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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

For success in this examination, candidates need to:
- Read the question carefully and identify precisely what they are required to do.
- Take due note of key words such as 'memorable', 'striking' or 'vivid', which are intended to elicit a personal response.
- Plan their ideas in order to produce an organised answer.
- Provide textual support for points made.
- Explore the writing to identify how effects are achieved.

Some practices to avoid are:
- Spending too much time establishing the biography of the writer or the historical context of the work.
- Numbering the question incorrectly.
- Answering an extract question without giving substantial attention to the extract.
- Relying on re-telling the story or paraphrasing the poem.
- Listing stylistic features without considering their effects.
- Quoting text without comment.

General comments

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination. There were hardly any rubric infringements and the vast majority of candidates appeared to be proportioning their time appropriately, so that in most cases both responses were of roughly equal length. There was evidence of planning on many scripts and most candidates avoided over planning at the expense of constructing a response. Though beneficial, there is no requirement to provide written evidence of planning – that is often evident from the quality and organisation of the answer itself.

It is worth reinforcing the message that, although there is a wealth of secondary material available on the internet for revision purposes, its quality is at best inconsistent and sometimes unreliable, and it should be used with caution. Such material is no adequate substitute for the candidate's own response to the studied text and can occasionally lead to eccentric and unsupportable interpretations of texts.

There was some improvement in the use of textual reference to support arguments. Candidates who embed relevant and appropriate textual detail into their own writing tend to achieve well; candidates who quote at length with little or no supporting comment of their own are not answering the question. Some responses were largely narrative with little or no interpretative comment. Responses of this nature will seldom achieve highly. There was also evidence of a tendency for candidates to *explain* the text rather than *explore* it. Responses of this nature tend to be restricted because they do not usually examine the deeper implications of the text in question.

There is a tendency for candidates to introduce their answers with a paragraph or more of biographical detail about the writer. Although this could have helped in considering Boey Kim Cheng's poem in **Question 1**, or perhaps Kathleen Raine in **Question 3**, it can be distinctly unhelpful when Jane Austen is identified as a Victorian writer where an answer goes on to examine the qualities that mark her out as such. Biographical or historical detail is often irrelevant to the given task.

Particularly noticeable in many answers was the use of truncated quotation, often with the consequence that meaning was distorted or misrepresented, with a consequent detrimental effect on the answer.

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Most responses avoided answering the discursive question using the extract set for the passage-based question, and avoided treating the extract as an 'unseen'. Virtually all candidates were clearly answering questions on texts that they had studied and most attempted to respond to the questions using appropriate material.

There were many scripts which demonstrated a high level of engagement on the part of candidates. There were some which suggested that the candidates were working at an academic level beyond IGCSE which were a privilege to read. Most candidates displayed clear evidence that they had benefitted from the study of their chosen set texts, whatever their level of achievement.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – Explore the ways in which Boey uses language to memorable effect in *Reservist*.

This was a question which elicited a good deal of background biographical information from candidates, not all of it useful or relevant. Some made brief, effective use of this background knowledge in identifying the tone of the poem and therefore Boey's attitude to the practice he writes about. An important differentiator between answers was what candidates identified that practice to be. A sizeable minority took the poem to be a war poem, with Boey objecting to having to fight, while more detailed responses outlined that the poem is about having to train rather than to fight. Candidates who realised this were generally able to make more telling comments and analysis of the tone of the poem. Many recognised the medieval references in the first stanza, and the allusion to Don Quixote drew some interesting responses. The sardonic humour of the incongruity of unfit and reluctant middle-aged men being forced to undergo this ordeal was widely recognised. The allusion to Sisyphus caused a little more confusion. Some candidates thought that proving Sisyphus not to be a myth was a generally favourable thing to do, and few recognised that such proof was created by the reservists similarly having to undergo endless repetition of tedious and irksome tasks. Although the final stanza presented some challenges, overall, candidates dealt well with this question.

