Pi's experience of sleeping in the tree with the meerkats and the shocking discovery of the island as carnivorous (the tooth in the tree). Many noted that the experience of the island enables Pi (and Richard Parker) to regain health. There were, however, few answers which provided specific textual evidence for

support. For this general essay question, candidates generally needed a wider range of direct quotations which could have been used not only to support points but also analyse Martel's use of language.

Question 21

The moments which made the extract so entertaining were generally understood, for example, the size and forcefulness of Mrs Jones and the way the boy realises he is beaten and behaves himself. There was much interesting exploration of the implications of poverty in the story and the surprising note of compassion in Mrs Jones's character, which contrasted with the way she is introduced in the opening paragraph. The strongest responses were able to explore ways in which Hughes makes the extract such an entertaining opening to the story by making at least some reference to what happens after the extract. Many candidates clearly enjoyed what they saw as the cartoonish way in which the initial encounter between the characters is conveyed. Less successful responses missed the humour or made generalised comments on gender (e.g. 'women were seen as scared in those days').

Question 22

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/13 Poetry and Prose 13</p>
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Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- show a clear understanding of the deeper implications of texts
- select relevant material that answers the question
- integrate apt textual references to support their ideas
- explore sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects
- write informed personal responses to texts.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- show only a basic grasp of surface meanings
- work through ‘themes’ they have studied without focusing on the key words of the question
- use long quotations or a list of shorter quotations without comment on specific words
- log writing devices without exploring the effects created
- are overly dependent on explanation and assertion.

General comments

There was evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where the most successful candidates showed insight and individuality in their engagement with the poems and the questions set on them. There were some examples of candidates who spent too much time on their first response, which adversely affected their performance across the paper. Most students were familiar with the layout of the paper, though there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. There were instances, too, of candidates relying exclusively on the extracts printed in the prose passage-based questions when answering the prose general essay questions. Centres should ensure that their candidates turn up to the exam with an understanding of the question paper’s layout and rubric. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses showed the ability of candidates to select relevant material for the question that had been set. This is an essential aspect of the examination: questions should not be seen as mere prompts for candidates to unload all information they know about the poem or character or theme mentioned in the question. The strongest responses to poetry and passage-based questions showed that candidates selected their material judiciously whereas in less effective responses candidates wrote exhaustively as they worked their way through a poem or passage.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more clearly organised response. Those candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material, simply delayed the actual beginning of their answer to the question. Some candidates were determined to state a writer’s themes at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. Some opening paragraphs included sentences which simply listed in a random way the devices the writer uses, which is not a productive way of beginning a response.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many students had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to explore ways in which writers achieve their effects. The least successful responses to prose general questions included insufficient textual detail and an over-dependence on unsupported assertion. Candidates should be reminded that there is little merit in simply copying out long quotations or a list of short quotations. Some candidates adopted a misguided approach when directing Examiners to specific lines in poems and passages without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide the specific supporting detail from the text, and not simply line references. Another misguided approach could be seen in the use of ellipses in the middle of quotations which left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. The use of concise quotations containing the actual words that support points is more effective.

The most successful responses showed a confident and sustained analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses, particularly to poetry, simply logged features without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers use these devices to create *specific* effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with broad comments made about an increase in, or slowing down of, the pace of a poem, though with no specific example given to support the general comment. Similarly, rhyme schemes were often said to aid the flow (or not) of the writing though without specific illustration.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates referred to ‘memories’ although they did not always place this in the overall context of the poem. Successful answers recognised that the poem was about Hardy’s approach to life and that his realistic approach enabled him to withstand unfairness, trials and difficulties. Less successful candidates were not as careful in their reading and there were misunderstandings and unsupported assertions. Several candidates did not understand that there were two ‘voices’ in the poem and misunderstood that in the second verse, despite the speech marks and the statement ‘you said’, that this was the world speaking and not Hardy. Some candidates made unsupported assertions about Hardy’s youth, for example, that he was lonely, had no friends or had no one to play with. They did not understand that the poem was about his chosen approach to life. In the third stanza, despite the words, ‘failed not’, some candidates read this as ‘failed’ and commented that Hardy refused to take advice.

Question 2

Most candidates referenced the question and the idea of hope but many struggled to relate ‘feelings of hope’ to ‘melancholy’. The strongest answers successfully explored how the poet presents feelings of hope despite the personal and universal challenges of ‘melancholy’. They understood the poet’s attempt to resist melancholy and sadness, noting her intentional focus on looking at goodness rather than human failings or evil in the world. These answers appreciated some of the writing features such as the imagery about nature and animals, the allusions to religion and the repeated mantra of ‘Away, Melancholy’. Although most candidates understood that mankind’s capacity to believe in goodness and love supersedes evil, there were some misunderstandings, especially when the thoughts on God were introduced. Several candidates thought the poem was about the goodness and superiority of God and allowed personal religious opinion to replace a critique of the poem with little dependence on relevant textual detail.

Question 3

Most answers responded to the question asking how Mew uses words and images to powerful effect. Candidates generally understood that the poem was a reflection on rooms she had spent time in during her life with some unpleasant connotations and allusions to death or dying. Stronger answers appreciated writing features such as the use of sensuous words and images, and the symbolism of rooms as enclosed spaces – producing a claustrophobic effect. These answers noted the ‘dying’ relationship in the poem and commented on the significance of the closing lines. Less successful answers ran through the poem, giving an overview of the rooms and places without a response to how words and images are used to powerful effect. A few candidates wrote lengthy biographical accounts without much dependence on the text of the poem.

Question 4

Many responses to this question were engaged and focused, showing understanding of the theme of rejection. The strongest answers provided perceptive personal responses, expressing their thoughts about the speaker who they sometimes criticised for the continual hapless descriptions of his plight. Many candidates enjoyed discussing the melodrama, exploring the imagery of the sea and nature. Less successful answers did not analyse the poem, providing straightforward quotations without explanation. There were a few literal interpretations which did not engage in any analysis of language or meaning.

Question 5

Most answers identified the strong emotions in the poem of jealousy and envy, and showed some understanding of how this is evident in the text. There were various debates on who the poet is referring to, some more convincing than others. Stronger answers engaged deeply with the poem's text and were focused and clear. They noted writing features such as the conversational tone, the image of the crossed-out page and repetition. Some wrote about the way in which the last line repeats a line from the first stanza and appreciated the way in which this sets up the idea of jealousy as a cycle. Less successful answers lacked clarity and seemed confused about Hughes' relationships, sometimes mixing up the pronouns. Some had clearly been taught, or researched, biographical details about Ted Hughes and his wives, even going so far as writing about the two women throughout their response instead of analysing the lines in front of them.

Question 6

Although a short poem, responses to this question were generally well-done and there were many strong, perceptive answers. The strongest answers provided detailed analysis of writing features. They recognised the brutality of the winter and explored the related imagery with care. These answers looked at ideas such as the tight 'globe' around the mouse's heart, thought about why it was dulled, and appreciated the imagery about darkness, metals and loss of right minds. They noted the contrasting descriptions of the animals and the snowdrop. Less successful answers provided more literal interpretations. It was evident that some candidates did not have a contextual knowledge of the life cycle of the snowdrop or an understanding of what a snowdrop looked like. Some commented about the winter and the animal imagery but did not write about the snowdrop or its ability to survive the harsh winters.

Question 7

Candidates responded clearly and with engagement to the key word 'disturbing' and were able to select suitable points from the extract to support this, such as the violence of Papa's beating and the family's acceptance of his abuse. Nearly all candidates showed knowledge and understanding of the whole novel. Stronger answers picked up on the details of how tension was created before and during the beating and analysed the power of the 'slow unbuckling of his belt'. These answers often commented on the Papa's use of Igbo language, the significance of his white shirt, and the references to the devil and convincingly explained how these aspects were disturbing. Less successful answers tended to paraphrase sections and did not pick up on the writing features in the passage.

Question 8

The few who chose to answer this question showed clear knowledge and understanding of themes, characters and events. Candidates successfully contrasted the two characters, showing the way their backgrounds produced different modes of self-expression. Candidates also commented on the antagonism between Amaka and Kambili and the progression of their relationship towards mutual understanding. Relevant examples were given of the times they are together in the novel, their differing habits or how they speak. Candidates seemed to enjoy writing about what these two characters represent.

Question 9

The strongest answers placed this extract in context, engaged deeply with the text and appreciated how tension is created. Candidates noted details such as the atmosphere of the cold, the use of lighting or the appearance of the gun. They commented on Orlik's tone of voice, his self-righteousness, his increasing violence and the image of him as a tiger. Less convincing answers found it difficult to work out what is happening and some were not sure of the context.

Question 10

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

The most successful answers demonstrated clear understanding of the two characters and provided detailed, convincing personal responses to show this. They commented on aspects such as Maxim's interest in the narrator and observed the seemingly instant attraction between the two. Some stronger answers explored the difference in status between the two, as well as their disinclination to discuss certain core issues. These appreciated features such as the questions coming from Maxim, the developing mystery of Manderley and the hints of a traumatic secret. Less effective answers focused more on going through the passage than considering how Maxim and the narrator are portrayed. A few answers commented on Maxim but neglected to write about the narrator.

Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

There was an attempt by the few candidates who chose this question, to show Miss Penniman's tendency to melodrama. The most successful answers were able to deftly pin down her self-indulgence and dangerous meddling. They also showed understanding of Morris and the irony of the conversations. Less successful answers tended to be narrative with little analyses or consideration of the question.

Question 14

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

The strongest answers sustained a focus on how Lahiri makes this a sad moment and found several points in the extract to illustrate this, such as Ashoke's short visits or the nostalgic memories. These answers commented sensitively about Ashima's loneliness and sadness from a variety of angles, considering identity and culture as well as isolation. They demonstrated their detailed knowledge of the whole book by linking some of the ideas in the passage to the wider novel, for example, Ashoke's foreshadowed death. Successful answers explored the symbolism, allusions and images in the extract such as the withering petunias, the tea, 'now cold', or the library books in Ashoke's place. Less successful responses did not focus on 'sad' and neglected to explore the symbolism in the extract. Some did not focus on the details of the extract and wrote at length about the general effects of loneliness.

Question 16

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 17

The most successful responses considered how this moment is entertaining and found examples in the text to address this, for example, the awkward relationships between the characters or the connotations of humour in the interruption of the dogs. Several stronger answers commented on the confusion about husbands and carpets. They noted details from close reading of the passage such as the gong as a 'gastronomical timepiece' or the overwhelming 'pinkness' of the drawing room and linked their points to the question. Less successful answers tended to summarise without detail and did not pick up on the key word, 'entertaining'. A few answers wrote at length about the effects of colonialism without enough analysis of the detail of the extract.

Question 18

Successful answers provided quite detailed responses, showing knowledge and understanding of the characters, events and life at Appleyard College. Candidates picked out key points such as the control exerted by Mrs Appleyard, the strict regimes, or descriptions of the lives of the boarders, and linked these to

the question. Less effective answers tended to give an overview and made general statements without supporting details or examples. A few candidates started with description of Appleyard College but confused the two questions and referred largely to the details in the extract; this approach was self-limiting.

Question 19

Almost all candidates who chose this question were able to make some comment about the 'surprising relationship' between Pi and Richard Parker. Stronger responses made effective use of the extract from the beginning, and used the introductory phrase 'It was Richard Parker who calmed me down' to develop convincing points about their mutual need for each other and for survival. Strong answers noted and explored the detailed descriptions of Richard Parker as an affectionate pet. They appreciated the auditory imagery and the idea of 'prusten'. These picked out key phrases such as 'I looked at him with fearful wonder' and 'without Richard Parker, I would not be alive today to tell you my story' to explore the relationship between the two. Some strong answers suggested wider meanings and interpretations about Richard Parker, demonstrating their knowledge of the whole novel. Less successful answers were repetitive and sometimes provided quotations without explaining their significance. Some of these answers did not sustain a focus on the question.

Question 20

There were few takers for this question, and generally it was not answered well as most candidates relied on the extract from **Question 19** to draw their points from. This resulted in limited responses. The very few successful answers selected points from the wider novel such as Pi's response to the many natural features such as the waves, weather, the stars at night or the marine life. A few provided some relevant comments on the extraordinary meerkat island.

Question 21

Most candidates were able to consider the question and engaged in varying degrees with the 'terrifying moment' in the story. The most convincing and successful answers sustained their focus, noting details such as Caroline's state of mind, the symbolism of the tower and the menacing steps or the mysterious and supernatural gothic features. Some explored the link to her husband and the idea of independence. Less successful answers did not sustain their focus on the key word and lapsed at times into re-telling the story. A few answers focused too much on the idea of feminism without analysis of the detail of the extract.

Question 22

The few who chose to answer this question showed sound knowledge and understanding of the story and character. They focused on the question and selected relevant points to show how the mother was an 'impressive character'. Candidates were aware of the mother's ability to take control of her life and picked up on the children's expectations that their mother would be helpless after the father's death. A few understood the wider implications socially and historically, providing supporting detail.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/21
Drama 21

Key messages

- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly contextualised the passage, selected relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful responses to the discursive questions supported their argument with reference to specific moments and with relevant quotations candidates had learned, allowed them to comment on the author's method.
- Successful responses recognised that this was drama and gave a personal response, or considered the effect on audiences, supported by the text.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set text(s). The most popular texts were *Journey's End*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* and *Othello*. Teachers are advised to check the syllabus carefully for the changes in set texts. This is the last year for both *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* which will be replaced in 2024 by William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams.

There was some very competent work seen. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on themes, characterisation and stagecraft. They demonstrated insight into the ways writers achieve effects, focusing closely on the key terms of the question. Textual knowledge was detailed, and these candidates were able to refer to, and quote from, texts effectively with brief, well-chosen quotations, which were fully analysed to consolidate the point being made. The strongest answers ranged across their texts and showed understanding of dramatic structure.

However, there were a substantial number of lower-level responses where there was a lack of basic knowledge of the texts, insecure understanding and sketchy detail. Many responses were very brief or fragmentary, showing simple recall of events and lacking detail and limited or no focus on the terms of the question. There were many examples of responses to *Journey's End* where candidates used only material from the extract in 2(a) to answer the discursive **Question 2(b)**. This obviously had a self-limiting effect on the answer which was very narrow in focus. Either candidates did not know the text well enough to provide their own evidence or misunderstood the rubric – but this only appeared to be an issue with this text. Centres should make clear to their candidates that the questions are discrete entities and there is rarely anything of value in the passage to answer the discursive question.

There were relatively few rubric infringements on paper 0475/21 and these were where two passage based questions were answered. In such cases, both responses are marked, but only the higher of the two marks is awarded. This will have meant disappointing results for affected candidates and might easily have been avoided if they had reminded themselves of the exam requirements by reading the instructions on the front of the question paper, before they started to write.

In extract questions, where the text is given to the candidate, it is expected that there will be much close reference and quotation and that the whole of the extract will be considered rather than a close focus on only the opening section. Very often there is rich dramatic material at the close of the passage which is overlooked by candidates.

The most successful candidates wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'dramatic', 'striking' or 'moving' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. Too

often candidates write lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot, listing irrelevant social, cultural and historical detail or the techniques the writer had used. Many candidates used rote-learned generic comments that added no value to their response as they do not cater to the focus of the question, for example, 'the play is a roller coaster of emotion'. All candidates should deconstruct the questions carefully, before they start to write, to check they have understood what is expected and to decide on the most relevant material.

The ability to 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 that are not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. Candidates often refer to punctuation – exclamation marks, capital letters, dashes – while seeking to comment on dialogue but without the context which is unhelpful. These can be relevant, and important, but only if related to the ideas conveyed in the text.

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 and to outline their own, or propose other audience members', responses.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) Candidates found 'intense' a useful question focus and brought in ideas such as 'tense' and 'dramatic' to support it. Most candidates were able to respond to the dramatic entrance of Godfrey and Gerte and to comment on the physical aspects of the scene such as Godfrey's dishevelled clothing, his face covered with blood and Gerte's blood-stained dress. Many answers commented on how Godfrey's search for a weapon, his 'bad' language and desire for revenge add to the scene's intensity. Better answers commented effectively on tone, the characters' short, sharp delivery, frequent cut-off lines and the impact of questions and exclamations in conveying confusion and increasing the pace. While weaker responses discussed only physical aspects of the scene, stronger candidates focused on how the other characters responded to the traumatic situation – Ermina's attempt to block the trauma and Ernestine's protective but wary attitude towards her father. Some candidates interpreted, 'You hurt Daddy' as an accusation against Gerte rather than Ernestine registering her father's injury.

All responses discussed how the scene exemplified the racism and violence which African Americans endured in 1950s America and candidates expressed strong personal responses to this theme of injustice and engaged with Nottage's message. There was some insightful comment on institutionalised racism revealed by the behaviour of not only the attackers but also the by-standers, and the lack of faith in equal treatment by the police. However, there was some repetition of the theme of racism and the historical context at the expense of what is revealed of the impact of this moment on the characters. Stronger answers recognised that this incident reinforces Godfrey's fear of allowing his daughters to go out and interact with people outside the safety of the home, the significance of the dressmaker's dummy – and Ernestine's newfound confidence and freedom – being toppled.

As with many passage-based questions, the later parts of the extract were underdeveloped. The stronger answers paid attention to Gerte's and Lily's interaction, recognising Lily's sarcasm towards what she viewed as Gerte's naiveté and developing this point to include Gerte's gradual realisation of her situation and her disillusionment. Stronger answers picked up the latent rivalry between Lily and Gerte after Godfrey supports Lily's opinion regarding the police, revealed in stage directions 'Lily tends to Godfrey's eye. Gerte tries to take over from Lily' and the subtext of the accusatory questions between them, where tension and hostility is revealed, for example 'I wonder how that happened?' and 'Where are the warriors in your revolution now?' These answers were able to relate to the intensity of the moment in the play and the relationships between the characters that have already been dramatically established rather than solely the tension and action of the scene.

Weaker responses tended to describe the scene and paraphrase the account Godfrey gives, noting stage direction and the mood of the scene but staying at a superficial level and not showing knowledge of the characters' situation, relationships and the implications of this moment in the wider play.

- (b) Most candidates understood that Ernestine escaped into film which offered a contrast to her drab life in Brooklyn. Some recognised that the cinema was a place to grieve and that Godfrey's restrictions on radio and the absence of television meant that this was the sole medium offering a glimpse of another world. Stronger candidates recognised the communal experience offered by the cinema, where both girls 'weep softly', engage with the heightened emotions and connect with other audience members. There were thoughtful comments on how the drama and glamour of film nourished her ambitions and how she identified with the intense emotions portrayed in the films. The best answers were able to link the way problems were always resolved in movies to Ernestine's own self-doubt and concerns about her future. Such answers effectively related Ernestine's enjoyment of cinema with her interactions with Gerte and Lily and how these contribute to the unfolding drama: Ernestine and Gerte admitting to a shared interest in cinema and dancing, showing their changing relationship, Lily's teasing 'Miss Bette' over her ambitions and her more pointed comments that cinema does not offer solutions and a 'movie star can not have politics'.

The strongest answers also fulfilled the requirement to explore the ways the writer presents ideas and creates effects, and evidenced how Nottage used music, dancing, lighting and breaking of the fourth wall to dramatically contrast Ernestine's restricted reality and her reserved self, creating brighter moments in the play. These recognised the genre and the audience's experience as well as showing understanding of the character and plot.

Textual detail was lacking in many weaker answers which then became generalised character sketches. Many responses struggled to retrieve specific moments related to film. The question asked for how Ernestine's enjoyment 'was made such a dramatic part of the play' but this element was neglected and a simple summary of why she liked cinema was given.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 2

- (a) This fairly open question allowed for a variety of responses. Candidates embraced the freedom of the idea of what is 'revealed' in terms of characterisation and what is shown about war. Candidates were able to access the idea of humour and, at least to some extent, explore what made the scene 'entertaining'.

Having two parts to the question seem to give candidates a clear structure to follow and most addressed both parts of the question although there was often less material on what was 'revealed' of Sherriff's ideas of the challenges of trench-warfare. Most candidates recognised the importance of food as a source of comfort and as a distraction from the war, for Trotter particularly. Many discussed 'coping mechanisms'. Answers achieving the higher levels discussed both characters' reactions to the 'pepper situation' but also to the fact that they are kept 'in the dark' by the higher orders, and how the soldiers are trying to control one small feature of a situation where they are powerless. Many answers discussed what is 'revealed' of the characters at this early part of the play and in particular Stanhope's authority, though few commented on his evident concern for the welfare of his men.

While most candidates were able to identify Trotter's humorous over-reaction to the lack of pepper, only stronger responses were able to contrast his use of language with Osborne's quiet, understated humour ('yellow flavour'), both characters playing down the horrors they were facing using euphemisms or vague terms such as 'trouble', 'nasty' and 'lively'. Many candidates used the term 'irony' to cover multiple effects such as sarcasm and wordplay but were attempting to unpick how humour is achieved and had some success. Strong answers also dealt with language through dramatic delivery, recognising the text as drama, the dashes indicating pauses and what these may signify, such as distress or embarrassment, and then went on to explore how the audience would react.

Weaker responses identified the more obvious evidence of 'jokes' and how a small matter is given undue emphasis but with little consideration of why. Some commented effectively on the stage directions and how the comedic actions such as 'throwing the spoon' in a childlike tantrum has an

entertaining impact. There was less focus on what is 'revealed' beyond the power structures shown by terms of address and the effect of the mistake on Mason. Many weaker answers focused at length on this character's embarrassment at the expense of the wider concerns revealed in the extract.

- (b) In response to this question on Stanhope, stronger answers used episodes such as his handling of Osborne's death, Hibbert's 'neuralgia' and Raleigh's demise at the end of the play to illustrate different facets of the character and his leadership. Osborne's spoken and Raleigh's written defence of the character featured as strong evidence of the character's admirable qualities. Insightful responses made use of the context of the war, suffering and alcoholism and portrayed Stanhope as admirable and sympathetic because of his personal demons which, they argued, were directly caused by his commitment to being a leader, tying in with Sherriff's anti-war agenda.

The best responses ranged across the play discussing Stanhope's experience and extensive losses over his three years in post, his high standards and his sense of duty. Most candidates were able to give a personal response about the character of Stanhope, empathising with the stressful nature of his position and pointing out his ability to give orders but also work hard himself. The best responses were able to contrast his occasional bullying of his men, Hibbert and Raleigh, with more sensitive and caring moments and to see his dependence on alcohol and his other inner struggles as very 'human flaws'. They recognised Stanhope's ability to identify his own weaknesses, his fear and alcoholism, and his ability to keep going despite his trauma. These comments were supported by close reference to language and action, and commented effectively on the emotions evoked in audiences.

This question produced many good responses, however a very large number of candidates only used the material from the extract given in **2(a)**. Those candidates drawing on the extract alone could support the point that Stanhope receives respect and perhaps fear from his men and that he is demanding, but this is a restricted view of the character, lacking context and subtlety. Other weaker answers wrote a character sketch of Stanhope rather than focus on his leadership qualities or gave a narrow, one-dimensional response to the character focusing on only one element. Most candidates had some grasp of the character's qualities but some gave generalised responses with limited close reference to language, structure or dramatic effects.

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

Question 3

- (a) The best responses to this question demonstrated some understanding of the symbolism behind the language and the context of the scene. They explored the idea of making a journey towards death mysterious via stage directions, the metaphoric language, rhetorical questions from the Praise-Singer and the ritual repetition of lines. Some considered the ambiguity of lines such as 'the end of the day' as a reference to death and the 'strange voices' along with Elesin's lack of response to the Praise-Singer and reduction in movement. There was also some attempt to consider the significance and irony of individual lines such as 'who may falter' in relation to Elesin's character and later events suggesting that the failure to complete his duty is already mysteriously fated to happen.

While most managed to identify the significance of the scene – Elesin's ritual journey from life to death and his sinking into a deep trance – there were very few who were able to engage with the 'mysterious' nature of the scene. Only a very small number of responses discussed the language in any detail, making an attempt to explore the Praise-Singer's role and the importance of language in conveying the important and mysterious nature of the ceremony. Few candidates commented on the use of metaphor and the use of animal imagery. Several candidates showed some insecurity in recognising the Praise-Singer's and Iyaloja's role in the play and of how much knowledge they possess in this scene. Some candidates referred broadly to metaphorical language but did not expand upon this. Although textual reference was used, this was often not explored and lacked relevance to the question meaning answers often became very narrative.

- (b) The question pointed candidates towards a particular view with few having the confidence to consider or argue any of Pilkings' more admirable traits. Since the question invited candidates to focus exclusively on Pilkings' negative characteristics, most candidates tended to describe even his potentially more redeeming features as worthy of contempt, for example, his attempt to prevent

Elesin committing 'ritual suicide' was seen as seeking to impose his 'moral values' on others, without exploring his motivations (which, it could be argued, were self-serving).

Stronger responses were able to discuss Pilkings' cultural ignorance and insensitivity towards Yoruba culture, whilst also exploring his mocking attitude to all religions and his rude and abusive treatment of his staff, Sergeant Amusa and even his wife, Jane. The precision in recalling textual detail and Pilkings' choice of language and actions which evoke negative responses from other characters, and the audience, determined the level of achievement. Stronger answers related the character to Soyinka's ideas on colonialism and cultural imperialism.

Weaker candidates gave a simple summary of character but most were able to consider the ways in which Pilkings is dislikable. Most cited the disrespect for ritual costume at the fancy dress party and treatment of Amusa, taking points from the early play alone with several missing his contribution to Elesin's arrest and the significant events that follow. Few referenced the exchanges between Pilkings and Elesin or Olunde.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 4

- (a) The stronger responses to this question moved beyond the central point of mistaken identity and recognised the 'drama' of the officers arresting Antonio and the strength of the argument between Antonio and Viola. These considered the language revealing Antonio's abruptly shifting emotions as his requests for his 'purse' are turned down. Some candidates who reached the end of the extract commented on the extract as providing a climax of confusion, and the shift towards the play's resolution for Viola in suggesting her brother had survived, revealed in her final dramatic lines hoping her wishes will 'prove true'. Authorial effects could have been profitably discussed by such structural points but not many candidates took advantage of this. Some responses recognised the frustration of the audience in terms of dramatic irony, hoping Antonio and Viola sort out the confusion whilst the guards' haste prevents it. The strongest discussed the lines adding urgency and drama to the moment, for example, 'Come, come sir'.

On a language level, the impact of questioning was fairly well covered to show confusion on both sides. The strongest answers considered Antonio's dramatic account of Sebastian's rescue from the 'jaws of death', his language of devotion and how his 'god' has become 'evil', engaging with the broader theme of deceptive appearances. Viola's kindness in offering 'half her coffer' to a 'stranger' and her spirited response to ungratefulness being met with exclamations and accusations of her being 'unkind' develop the drama of misunderstanding further.

Weaker responses were plot-based responses, where narrative and backstory dominated the answer. Most candidates were able to discuss the key points of disguise and mistaken identity and recognise that Antonio believed the disguised Viola was Sebastian, though not all candidates were conscious of Antonio's close bond with Sebastian, having saved his life. Weaker responses considered few details from the passage and showed limited engagement with the characters' language choices and what is revealed of character here.

- (b) Stronger responses to this question were able to consider Viola's love in relation to other types of love in the play, including that of Olivia and Orsino, although some answers focused more on these than the question of how Viola's love is moving to audiences. Most candidates made relevant points about Viola's love for Orsino and how, despite her love, she still behaves dutifully as his servant, taking his messages and entreaties to Olivia. While candidates were able to identify the drama and humour which came from the disguised Viola being loved by Olivia, only stronger responses explored this in detail. Not all candidates were able to focus closely on language to discuss how Viola's love for Orsino was portrayed movingly in different parts of the play, although several responses made reference to the resolution of the play and how Viola's love is finally reciprocated, satisfying the audience. The strongest answers recognised the pathos evoked by Viola's 'barful strife' and her veiled professions of love to, and about, Orsino. Some also expressed sympathy for her struggle to disguise her feelings and how the audience may be moved to find humour in her difficulties.

Although the successful responses showed a good understanding of the ideas of the play, there was, on the whole, limited focus on the ways the writer achieved effects, the moments when Viola's love for Orsino is dramatised and how the language Viola uses reveals the strength of her feelings.

Weaker answers tended to narrate the circumstances of Viola's disguise and her situation but with limited comment on how her love is presented. Some candidates gave personal responses that were not grounded in the text and lacked precise textual reference. The ability to recall specific moments and examples of Viola's language which move audiences was essential for achievement of the higher levels.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) Most answers found the passage accessible, gave a reasonable focus and were able to use the material to support prior knowledge of these characters. Candidates identified the fact that Roderigo has finally run out of patience and summoned up enough courage to confront Iago for duping him. Stronger responses identified the striking contrast with the earlier presentation of Roderigo who is unusually forceful in these opening lines and recognises he has been 'foolish'. Some noted the striking threat that he will 'seek satisfaction' and his newfound clarity in recognising that Iago's 'deeds' and 'words' do not match, tying into the theme of deceptive appearances. These answers focused well on the language and the best commented on the tension created before the climax of the play since Iago's schemes are now, briefly, threatened with exposure.

Better answers focused on Iago's calmness under pressure and his effective use of language to dissemble, exploring how quickly and easily he persuades Roderigo to murder Cassio. Some picked up on the contradiction in Iago's lines where he first says that he is being treated 'most unjustly' and later admitting that Roderigo's 'suspicion is not without wit and judgment' in an effort to assuage him. They noted his short, dismissive responses switching to flattery and a brutal plan which he pledges will bring immediate satisfaction to Roderigo, playing again on characters' weaknesses, in this case Roderigo's passion for Desdemona. This exploration of Iago's language and cynical manipulation, along with the dramatic effect on the audience when Roderigo takes the bait, marked out the stronger responses.

Weaker answers drifted into narrative and others gave generalised character sketches repeating the main points that Iago is puppeteer and Roderigo is naive puppet rather than focusing on specific details from the scene. Many responses considered one character much more fully than another and repeated that Iago is lying and manipulating but without close reference to his language and method. Most recognised Iago's true feelings for Roderigo. However, not all candidates were able to clearly contextualise the scene, and some did not seem clear on what Roderigo expected Iago to do for him or what Iago instructs Roderigo to do at the close of the extract, confusing this moment with Act 2 and his earlier instruction to Cassio at the watch. The weakest answers recognised the conflict between the two but struggled to articulate the nature of Roderigo's complaint or Iago's response.

- (b) Most candidates made good use of material related to Desdemona's defiance of her father to marry Othello, Othello's false accusations of infidelity and her enduring love and faithfulness even in death.

Stronger answers ranged across the play, responding on a personal level to the strength of Desdemona's love and the unjust way she is treated, drawing on a range of well-selected references to support points. Stronger responses developed the point of Desdemona standing up to her father and the bravery of this in the social and historical context. Her defence of Othello to the Senate was cited by some as striking evidence of her love whilst others identified the sacrifices she made to follow Othello to Cyprus and her immediate concern for him on arrival. Her respectful language and her obedience even in the face of his violence and verbal abuse was used as well-selected, specific support. Some wrote effectively on the symbolism of the handkerchief, how her act of love results in her dropping it, and on the pathos of her love in the face of death. Many responses effectively commented on her defence of Othello in her final words and that this had been foreshadowed by her pledge not to let his 'unkindness taint (her)love'. There was some insightful comment on how Desdemona's love imbues her with strength and confidence in the opening scenes and in her commitment to mending Othello's relationship with Cassio but ultimately renders her helpless in the closing scenes. Most candidates had clearly engaged with the character and her narrative and showed a personal response which was clearly grounded in the text.

Weaker responses did not draw on enough specific textual detail to support their comments or summarised the lovers' story rather than how Desdemona's constancy and love is vividly presented

in particular scenes. Many cited the opening and final scenes but had limited recall of events in the middle of the play.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/22
Drama 22

Key messages

- Candidates should read the instructions to the question paper carefully, to remind themselves of the requirements for the paper, and be able to select an accurate combination of questions.
- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly contextualised the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful responses to the discursive questions supported their argument with relevant quotations candidates had learned.
- Teachers should refer to the relevant syllabus, and examination requirements, during the planning stages of the course.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set text(s). The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* followed by *Death and the King's Horseman* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. However, there were very few responses to *Journey's End*. Teachers are advised to check the syllabus carefully for the changes in set texts. This is the last year for both *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* which will be replaced in 2024 by William Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams.

There was some excellent work seen. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on themes, characterisation and stagecraft. They demonstrated insight into the ways writers achieved effects, focusing closely on the key terms of the question. Textual knowledge was detailed, and these candidates were able to refer to, and quote from, texts effectively with brief, well-chosen quotations, which were fully analysed to consolidate the point being made.

However, there were many less successful answers where there was a lack of basic knowledge of the texts, with much confusion over characters, plot and even with the name and gender of the playwrights. Frequently these responses offered a narrative overview of the text with limited or no focus on the terms of the question. There were considerable rubric infringements reported this year in Paper 2. Candidates appeared to be unaware of the exam requirements to write on two different texts and to answer two questions; an extract-based **Question (a)** and a discursive **(b)** question. All types of rubric infringements were seen: only one answer or too many; two essays on the same text; two **(a)** questions or two **(b)** questions. In instances of rubric infringements, both responses are marked, but only the higher of the two marks is awarded. This results in disappointing results for affected candidates and may be easily avoided if they remind themselves of the exam requirements by reading the instructions on the front of the question paper, before they start to write.

The most successful candidates wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'dramatic', 'memorable' or 'likeable' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. Too often candidates write lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot, listing irrelevant social, cultural and historical detail or the techniques the writer had used. All candidates should deconstruct the questions carefully, before they start to write, to check they have understood what is expected, for example, are they writing about the correct character?

The ability to 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 simply point out terms, which is not helpful in developing an argument

constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded: techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. It is unhelpful for candidates to be stating the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language', 'diction', dialogue, 'end-stopping' or 'caesura' to convey ideas.

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. Time management was generally good with few unfinished responses seen though there were many very brief answers seen where candidates lacked sufficient knowledge of the texts to write in more detail. 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 their answer.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) This text was more popular than last year. Most candidates answered the extract-based question which produced the full range of responses. Successful answers established the context, referring to Lily's drunken and dishevelled state, how Godfrey catches her dancing the Mambo with Ermina and Ernestine, and Lily's provocative comments about Father Divine. This context is relevant to establish that the tension is already high at the start of the passage. The best answers centred on the fact that, though Lily and Godfrey have taken steps to escape their previous lives that were marred by family tragedy and racism, they have adopted very different strategies. They explored the clash of attitudes and approaches, with Lily attributing culpability for Sandra's death to Godfrey, and his anger and dramatic, capitalised words, as he physically '*shoves*' the girls out of the room. There was critical understanding of the impact on stage with Godfrey's anger and Lily's retaliation, mocking his beliefs in Father Divine. The tension created by Godfrey's fears of Lily's being a communist were also understood. They also recognised the sexual tension and physical attraction between them, though too often candidates lapsed into speculative comments about their past relationship with some considering this the reason for Sandra's death, missing Lily's intentions in this passage.

In less successful answers candidates struggled to maintain focus on the task, paraphrasing the passage, to give an account of the argument, but without managing to probe more deeply into the text in order to explore the tension between Lily and Godfrey. There were lengthy, inert quotations copied, with candidates asserting that what they had paraphrased conveyed 'tension', but with little understanding of the text quoted.

- (b) There were very few answers to this question and some candidates were unable to recall specific details to develop how Nottage makes Ernestine's graduation a 'memorable and significant' part of the play. It is helpful for candidates to learn some quotations to be able to support responses to discursive questions.

Successful answers understood the importance of the graduation both practical in terms of Ernestine's future, and symbolic in terms of her coming of age, and knew the play well so could support the argument. The best answers could isolate moments where the dress featured; as in the sewing and tearing off of the lace and linked these moments to the evolving relationship between Lily and Ernestine and how she helps Ernestine to mature. There were some moving comments on the dress being a physical representation of her mother, as Sandra, before she died, had chosen a pattern for her graduation dress. The best answers explored how Ernestine's graduation is 'a first' for the family but despite Godfrey's pride, he can only see a job in the bakery or marriage for her. They understood that Ernestine's maturity and ability to break free from his expectations, to reject the job, was both memorable and significant.

Less successful answers were narrative, repetitive and commented on how it was unusual for a black girl to succeed, with the main focus of their writing on the social and historical context of the play but with little understanding of the text, and the significance of Ernestine's achievement in her family, or in her personal development. Weaker answers retold parts of the play with little focus on the question and with limited understanding of the text.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 2

- (a) There were fewer answers to this text. Successful answers identified Stanhope's emotions and the reason for them as well as, most importantly, how the writing conveys his emotions. The best answers explored the context of the passage that Stanhope is in a relationship with Raleigh's sister, Madge, and how he earlier revealed to Osborne his fears that Raleigh will reveal his drinking and erratic behaviour to her. They analysed the stage directions and how Stanhope's '*trembling*' showed his extreme anger, fear and inability to control it, as well as the way he tears the letter from Raleigh in such a violent way. Better answers focused on how Sherriff uses stage directions to indicate anger, as well as fear, and many recognised Stanhope's loss of control as symptomatic of the stress he is under. They commented on how he not only loses his temper with Raleigh, but also with poor Osborne, indicative in itself of how Stanhope has lost control. There was critical understanding of how Stanhope's body language in the second half of the scene reflects his sense of embarrassment and shame at how he's behaved, as he '*sits with lowered head*' for the way he treated Raleigh. The best answers fully explored the reading aloud of the letter, focusing on Stanhope's actions and the contrast of him shouting at both Raleigh and Osborne against his '*murmuring*' at the end. The reference to the sun shining outside in the trench was largely ignored but those who attempted comment on the changing mood, did so successfully.

Less successful responses considered the basic elements of the scene: Stanhope shouting and Raleigh's amazement and shock, followed by the contrasting quiet of Osborne reading the letter. It was surprising that some wrote about the passage without reference to the letter or about Stanhope's fears concerning the possible content. Such answers limited themselves, as only a little understanding of the moment was shown. Weaker answers did not convey understanding of why Stanhope was angry, losing focus on the question, and wrote about the previous friendship between Stanhope and Raleigh. Stanhope's behaviour, and demonstration of his authority, was considered important but only as he wanted to show Raleigh that life in the war was different to being at school together, which misses his abuse of his position and the dramatic impact of the moment.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question and, for some candidates, it proved to be challenging as they confused Hibbert with Trotter. In these answers, there was little to reward as there was limited, relevant, information on the named character.

The most successful answers tended to err on the side of feeling sorry for Hibbert: that his faking his neuralgia was his 'coping mechanism' as drinking was for Stanhope. Others were damning of his perceived cowardice and took a dim view of his selfishness as he prepared to 'let the team down'. The scene when Stanhope threatens to shoot him, and later talks to him, was often used well and served to increase sympathy for Hibbert with the resulting slight change of admiration for him at this point, which is portrayed through the change in feeling in Stanhope. There was some understanding of how during this scene Sherriff implies the significance of camaraderie and friendship and how facing one's fears helps to cope more effectively. The best responses understood how Hibbert's cowardice is used as a foil to reflect Stanhope's bravery and greater honesty in handling his fears – even if via alcohol - but thought that Hibbert was a very weak person and dislikeable character. Further evidence of Hibbert being a contrast to other men is when he boasts of a 'couple of damn fine girls' and showed photographs: this was considered crude and vulgar. Surprisingly few commented on Stanhope's description of Hibbert being a '*little worm*' hoping to '*wriggle back home*'.

Less successful answers were narrative and simply commented on Hibbert's cowardice and general unpleasantness but there was insufficient knowledge of the text and a lack of memorised quotations, and textual reference, to support their responses.

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

Question 3

- (a) This was the most popular question on Soyinka. Candidates should avoid writing detailed introductions on the historical and cultural setting of the play, and the history of colonialism, leaving little time to respond to the actual question. There were many successful answers which

established the context that Elesin is ashamed of not fulfilling his duty as the King's Horseman and that he is in prison, having been arrested by Pilkings to prevent his suicide. They selected material to focus securely on Elesin's shame: explored the idea of Olunde as an avenger of the shame; Elesin's rejection of Pilkings' consolation; his aggression towards Pilkings, 'white man', covering his shame; the symbolism of 'my voice is broken' and his lost honour as a father and his reputation with the people. There was some insight into his silence and sigh after Pilkings points out that no one goes to their death willingly, and how Elesin blamed everyone else before finally confessing to his own failing. The best answers directly addressed 'powerfully' by responding to the language and the ominous threat of what Olunde will do to the white man: 'His spirit will destroy you and yours' and his comments to his bride that his shame made him blame anyone before he admits he is to blame because it was difficult to let go of his joy in living.