Question 2 – How does Baxter convey a sense of admiration for his grandfather in *Elegy For My Father's Father?*

Responses to this question were rather uneven. A common approach was to work through the poem in a linear manner, often attempting to explain or paraphrase what the poet was saying. This sometimes led candidates away from the question, with candidates becoming more concerned with explaining what the poem was perceived to mean than with a sense of admiration. A more successful approach was to focus on the 'sense of admiration' in the question, and to identify where that was evident in the poem. This often led on to a consideration of the techniques used by Baxter, dealing with the 'How' of the question. There were some rather dubious attempts to deal with the form of the poem, where time would have been better spent on consideration of the poet's language choices. This question was also beset by the problem outlined above, that of the truncated quotation. Candidates tended to overlook punctuation and quote by the line. This led to some misreading. There was also a tendency to misread the reference to 'drunken dancing' as applying to him rather than 'the stars'. Set against that were some very sensitive readings, particularly of the last few lines of the poem which explored effectively links between the grandfather and the natural world. Candidates who confronted head-on the lines which seemed to qualify the admiration for the grandfather – the reference to 'his bitter veins', for example – often arrived at a measured critical evaluation of the poem.

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Question 3 – How does Raine movingly convey a powerful experience in *Passion?*

This was the most popular question on the paper, and there were some strong responses. In many cases, some biographical information was provided as an introduction to the response. However, it was possible to provide a strongly convincing response without using the autobiographical detail, and many candidates did so. Most candidates recognised, at least implicitly, that the poem deals with a process which started with heartbreak and ended in tranquillity. There were many strong responses which identified turning points and provided some telling analysis of the language of the poem. Even those who did not move much beyond paraphrase were able to gain some credit for the extent to which they demonstrated understanding of the poem. However, there were also some recurrent misreadings and misunderstandings. The allusions to Homer's ghosts and the savage conches also caused some problems for candidates, compounded by ignoring the words 'out of reach', another example of the dangers of truncated quotation. That said there was some high quality analysis of language at work in this poem, with close attention to effects created by the poet.

Question 4 – Explore the ways in which Sitwell creates striking contrasts in *Heart and Mind*.

Some candidates provided persuasive interpretations with some solid textual backing for their interpretations. Some equated the Heart with lust, others with love or spiritual love. In either case, the mind was asserted to be the opposite. There was a good deal of fairly ingenious interpretation, often relying on an initial assertion but thereafter developing with good sense. The final lines of the poem were variously construed as hopeful or hopeless, with the force of the 'never' in the penultimate line not always being acknowledged. A significant number of candidates saw the shift from 'amber' to 'tawny' to describe the lion's body as a move from admiration to disparagement. Candidates who were most successful moved from attempting to elucidate the poem to considering what contrasts were being made, and how they were made to be striking.

Question 5 – Explore the ways in which Clarke creates such vivid impressions of a night-time journey in *Journey.*

This was less popular, and candidates sometimes limited their responses by seeking to offer an interpretation which saw the journey as a metaphor for life. This led them away from the question, which referred to 'vivid impressions' of a night-time journey. Candidates who avoided this pitfall found scope to comment effectively on some of the imagery of the poem, and understood the interplay between light and darkness. However, there were some recurrent misreadings. The opening line caused some confusion, many candidates ignoring the 'As far as' and taking this as a statement of the poet's worried state of mind. The imagery of the milkchurns awaiting collection was not widely understood, and few candidates knew the significance of the 'cat's eye' reference, often thinking there was a literal cat ahead of them. Similarly, it was only rarely that candidates made any attempt to comment on the final image.

Question 6 – How does Clarke convey the importance of the box to her in *My Box*?

Candidates responded with enthusiasm to this poem, many of them tracing the stages of Clarke's relationship with her lover through the three stanzas of the poem. There were some telling comments on the form of the poem, and on recurrent ideas and images, which showed a clear understanding of many aspects of the meaning of the poem. There were some subtle comments on language, noting, for example, the shift from 'my' to 'we' in the first two stanzas. Sometimes, interpretations were asserted without supporting argument, in particular in the middle stanza, where symbolic weight was attached to many of the images. 'Rare red kites' were particularly susceptible to this fate, in some cases being seen as symbols for passion because of their redness, and the 'wild heartsease' led to similar speculation based on its name. The 'twelve black books' similarly attracted a range of attempts at interpretation with a number of attempts to explain the symbolic significance of black. Most candidates took them to be journals or diaries, which seems a sensible opinion. Interpretations which considered the stanzas as representing three stages of a relationship often went on to consider the importance of the box at each stage with some success and arrived at an insightful reading of the entire poem.