Less successful responses showed insecure understanding of the text and passage. They mistook the context and thought that Elesin knew at this point that Olunde had committed suicide in his place. Some misread the opening speech and thought that Elesin was still ashamed of his son going to England and that his shame here was about that. The weakest responses wrote too much about the context spending much of the answer explaining what had gone before, often inaccurately. Others simply could not select the relevant material sufficiently or just did not focus on the question, writing a character sketch of Elesin or simply retold the plot, often with many inaccuracies.

- (b) This proved difficult for candidates who did not read the question carefully. This question required candidates to write about two dramatic moments in the play, with the rider that candidates did 'not use the passage printed in **Question 3(a)** in answering this question'. Unfortunately, this was ignored with many candidates using the passage as one of the moments. The most successful answers selected two distinct and dramatic moments showing a clear understanding of the play on stage by considering interaction between characters, audience response, action and sound, for example, the drumming, music and rhythmic chanting. These were supported with textual details and quotation candidates had learned. A range of moments were chosen including: the opening scene in the market; the 'Not-I' bird story and Elesin's welcoming response to the bird; the ending scene with Elesin's actual suicide; Amusa's reaction to the egungun costumes and the market women amusingly mocking Amusa.

Less successful responses retold the plot without identifying discrete moments, used the passage, or chose one or two moments to write about, but without focusing on how they were dramatic or supporting with specific textual detail. Weaker responses did not know the text well enough and narrated their moments, often incorrectly, and without comment. Some thought that Soyinka was a character in the market place and referred to him as 'she' and 'her'.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 4

- (a) The most successful answers demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the situation, although some confused Antonio with the Sea Captain who rescues Viola at the beginning of the play. Many candidates were able to recognise that the presentation of Antonio in the passage is problematic in so far as there are contradictory impressions given of him as both a 'pirate' and a loyal and unselfish friend. The best responses were able to contextualise the scene and discuss how Antonio 'saved' Viola/Cesario from her duel and his sense of betrayal having done so much for this 'most ingrateful boy'. Better responses supported their arguments with precise textual reference offering some sensitive analysis of language, exploring the implications of 'Vulcan' and were secure in their knowledge of dramatic irony. Some were able to comment on the fact that when Olivia enters at the end of the scene, Orsino's attention is immediately drawn away from Antonio and he is no longer of any interest or importance to the duke. There was predictably a lot of sympathy for Antonio as well as some discussion about his sexuality.

In less successful answers there was confusion over what was going on in the scene and the issue of mistaken identity. Some candidates struggled to comment on Antonio, a minor character, who appears in only a few scenes. They were confused by the Duke's language about when he last saw Antonio. There was also confusion about the context of this moment; when it took place and who Antonio had rescued. Some were able to identify Antonio's feelings of betrayal but comments about Antonio's relationship with Sebastian ranged from it being brotherly, to openly homosexual with

some candidates losing focus on both the question, and passage, to write about homosexuality in Shakespeare's day.

- (b) This was also a popular question but proved to be problematic where some candidates confused Sir Toby with Sir Andrew or even, in a few cases, Malvolio. Stronger responses engaged with the question and provided plenty of textual detail in support. They provided a balanced response to Sir Toby being 'likeable', though some were quite vehement in their disapproval of his debauched ways. There was a clear understanding of his drunken behaviour, cynical use of Sir Andrew for money and amusement, organising of the duel between Cesario and Sir Andrew, and the cruel way he gained revenge on Malvolio. However, there were very few instances of candidates being able to look at the playwright's methods of presenting the character through the language of the text and the stage craft. Many simply asserted he provides comic-relief but without exploring precisely how Shakespeare conveys this. There was often mention of his involvement in the gulling of Malvolio, but some misunderstanding of the extent of his role.

Less successful answers showed insecure understanding of the character and his behaviour, believing Sir Toby was a loyal and faithful friend to Sir Andrew, unaware of his ulterior motives. Some candidates felt that his care of Olivia was completely unselfish. Weaker candidates simply asserted whether or not he is likeable with little or no support from the text, considering Sir Toby being likeable because he is funny and 'a drunkard'. Candidates tended to write very generalised responses about this character, lacking specific moments and detail to support their points. Weaker responses asserted Sir Toby 'stops the play being boring' and 'keeps the audience awake' but then offered little support for this view, or a link back to the task.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) There were many insightful and sensitive responses seen. The most successful answers placed the passage in context, focused sharply on the disturbing nature of the passage and showed a strong sense of audience response. There was understanding that Iago has told Othello he is going to question Cassio about Desdemona, to provide 'ocular proof' of their love affair, when in fact, he questions him about Bianca, and that Othello will be hiding as this conversation occurs. This moment is disturbing because it is not proof, it only appears so to Othello, with grave consequences. They commented on Iago's soliloquy to establish his disturbing intent and manipulative qualities, creating dramatic irony and showing his ability to recognise and use the weaknesses of his victims. Many commented on Iago's 'honesty' in telling Cassio: '*I am a very villain else*', the dramatic irony in his ability to deceive others and how this is disturbing for the audience. Iago's complete lack of empathy, conscience and remorse was cited as disturbing, along with Othello's gullibility and jealousy. Cassio's attitude to Bianca and complete obliviousness to how he is being played by Iago were also cited.

There were some perceptive responses which identified Iago's success in the passage and considered how it fits within his overall plans. They commented on Othello taking on Iago's traits of using animal imagery as he declines into a murderous rage, sealing the fate of Desdemona and nearly eliminating Cassio on the way. Many commented on Iago's disturbing misogyny and the derogatory way that Bianca is spoken about, calling her a 'creature' and deriding her profession, but also saw that Cassio is less of a gentleman than he appeared to be earlier in the play, finding his behaviour towards Bianca reprehensible. Othello's interjections, which reveal his jealousy and increasing anger, leading him to threaten violence were analysed, and the contrast between Othello's heartbreak and Iago and Cassio's light-hearted comments clearly understood.

The least successful answers thought Cassio was talking about Desdemona, that he was married to Bianca and that Othello was part of the conversation. Many had the misconception that Othello compared Cassio to a dog. Others had a basic grasp of Iago's plot but did not comment sufficiently on what was disturbing or on effects. Some candidates worked through the passage failing to focus on the 'disturbing' aspects and were side tracked, writing mainly on the treatment of Bianca, Desdemona and women in general.

- (b) This was less popular and, as with some other character-based questions, some candidates confused Roderigo with Brabantio, Cassio and even Iago. Successful answers balanced the argument. Reasons for sympathy were that his love is unrequited, Brabantio rejects him as a suitor for Desdemona, Iago exploits his weaknesses and gullibility, he loses all his money to Iago and,

ultimately, he is betrayed and murdered. It was pointed out that no-one else recognises Iago's duplicity either so Roderigo cannot be blamed for understanding this too late. On the other hand, he is relentlessly stupid, ignoring Iago telling him '*I am not what I am*', believing him to be a 'friend', and foolishly pursuing a married woman who shows no interest in him whatsoever. Strong answers engaged with his immorality – the racist language to provoke Brabantio, his willingness to start a fight with Cassio and later to agree to kill him. They could support these points with apt quotation and reference to specific moments in the text.

Less successful answers could outline some of the points above and show knowledge of the play but could not refer closely to the text to support ideas. Consequently, responses remained a generalised plea, mainly for sympathy with how he is manipulated. Answers were rather generous to Roderigo taking his 'love' for Desdemona as fact rather than questioning its depth, and some candidates sympathised with his most immoral actions, as if he had no choice or free will.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/23
Drama 23

Key messages

- The most successful responses remained focused on the key words in the question and avoided lengthy outlines of historical context as an introduction to the task. Effective conclusions were more than a reiteration of points.
- The most successful responses demonstrated a personal engagement with the text as drama, the characters and the stagecraft.
- Direct quotations from the set passage, or from the whole text in discursive responses, are the best form of textual support.
- Less successful responses commented on literary techniques or themes of the text but did not contextualise or analyse these.
- The strongest passage-based responses contextualised the passage and considered its content and language, choosing material from throughout the passage to support points.
- Successful discursive responses remained focused on the question and selected precise textual references from throughout the text to support ideas.

General comments

Overall, candidates demonstrated enjoyment of their set texts and showed engagement with the themes, characters and stagecraft. The most popular texts were *Othello*, *Journey's End* and *Twelfth Night*.

Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Effective passage-based responses contained introductions which briefly set the passage in context and the introductions of effective discursive responses focused on the key words of the question. Many candidates wasted valuable exam time summarising the plot or outlining historical context at length. This often meant that they ran out of time and did not fully develop the response or cover the ending of the passage. The sooner the candidate begins to answer the question, and to work chronologically through the passage, the better. A brief essay plan can help to maintain focus, and annotation of the passage is essential in ensuring that relevant material is selected. Focus on the key question words such as 'powerfully', 'revealing', or 'compelling' should be maintained throughout the response. The most successful responses paid attention to the key ideas in the question and referenced them throughout.

Responses which referred to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'book' showed an awareness that the texts are written to be performed on stage and understood their dramatic impact. These responses referenced stage directions and aural and visual effects to explore the drama.

In general, there was some effective analysis of language, but less successful responses tended to write all they knew about the text's plot, characters and themes with little or no reference to the question or focus on how they were conveyed through the writer's effects. Some of these responses pointed out literary techniques such as dramatic irony or foreshadowing, but with no analysis of these techniques.

There were a few rubric infringements on Paper 23. The majority of rubric infringements occurred when candidates answered two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based and one discursive question. In instances of rubric infringements, both responses are marked, but only the higher of the two marks is awarded. It was noted that there was a deterioration in handwriting, and although this syllabus does not assess spelling, punctuation and grammar, candidates should be aware of the importance of writing legibly and accurately to convey their ideas clearly.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) This question focused on a passage from the opening of the play, asking candidates to explore Ernestine's thoughts and feelings at this early stage in the play. Candidates across the ability range were able to respond personally to the passage and showed enjoyment of the text.

Successful responses commented on Ernestine's unhappiness at having moved to Brooklyn, setting the passage within the context that her mother has recently died, and that she is finding life in the city difficult in contrast with her previous home of Florida. These responses understood the comfort, sense of freedom and belonging that she feels in the cinema, and the way that her tears at the pretend lives in films are a catharsis, but very different from her real grief about her mother. They understood how racial inequalities disappear in the cinema, as she sits, '*right smack between two white gals*'.

The stage directions were analysed, commenting on the visual effects created onstage, for example the flickering blue light of the cinema. This awareness of staging was developed in discussion of Ernestine's narrator role, her tendency to address the audience and to break the 'fourth wall', and these stronger responses were able to link staging with character empathy. There was awareness of the visual significance of the photographs of Father Divine and Sandra Crump which are placed in the living room and the sound effects of the radio were also discussed.

The way in which Ernestine's character contrasts with her sister Ermina's was understood and candidates wrote about her inability to speak up to her father about his frustrating restrictions. Ermina, on the other hand, is much more 'sassy' in her interactions with Godfrey.

A number of less successful responses only dealt with the first section of the passage and did not engage with the context of Ernestine's grief about her mother and the sense of the cinema being an escape for her. There was some misunderstanding that Ernestine is happy living in Brooklyn. Stage directions were not explored thoroughly and the point about having, '*nothing to talk about in school*', was often misunderstood.

- (b) This question focused on Ernestine's strong feelings about Gerte, and successful responses considered the context of Godfrey's sudden marriage to Gerte and Ernestine's shocked response to this. Many considered the historical context of the recent Second World War and the reaction of many Americans to Germans in its aftermath.

These responses were able to discuss the evolution of Ernestine's relationship with Gerte and how, towards the end of the play there is some acceptance of her. There was understanding of Ernestine's coldness to Gerte - her formal address of '*Ma'am*' - but also her level of politeness and respect of Gerte's position in the household. Lily's influence upon these feelings was recognised and discussed by strong responses. Most responses commented that Ernestine dislikes Gerte due to her colour and her race but only a few responses picked up on the irony of this due to the racism that the Crumps have suffered. The way in which Ernestine's feelings of anger and hatred for Gerte cause her to be much more expressive than her normally introverted personality was identified by many candidates, and they also examined her sense of betrayal at Godfrey moving on too quickly after her mother's death.

Ernestine's anger and blame towards Gerte for the racist attack upon Godfrey was discussed in successful responses, along with a more general commentary about race, as was the irony of Godfrey marrying a white woman after his earlier critical words about white people. These responses also commented on how he has emulated Father Divine in his choice of a white woman as his wife.

Less successful responses became distracted by the historical context and wrote at length about America after the war rather than using this information as a brief example of context. These responses did not discuss any sense of acceptance that Ernestine develops towards Gerte and did progress beyond the fact that Gerte could not replace the girls' mother. They also mistakenly wrote about Godfrey marrying Gerte out of lust, not understanding his choice of sexual abstinence to

show respect to Father Divine. Few candidates referred to Ernestine's imagined scenes such as Gerte dancing with Lily or Godfrey and Gerte kissing.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 2

- (a) The strongest responses to this question covered the passage thoroughly with discussion of a range of ways in which tension is built and understood the deeper implications of the situation. The staging cues formed a successful base for many responses, along with the audience anticipation of imminent tragedy. Candidates engaged with the soldiers' uncertainty and the tension of waiting for the attack to start and there was much personal engagement from all levels of response, with the sense of dread created and sympathy for the characters who are facing almost inevitable death.

Discussion of the sound effects - '*thud*' and '*whistle*' - and how the men react to these alarming sounds, as well as the impact of the silences and the darkness, was effective. Other stage directions such as Stanhope pouring whisky into his tea, or Mason handing round packs of '*sambridges*', were used to develop the discussion of coping mechanisms, light relief or the everyday being contrasted with the horrors of war. Strong responses focused on the sense of movement adding to the tension, with several characters moving on and offstage.

Weaker responses often tended to write generally about life in the trenches and simply described what is happening in the passage. They acknowledged the sound effects but tended to make little progress from there, and coverage of the passage was often limited. They focused on the rum, assuming that all the soldiers are alcoholics and some candidates struggled to engage with the exchange between Stanhope and Mason about '*pate de foie gras*', or even omitted to comment on this section altogether.

- (b) This question, focusing on sympathy for Raleigh, succeeded in engaging many candidates and resulted in some effective personal responses, although, surprisingly, many candidates did not focus in detail on Raleigh's death.

The most successful responses covered a range of points with careful support and discussed aspects such as Raleigh's youth and innocence, his relationship with Stanhope, the letter which Stanhope insists on censoring, and finally his death. Many candidates expressed a sense of sadness at the deaths of many such young men in the First World War and propaganda was often discussed, in the sense that we sympathise with Raleigh as he has signed up under false pretences and is excited at the prospect of war, not understanding the reality. Although this was relevant, some candidates became distracted by the historical context and wrote at length about it, losing focus on the question in the process.

The crushing of Raleigh's innocence and his gradual understanding of how war has changed his hero Stanhope were discussed effectively in strong responses. His enthusiastic comments at the start of the play were contrasted with his character after Osborne dies. His sense of loss, feelings of guilt and sadness at the loss of the bond they had developed, and being unable to join the other men in champagne and cigars afterwards, was often focused on effectively. The way that Stanhope turns on Raleigh was discussed, and how Raleigh remains loyal to him, writing only positive things in the letter home.

Raleigh's death was analysed in detail by the most successful responses, which focused on his child-like language, '*It's so frightfully dark and cold*', Stanhope's kindness towards him and the use of his first name, '*Jimmy*', to emphasise the pathos of the scene. Less successful responses tended to focus on one or two aspects, notably Raleigh's innocence and his relationship with Stanhope. They did not fully grasp how Raleigh must have been very let down by his hero after the comments he had made to Osborne and his determination to be in his company. Quite often, discussion of Raleigh's death was lacking, with too much time being spent writing about personal attitudes towards the war.

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

Question 3

- (a) This question gave candidates the opportunity to explore a passage from the opening of the play with a focus on 'fascinating'. This question succeeded in creating positive engagement across the ability range.

Successful responses were able to write about Elesin's vitality, which is expressed in the stage directions, linking this with the vitality and colour of the market. They considered the drama of his entrance - the music, dancing and singing and considered the role of the Praise-Singer in smoothing Elesin's way. They focused on the importance of his warning to Elesin about not being distracted by the women and also on the significance of the women's role in spoiling Elesin. Engagement with Elesin's conversation with the Praise-Singer and what it foreshadows was a feature of stronger responses. There was effective personal engagement and often an expression of frustration with Elesin being distracted from his purpose, despite the warnings and there was also clear analysis of the metaphorical language of the passage.

Less successful responses missed the significance of the Praise-Singer's warning about the women and often paraphrased his words with little or no analysis. They often lacked focus on the language and staging of the passage and did not show understanding of the significance of this moment in the play.

- (b) Olunde's thoughts and feelings about Yoruba traditions were dealt with in a variety of ways. His dual cultural awareness was addressed by the most successful responses, which also contrasted Olunde with Jane and Simon Pilkings, commenting on him wearing a suit and the fact that he is not shocked by Jane being dressed in the Egungun costume. They were aware of his open mind towards the attitudes of other people, created by his time spent in England, and of his sense of duty. Despite exposure to life in England, Olunde maintains belief in Yoruba traditions and the importance of sacrifice and some candidates observed that he values the traditions more than he does his own life, as he chooses to take on the responsibility of the King's Horseman, killing himself in Elesin's place.

Weaker responses were general, quite repetitive and lacked textual support, range and development. They recognised that Olunde has to commit suicide because his father has failed in his duty but did not develop beyond this.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 4

- (a) This popular question focuses on the 'revealing' nature of the given passage and strong responses set the passage in the context of Viola/Cesario being sent to woo Olivia on Orsino's behalf and the beginnings of Olivia's attraction to her. They showed enjoyment when considering the developing love triangle and engaged with Olivia's wit in making an inventory of her beauty and with the witty exchanges between the two women. Many focused on Olivia's repetition of, '*I cannot love him*', showing her confident and assertive nature.

High level responses analysed Orsino's elaborate language of love, his tears, groans and sighs, and contrasted this with Viola's more genuine words in the 'willow cabin' speech. Some of these responses discussed how Orsino's language shows the fickleness and superficiality of the aristocracy, but often spent too long on this topic, losing focus on the passage. Candidates understood how Viola, by wooing Olivia on Orsino's behalf, is trying to make her loved one happy, but in the process is making herself miserable. They also understood how and why Olivia shifts her attention to Viola and what this might mean for the rest of the play. There was a clear sense that contemporary debates have reinvigorated appreciation of the play.

Weaker responses lacked sufficient coverage of the passage and analysis of the language. Some tended to paraphrase or summarise the passage with little detail or development, and they were often very repetitive. There was often an attempt to find examples of literary techniques without understanding their purpose and engagement with Olivia's humour in her 'inventory' or with the wit in her exchanges with Viola was limited. Some weaker responses showed misunderstanding, thinking that Viola loves Olivia, and some showed no awareness that Olivia is developing feelings

for Viola/Cesario, or that Viola is in love with Orsino. While some responses understood Viola's expression of her status and her refusal to accept Olivia's money, some interpreted this as her rejection of Olivia, rather than an expression of pride.

- (b) Successful responses were able to establish Malvolio as a serious Puritan character, understanding that this makes his transformation into a love-sick fool all the more comedic. They established him as an arrogant and self-important character, discussed his actions following the discovery of the letter and his ridicule as a 'madman'. Strong responses used textual support to demonstrate how Malvolio expresses his feeling of superiority over Sir Toby and the other characters and showed sympathy for him when he is locked up. They examined the comedy of his response to the letter and his ridiculous appearance when he dresses as 'Olivia' requests. Some responses wrote about the scene where Malvolio throws the ring at Viola, discussing the comedy in this and there was an awareness of the darker side of the comedy involving Malvolio, with some debate regarding to what extent he deserves our pity.

Strong responses were aware that whereas we laugh with Sir Toby, we laugh *at* Malvolio and they were able to discuss the subtleties of this. Some responses commented on Feste's role and his comment on, '*witty fool/foolish wit,*' and how this applies to Malvolio.

Weaker responses often became a simple character study of Malvolio with some focus on the prank but with heavy reliance on narrative. These responses lacked detailed textual support and development and did not engage with the elements of physical, slapstick comedy often created by Malvolio's behaviour.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) This passage focuses on Iago's attempts to discredit Cassio by plying him with alcohol and encouraging him to fight. The compelling nature of the passage was appreciated by most candidates, with a range of outcomes. Many appreciated Iago as a director of his own show, maybe not empathising with the hapless victims, and were able to successfully align language, drama and anticipation with varying levels of success.

The most successful responses worked carefully through the passage, setting it within the context of Othello and Desdemona's wedding night and the celebrations for peace being restored to Cyprus. They were able to link Othello's warning about keeping the peace to Iago's soliloquy at the end. They understood and analysed the contrasting language used about Desdemona by Cassio and Iago and discussed Iago's misogyny in his innuendo-laden language about Desdemona. There was an understanding that Iago is scheming, trying to get Cassio to admit desire for Desdemona but gives up when he is unsuccessful and adapts his plan in a different direction.

There was focus on Iago's soliloquy and the ways in which his plans are revealed through his derogatory language about Cassio and Roderigo. Candidates often made a personal response to the frustration and anger they felt towards Iago.

Weaker responses did not cover the passage thoroughly. They looked at the characters' language about Desdemona but did not link this with Iago's attempt to influence Cassio's language. Some mistakenly thought that Cassio is in love with Desdemona and is expressing this here. They paid little attention to Iago's language in his soliloquy, maybe due to running out of time. There was some misinterpretation of, '*creature*' used by Cassio about Desdemona, thinking that she is his prey or that the word is being used to dehumanise her. The theme of 'appearance v reality' was often referenced, but with the possibility that candidates categorised characters or behaviour simplistically and perhaps stereotypically, without nuance or personal interpretation.

- (b) Candidates had many ideas about Othello's jealousy and how it is conveyed. There was much independent exploration of character, cultural pressures and human frailty. Stronger responses covered a range of points and were well supported and developed. They captured the sinister nature of Iago's plan, traced the destruction of Othello both physically and mentally and analysed the often disturbing language surrounding jealousy. They also focused on the symbolism of the handkerchief which serves as Othello's '*ocular proof*' of Desdemona's infidelity and focused on particular incidents which fuel Othello's jealousy.

These responses focused on how little separates love and hate, and how jealousy tips Othello into violence. They analysed his violent language towards Desdemona and the disturbing scene when he murders her and they understood how Othello's language begins to mimic Iago's in his response to women. The transformation of Othello into the 'beast' that he had previously been judged to be, was discussed by strong responses, with detailed support from the text, and the racial undertones of this were understood. Some candidates engaged with, and were frustrated by, the idea that Othello never confronts Desdemona or gives her chance to defend herself. They discussed whether this is due to his pride or to Iago's influence.

Weaker responses lacked sufficient textual support but often quoted, '*the green-eyed monster*' and were able to discuss what this says about jealousy and about the characters. They lacked focus on Othello's violent treatment of Desdemona, her murder and his disturbing language and did not mention the significance of the handkerchief in the development of his jealousy. Some weaker responses focused more generally on jealousy in the play, with insufficient treatment of Othello's jealousy in particular. Overall, this level of response relied heavily upon narrative and there was little exploration of language.

Overall, Othello's jealousy was clear for most candidates – almost all understood his trust, his insecurity, racism, and Iago's effect on Othello.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/31
Drama 31 (Open Text)

Key messages

- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly contextualised the passage, selected relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful responses to the discursive questions supported their argument with reference to specific moments and with relevant quotations candidates had learned, allowed them to comment on the author's method.
- Successful responses recognised that this was drama and gave a personal response, or considered the effect on audiences, supported by the text.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set text(s). The most popular texts were *Journey's End*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* and *Othello*. Teachers are advised to check the syllabus carefully for the changes in set texts. This is the last year for both *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* which will be replaced in 2024 by William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams.

There was some very competent work seen. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on themes, characterisation and stagecraft. They demonstrated insight into the ways writers achieve effects, focusing closely on the key terms of the question. Textual knowledge was detailed, and these candidates were able to refer to, and quote from, texts effectively with brief, well-chosen quotations, which were fully analysed to consolidate the point being made. The strongest answers ranged across their texts and showed understanding of dramatic structure.

However, there were a substantial number of lower-level responses where there was a lack of basic knowledge of the texts, insecure understanding and sketchy detail. Many responses were very brief or fragmentary, showing simple recall of events and lacking detail and limited or no focus on the terms of the question. There were many examples of responses to *Journey's End* where candidates used only material from the extract in 2(a) to answer the discursive **Question 2(b)**. This obviously had a self-limiting effect on the answer which was very narrow in focus. Either candidates did not know the text well enough to provide their own evidence or misunderstood the rubric – but this only appeared to be an issue with this text. Centres should make clear to their candidates that the questions are discrete entities and there is rarely anything of value in the passage to answer the discursive question.

In extract questions, where the text is given to the candidate, it is expected that there will be much close reference and quotation and that the whole of the extract will be considered rather than a close focus on only the opening section. Very often there is rich dramatic material at the close of the passage which is overlooked by candidates.

The most successful candidates wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'dramatic', 'striking' or 'moving' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. Too often candidates write lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot, listing irrelevant social, cultural and historical detail or the techniques the writer had used. Many candidates used rote-learned generic comments that added no value to their response as they do not cater to the focus of the question, for example, 'the play is a roller coaster of emotion'. All candidates should deconstruct the questions carefully, before they start to write, to check they have understood what is expected and to decide on the most relevant material.

The ability to 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 that are not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. Candidates often refer to punctuation – exclamation marks, capital letters, dashes – while seeking to comment on dialogue but without the context which is unhelpful. These can be relevant, and important, but only if related to the ideas conveyed in the text.

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 and to outline their own, or propose other audience members’, responses.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) Candidates found ‘intense’ a useful question focus and brought in ideas such as ‘tense’ and ‘dramatic’ to support it. Most candidates were able to respond to the dramatic entrance of Godfrey and Gerte and to comment on the physical aspects of the scene such as Godfrey’s dishevelled clothing, his face covered with blood and Gerte’s blood-stained dress. Many answers commented on how Godfrey’s search for a weapon, his ‘bad’ language and desire for revenge add to the scene’s intensity. Better answers commented effectively on tone, the characters’ short, sharp delivery, frequent cut-off lines and the impact of questions and exclamations in conveying confusion and increasing the pace. While weaker responses discussed only physical aspects of the scene, stronger candidates focused on how the other characters responded to the traumatic situation – Ermina’s attempt to block the trauma and Ernestine’s protective but wary attitude towards her father. Some candidates interpreted, ‘You hurt Daddy’ as an accusation against Gerte rather than Ernestine registering her father’s injury.

All responses discussed how the scene exemplified the racism and violence which African Americans endured in 1950s America and candidates expressed strong personal responses to this theme of injustice and engaged with Nottage’s message. There was some insightful comment on institutionalised racism revealed by the behaviour of not only the attackers but also the by-standers, and the lack of faith in equal treatment by the police. However, there was some repetition of the theme of racism and the historical context at the expense of what is revealed of the impact of this moment on the characters. Stronger answers recognised that this incident reinforces Godfrey’s fear of allowing his daughters to go out and interact with people outside the safety of the home, the significance of the dressmaker’s dummy – and Ernestine’s newfound confidence and freedom – being toppled.

As with many passage-based questions, the later parts of the extract were underdeveloped. The stronger answers paid attention to Gerte’s and Lily’s interaction, recognising Lily’s sarcasm towards what she viewed as Gerte’s naiveté and developing this point to include Gerte’s gradual realisation of her situation and her disillusionment. Stronger answers picked up the latent rivalry between Lily and Gerte after Godfrey supports Lily’s opinion regarding the police, revealed in stage directions ‘Lily tends to Godfrey’s eye. Gerte tries to take over from Lily’ and the subtext of the accusatory questions between them, where tension and hostility is revealed, for example ‘I wonder how that happened?’ and ‘Where are the warriors in your revolution now?’ These answers were able to relate to the intensity of the moment in the play and the relationships between the characters that have already been dramatically established rather than solely the tension and action of the scene.

Weaker responses tended to describe the scene and paraphrase the account Godfrey gives, noting stage direction and the mood of the scene but staying at a superficial level and not showing knowledge of the characters’ situation, relationships and the implications of this moment in the wider play.

- (b) Most candidates understood that Ernestine escaped into film which offered a contrast to her drab life in Brooklyn. Some recognised that the cinema was a place to grieve and that Godfrey’s

restrictions on radio and the absence of television meant that this was the sole medium offering a glimpse of another world. Stronger candidates recognised the communal experience offered by the cinema, where both girls ‘weep softly’, engage with the heightened emotions and connect with other audience members. There were thoughtful comments on how the drama and glamour of film nourished her ambitions and how she identified with the intense emotions portrayed in the films. The best answers were able to link the way problems were always resolved in movies to Ernestine’s own self-doubt and concerns about her future. Such answers effectively related Ernestine’s enjoyment of cinema with her interactions with Gerte and Lily and how these contribute to the unfolding drama: Ernestine and Gerte admitting to a shared interest in cinema and dancing, showing their changing relationship, Lily’s teasing ‘Miss Bette’ over her ambitions and her more pointed comments that cinema does not offer solutions and a ‘movie star can not have politics’.

The strongest answers also fulfilled the requirement to explore the ways the writer presents ideas and creates effects, and evidenced how Nottage used music, dancing, lighting and breaking of the fourth wall to dramatically contrast Ernestine’s restricted reality and her reserved self, creating brighter moments in the play. These recognised the genre and the audience’s experience as well as showing understanding of the character and plot.

Textual detail was lacking in many weaker answers which then became generalised character sketches. Many responses struggled to retrieve specific moments related to film. The question asked for how Ernestine’s enjoyment ‘was made such a dramatic part of the play’ but this element was neglected and a simple summary of why she liked cinema was given.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey’s End*

Question 2

- (a) This fairly open question allowed for a variety of responses. Candidates embraced the freedom of the idea of what is ‘revealed’ in terms of characterisation and what is shown about war. Candidates were able to access the idea of humour and, at least to some extent, explore what made the scene ‘entertaining’.

Having two parts to the question seem to give candidates a clear structure to follow and most addressed both parts of the question although there was often less material on what was ‘revealed’ of Sherriff’s ideas of the challenges of trench-warfare. Most candidates recognised the importance of food as a source of comfort and as a distraction from the war, for Trotter particularly. Many discussed ‘coping mechanisms’. Answers achieving the higher levels discussed both characters’ reactions to the ‘pepper situation’ but also to the fact that they are kept ‘in the dark’ by the higher orders, and how the soldiers are trying to control one small feature of a situation where they are powerless. Many answers discussed what is ‘revealed’ of the characters at this early part of the play and in particular Stanhope’s authority, though few commented on his evident concern for the welfare of his men.

While most candidates were able to identify Trotter’s humorous over-reaction to the lack of pepper, only stronger responses were able to contrast his use of language with Osborne’s quiet, understated humour (‘yellow flavour’), both characters playing down the horrors they were facing using euphemisms or vague terms such as ‘trouble’, ‘nasty’ and ‘lively’. Many candidates used the term ‘irony’ to cover multiple effects such as sarcasm and wordplay but were attempting to unpick how humour is achieved and had some success. Strong answers also dealt with language through dramatic delivery, recognising the text as drama, the dashes indicating pauses and what these may signify, such as distress or embarrassment, and then went on to explore how the audience would react.

Weaker responses identified the more obvious evidence of ‘jokes’ and how a small matter is given undue emphasis but with little consideration of why. Some commented effectively on the stage directions and how the comedic actions such as ‘throwing the spoon’ in a childlike tantrum has an entertaining impact. There was less focus on what is ‘revealed’ beyond the power structures shown by terms of address and the effect of the mistake on Mason. Many weaker answers focused at length on this character’s embarrassment at the expense of the wider concerns revealed in the extract.

- (b) In response to this question on Stanhope, stronger answers used episodes such as his handling of Osborne’s death, Hibbert’s ‘neuralgia’ and Raleigh’s demise at the end of the play to illustrate

different facets of the character and his leadership. Osborne's spoken and Raleigh's written defence of the character featured as strong evidence of the character's admirable qualities. Insightful responses made use of the context of the war, suffering and alcoholism and portrayed Stanhope as admirable and sympathetic because of his personal demons which, they argued, were directly caused by his commitment to being a leader, tying in with Sherriff's anti-war agenda.

The best responses ranged across the play discussing Stanhope's experience and extensive losses over his three years in post, his high standards and his sense of duty. Most candidates were able to give a personal response about the character of Stanhope, empathising with the stressful nature of his position and pointing out his ability to give orders but also work hard himself. The best responses were able to contrast his occasional bullying of his men, Hibbert and Raleigh, with more sensitive and caring moments and to see his dependence on alcohol and his other inner struggles as very 'human flaws'. They recognised Stanhope's ability to identify his own weaknesses, his fear and alcoholism, and his ability to keep going despite his trauma. These comments were supported by close reference to language and action, and commented effectively on the emotions evoked in audiences.

This question produced many good responses, however a very large number of candidates only used the material from the extract given in **2(a)**. Those candidates drawing on the extract alone could support the point that Stanhope receives respect and perhaps fear from his men and that he is demanding, but this is a restricted view of the character, lacking context and subtlety. Other weaker answers wrote a character sketch of Stanhope rather than focus on his leadership qualities or gave a narrow, one-dimensional response to the character focusing on only one element. Most candidates had some grasp of the character's qualities but some gave generalised responses with limited close reference to language, structure or dramatic effects.

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

Question 3

- (a) The best responses to this question demonstrated some understanding of the symbolism behind the language and the context of the scene. They explored the idea of making a journey towards death mysterious via stage directions, the metaphoric language, rhetorical questions from the Praise-Singer and the ritual repetition of lines. Some considered the ambiguity of lines such as 'the end of the day' as a reference to death and the 'strange voices' along with Elesin's lack of response to the Praise-Singer and reduction in movement. There was also some attempt to consider the significance and irony of individual lines such as 'who may falter' in relation to Elesin's character and later events suggesting that the failure to complete his duty is already mysteriously fated to happen.

While most managed to identify the significance of the scene – Elesin's ritual journey from life to death and his sinking into a deep trance – there were very few who were able to engage with the 'mysterious' nature of the scene. Only a very small number of responses discussed the language in any detail, making an attempt to explore the Praise-Singer's role and the importance of language in conveying the important and mysterious nature of the ceremony. Few candidates commented on the use of metaphor and the use of animal imagery. Several candidates showed some insecurity in recognising the Praise-Singer's and Iyaloja's role in the play and of how much knowledge they possess in this scene. Some candidates referred broadly to metaphorical language but did not expand upon this. Although textual reference was used, this was often not explored and lacked relevance to the question meaning answers often became very narrative.

- (b) The question pointed candidates towards a particular view with few having the confidence to consider or argue any of Pilkings' more admirable traits. Since the question invited candidates to focus exclusively on Pilkings' negative characteristics, most candidates tended to describe even his potentially more redeeming features as worthy of contempt, for example, his attempt to prevent Elesin committing 'ritual suicide' was seen as seeking to impose his 'moral values' on others, without exploring his motivations (which, it could be argued, were self-serving).

Stronger responses were able to discuss Pilkings' cultural ignorance and insensitivity towards Yoruba culture, whilst also exploring his mocking attitude to all religions and his rude and abusive treatment of his staff, Sergeant Amusa and even his wife, Jane. The precision in recalling textual detail and Pilkings' choice of language and actions which evoke negative responses from other

characters, and the audience, determined the level of achievement. Stronger answers related the character to Soyinka's ideas on colonialism and cultural imperialism.

Weaker candidates gave a simple summary of character but most were able to consider the ways in which Pilkings is disliked. Most cited the disrespect for ritual costume at the fancy dress party and treatment of Amusa, taking points from the early play along with several missing his contribution to Elesin's arrest and the significant events that follow. Few referenced the exchanges between Pilkings and Elesin or Olunde.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 4

- (a) The stronger responses to this question moved beyond the central point of mistaken identity and recognised the 'drama' of the officers arresting Antonio and the strength of the argument between Antonio and Viola. These considered the language revealing Antonio's abruptly shifting emotions as his requests for his 'purse' are turned down. Some candidates who reached the end of the extract commented on the extract as providing a climax of confusion, and the shift towards the play's resolution for Viola in suggesting her brother had survived, revealed in her final dramatic lines hoping her wishes will 'prove true'. Authorial effects could have been profitably discussed by such structural points but not many candidates took advantage of this. Some responses recognised the frustration of the audience in terms of dramatic irony, hoping Antonio and Viola sort out the confusion whilst the guards' haste prevents it. The strongest discussed the lines adding urgency and drama to the moment, for example, 'Come, come sir'.

On a language level, the impact of questioning was fairly well covered to show confusion on both sides. The strongest answers considered Antonio's dramatic account of Sebastian's rescue from the 'jaws of death', his language of devotion and how his 'god' has become 'evil', engaging with the broader theme of deceptive appearances. Viola's kindness in offering 'half her coffer' to a 'stranger' and her spirited response to ungratefulness being met with exclamations and accusations of her being 'unkind' develop the drama of misunderstanding further.

Weaker responses were plot-based responses, where narrative and backstory dominated the answer. Most candidates were able to discuss the key points of disguise and mistaken identity and recognise that Antonio believed the disguised Viola was Sebastian, though not all candidates were conscious of Antonio's close bond with Sebastian, having saved his life. Weaker responses considered few details from the passage and showed limited engagement with the characters' language choices and what is revealed of character here.

- (b) Stronger responses to this question were able to consider Viola's love in relation to other types of love in the play, including that of Olivia and Orsino, although some answers focused more on these than the question of how Viola's love is moving to audiences. Most candidates made relevant points about Viola's love for Orsino and how, despite her love, she still behaves dutifully as his servant, taking his messages and entreaties to Olivia. While candidates were able to identify the drama and humour which came from the disguised Viola being loved by Olivia, only stronger responses explored this in detail. Not all candidates were able to focus closely on language to discuss how Viola's love for Orsino was portrayed movingly in different parts of the play, although several responses made reference to the resolution of the play and how Viola's love is finally reciprocated, satisfying the audience. The strongest answers recognised the pathos evoked by Viola's 'barful strife' and her veiled professions of love to, and about, Orsino. Some also expressed sympathy for her struggle to disguise her feelings and how the audience may be moved to find humour in her difficulties.

Although the successful responses showed a good understanding of the ideas of the play, there was, on the whole, limited focus on the ways the writer achieved effects, the moments when Viola's love for Orsino is dramatised and how the language Viola uses reveals the strength of her feelings. Weaker answers tended to narrate the circumstances of Viola's disguise and her situation but with limited comment on how her love is presented. Some candidates gave personal responses that were not grounded in the text and lacked precise textual reference. The ability to recall specific moments and examples of Viola's language which move audiences was essential for achievement of the higher levels.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) Most answers found the passage accessible, gave a reasonable focus and were able to use the material to support prior knowledge of these characters. Candidates identified the fact that Roderigo has finally run out of patience and summoned up enough courage to confront Iago for duping him. Stronger responses identified the striking contrast with the earlier presentation of Roderigo who is unusually forceful in these opening lines and recognises he has been 'foolish'. Some noted the striking threat that he will 'seek satisfaction' and his newfound clarity in recognising that Iago's 'deeds' and 'words' do not match, tying into the theme of deceptive appearances. These answers focused well on the language and the best commented on the tension created before the climax of the play since Iago's schemes are now, briefly, threatened with exposure.

Better answers focused on Iago's calmness under pressure and his effective use of language to dissemble, exploring how quickly and easily he persuades Roderigo to murder Cassio. Some picked up on the contradiction in Iago's lines where he first says that he is being treated 'most unjustly' and later admitting that Roderigo's 'suspicion is not without wit and judgment' in an effort to assuage him. They noted his short, dismissive responses switching to flattery and a brutal plan which he pledges will bring immediate satisfaction to Roderigo, playing again on characters' weaknesses, in this case Roderigo's passion for Desdemona. This exploration of Iago's language and cynical manipulation, along with the dramatic effect on the audience when Roderigo takes the bait, marked out the stronger responses.