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Section B

Question 7 – How does Achebe's writing vividly convey Obi's state of mind at this moment in the novel?

Many set out by identifying Obi's situation having returned from his studies in England, and suggesting that at this point in the narrative he remained uncorrupted. His immediate situation of a visit to his parents' home in Umuofia was grasped by most, and his financial situation was understood by many. Some went on to consider the implications of his worsening position as far as his wish to resist corruption went. Surprisingly few recognised that his father was in receipt of a meagre pension, or what that pension related to, most thinking that his parents were merely subsistence farmers. His thoughts about Clara were construed either as escapism or as a sign of the superficiality of his relationship with her. His anticipation of his mother's reaction to his relationship was recognised significant. For some candidates, this led them into digressions about subsequent events, taking them away from a fuller consideration of the extract. This meant that relatively few dealt in any depth with Obi's musings about his siblings or 'the little incident after prayers'. However, the rain storm was generally interpreted as pathetic fallacy, mirroring the stormy state of Obi's state of mind. Candidates who scrutinised Achebe's writing closely achieved highly.

Question 8 – How does Achebe strikingly portray Obi's relationships with servants?

This was attempted by few candidates, and was not handled well for the most part. There was a range of material available, from his early dealings with Christopher's houseboy through his interactions with Zacchaeus and Sebastian to his dealings with Hon Sam Okoli's servant. However, most candidates who attempted this question seemed to have rephrased it to 'How does Achebe strikingly portray servants?' In consequence, answers sometimes achieved relevance only incidentally or implicitly, and Achebe's writing was seldom considered in any depth.

Question 9 – How does Austen make this such a revealing moment in the novel?

Mansfield Park was a popular text this session. Most responses went at least some way to recognising the context of Fanny's return to her family home in Portsmouth. Stronger responses recognised the circumstances which had led Sir Thomas effectively to banish her in order to teach her a lesson following her rejection of Henry Crawford's proposal, with its consequent effect on her state of mind. Most recognised the contrast between the calm and ordered life of Mansfield Park and the relative chaos of Portsmouth. There was some sensitive reaction to the presentation of Mrs Price's anxiety-ridden reception of her children and a general condemnation of her husband's behaviour, and in particular his general lack of interest in his daughter. Less common in many answers was any engagement with Austen's writing. There was an abundance of rich material in the extract, for example in the paragraph in which Mr Price's arrival home occurs, which went largely unexplored. Some answers tended to over-simplify the differences between the two households and to conclude that the Prices lived in abject poverty.

Question 10 – What does Austen's portrayal of Mary Crawford make you feel about her?

This was the more popular option on this text, and drew a range of responses, from total condemnation to balanced assessments acknowledging her attractiveness while pointing out her defects. Few candidates expressed unqualified admiration for her. Some successful answers paid heed to the socio-historical context of the novel, noting the mercenary norms for women seeking husbands. Some of these responses seemed to be putting forward an argument that Mary Crawford was forced by circumstances into seeking as wealthy a husband as possible. This went some way, for them, to excusing her behaviour while staying with the Grants. Other strong responses recognised the conflict between the norms of values and behaviour in town and in the country, with the Crawfords representing the former. One factor which marked out some successful answers was the level of detail provided: criticism of Mary's behaviour towards and treatment of Fanny was strengthened when candidates gave detailed examples of how she either befriended or betrayed her. Some candidates were side-tracked into a shift of focus so that they were writing predominantly about Edmund and his relationship with Fanny, so that their knowledge of the book did not receive full credit because it was not particularly relevant to the question. Successful answers usually displayed a full awareness of the ways in which Austen manipulates reader's responses.