Weaker answers drifted into narrative and others gave generalised character sketches repeating the main points that Iago is puppeteer and Roderigo is naive puppet rather than focusing on specific details from the scene. Many responses considered one character much more fully than another and repeated that Iago is lying and manipulating but without close reference to his language and method. Most recognised Iago's true feelings for Roderigo. However, not all candidates were able to clearly contextualise the scene, and some did not seem clear on what Roderigo expected Iago to do for him or what Iago instructs Roderigo to do at the close of the extract, confusing this moment with Act 2 and his earlier instruction to Cassio at the watch. The weakest answers recognised the conflict between the two but struggled to articulate the nature of Roderigo's complaint or Iago's response.

- (b) Most candidates made good use of material related to Desdemona's defiance of her father to marry Othello, Othello's false accusations of infidelity and her enduring love and faithfulness even in death.

Stronger answers ranged across the play, responding on a personal level to the strength of Desdemona's love and the unjust way she is treated, drawing on a range of well-selected references to support points. Stronger responses developed the point of Desdemona standing up to her father and the bravery of this in the social and historical context. Her defence of Othello to the Senate was cited by some as striking evidence of her love whilst others identified the sacrifices she made to follow Othello to Cyprus and her immediate concern for him on arrival. Her respectful language and her obedience even in the face of his violence and verbal abuse was used as well-selected, specific support. Some wrote effectively on the symbolism of the handkerchief, how her act of love results in her dropping it, and on the pathos of her love in the face of death. Many responses effectively commented on her defence of Othello in her final words and that this had been foreshadowed by her pledge not to let his 'unkindness taint (her)love'. There was some insightful comment on how Desdemona's love imbues her with strength and confidence in the opening scenes and in her commitment to mending Othello's relationship with Cassio but ultimately renders her helpless in the closing scenes. Most candidates had clearly engaged with the character and her narrative and showed a personal response which was clearly grounded in the text.

Weaker responses did not draw on enough specific textual detail to support their comments or summarised the lovers' story rather than how Desdemona's constancy and love is vividly presented in particular scenes. Many cited the opening and final scenes but had limited recall of events in the middle of the play.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0475/32 Drama (Open Text) 32</p>

Key messages

- Candidates should read the instructions to the question paper carefully, to remind themselves of the requirements for the paper, and be able to select an accurate combination of questions.
- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly contextualised the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful responses to the discursive questions supported their argument with relevant quotations candidates had learned.
- Teachers should refer to the relevant syllabus, and examination requirements, during the planning stages of the course.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set text(s). The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* followed by *Death and the King's Horseman* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. However, there were very few responses to *Journey's End*. Teachers are advised to check the syllabus carefully for the changes in set texts. This is the last year for both *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* which will be replaced in 2024 by William Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams.

There was some excellent work seen. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on themes, characterisation and stagecraft. They demonstrated insight into the ways writers achieved effects, focusing closely on the key terms of the question. Textual knowledge was detailed, and these candidates were able to refer to, and quote from, texts effectively with brief, well-chosen quotations, which were fully analysed to consolidate the point being made.

However, there were many less successful answers where there was a lack of basic knowledge of the texts, with much confusion over characters, plot and even with the name and gender of the playwrights. Frequently these responses offered a narrative overview of the text with limited or no focus on the terms of the question.

The most successful candidates wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'dramatic', 'memorable' or 'likeable' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. Too often candidates write lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot, listing irrelevant social, cultural and historical detail or the techniques the writer had used. All candidates should deconstruct the questions carefully, before they start to write, to check they have understood what is expected, for example, are they writing about the correct character?

The ability to 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 simply point out terms, which is not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded: techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. It is unhelpful for candidates to be stating the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language', 'diction', dialogue, 'end-stopping' or 'caesura' to convey ideas.

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. Time

management was generally good with few unfinished responses seen though there were many very brief answers seen where candidates lacked sufficient knowledge of the texts to write in more detail. 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 their answer.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) This text was more popular than last year. Most candidates answered the extract-based question which produced the full range of responses. Successful answers established the context, referring to Lily's drunken and dishevelled state, how Godfrey catches her dancing the Mambo with Ermina and Ernestine, and Lily's provocative comments about Father Divine. This context is relevant to establish that the tension is already high at the start of the passage. The best answers centred on the fact that, though Lily and Godfrey have taken steps to escape their previous lives that were marred by family tragedy and racism, they have adopted very different strategies. They explored the clash of attitudes and approaches, with Lily attributing culpability for Sandra's death to Godfrey, and his anger and dramatic, capitalised words, as he physically '*shoves*' the girls out of the room. There was critical understanding of the impact on stage with Godfrey's anger and Lily's retaliation, mocking his beliefs in Father Divine. The tension created by Godfrey's fears of Lily's being a communist were also understood. They also recognised the sexual tension and physical attraction between them, though too often candidates lapsed into speculative comments about their past relationship with some considering this the reason for Sandra's death, missing Lily's intentions in this passage.

In less successful answers candidates struggled to maintain focus on the task, paraphrasing the passage, to give an account of the argument, but without managing to probe more deeply into the text in order to explore the tension between Lily and Godfrey. There were lengthy, inert quotations copied, with candidates asserting that what they had paraphrased conveyed 'tension', but with little understanding of the text quoted.

- (b) There were very few answers to this question and some candidates were unable to recall specific details to develop how Nottage makes Ernestine's graduation a 'memorable and significant' part of the play. It is helpful for candidates to learn some quotations to be able to support responses to discursive questions.

Successful answers understood the importance of the graduation both practical in terms of Ernestine's future, and symbolic in terms of her coming of age, and knew the play well so could support the argument. The best answers could isolate moments where the dress featured; as in the sewing and tearing off of the lace and linked these moments to the evolving relationship between Lily and Ernestine and how she helps Ernestine to mature. There were some moving comments on the dress being a physical representation of her mother, as Sandra, before she died, had chosen a pattern for her graduation dress. The best answers explored how Ernestine's graduation is 'a first' for the family but despite Godfrey's pride, he can only see a job in the bakery or marriage for her. They understood that Ernestine's maturity and ability to break free from his expectations, to reject the job, was both memorable and significant.

Less successful answers were narrative, repetitive and commented on how it was unusual for a black girl to succeed, with the main focus of their writing on the social and historical context of the play but with little understanding of the text, and the significance of Ernestine's achievement in her family, or in her personal development. Weaker answers retold parts of the play with little focus on the question and with limited understanding of the text.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 2

- (a) There were fewer answers to this text. Successful answers identified Stanhope's emotions and the reason for them as well as, most importantly, how the writing conveys his emotions. The best answers explored the context of the passage that Stanhope is in a relationship with Raleigh's

sister, Madge, and how he earlier revealed to Osborne his fears that Raleigh will reveal his drinking and erratic behaviour to her. They analysed the stage directions and how Stanhope's 'trembling' showed his extreme anger, fear and inability to control it, as well as the way he tears the letter from Raleigh in such a violent way. Better answers focused on how Sherriff uses stage directions to indicate anger, as well as fear, and many recognised Stanhope's loss of control as symptomatic of the stress he is under. They commented on how he not only loses his temper with Raleigh, but also with poor Osborne, indicative in itself of how Stanhope has lost control. There was critical understanding of how Stanhope's body language in the second half of the scene reflects his sense of embarrassment and shame at how he's behaved, as he 'sits with lowered head' for the way he treated Raleigh. The best answers fully explored the reading aloud of the letter, focusing on Stanhope's actions and the contrast of him shouting at both Raleigh and Osborne against his 'murmuring' at the end. The reference to the sun shining outside in the trench was largely ignored but those who attempted comment on the changing mood, did so successfully.

Less successful responses considered the basic elements of the scene: Stanhope shouting and Raleigh's amazement and shock, followed by the contrasting quiet of Osborne reading the letter. It was surprising that some wrote about the passage without reference to the letter or about Stanhope's fears concerning the possible content. Such answers limited themselves, as only a little understanding of the moment was shown. Weaker answers did not convey understanding of why Stanhope was angry, losing focus on the question, and wrote about the previous friendship between Stanhope and Raleigh. Stanhope's behaviour, and demonstration of his authority, was considered important but only as he wanted to show Raleigh that life in the war was different to being at school together, which misses his abuse of his position and the dramatic impact of the moment.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question and, for some candidates, it proved to be challenging as they confused Hibbert with Trotter. In these answers, there was little to reward as there was limited, relevant, information on the named character.

The most successful answers tended to err on the side of feeling sorry for Hibbert: that his faking his neuralgia was his 'coping mechanism' as drinking was for Stanhope. Others were damning of his perceived cowardice and took a dim view of his selfishness as he prepared to 'let the team down'. The scene when Stanhope threatens to shoot him, and later talks to him, was often used well and served to increase sympathy for Hibbert with the resulting slight change of admiration for him at this point, which is portrayed through the change in feeling in Stanhope. There was some understanding of how during this scene Sherriff implies the significance of camaraderie and friendship and how facing one's fears helps to cope more effectively. The best responses understood how Hibbert's cowardice is used as a foil to reflect Stanhope's bravery and greater honesty in handling his fears – even if via alcohol - but thought that Hibbert was a very weak person and dislikeable character. Further evidence of Hibbert being a contrast to other men is when he boasts of a 'couple of damn fine girls' and showed photographs: this was considered crude and vulgar. Surprisingly few commented on Stanhope's description of Hibbert being a 'little worm' hoping to 'wiggle back home'.

Less successful answers were narrative and simply commented on Hibbert's cowardice and general unpleasantness but there was insufficient knowledge of the text and a lack of memorised quotations, and textual reference, to support their responses.

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

Question 3

- (a) This was the most popular question on Soyinka. Candidates should avoid writing detailed introductions on the historical and cultural setting of the play, and the history of colonialism, leaving little time to respond to the actual question. There were many successful answers which established the context that Elesin is ashamed of not fulfilling his duty as the King's Horseman and that he is in prison, having been arrested by Pilkings to prevent his suicide. They selected material to focus securely on Elesin's shame: explored the idea of Olunde as an avenger of the shame; Elesin's rejection of Pilkings' consolation; his aggression towards Pilkings, 'white man', covering his shame; the symbolism of 'my voice is broken' and his lost honour as a father and his reputation with the people. There was some insight into his silence and sigh after Pilkings points out that no one goes to their death willingly, and how Elesin blamed everyone else before finally confessing to his own failing. The best answers directly addressed 'powerfully' by responding to the language

and the ominous threat of what Olunde will do to the white man: '*His spirit will destroy you and yours*' and his comments to his bride that his shame made him blame anyone before he admits he is to blame because it was difficult to let go of his joy in living.

Less successful responses showed insecure understanding of the text and passage. They mistook the context and thought that Elesin knew at this point that Olunde had committed suicide in his place. Some misread the opening speech and thought that Elesin was still ashamed of his son going to England and that his shame here was about that. The weakest responses wrote too much about the context spending much of the answer explaining what had gone before, often inaccurately. Others simply could not select the relevant material sufficiently or just did not focus on the question, writing a character sketch of Elesin or simply retold the plot, often with many inaccuracies.

- (b) This proved difficult for candidates who did not read the question carefully. This question required candidates to write about two dramatic moments in the play, with the rider that candidates did '**not** use the passage printed in **Question 3(a)** in answering this question'. Unfortunately, this was ignored with many candidates using the passage as one of the moments. The most successful answers selected two distinct and dramatic moments showing a clear understanding of the play on stage by considering interaction between characters, audience response, action and sound, for example, the drumming, music and rhythmic chanting. These were supported with textual details and quotation candidates had learned. A range of moments were chosen including: the opening scene in the market; the 'Not-I' bird story and Elesin's welcoming response to the bird; the ending scene with Elesin's actual suicide; Amusa's reaction to the egungun costumes and the market women amusingly mocking Amusa.

Less successful responses retold the plot without identifying discrete moments, used the passage, or chose one or two moments to write about, but without focusing on how they were dramatic or supporting with specific textual detail. Weaker responses did not know the text well enough and narrated their moments, often incorrectly, and without comment. Some thought that Soyinka was a character in the market place and referred to him as 'she' and 'her'.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 4

- (a) The most successful answers demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the situation, although some confused Antonio with the Sea Captain who rescues Viola at the beginning of the play. Many candidates were able to recognise that the presentation of Antonio in the passage is problematic in so far as there are contradictory impressions given of him as both a 'pirate' and a loyal and unselfish friend. The best responses were able to contextualise the scene and discuss how Antonio 'saved' Viola/Cesario from her duel and his sense of betrayal having done so much for this '*most ingrateful boy*'. Better responses supported their arguments with precise textual reference offering some sensitive analysis of language, exploring the implications of 'Vulcan' and were secure in their knowledge of dramatic irony. Some were able to comment on the fact that when Olivia enters at the end of the scene, Orsino's attention is immediately drawn away from Antonio and he is no longer of any interest or importance to the duke. There was predictably a lot of sympathy for Antonio as well as some discussion about his sexuality.

In less successful answers there was confusion over what was going on in the scene and the issue of mistaken identity. Some candidates struggled to comment on Antonio, a minor character, who appears in only a few scenes. They were confused by the Duke's language about when he last saw Antonio. There was also confusion about the context of this moment; when it took place and who Antonio had rescued. Some were able to identify Antonio's feelings of betrayal but comments about Antonio's relationship with Sebastian ranged from it being brotherly, to openly homosexual with some candidates losing focus on both the question, and passage, to write about homosexuality in Shakespeare's day.

- (b) This was also a popular question but proved to be problematic where some candidates confused Sir Toby with Sir Andrew or even, in a few cases, Malvolio. Stronger responses engaged with the question and provided plenty of textual detail in support. They provided a balanced response to Sir Toby being 'likeable', though some were quite vehement in their disapproval of his debauched ways. There was a clear understanding of his drunken behaviour, cynical use of Sir Andrew for money and amusement, organising of the duel between Cesario and Sir Andrew, and the cruel way

he gained revenge on Malvolio. However, there were very few instances of candidates being able to look at the playwright's methods of presenting the character through the language of the text and the stage craft. Many simply asserted he provides comic-relief but without exploring precisely how Shakespeare conveys this. There was often mention of his involvement in the gulling of Malvolio, but some misunderstanding of the extent of his role.

Less successful answers showed insecure understanding of the character and his behaviour, believing Sir Toby was a loyal and faithful friend to Sir Andrew, unaware of his ulterior motives. Some candidates felt that his care of Olivia was completely unselfish. Weaker candidates simply asserted whether or not he is likeable with little or no support from the text, considering Sir Toby being likeable because he is funny and 'a drunkard'. Candidates tended to write very generalised responses about this character, lacking specific moments and detail to support their points. Weaker responses asserted Sir Toby 'stops the play being boring' and 'keeps the audience awake' but then offered little support for this view, or a link back to the task.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) There were many insightful and sensitive responses seen. The most successful answers placed the passage in context, focused sharply on the disturbing nature of the passage and showed a strong sense of audience response. There was understanding that Iago has told Othello he is going to question Cassio about Desdemona, to provide 'ocular proof' of their love affair, when in fact, he questions him about Bianca, and that Othello will be hiding as this conversation occurs. This moment is disturbing because it is not proof, it only appears so to Othello, with grave consequences. They commented on Iago's soliloquy to establish his disturbing intent and manipulative qualities, creating dramatic irony and showing his ability to recognise and use the weaknesses of his victims. Many commented on Iago's 'honesty' in telling Cassio: '*I am a very villain else*', the dramatic irony in his ability to deceive others and how this is disturbing for the audience. Iago's complete lack of empathy, conscience and remorse was cited as disturbing, along with Othello's gullibility and jealousy. Cassio's attitude to Bianca and complete obliviousness to how he is being played by Iago were also cited.

There were some perceptive responses which identified Iago's success in the passage and considered how it fits within his overall plans. They commented on Othello taking on Iago's traits of using animal imagery as he declines into a murderous rage, sealing the fate of Desdemona and nearly eliminating Cassio on the way. Many commented on Iago's disturbing misogyny and the derogatory way that Bianca is spoken about, calling her a 'creature' and deriding her profession, but also saw that Cassio is less of a gentleman than he appeared to be earlier in the play, finding his behaviour towards Bianca reprehensible. Othello's interjections, which reveal his jealousy and increasing anger, leading him to threaten violence were analysed, and the contrast between Othello's heartbreak and Iago and Cassio's light-hearted comments clearly understood.

The least successful answers thought Cassio was talking about Desdemona, that he was married to Bianca and that Othello was part of the conversation. Many had the misconception that Othello compared Cassio to a dog. Others had a basic grasp of Iago's plot but did not comment sufficiently on what was disturbing or on effects. Some candidates worked through the passage failing to focus on the 'disturbing' aspects and were side tracked, writing mainly on the treatment of Bianca, Desdemona and women in general.

- (b) This was less popular and, as with some other character-based questions, some candidates confused Roderigo with Brabantio, Cassio and even Iago. Successful answers balanced the argument. Reasons for sympathy were that his love is unrequited, Brabantio rejects him as a suitor for Desdemona, Iago exploits his weaknesses and gullibility, he loses all his money to Iago and, ultimately, he is betrayed and murdered. It was pointed out that no-one else recognises Iago's duplicity either so Roderigo cannot be blamed for understanding this too late. On the other hand, he is relentlessly stupid, ignoring Iago telling him '*I am not what I am*', believing him to be a 'friend', and foolishly pursuing a married woman who shows no interest in him whatsoever. Strong answers engaged with his immorality – the racist language to provoke Brabantio, his willingness to start a fight with Cassio and later to agree to kill him. They could support these points with apt quotation and reference to specific moments in the text.

Less successful answers could outline some of the points above and show knowledge of the play but could not refer closely to the text to support ideas. Consequently, responses remained a generalised plea, mainly for sympathy with how he is manipulated. Answers were rather generous to Roderigo taking his 'love' for Desdemona as fact rather than questioning its depth, and some candidates sympathised with his most immoral actions, as if he had no choice or free will.

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Key messages

- The most successful responses remained focused on the key words in the question and avoided lengthy outlines of historical context as an introduction to the task. Effective conclusions were more than a reiteration of points.
- The most successful responses demonstrated a personal engagement with the text as drama, the characters and the stagecraft.
- Direct quotations from the set passage, or from the whole text in discursive responses, are the best form of textual support.
- Less successful responses commented on literary techniques or themes of the text but did not contextualise or analyse these.
- The strongest passage-based responses contextualised the passage and considered its content and language, choosing material from throughout the passage to support points.
- Successful discursive responses remained focused on the question and selected precise textual references from throughout the text to support ideas.

General comments

Overall, candidates demonstrated enjoyment of their set texts and showed engagement with the themes, characters and stagecraft. The most popular texts were *Othello*, *Journey's End* and *Twelfth Night*.

Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Effective passage-based responses contained introductions which briefly set the passage in context and the introductions of effective discursive responses focused on the key words of the question. Many candidates wasted valuable exam time summarising the plot or outlining historical context at length. This often meant that they ran out of time and did not fully develop the response or cover the ending of the passage. The sooner the candidate begins to answer the question, and to work chronologically through the passage, the better. A brief essay plan can help to maintain focus, and annotation of the passage is essential in ensuring that relevant material is selected. Focus on the key question words such as 'powerfully', 'revealing', or 'compelling' should be maintained throughout the response. The most successful responses paid attention to the key ideas in the question and referenced them throughout.

Responses which referred to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'book' showed an awareness that the texts are written to be performed on stage and understood their dramatic impact. These responses referenced stage directions and aural and visual effects to explore the drama.

In general, there was some effective analysis of language, but less successful responses tended to write all they knew about the text's plot, characters and themes with little or no reference to the question or focus on how they were conveyed through the writer's effects. Some of these responses pointed out literary techniques such as dramatic irony or foreshadowing, but with no analysis of these techniques.

It was noted that there was a deterioration in handwriting, and although this syllabus does not assess spelling, punctuation and grammar, candidates should be aware of the importance of writing legibly and accurately to convey their ideas clearly.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

- (a) This question focused on a passage from the opening of the play, asking candidates to explore Ernestine's thoughts and feelings at this early stage in the play. Candidates across the ability range were able to respond personally to the passage and showed enjoyment of the text.

Successful responses commented on Ernestine's unhappiness at having moved to Brooklyn, setting the passage within the context that her mother has recently died, and that she is finding life in the city difficult in contrast with her previous home of Florida. These responses understood the comfort, sense of freedom and belonging that she feels in the cinema, and the way that her tears at the pretend lives in films are a catharsis, but very different from her real grief about her mother. They understood how racial inequalities disappear in the cinema, as she sits, '*right smack between two white gals*'.

The stage directions were analysed, commenting on the visual effects created onstage, for example the flickering blue light of the cinema. This awareness of staging was developed in discussion of Ernestine's narrator role, her tendency to address the audience and to break the 'fourth wall', and these stronger responses were able to link staging with character empathy. There was awareness of the visual significance of the photographs of Father Divine and Sandra Crump which are placed in the living room and the sound effects of the radio were also discussed.

The way in which Ernestine's character contrasts with her sister Ermina's was understood and candidates wrote about her inability to speak up to her father about his frustrating restrictions. Ermina, on the other hand, is much more 'sassy' in her interactions with Godfrey.

A number of less successful responses only dealt with the first section of the passage and did not engage with the context of Ernestine's grief about her mother and the sense of the cinema being an escape for her. There was some misunderstanding that Ernestine is happy living in Brooklyn. Stage directions were not explored thoroughly and the point about having, '*nothing to talk about in school*', was often misunderstood.

- (b) This question focused on Ernestine's strong feelings about Gerte, and successful responses considered the context of Godfrey's sudden marriage to Gerte and Ernestine's shocked response to this. Many considered the historical context of the recent Second World War and the reaction of many Americans to Germans in its aftermath.

These responses were able to discuss the evolution of Ernestine's relationship with Gerte and how, towards the end of the play there is some acceptance of her. There was understanding of Ernestine's coldness to Gerte - her formal address of '*Ma'am*' - but also her level of politeness and respect of Gerte's position in the household. Lily's influence upon these feelings was recognised and discussed by strong responses. Most responses commented that Ernestine dislikes Gerte due to her colour and her race but only a few responses picked up on the irony of this due to the racism that the Crumps have suffered. The way in which Ernestine's feelings of anger and hatred for Gerte cause her to be much more expressive than her normally introverted personality was identified by many candidates, and they also examined her sense of betrayal at Godfrey moving on too quickly after her mother's death.

Ernestine's anger and blame towards Gerte for the racist attack upon Godfrey was discussed in successful responses, along with a more general commentary about race, as was the irony of Godfrey marrying a white woman after his earlier critical words about white people. These responses also commented on how he has emulated Father Divine in his choice of a white woman as his wife.

Less successful responses became distracted by the historical context and wrote at length about America after the war rather than using this information as a brief example of context. These responses did not discuss any sense of acceptance that Ernestine develops towards Gerte and did progress beyond the fact that Gerte could not replace the girls' mother. They also mistakenly wrote about Godfrey marrying Gerte out of lust, not understanding his choice of sexual abstinence to

show respect to Father Divine. Few candidates referred to Ernestine's imagined scenes such as Gerte dancing with Lily or Godfrey and Gerte kissing.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 2

- (a) The strongest responses to this question covered the passage thoroughly with discussion of a range of ways in which tension is built and understood the deeper implications of the situation. The staging cues formed a successful base for many responses, along with the audience anticipation of imminent tragedy. Candidates engaged with the soldiers' uncertainty and the tension of waiting for the attack to start and there was much personal engagement from all levels of response, with the sense of dread created and sympathy for the characters who are facing almost inevitable death.

Discussion of the sound effects - '*thud*' and '*whistle*' - and how the men react to these alarming sounds, as well as the impact of the silences and the darkness, was effective. Other stage directions such as Stanhope pouring whisky into his tea, or Mason handing round packs of '*sambridges*', were used to develop the discussion of coping mechanisms, light relief or the everyday being contrasted with the horrors of war. Strong responses focused on the sense of movement adding to the tension, with several characters moving on and offstage.

Weaker responses often tended to write generally about life in the trenches and simply described what is happening in the passage. They acknowledged the sound effects but tended to make little progress from there, and coverage of the passage was often limited. They focused on the rum, assuming that all the soldiers are alcoholics and some candidates struggled to engage with the exchange between Stanhope and Mason about '*pate de foie gras*', or even omitted to comment on this section altogether.

- (b) This question, focusing on sympathy for Raleigh, succeeded in engaging many candidates and resulted in some effective personal responses, although, surprisingly, many candidates did not focus in detail on Raleigh's death.

The most successful responses covered a range of points with careful support and discussed aspects such as Raleigh's youth and innocence, his relationship with Stanhope, the letter which Stanhope insists on censoring, and finally his death. Many candidates expressed a sense of sadness at the deaths of many such young men in the First World War and propaganda was often discussed, in the sense that we sympathise with Raleigh as he has signed up under false pretences and is excited at the prospect of war, not understanding the reality. Although this was relevant, some candidates became distracted by the historical context and wrote at length about it, losing focus on the question in the process.

The crushing of Raleigh's innocence and his gradual understanding of how war has changed his hero Stanhope were discussed effectively in strong responses. His enthusiastic comments at the start of the play were contrasted with his character after Osborne dies. His sense of loss, feelings of guilt and sadness at the loss of the bond they had developed, and being unable to join the other men in champagne and cigars afterwards, was often focused on effectively. The way that Stanhope turns on Raleigh was discussed, and how Raleigh remains loyal to him, writing only positive things in the letter home.

Raleigh's death was analysed in detail by the most successful responses, which focused on his child-like language, '*It's so frightfully dark and cold*', Stanhope's kindness towards him and the use of his first name, '*Jimmy*', to emphasise the pathos of the scene. Less successful responses tended to focus on one or two aspects, notably Raleigh's innocence and his relationship with Stanhope. They did not fully grasp how Raleigh must have been very let down by his hero after the comments he had made to Osborne and his determination to be in his company. Quite often, discussion of Raleigh's death was lacking, with too much time being spent writing about personal attitudes towards the war.

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

Question 3

- (a) This question gave candidates the opportunity to explore a passage from the opening of the play with a focus on 'fascinating'. This question succeeded in creating positive engagement across the ability range.

Successful responses were able to write about Elesin's vitality, which is expressed in the stage directions, linking this with the vitality and colour of the market. They considered the drama of his entrance - the music, dancing and singing and considered the role of the Praise-Singer in smoothing Elesin's way. They focused on the importance of his warning to Elesin about not being distracted by the women and also on the significance of the women's role in spoiling Elesin. Engagement with Elesin's conversation with the Praise-Singer and what it foreshadows was a feature of stronger responses. There was effective personal engagement and often an expression of frustration with Elesin being distracted from his purpose, despite the warnings and there was also clear analysis of the metaphorical language of the passage.

Less successful responses missed the significance of the Praise-Singer's warning about the women and often paraphrased his words with little or no analysis. They often lacked focus on the language and staging of the passage and did not show understanding of the significance of this moment in the play.

- (b) Olunde's thoughts and feelings about Yoruba traditions were dealt with in a variety of ways. His dual cultural awareness was addressed by the most successful responses, which also contrasted Olunde with Jane and Simon Pilkings, commenting on him wearing a suit and the fact that he is not shocked by Jane being dressed in the Egungun costume. They were aware of his open mind towards the attitudes of other people, created by his time spent in England, and of his sense of duty. Despite exposure to life in England, Olunde maintains belief in Yoruba traditions and the importance of sacrifice and some candidates observed that he values the traditions more than he does his own life, as he chooses to take on the responsibility of the King's Horseman, killing himself in Elesin's place.

Weaker responses were general, quite repetitive and lacked textual support, range and development. They recognised that Olunde has to commit suicide because his father has failed in his duty but did not develop beyond this.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 4

- (a) This popular question focuses on the 'revealing' nature of the given passage and strong responses set the passage in the context of Viola/Cesario being sent to woo Olivia on Orsino's behalf and the beginnings of Olivia's attraction to her. They showed enjoyment when considering the developing love triangle and engaged with Olivia's wit in making an inventory of her beauty and with the witty exchanges between the two women. Many focused on Olivia's repetition of, '*I cannot love him*', showing her confident and assertive nature.

High level responses analysed Orsino's elaborate language of love, his tears, groans and sighs, and contrasted this with Viola's more genuine words in the 'willow cabin' speech. Some of these responses discussed how Orsino's language shows the fickleness and superficiality of the aristocracy, but often spent too long on this topic, losing focus on the passage. Candidates understood how Viola, by wooing Olivia on Orsino's behalf, is trying to make her loved one happy, but in the process is making herself miserable. They also understood how and why Olivia shifts her attention to Viola and what this might mean for the rest of the play. There was a clear sense that contemporary debates have reinvigorated appreciation of the play.

Weaker responses lacked sufficient coverage of the passage and analysis of the language. Some tended to paraphrase or summarise the passage with little detail or development, and they were often very repetitive. There was often an attempt to find examples of literary techniques without understanding their purpose and engagement with Olivia's humour in her 'inventory' or with the wit in her exchanges with Viola was limited. Some weaker responses showed misunderstanding, thinking that Viola loves Olivia, and some showed no awareness that Olivia is developing feelings

for Viola/Cesario, or that Viola is in love with Orsino. While some responses understood Viola's expression of her status and her refusal to accept Olivia's money, some interpreted this as her rejection of Olivia, rather than an expression of pride.

- (b) Successful responses were able to establish Malvolio as a serious Puritan character, understanding that this makes his transformation into a love-sick fool all the more comedic. They established him as an arrogant and self-important character, discussed his actions following the discovery of the letter and his ridicule as a 'madman'. Strong responses used textual support to demonstrate how Malvolio expresses his feeling of superiority over Sir Toby and the other characters and showed sympathy for him when he is locked up. They examined the comedy of his response to the letter and his ridiculous appearance when he dresses as 'Olivia' requests. Some responses wrote about the scene where Malvolio throws the ring at Viola, discussing the comedy in this and there was an awareness of the darker side of the comedy involving Malvolio, with some debate regarding to what extent he deserves our pity.

Strong responses were aware that whereas we laugh with Sir Toby, we laugh *at* Malvolio and they were able to discuss the subtleties of this. Some responses commented on Feste's role and his comment on, '*witty fool/foolish wit,*' and how this applies to Malvolio.

Weaker responses often became a simple character study of Malvolio with some focus on the prank but with heavy reliance on narrative. These responses lacked detailed textual support and development and did not engage with the elements of physical, slapstick comedy often created by Malvolio's behaviour.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 5

- (a) This passage focuses on Iago's attempts to discredit Cassio by plying him with alcohol and encouraging him to fight. The compelling nature of the passage was appreciated by most candidates, with a range of outcomes. Many appreciated Iago as a director of his own show, maybe not empathising with the hapless victims, and were able to successfully align language, drama and anticipation with varying levels of success.

The most successful responses worked carefully through the passage, setting it within the context of Othello and Desdemona's wedding night and the celebrations for peace being restored to Cyprus. They were able to link Othello's warning about keeping the peace to Iago's soliloquy at the end. They understood and analysed the contrasting language used about Desdemona by Cassio and Iago and discussed Iago's misogyny in his innuendo-laden language about Desdemona. There was an understanding that Iago is scheming, trying to get Cassio to admit desire for Desdemona but gives up when he is unsuccessful and adapts his plan in a different direction.

There was focus on Iago's soliloquy and the ways in which his plans are revealed through his derogatory language about Cassio and Roderigo. Candidates often made a personal response to the frustration and anger they felt towards Iago.

Weaker responses did not cover the passage thoroughly. They looked at the characters' language about Desdemona but did not link this with Iago's attempt to influence Cassio's language. Some mistakenly thought that Cassio is in love with Desdemona and is expressing this here. They paid little attention to Iago's language in his soliloquy, maybe due to running out of time. There was some misinterpretation of, '*creature*' used by Cassio about Desdemona, thinking that she is his prey or that the word is being used to dehumanise her. The theme of 'appearance v reality' was often referenced, but with the possibility that candidates categorised characters or behaviour simplistically and perhaps stereotypically, without nuance or personal interpretation.

- (b) Candidates had many ideas about Othello's jealousy and how it is conveyed. There was much independent exploration of character, cultural pressures and human frailty. Stronger responses covered a range of points and were well supported and developed. They captured the sinister nature of Iago's plan, traced the destruction of Othello both physically and mentally and analysed the often disturbing language surrounding jealousy. They also focused on the symbolism of the handkerchief which serves as Othello's '*ocular proof*' of Desdemona's infidelity and focused on particular incidents which fuel Othello's jealousy.

These responses focused on how little separates love and hate, and how jealousy tips Othello into violence. They analysed his violent language towards Desdemona and the disturbing scene when he murders her and they understood how Othello's language begins to mimic Iago's in his response to women. The transformation of Othello into the 'beast' that he had previously been judged to be, was discussed by strong responses, with detailed support from the text, and the racial undertones of this were understood. Some candidates engaged with, and were frustrated by, the idea that Othello never confronts Desdemona or gives her chance to defend herself. They discussed whether this is due to his pride or to Iago's influence.

Weaker responses lacked sufficient textual support but often quoted, '*the green-eyed monster*' and were able to discuss what this says about jealousy and about the characters. They lacked focus on Othello's violent treatment of Desdemona, her murder and his disturbing language and did not mention the significance of the handkerchief in the development of his jealousy. Some weaker responses focused more generally on jealousy in the play, with insufficient treatment of Othello's jealousy in particular. Overall, this level of response relied heavily upon narrative and there was little exploration of language.

Overall, Othello's jealousy was clear for most candidates – almost all understood his trust, his insecurity, racism, and Iago's effect on Othello.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/41
Unseen 41

Key messages

- Most candidates can make sense of the surface meaning of their chosen text and support this with an appropriate form of textual reference.
- Focused comment on the writer's craft is a key discriminator.
- Analysis of language needs to move beyond identification of effects.
- There is a close link between effects on the reader and a convincing personal response.
- Interpretation needs to move beyond the surface narrative and explore deeper implications.

General comments

This November session was very successful: Examiners saw little very weak work, and most candidates achieved an impressive understanding of these complex texts using the tools of analysis and response which they have acquired through their Literature courses. Some candidates still struggle to move beyond the literal meaning and surface narrative of their chosen poem or prose passage. For higher marks, they need to give more consideration to how, and why, the writer wrote the text, and what the impact of reading it is on the reader. Teachers should encourage practice with a variety of past paper questions, and in both poetry and prose: too many candidates who choose the prose produce responses which are paraphrases of the narrative, without the analytical approach that is more obvious in responses to poetry.

In this report, it might help centres and teachers to know more about the characteristics of work at different Levels in the mark scheme, and therefore what distinguishes stronger from weaker work.

At the lower Levels from Level 1 to Level 3, candidates are struggling to engage with the text in a literary way, but nevertheless show some basic response. At this level, AO1 (Knowledge of the text supported by appropriate reference) is the Assessment Objective candidates can most easily meet, if they can support their observations with quotations. Significant misreadings usually disqualify candidates from Level 3, as do very fragmentary responses which do not attempt to achieve understanding of the whole text. Quotation is much more effective than paraphrase, but candidates might be advised to keep quotations short in order to give more scope for comment on their content, and perhaps the techniques the writer uses. Attention to the question, guided by the advisory bullet points, can give responses more focus and make them more relevant.

Many responses bunch together in the middle Levels: Level 4 and Level 5. A key discriminator here is the amount of attention to the writer's craft. Candidates in Level 4 might not have a confident overview of the whole text and its meaning, but have some understanding of what is implied, and they usually begin to identify some of the writer's techniques, such as use of imagery or figurative language, use of poetic form and voice, or the choice of narrative perspective and structural development. AO3 (response to language and form) is not the only Assessment Objective assessed in this paper, which tests all literary skills, but the quality of comment on language is a discriminator for Level 5 scripts. It usually drives stronger AO2 (understanding of different possible meanings), as an exploratory approach to the writer's choices and their effects on the reader lead to better overall interpretation of the impact of the text. The key term at this level is 'reasonably developed personal response'. This phrase points to AO4 (interpretation): a developed interpretation is based on evidence and analysis of that evidence which moves beyond identification of literary techniques and considers their emotive purpose.

Just as many more student responses now achieve borderline marks in Level 4, instead of Level 3, Examiners now see more responses in lower Level 6. A key discriminator for this Level and above is 'clear understanding'. These essays are well-developed and show an appreciation of the deeper implications of the text, exploring the writer's purpose as well as their methods. There is a sense of the prose or poem as a literary construct, and that the speaker of the poem or the observer of the narrative passage is not the same

as the writer. These candidates will have used the support in the introductory rubric to put the text into a context, so their response is not purely 'personal'. Their argument will be consistently relevant to the question set, and is likely to have been guided by the bullet points. The second bullet usually encourages focus on an aspect of the writer's craft, so critical attention to this allows the candidate to demonstrate 'a developed response to the way the writer achieves their effects'. The third bullet usually encourages a degree of evaluation, and often asks candidates to consider how a piece of writing ends, and therefore what its ultimate impact is on the reader. Thus, AO4 can be addressed by carefully structuring and developing an argument, with frequent and brief quotation in support, and reaching conclusions based on a relevant response to the question. How high a response is placed in Level 6 depends on the extent to which it meets these descriptors.

For the highest Levels, 7 and 8, there is a very clear critical understanding of the text as a construct and a convincing interpretation of the writer's purpose. The subtext is understood, with appreciation that the deeper implications of a text relate to the culture and context it describes, and the writer's manipulation of the reader's response to it. At this level, there is likely to be much more understanding of characters or voices in the text as constructs, and a critical response to the ways in which a writer guides the reader's response to them. There is also likely to be much more sensitive attention to details of language, such as a poet's similes and sound effects, or a prose writer's use of description and different sentence and paragraph structures. Examiners are open to different interpretations of a text, and welcome personal and evaluative readings which explore alternative responses to the ways in which texts develop and conclude. Stronger responses at this level move beyond individual perceptive moments and sustain a strong argument which is consistently detailed and supported by interpretation of the effects of the writing. Year by year, Examiners are impressed by what the strongest candidates achieve within the time constraints of this exercise, and without further study of the texts. Committed and personal readings are often the most successful, when supported by critical attention to the writer's methods.

Strong responses to this task do not have to be particularly long: they are, however, usually carefully planned and the candidate has left time to consider both how the text concludes and how they want to conclude their personal interpretation of its effect on the reader.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Many good answers were seen in response to the poem 'Hanging Fire' by the great Black American writer Audre Lorde (1934 – 1992). Candidates overwhelmingly empathised with the 14 – year-old persona whose negative experiences of puberty, both physical and mental, revealed the anguish facing those on the threshold of adulthood.

Some candidates noted the theme of time in the poem, expressed through the persona's frequent changes of tense. A good number noted that the poem starts in the present, with reference to the persona's age, and the ever-present reminder of 'Momma' 'in the bedroom with the door closed'. Fears about the future were also recognised as dominating the teenager's thoughts, particularly the spectre of an early death, 'before the morning', 'before graduation' and before having the time 'to grow up'. The persona also anticipates a future scenario where she envisages a funeral for herself where 'sad melodies will be sung about her and 'finally' the 'truth' about her will be told.

A variety of interpretations of what this 'truth' might be were posited. Some suggested that the truth would vindicate the persona of some suspected misdemeanour, while others saw the 'truth' as being some revelation about her (past) character, that she was, in 'the present', attempting to conceal. Most candidates agreed that the persona feared being the subject of whispers or scandal or simply of being 'different.' Less ominous thoughts about the future, including learning 'to dance' and finding something 'to wear tomorrow' were recognised by some candidates as being somewhat bathetic compared to the persona's persistent worries about mortality.

Candidates who explored the poet's handling of time considered the persona's attitude towards the past, and the fact that she is clearly rankled by not having gained a place on the 'Math team', whereas an unnamed male, with lower marks than hers, has been admitted. Some candidates went on to explore the 'gendered' pronoun 'his marks', and the general sense that, despite the relative immaturity of boys her own age, girls are still excluded from some academic ventures due to sexist prejudice. Opinion was divided about the identity of the usurping male, some candidates suggested that he was the persona's brother and others that he was the thumb-sucking 'boy' that the persona is unable 'to live without'. Others took a different approach

to the 'gender' issues and commented on the writer's portrayal of the boy's need to hide his vulnerabilities, sucking his thumb only 'in secret', showing societal pressure on adolescent boys to 'man-up', even when they are not ready to do so. A number of candidates inferred that the girl, though unable to 'live without' the boy, still recognised that his childishness meant that he was really unworthy of her affection. Others accused the persona of hypocrisy in judging the boy for his babyish habit, when she resented the judgement of others on her less than perfect skin and teeth.