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Question 11

There were so few answers on these texts that meaningful comment is not possible.

Question 12

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Question 13

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Question 14

There were so few answers on these texts that meaningful comment is not possible.

Question 15 – How does Frayn vividly portray the relationship between Stephen and Keith at this moment in the novel?

This question was sometimes handled less than successfully because candidates overlooked the last part of the question, and wrote in general about the relationship between the two boys. Those who saw this as a turning point in the relationship were able to include material from elsewhere in the novel with some relevance. Most candidates recognised and commented on the 'leader/led' nature of the relationship, and went on to describe Keith as a bully. A significant number confused the two boys. There were some who recognised the ways in which Keith replicated his father's behaviour, and some more sophisticated responses differentiated between old Stephen and his boyhood self, commenting on how events were seen through the eyes of the younger Stephen. Few explored the dilemma which Stephen's promise to Mrs Hayward placed him in and its effect on his relationship with Keith. There were also some candidates who did not respond to the question, but simply narrated events described in the extract, in some cases going on to say what happened next. This does not demonstrate the skills needed meet the assessment criteria.

Question 16 – Explore the ways in which Frayn makes this novel such a sad love story.

Few candidates attempted this option, and most that did found it difficult to engage with specifics. This seemed to arise once more from a misreading of the question or a failure to identify whose was the love story. Some interpreted that the love story was a term applied to Stephen and Keith's relationship, or to Stephen's dalliance with Barbara. This, whilst not overtly incorrect, led to some unsupported interpretations. Others ignored the word 'love', and explained how they found the novel sad. More successful were those who were able to consider the presentation of the relationship between Keith's mother and Uncle Peter, often focusing on the latter's situation during the novel, and his death. The long duration of their love was seldom appreciated, and the additional facts of Mr Hayward's bullying and the general wartime conditions were rarely mentioned.

Question 17 – How does Grenville vividly convey William's impressions on arriving in Sydney at this moment in the novel?

This extract was often well handled in terms of narrative. The circumstances which had led to William's travel to Sydney were clearly understood, and most recognised that the voyage cannot have been pleasant. However, few candidates explored the language of the extract in any depth, with the consequence that some of the implications of Grenville's writing were not clearly grasped. There was a general assumption that William must have been relieved to have reached his destination, and relatively little explicit awareness of his confusion in his new surroundings. A surprising number assumed that the bright sunshine was a source of pleasure, despite the ways in which Grenville describes it. His reunion with his family was noted, but the ways in which Grenville presents it went largely unexamined.

Question 18 – 'Despite their wealth, William and Sal do not seem happy at the end of the novel.' How does Grenville strikingly convey this to you?

This was markedly the more popular question on this text, and was often dealt with convincingly. Most candidates recognised some of the causes of this: William's guilt about the attacks on the natives, Sal's unsatisfied longing for home in London, Dick's alienation from his father. Stronger answers went on to demonstrate how this lack of happiness manifested itself, for example in Sal's unsuccessful attempts to

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anglicise her garden, or Will's gazing through his spy-glass, or his attempts to deal with Long Jack and his realisation that Long Jack 'belonged' in a way that he, Will, never would. Candidates were often able to draw on an impressive range of detail to support their answers, moving beyond mere narrative recall to identify and explore some of the implications of the novel's ending.

Question 19 – Explore the ways in which Narayan presents the relationship between Krishna and Susila at this moment in the novel.

Many candidates focused on 'the ways' in the question, and organised their answers by looking at a series of literary devices and techniques in sequence. Such an approach often proved fruitful, as long as candidates also focused on the actual relationship while considering how it is presented. For some, this approach led to little more than feature-spotting, with little consideration of effects. The context was generally established securely, and there were many comments on the fact that, although the couple had been married for quite some time, they were also like newly-weds in terms of the time they had spent living together. Distinctions were often drawn between Krishna's worldliness – often linked with a Western outlook – and Susila's impulsiveness – seen as an Eastern approach to life. There was some thoughtful evaluation of the 'quarrels' between the two – over bathroom tiles, over sweets for the child, over the food – with many commenting on Krishna's willingness to give way in order to avoid an argument. Some candidates became side-tracked into focusing on Krishna rather than the relationship, with a consequent lack of comment on Susila beyond the observation that she is presented as 'childish'. Although many commented on the apparently semi-autobiographical nature of the novel, so that Krishna was regarded in effect as Narayan, few went on to consider the effects of the narrative point of view, which led to some missed opportunities in dealing with some of the implications of the episode.