Most candidates noted the persona's frequent references to body image with poor skin, 'ashy knees', and braces for her teeth featuring large in the list of her frustrations. Each of her perceived flaws causing her to utter the unanswerable question: 'why me?' Candidates frequently selected the phrase 'my skin betrays me' for 'close' language analysis. However, in most responses, having identified personification as the technique used, there was no attempt to consider the effect of this 'betrayal', by her own body, upon the speaker. Other candidates picked out the phrase 'live long' as an example of alliteration but without offering any idea about how the use of that specific technique contributed in any way to the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the poem.

In better answers, there was more purposeful focus on language and, in particular, on the chorus line/refrain that ends each verse, acting to emphasise, repeatedly, the fact that the persona has to face the trials and tribulations of growing up without the support or advice of her 'Momma', who stays emphatically unavailable behind her bedroom door. Few candidates speculated about what 'Momma' might be doing there, but many noted that the door was a barrier, both physical and emotional, between mother and daughter and that the mother's unavailability was one of the root causes of all the persona's insecurities and fears.

The poet's use of the first-person voice was widely recognised and many also noted the frequency with which she referred to herself using the pronouns 'I', 'me' or 'my' – sixteen times in the course of the short poem. This was interpreted variously as a feature of adolescence, heralding an enhanced perception of self and one's place in the world. Others were struck by the personal limitations that the persona identifies: her inability to dance, the cramped conditions of her 'too small' bedroom, her failure to be admitted to the 'Math team', her lack of motivation to get things 'done'. Most mentioned the persona's belief that her life would be cut short prematurely as the greatest limitation of all.

Fewer candidates considered the form and/or structure of the poem, but when they did there were some constructive points to be made. Some noted the irregular length of the verses – 11 lines in the first stanza and 12 lines in stanzas 2 and 3. This was seen as mirroring the irregular feelings experienced by adolescents where life becomes unpredictable, and the regular rhythms of childhood are interrupted by the changes brought about by puberty. Others noted how the layout of the lines was often significant. For example, in the first stanza, the positioning of the phrase, 'what if I die', taking up a single line, draws attention to the suddenness of the thought after the relatively low-level concern of acne or 'ashy' knees. Similarly, the placing of the phrase 'the one', on its own line, in stanza 3, draws attention to the persona's sense of having been 'singled out' to wear braces. Such sensitivity to some of the less obvious features of poetic method were highly credit-worthy. Surprisingly few candidates attempted to 'unpick' the title, and those who did tended to interpret it as a reference to alternative ways to die.

Question 2

The extract from *Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker (2018) proved highly popular, indeed almost as popular as the poem, and it produced some very strong responses indeed. Most candidates made good use of introductory information including the three bullet-point prompts and they structured their responses accordingly. However, some candidates gave a narrative retelling of the plot rather than offering critical argument.

Most candidates found the first bullet point the easiest to address. Almost all were able to comment on the effect of the writer's use of imagery in the swift, brutal, and certain death of Patroclus. The word 'murder' was often used, inappropriately, to describe Patroclus' defeat on the battlefield. Many candidates responded to the suddenness of Patroclus' killing. Some insightful candidates were able to identify a level of Achilles' culpability in Patroclus' death, given that Patroclus was distracted by his 'call'. Some candidates made mention of Patroclus' impotent attempt to use Achilles' sword, 'standing in' for his friend in a battle that Achilles refused to fight. Some suggested Patroclus' inherent inadequacy as he 'tries to raise' the sword against Hector.

Almost all candidates commented on the phrase 'thrashing like a fish', understanding the connotations of helplessness. Others suggested that the comparison of this brave warrior with a fish diminished Patroclus' status as a man. In stronger answers, candidates looked closely at language and punctuation here, noting

the contrast between the speed of the attack and the drawn-out sentence structure. Most also mentioned the prevalence of violent images in the passage.

Most candidates were able to address the second bullet point successfully and acknowledged Achilles' grief and denial. Some candidates used Achilles' willful act of 'denial' as an opportunity to discuss the various commonly identified 'stages of grief' which frequently led to the introduction of material that was extraneous to the set task. Most candidates understood the reasons behind Achilles' denial of what he heard, with simpler responses pointing to his desperation in the 'ridiculous' suggestion that his friend's cry of anguish could be a 'gull's cry'. Many were also able to discuss the language choices of 'the bitterness...bites into him', with careful linking of the ideas to suggestions of attack, injury and pain.

Towards the second half of the text, some candidates became confused about Achilles precise location. Some believed him to be on the battlefield while others feared an imminent attack by enemy soldiers in the advancing chariot. Stronger answers revealed an understanding of Achilles' need to stop the chariot's arrival, as part of his effort to suspend time. Some used the information gleaned from the preliminary material to conclude that, despite Achilles' heritage, 'even a half-god cannot stop the truth.'

The final bullet point seemed the most challenging for candidates to address, although in insightful responses candidates compared the 'din' of battle, involving the clashes of living soldiers, to the silence of its aftermath and the absolute quiet of the dead. On a more basic level, candidates talked about the 'silence' showing how there was now nothing to stop the truth being heard, while more sophisticated responses were able to incorporate several quotations: 'silence', 'somewhere a door banging loose', 'not a breath of wind' to build an interpretation of the world, metaphorically stopping and emptying of everything in Achilles' consciousness. In stronger answers, Examiners reported seeing sensitivity to the recurring linguistic features of the passage. For example, in better answers, candidates noted the frequency of references to both time and place.

Some candidates remarked upon the writer's identification of a variety of locations throughout the passage helping the reader to visualise the unfolding action. These candidates noted that the passage opens with the phrase 'On the battlefield' while the second paragraph starts, 'A mile away' helping the reader to understand something of the mystery behind the 'supernatural' nature of the communication channel between Achilles and Patroclus, whereby each, impossibly, hears the other's voice, calling to him. Once Patroclus has been killed, Achilles is depicted moving from place to place somewhat aimlessly, mirroring his mental state – first, 'no point sitting here', then, 'Time he was back on the ship', 'barely reached the door', 'steps onto the veranda', 'Back onto the ship', 'Halfway up the rope ladder', 'walks into the centre of the yard' – candidates remarked that while Achilles' physical location is constantly shifting, his mind is fixed on one point – Patroclus.

Other sensitive candidates remarked on the prevalence of references to or measurements of time in the extract. Patroclus is distracted for 'a second', but that second is 'long enough' for him to be killed. Candidates observed that the writer uses the time-related word 'suddenly' twice in the opening paragraph to heighten the tension of the action. Some candidates remarked upon phrases such as 'too late', 'just for a moment', 'Time he was back on the ship', 'not even his power can stop time', 'to wait for what he knows is coming' helping to highlight Achilles' experience of time once Patroclus has died.

There was also some excellent work seen on the writer's pervasive references to darkness and light as well as to sound and silence. Many candidates referred to the symbolic meaning of light and darkness to signify life and death in the passage. Others noted the counterpointing of sounds and silence. Both protagonists hear each other calling their name, Patroclus 'shouts' Achilles' name and Achilles mistakes, or tries to mistake, Patroclus' 'voice' for the 'cries' of a gull. Later in the passage candidates wrote sensitively about the effects created at the moment when Achilles 'hears his name being called again' but is met only with 'silence' and the eerie sound of a 'door banging on its hinges'. The final short sentences bring together the images of light and darkness in the 'White sun' and the 'Black shadows', as one candidate wrote: 'all sound has stopped for Achilles as he is left with 'silence'.

Quite a few candidates commented on the writer's use of negatives in the passage, citing phrases such as 'No, it can't be', 'No, it was a gull', 'prayer never comes easily', 'No point in sitting here', 'there's nobody there', 'Nothing moves', 'Not a breath' to convey the absence of meaning – the 'nothingness' – in Achilles' world, once Patroclus has gone. Many candidates excelled in their responses to this prose passage.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/42
Unseen 42

Key messages

- Most candidates can make sense of the surface meaning of their chosen text and support this with an appropriate form of textual reference.
- Focused comment on the writer's craft is a key discriminator.
- Analysis of language needs to move beyond identification of effects.
- There is a close link between effects on the reader and a convincing personal response.
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General comments

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At the lower Levels from Level 1 to Level 3, candidates are struggling to engage with the text in a literary way, but nevertheless show some basic response. At this level, AO1 (Knowledge of the text supported by appropriate reference) is the Assessment Objective candidates can most easily meet, if they can support their observations with quotations. Significant misreadings usually disqualify candidates from Level 3, as do very fragmentary responses which do not attempt to achieve understanding of the whole text. Quotation is much more effective than paraphrase, but candidates might be advised to keep quotations short in order to give more scope for comment on their content, and perhaps the techniques the writer uses. Attention to the question, guided by the advisory bullet points, can give responses more focus and make them more relevant.

Many responses bunch together in the middle Levels: Level 4 and Level 5. A key discriminator here is the amount of attention to the writer's craft. Candidates in Level 4 might not have a confident overview of the whole text and its meaning, but have some understanding of what is implied, and they usually begin to identify some of the writer's techniques, such as use of imagery or figurative language, use of poetic form and voice, or the choice of narrative perspective and structural development. AO3 (response to language and form) is not the only Assessment Objective assessed in this paper, which tests all literary skills, but the quality of comment on language is a discriminator for Level 5 scripts. It usually drives stronger AO2 (understanding of different possible meanings), as an exploratory approach to the writer's choices and their effects on the reader lead to better overall interpretation of the impact of the text. The key term at this level is 'reasonably developed personal response'. This phrase points to AO4 (interpretation): a developed interpretation is based on evidence and analysis of that evidence which moves beyond identification of literary techniques and considers their emotive purpose.

Just as many more student responses now achieve borderline marks in Level 4, instead of Level 3, Examiners now see more responses in lower Level 6. A key discriminator for this Level and above is 'clear understanding'. These essays are well-developed and show an appreciation of the deeper implications of the text, exploring the writer's purpose as well as their methods. There is a sense of the prose or poem as a literary construct, and that the speaker of the poem or the observer of the narrative passage is not the same

as the writer. These candidates will have used the support in the introductory rubric to put the text into a context, so their response is not purely 'personal'. Their argument will be consistently relevant to the question set, and is likely to have been guided by the bullet points. The second bullet usually encourages focus on an aspect of the writer's craft, so critical attention to this allows the candidate to demonstrate 'a developed response to the way the writer achieves their effects'. The third bullet usually encourages a degree of evaluation, and often asks candidates to consider how a piece of writing ends, and therefore what its ultimate impact is on the reader. Thus AO4 can be addressed by carefully structuring and developing an argument, with frequent and brief quotation in support, and reaching conclusions based on a relevant response to the question. How high a response is placed in Level 6 depends on the extent to which it meets these descriptors.

For the highest Levels, 7 and 8, there is a very clear critical understanding of the text as a construct and a convincing interpretation of the writer's purpose. The subtext is understood, with appreciation that the deeper implications of a text relate to the culture and context it describes, and the writer's manipulation of the reader's response to it. At this level, there is likely to be much more understanding of characters or voices in the text as constructs, and a critical response to the ways in which a writer guides the reader's response to them. There is also likely to be much more sensitive attention to details of language, such as a poet's similes and sound effects, or a prose writer's use of description and different sentence and paragraph structures. Examiners are open to different interpretations of a text, and welcome personal and evaluative readings which explore alternative responses to the ways in which texts develop and conclude. Stronger responses at this level move beyond individual perceptive moments and sustain a strong argument which is consistently detailed and supported by interpretation of the effects of the writing. Year by year, Examiners are impressed by what the strongest candidates achieve within the time constraints of this exercise, and without further study of the texts. Committed and personal readings are often the most successful, when supported by critical attention to the writer's methods.

Strong responses to this task do not have to be particularly long: they are, however, usually carefully planned and the candidate has left time to consider both how the text concludes and how they want to conclude their personal interpretation of its effect on the reader.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem 'Kissing in Vietnamese' by the Vietnamese American poet Ocean Vuong, best known as the author of the novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* was a very popular choice. Vuong fled Vietnam as a refugee when a very young child, and his grandfather was a serviceman in the US Navy who was unable to return after the fall of Saigon. His grandmother held the family together and enabled their migration to the USA. The question asked how the poet conveyed what the kisses meant to him, a suggestion that the poem is strongly autobiographical, although the persona is nevertheless a literary construct.

The poem was generally very well understood at a surface level, with appreciation of the relationship of the boy to his grandmother but there was a tendency for candidates to read the images too literally. Some candidates assumed that the poem was set during rather than after a war, although a careful reading of the introductory rubric, the poet's 'as ifs' and dynamic use of tenses was enough to prevent this. Some made connections with the tragedies of contemporary conflicts, and the ways in which they have destroyed and divided families, some were interested in what they perceived as criticisms of 'western' culture and attitudes. The concept of a refugee was perhaps less well understood, alongside the ways in which different cultures collide in this poem. There was some misinterpretation in that some candidates felt that the boy in the poem was writing about his personal experiences of war, and that he had suffered injuries mentioned in the poem so the grandmother was comforting him. Stronger candidates recognised that the persona in the poem was reflecting on the impact that war had on the grandmother. Stronger candidates also recognised the ideas behind the poem particularly with respect to family relationships, bonds of love and the portrayal of strong emotions.

The title was commented upon by many candidates and was an effective 'way in' to the poem due to the cultural significance of 'Vietnamese'. Stronger candidates recognised that this was a reference to language, and contrasted the English language of the poem with language of destruction associated with Vietnamese culture. For example, one candidate wrote that 'flames are making their way back through the intricacies of a young boy's thigh' implies that the grandmother is mentally scarred by the experience of war and results in her not changing the way she kisses, even though the war is over, and so both her language and the poet's are influenced by the memories of the conflict.

Most candidates began by analysing the simile 'as if bombs were bursting in the background', linking this to the passionate nature of the grandmother's kisses, expressed through explosive imagery and plosive sound effects. Many read this as showing that she kisses as if it might be the last time she kisses him. Some wanted to see a link to a specific incident. The juxtaposition of the bombs and 'mint and jasmine' was also frequently commented upon with stronger candidates recognising the sensory (or 'olfactory') significance of smells, as well as sights and sounds in the poem. They then evoked the memory of war alongside a domestic setting both in wartime (the bombs in the garden) and in the present day: the grandmother's own scent and the scent of the boy being consumed by the grandmother. One candidate wrote: 'this highlights a sense of intimacy. A person's scent is a portrayal of who they are as a person as it the first thing one may smell as they walk towards someone. Therefore the grandmother's attempt to relearn his 'scent' is a display of deep affection.' Another commented: 'How he smells day to day is deep within her, so she would never forget him like those lost at war'.

Other images of warfare were correctly identified, but candidates found them harder to connect with the poet's feelings about his grandmother's kisses. Some thought the repeated image of 'a body ... falling apart' referred to a specific incident in the lives of boy or grandmother or was even happening to the poet himself. Weaker responses tended to involve the construction of a narrative speculating about dead parents or a dying grandmother widowed after the grandfather's death. Others more correctly paid attention to the imaginary repeated 'as ifs' as images of the destructiveness of modern warfare, involving minefields and chemical warfare. The most powerful responses made the implied connection between the explosiveness and chemistry of love, even familial love, and these images of traumatic destruction which would have surrounded the grandmother. Some candidates attempted to write about 'your torso/would dance from exit wounds' but struggled to explain its effect, even if they understood what exit wounds are, as they were confused by the word 'dance'. Many wrote about this deliberately disturbing image far too literally. For others, the paradoxical language was an opportunity for deeper analysis of language and implications: 'The peculiar use of 'dance' – a verb – to represent the violent shaking of shrapnel tearing out one's body and then comparing it to kisses using 'as' in line 8 creates vivid gruesome imagery of a hurt boy' powerfully connecting the violence of warfare and the boy's confusion at the grandmother's powerful embrace. Strong responses were alert to the 'flames' as both the heat of love and passion but also a horrifying image of napalm destroying homes and bodies.

The majority of candidates wrote with understanding of the difference between 'western' kisses and 'Vietnamese' kisses although this led to a wide range of generalisations about culture and human behaviour that were not rooted in the text and some highly critical comments about western society. However, those candidates who understood the deeper meaning of the contrast between the kisses wrote impressively about the effect. These concentrated on 'flashy' and 'pursed' as a choice of adjectives which revealed the superficial nature of these kisses 'just for show', in contrast to the depth of feeling shown through the kisses of the grandmother. Almost all candidates understood that these kisses imitated those of the movies, and actually gave little away, their function merely performative. In contrast, the intimacy of the grandmother's kiss is 'as if to breath/you inside her'. Strong responses referenced the enveloping effect of the enjambment here, the physicality of nose, sweat and lungs and the comparison to a personification of death 'clutching your wrist' as evidence of authenticity, defiance and desperation. One candidate wrote that the poet 'personifies death in a simile to say that the length is long enough to kill you from loss of air. Death ready to take you away as a result. These phrases all capture the raw, true passion of the kiss and powerfully contrasts with cliché, forced romantic western kisses.'

Many candidates also wrote about 'your scent is re-learned' and 'sweat pearls into drops of gold inside her lungs'. These images were explored not just for their sensory nature but as evidence of the effect of family detachment and trauma, and proof of how treasured those kisses were. Higher level candidates really developed this image further to link this to the lungs, breathing and therefore life itself – focusing on the binary opposites of life and death in this poem. For example, one candidate commented 'Sweat is not normally glamourised however the poet uses the metaphor to compare it to precious gold. The sweat compared to gold which is hard and impossible to corrode that the grandmother inhaling signifies that the grandson will always remain with her.' While for some the image simply converted something 'disgusting' into something highly valued, others related the sweat to other body parts, and the imagery of fear and war trauma.

Overall, candidates recognised the idea of the strength of familial love in this poem and could link it to the contextual background of having endured/experienced war. Weaker responses saw the suggestion that it was 'as if history/never ended' as simply a reference to eternal love, or to the grandmother's own body 'falling apart'. Stronger responses saw the importance of repetition, the word 'still' and the change of rhythm in these lines, some seeing a more universal reference to war continuing 'somewhere', some to the

continuing trauma experienced by the grandmother, and some to the poet's own involvement in that embrace. The strongest responses explored the paradox of never-ending history and telling a historical story in the present tense 'allows us to image the tragedies that his grandmother's kisses remind him of'. It was interesting to read so many different responses to cultural difference, the impact of history on family relationships, and understanding of trauma alongside sensitive responses to the structure and patterns of the poem.

Question 2

The prose extract was taken from *A State of Freedom* by Neel Mukherjee, published in 2017. Stronger responses observed that this passage also portrays a modern narrative of cultural difference, refracted through the narrative viewpoint of the anxious father, who makes all the observations here. While the passage initially focuses on the rough and speedy journey and linguistic differences and confusions, it develops into a troubled retrospective view of how little the boy had seemed to understand the Taj Mahal, how different their childhoods had been, and how the boy's US upbringing had been unable to foster his imagination, leaving the father 'to make a mental note to stick to historical facts only'.

Candidates often appeared to choose the prose question as an opportunity for rather straightforward narrative retelling, missing the subtleties of the writing and the deeper implications behind the writer's creation of the narrative voice. Nevertheless, there were some insightful interpretations of the text and most remained focused on the feelings of the father throughout. More successful responses kept the question firmly in mind with many candidates closely focusing on the words used by the writer as a method in a precise, focused and effective manner.

Most candidates commented upon the opening to the text with the description of the driver setting an unsettling scene, the conflicted feelings of the father due to the speed of the car and the father's anxiety about his son's safety and possible car-sickness. These were often seen as masking a deeper insecurity about whether the father's home country was making the impact on the boy that he had hoped for, betrayed by observations about 'dingy roadside eateries' with predictable names, poor spelling and 'unsettling' orthography. Some suggested the father was embarrassed about the impression his homeland might be making on his American son. Stronger responses noted the 'organ-jostling speed' in particular and the way this effectively suggested the unnatural speed of the driver or the way in which the boy can recognise global brands but not read the 'Hindi script'. Fewer commented on the joke, as well as the warning in the sign 'Batter late than never' as a signifier of cultural difference. One strong script noted the effect of the succession of shops and names was both 'quickenning the scene and flustering it. The former is further explored when the writer described 'speed-warning signs' uses the term 'record time' and likens the car to a rocket using the word 'launching', but the 'The word 'occupied' denotes the father's flustered emotions. This word succeeds the same flustered scene that lingers outside the car': comparing the scene outside to the turmoil of the father's emotions was an effective bridge to the later parts of the passage.

Here too there were traps for those who did not read carefully enough: just as some thought it was the father and not the driver who 'revelled in the opportunity to drive at speed', not enough paid attention to the father's perspective and use of tense, as well as other evidence from the text, to realise that the boy's questions at the Taj Mahal are part of a flashback. In the father's mind, he is replaying the earlier trip, whereas some candidates appeared to think that they were already at Fatehpur Sikri. However, most realised that the trip was of cultural significance and should have been a bonding opportunity but had opened up a gulf of experiences between father and son. A few commented that he should have realised that 'dragging him from one historical monument to another' was unlikely to be welcomed by a six-year-old. Most candidates felt the father was overthinking and too anxious, but better responses tended to focus on the writer's craft and how he contrasted the busy scene of the first paragraph with the quiet tension inside the car: 'the writer then describes the evolution of the boy's behaviour. 'Ordinarily he would be compulsively spelling out (what was) written in English on shopfronts and billboards'. The word 'ordinarily' implies the sharp contrast between the boy's nature in the USA and his 'subdued' summer in India.' The concentration of the second bullet point on the 'boy's response to the trip' allowed plenty of factual observation about what candidates considered the child's understandable boredom, but more subtle responses realised that this was filtered through the father's worries about a gulf of experience and expectation which had opened up between them.

These different levels of response were equally evident in the retrospective account of the visit to the Taj Mahal. Candidates focused on the son with frequent comments on his 'uncharacteristic placidity' and 'polite forbearance'. The majority of candidates who answered this question recognised the varying emotions of the father as he related to his own experiences and contrasted them with the boy's, acknowledging that the child had grown up in America. Higher level responses noted that the father had grown up surrounded by servants and extended families, and 'with the gift of ghost stories', and observed that this might be reflected in the

repeated references to 'white' in the stories he told the boy. Some understood that the father was concerned that the boy was worried or made anxious by these stories, although the real anxieties are really his own. Very few considered what was meant by 'the imagination residing *under* the visible world', or were able to consider that it is actually the boy who is culturally limited in this context. Many did realise that the father is trying to reconnect with his own past, and disappointed that his son could not join him. There was sometimes a sense that this is unlikely to end well.

Stronger responses observed that the tension of the passage came from the father's unrealistic and unfulfilled expectation of building a stronger bond with his son: 'When this does not work there is a solemnity within the father. A realisation that this child could not experience his Indian childhood because the boy is American. This injects apprehension within the father, that arose from his lack of understanding of an American child ... because he never was one'. The interpretative and evaluative ability to move from sensitive observations about particular details of the narrative towards a more global appreciation of different cultures and their effect on how people think and behave is the mark of a successful candidate's response to an International GCSE Literature paper. Both texts addressed central contemporary issues of migration and displacement in powerful but recognisable familial contexts.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/43
Unseen 43

Key messages

- Most candidates can make sense of the surface meaning of their chosen text and support this with an appropriate form of textual reference
- Focused comment on the writer's craft is a key discriminator
- Analysis of language needs to move beyond identification of effects
- There is a close link between effects on the reader and a convincing personal response
- Interpretation needs to move beyond the surface narrative and explore deeper implications.

General comments

This November session was very successful: examiners saw little very weak work, and most candidates achieved an impressive understanding of these complex texts using the tools of analysis and response which they have acquired through their Literature courses. Some candidates still struggle to move beyond the literal meaning and surface narrative of their chosen poem or prose passage. For higher marks, they need to give more consideration to how, and why, the writer wrote the text, and what the impact of reading it is on the reader. Teachers should encourage practice with a variety of past paper questions, and in both poetry and prose: too many candidates who choose the prose produce responses which are paraphrases of the narrative, without the analytical approach that is more obvious in responses to poetry.

In this report, it might help centres and teachers to know more about the characteristics of work at different Levels in the mark scheme, and therefore what distinguishes stronger from weaker work.

At the lower Levels from Level 1 to Level 3, candidates are struggling to engage with the text in a literary way, but nevertheless show some basic response. At this level, AO1 (Knowledge of the text supported by appropriate reference) is the Assessment Objective candidates can most easily meet, if they can support their observations with quotations. Significant misreadings usually disqualify candidates from Level 3, as do very fragmentary responses which do not attempt to achieve understanding of the whole text. Quotation is much more effective than paraphrase, but candidates might be advised to keep quotations short in order to give more scope for comment on their content, and perhaps the techniques the writer uses. Attention to the question, guided by the advisory bullet points, can give responses more focus and make them more relevant.

Many responses bunch together in the middle Levels: Level 4 and Level 5. A key discriminator here is the amount of attention to the writer's craft. Candidates in Level 4 might not have a confident overview of the whole text and its meaning, but have some understanding of what is implied, and they usually begin to identify some of the writer's techniques, such as use of imagery or figurative language, use of poetic form and voice, or the choice of narrative perspective and structural development. AO3 (response to language and form) is not the only Assessment Objective assessed in this paper, which tests all literary skills, but the quality of comment on language is a discriminator for Level 5 scripts. It usually drives stronger AO2 (understanding of different possible meanings), as an exploratory approach to the writer's choices and their effects on the reader lead to better overall interpretation of the impact of the text. The key term at this level is 'reasonably developed personal response'. This phrase points to AO4 (interpretation): a developed interpretation is based on evidence and analysis of that evidence which moves beyond identification of literary techniques and considers their emotive purpose.

Just as many more candidate responses now achieve borderline marks in Level 4, instead of Level 3, examiners now see more responses in lower Level 6. A key discriminator for this Level and above is 'clear understanding'. These essays are well-developed and show an appreciation of the deeper implications of the text, exploring the writer's purpose as well as their methods. There is a sense of the prose or poem as a literary construct, and that the speaker of the poem or the observer of the narrative passage is not the same

as the writer. These candidates will have used the support in the introductory rubric to put the text into a context, so their response is not purely 'personal'. Their argument will be consistently relevant to the question set and is likely to have been guided by the bullet points. The second bullet usually encourages focus on an aspect of the writer's craft, so critical attention to this allows the candidate to demonstrate 'a developed response to the way the writer achieves their effects'. The third bullet usually encourages a degree of evaluation, and often asks candidates to consider how a piece of writing ends, and therefore what its ultimate impact is on the reader. Thus AO4 can be addressed by carefully structuring and developing an argument, with frequent and brief quotation in support, and reaching conclusions based on a relevant response to the question. How high a response is placed in Level 6 depends on the extent to which it meets these descriptors.

For the highest Levels, 7 and 8, there is a very clear critical understanding of the text as a construct and a convincing interpretation of the writer's purpose. The subtext is understood, with appreciation that the deeper implications of a text relate to the culture and context it describes, and the writer's manipulation of the reader's response to it. At this level, there is likely to be much more understanding of characters or voices in the text as constructs, and a critical response to the ways in which a writer guides the reader's response to them. There is also likely to be much more sensitive attention to details of language, such as a poet's similes and sound effects, or a prose writer's use of description and different sentence and paragraph structures. Examiners are open to different interpretations of a text, and welcome personal and evaluative readings which explore alternative responses to the ways in which texts develop and conclude. Stronger responses at this level move beyond individual perceptive moments and sustain a strong argument which is consistently detailed and supported by interpretation of the effects of the writing. Year by year, examiners are impressed by what the strongest candidates achieve within the time constraints of this exercise, and without further study of the texts. Committed and personal readings are often the most successful, when supported by critical attention to the writer's methods.

Strong responses to this task do not have to be particularly long: they are, however, usually carefully planned and the candidate has left time to consider both how the text concludes and how they want to conclude their personal interpretation of its effect on the reader.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Based on the poem 'Arrival' by George Szirtes, this question was notably successful in eliciting a range of highly engaged responses, many of which were of a high or extremely high standard. While the somewhat surreal and enigmatic elements of the poem undoubtedly pose something of a challenge to the reader, candidates appeared to relish responding to the darkly dystopian features of Szirtes's vision of the imaginary city of silence where nobody speaks. The majority showed themselves adept at exploring the poem's possible suggestions and implications, and at analysing its striking and unsettling imagery.

The focus of the question was on the ways in which the poet makes the city so disturbing by its vivid evocation of the strangeness of the place and of its inhabitants who, for reasons which are suggested but never definitively specified, cannot openly communicate. Most candidates displayed knowledge (AO1) of the mysterious and unusual nature of the city and of those who live there through the effective use of relevant textual reference. Understanding was shown (AO2) of the claustrophobic and oppressive elements of the city and its all-pervasive silence. Strong responses recognised the implication that the muteness of the people is neither natural or entirely voluntary, but enforced by the police, the 'civic authorities' and by those who draw up the long, enumerated lists of 'thought-crimes, hand-crimes, and heart-crimes'. Many candidates saw here an allusion to George Orwell's *1984* and the ability of the State to reach into and to control and sanction not just the individual's actions but his or her inner spaces of thought and feeling. Some candidates perceptively observed the apparent absence of 'speech-crimes', the power and potentiality of speech having seemingly been completely suppressed or erased. There was an understanding of some inhabitants' recourse to expressing themselves and their experience through their eyes or through elaborate hand gestures. Others, the majority it is suggested, seem to have sunk into a submissive and basic perhaps even animalistic existence, simply going on 'feeding and breeding'.

Encouraged perhaps by the brevity of the text together with its density of vivid and at times perplexing images, candidates took to the business of critical analysis and exploration (AO3) with a real sense of focus and attention to detail. Most candidates commented on how the description of the city as 'enormous, high-walled' created a forbidding image as well as one of entrapment or imprisonment, particularly when allied to being 'a place without doors'. Candidates were particularly intrigued by the elements of personification in the

'furious traffic lights / signalling in panic' (indicative of an imminent breakdown into chaos or perhaps a desperate warning to the unwary new arrival?) and the surreal image of the 'thick rugs' (literal or metaphorical?). Most candidates considered the presentation of the citizens' eyes and how they 'spoke volumes, / vast encyclopaedias', some perceptively picking up on the double meaning in 'volumes' as well as the scale and depth of meaning implicit in the metaphor. Excellent work was done on unpicking the connotations suggested in the description of their hands with some sensing a butterfly fragility in 'fluttering' and an uncomfortable contrast between the grace and elegance hinted at in the 'dancing fingers' and how they are presented as moving 'grotesquely' in an apparently tortured fashion. The sense of complexity and mystery when it comes to the inhabitants' inner lives was set against the simple, blunt imperatives of the signs placed around the city, many candidates alluding to the use of capitalisation to underscore the force of authority – and implicit threat – which lies behind them.

The third bullet explicitly directed candidates to examine the effect of the images in the final stanza and, as intended, this proved something of a discriminator. The implications of the macabre and disturbing image of the citizens 'planting tongues in the cemetery' were fruitfully explored as were those of the extended metaphor of the final line with its 'flowering shrubs of silence'. Some candidates astutely registered how the central subject of the poem is underlined in its closing word and how this takes the reader back to the opening line, suggesting perhaps a never-ending state of silence that repeats and doubles back on itself in, as one candidate eloquently put it, a 'nullifying death-loop'. This brings us of course to the central question of what we are to make of the 'meaning' or, more accurately, 'meanings' of the poem. What made the candidates' work on this text and task so stimulating and enjoyable to read was both the range and the closely engaged nature of personal response and interpretation (AO4) displayed. Some candidates, for instance, registered a degree of hope and positivity in the use of imagery drawn from the natural world in the 'flowering shrubs'. Likewise, some interpreted the planting of tongues as an attempt at bringing about the rebirth or regeneration of speech and sound even if it is in a place of death. Most, however, couldn't get beyond the horror and negativity of these images. Some read the burial of the tongues as the aftermath of a brutal punishment for attempting to speak out. Others, perhaps even more poignantly, saw it as the citizens voluntarily consigning their tongues to the ground in a bleak act of acquiescence or hopelessness. Such candidates tended to read the 'flowering' less as a symbol of fertility but more as a terrifying re-growth and re-intensification of a sterile and life-denying impulse to silence and all the tragic suppression of individuality and humanity implicit in this. A dark flower, indeed.

The highly enigmatic, somewhat fractured and briefly sketched out nature of the text allowed much scope for candidates to develop readings such as these on very individual lines. It is perhaps unsurprising that many candidates chose to read the poem as a social or overtly political allegory, drawing parallels between the world of the poem and the one which surrounds them, particularly in the case of totalitarian or dictatorial regimes where freedom of self-expression and individual agency have been radically curtailed. Others responded to it on a more personal, psychological level, commenting on aspects of its hauntingly dream-like or nightmarish strangeness. Whatever the interpretive line taken, high-scoring scripts invariably displayed a close, detailed and, at best, sustained focus on the writing and a clear critical understanding of the means by which the writer shapes meaning for the reader.

Question 2

This task was based on an extract from the novel *The World My Wilderness* by Rose Macaulay. Set immediately after the end of World War 2, it captures the atmosphere of the bombed-out City of London, and the characters of children at play among the ruins. The question directed candidates to explore how the writer vividly portrays the feelings of two of these children, Barbary and Raoul, about the post-war city.

In an initial focus on the principal character Barbary and the manner in which she leads her friend around the ruined city, candidates showed knowledge of the text (AO1) through an apt selection of supporting and illustrative textual reference. There was an understanding (AO2) of how Barbary's knowledge of the city and her confident, almost off-hand demeanour are conveyed to the reader as in her use of the teacherly 'You see...' as she 'nonchalantly' explains things to Raoul. Most candidates commented on the allusion to her 'estate agent's smug and optimistic manner' as she 'led the way' and 'indicated' this or that feature almost as she were showing off a property to a prospective buyer. Some candidates were amused by her proprietorial sense of ownership and the manner in which she loftily declares that she had 'taken a house here', as if it were some grand residence rather than a roofless ruin. There was in almost all cases a clear understanding of the contrast between the historical City of London as a great, vibrant and architecturally imposing metropolis and its present deserted and derelict state. Some strong scripts focused on how the 'road' is described as becoming a 'lane' which traversed a 'wrecked and flowering wilderness', its name 'Noble Street' being poignantly ironic in the light of its lost grandeur. Most candidates commented on the lack of surprise or even particular interest the children show in response to such change and to what they see around them:

‘these broken habitations, this stony rubbish, seemed natural to them.’ There was a recognition of the absence of explicit reflection on their part of the darker consequences of war and the catastrophic loss of life. Rather there is the sense of the devastated city offering up a freedom from normal urban fears and constraints, its ruins a place of play: ‘Look, we can climb through it.’

It was at this point in the text, when the children begin their ascent up through the broken building, that critical analysis of the writing (AO3) tended to come into sharper focus. Some candidates showed themselves to be admirably attuned to the rhythms of the prose and how, for instance, the brevity of ‘Barbary nodded’ is succeeded by a long, complex sentence which accentuated the sense of the children’s movement and their new discoveries at each turn. Likewise, many candidates productively began to tease out what they saw as elements of symbolism in the writing; how, for example, a sense of liberation or release is suggested by the building suddenly opening out to the sky and the way ‘the wind blew in their faces’. Perspective shifts were noted in the mass of close detail at ground level to that of a sweeping and expansive panorama across the city. Much excellent work was done on the writer’s presentation of the unexpected sounding out of the bells of St. Paul’s ‘drowning’ the children in ‘sweet, hoarse, rocking clamour’, the diction and the asyndetic listing of somewhat discordant adjectives indicating its felt intensity and force. The response of the children in their dancing and singing accentuates the feeling of freedom and an unrestrained, energetic exuberance with the vivid visual image of Barbary’s hair ‘flapping in the breeze’ as she ‘spun about’.

In terms of personal interpretation and response (AO4), many candidates were clearly moved by this scene, some reading it as the expression of childhood innocence and an instinctive pleasure in the moment. While some candidates had shown themselves as somewhat unnerved by what they saw as the children’s unfeeling or at least numbed response to the evidence of disaster all around them, many saw the extract’s closing sequence as offering the reader a sense of hope and optimism for the future in the children’s unaffected actions. Many strong responses also saw hope of a kind in the way in which the writer presents nature as having reclaimed the city. Again, a short, abrupt opening sentence to a paragraph – ‘The bells stopped’ – is followed by a strikingly long, closing period in which the ‘wilderness of little streets’ is described as being ‘grown over by green and golden fennel and ragwort’. There is a harmony in the alliterative patterns and rhythms created here and in the extended list of wildflowers and plants which follow. While the hollowed-out city appears to be eerily empty in terms of human life, other forms of life have moved in and go about their business undisturbed: ‘rabbits burrowed and wild cats crept and hens laid eggs.’ The use of syndeton here emphasises the sense of the proliferation of life and regeneration amongst the devastation. For some candidates, this represented the resilience of nature and its power to survive and to endure, in sharp and telling contrast to the senseless self-destructiveness of mankind. Some asserted a welcoming benevolence in the natural world, symbolised by the earlier scene in the graveyard and how ‘the tall weeds waved about tombstones’. How much or how deeply all of this touches the consciousness of Barbary and Raoul is ultimately left unclear by the writer, of course. At the end, ‘the children stood still, gazing down’ and not a word is spoken.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/05
Coursework

Key Messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- focus explicitly on the task set
- use relevant, concise references to support analysis
- analyse in detail ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have only a basic knowledge of surface meanings
- lose focus on the task
- make unsupported assertions
- list techniques without analysing precise ways in which writers achieve their effects.

General Comments

There was much evidence of coursework of a high standard this session, where candidates showed a personal and evaluative engagement with texts.

The most successful assignments sustained a clear focus on a carefully worded task which enabled candidates to meet the requirements of the highest levels. It is important that tasks direct candidates to consider the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Where tasks did not do this, candidates tended to treat characters as real-life people (rather than fictional or dramatic constructs) in assignments on prose and drama texts.

Some less successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text, sometimes at exhaustive length, but lacked a clear focus on the task. In some poetry assignments, candidates worked through the poem offering a line-by-line commentary, with only occasional focus on the task. Some candidates showed an eagerness to list themes they had studied, without always making their comments relevant to the actual task.

In this regard, centres should remind students that an advantage of the Coursework component is that it encourages skills of re-drafting. Candidates should be taught the skill of selecting material in a way that directly addresses the task set; every sentence should contribute to the unfolding argument. This skill will help them in their preparation for the examination papers.

As in previous sessions, the most convincing and persuasive essays sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects (Assessment Objective 3), relating their points to the task. By contrast, less successful assignments often commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to their use in the text. Some poetry assignments logged features such as alliteration, caesura, enjambment and ABAB rhyme schemes in poetry essays though without exploring how the writer uses these devices to convey their ideas. Candidates should be reminded that feature logging is not the same as critical analysis.

Several centres submitted empathic responses, with the necessary information supplied: the name of the character and the precise moment in the text that the interior monologue takes place. The most successful responses captured a convincingly authentic voice for the chosen character and moment. Candidates should be permitted to select their own character and moment for empathic responses to encourage personal responses to texts.

Guidance for teachers

This guidance, which has appeared in previous reports, is still relevant for future coursework submissions.

Guidance on task-setting can be found in the Coursework Handbook, which stresses the importance of (a) wording tasks that direct candidates explicitly to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects and (b) avoiding insufficiently challenging command words such as 'Describe' and 'Explain'. Teachers within the centre should together discuss the appropriateness of proposed tasks before they are given to candidates. This enables any problems with proposed tasks to be resolved before it is too late.

There follows a reminder of what constitutes both good practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

- Start each assignment with the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment should be clearly stated. This is important since it allows the moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has addressed the task.
- Use focused ticking in the body of the text to indicate valid and thoughtful points, together with concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the levels descriptors. Avoid words such as 'superficial', 'thin', 'brilliant' and 'wow' which do not feature in the level descriptors.
- Provide a brief explanation on the assignment itself or on the cover sheet in cases where marks are changed during internal moderation. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it allows a centre to justify its award of marks.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (for example, of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality; labelling by assessment objective. Simply putting the supposed relevant AOs in the margin is of very little benefit to any subsequent reader, as it does not reveal the *extent* to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed; instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant levels descriptors.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently, using the current version of the cover sheet, and securing it by treasury tag or staple to allow easy access to candidate work. In well-administered centres, care had been taken to:

- include all candidates on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form
- transcribe totals accurately across the various documents.

All centres are advised to include a clerical checking stage in their moderation procedures before submitting their paperwork to Cambridge. This check should be carried out by a different person from the one who completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms and Mark Sheets originally.