Question 20 – How far does Narayan persuade you that the Headmaster's school offers a worthwhile education to Leela and the other children?

Some good points were made about spontaneity and the focus on enjoyment and examples of the Headmaster's teaching methods were provided, though most responses lacked detail. Some stronger answers looked at the ways in which the Headmaster's school chimed in with ideas about Eastern attitudes contrasted with those of the west, as represented by Krishna's college environment. However, most candidates struggled to find sufficient textual detail to support the points they were making. The question invited some consideration of what is a 'worthwhile education', an invitation that was usually declined.

Question 21 – How does Ballard make this moment in *Billenium* so powerful?

This question was often handled with some assurance. Candidates generally understood the significance of the extract as a turning-point in the story, and there was plenty of narrative recall of previous and subsequent events to contextualise this moment. In some cases, this was overdone, so that candidates retold the story, leaving the power of the moment to speak for itself. Those who recognised and explored the presentation of the girls' manipulative behaviour generally succeeded in demonstrating how powerful the moment is, and those who commented on Judith's aunt's prompt arrival were able to show understanding of some implications. Some confident candidates went on to comment on what the story – and this moment in particular – shows us about human nature. What was lacking in many otherwise strong answers was any scrutiny of Ballard's actual writing beyond the odd comment on 'private universe'.

Question 22 – Explore the ways in which Desai makes you feel sympathy for Ravi in *Games at Twilight*.

This was often well answered. Candidates generally adopted a narrative approach, pointing out how the odds are stacked against Ravi from the outset because of his youth and immaturity. His desire to make his mark with the other children was well understood, as was their imperviousness to it. His bravery in coping with the terrors of the shed was recognised by many, and Raghu's 'hairy footballer's legs' loomed large as a physical emblem of Ravi's inferiority. The reactions of the other children to his belated emergence and their indifference to his thwarted triumph were well explored, and strong answers also dealt with the children's rhymes, and some explored the significance of twilight. The story clearly struck a chord with many candidates, who wrote movingly about loss of innocence and the death of childhood. Nearly all answers demonstrated feelings of sympathy for Ravi. Most managed to move beyond mere narration to explore some of the ways in which the writer brings this about, and there was some strong investigation of the narrative point of view and its effects.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/22
Drama

Key messages

- Good answers explicitly addressed the question, and maintained a strong focus on it throughout.
- The strongest responses made points which were clear, well-developed and always supported with precise reference to the text.
- Effective answers responded to features of drama such as: on-stage action, dialogue between characters, significant entrances and exits and the playwright's intended reaction from the audience.
- Strong responses avoided lengthy or irrelevant introductions, and narrating the plot.

General comments

There were sound responses to all texts and questions this session, with candidates showing good knowledge of their set texts. They often made a strong personal response, sometimes to the situation the characters are in or to the choices they make. Thus, there was much admiration for the moral qualities and selfless decisions made by both Catherine Winslow in *The Winslow Boy*, and Drummond in *Inherit the Wind*, as they strive to see 'Right' prevail. Candidates often showed their enjoyment of their chosen texts, evident in responses to the disreputable but amusing Pistol from *Henry V*, or in responses to the moving passage from *A View from the Bridge* which shows Catherine choosing her lover Rodolpho over her guardian Eddie. Lady Macbeth provoked strong responses, with candidates varying in how far they were convinced of her responsibility for Duncan's death: the best answers selected relevant material from the play to support reasoned arguments.

Careful selection of the most relevant material to support an answer was key to making a good response to both passage-based and discursive questions. Candidates need to consider the question and what an answer entails before starting to write their response. Strong answers are expected to select key points from a passage with which to answer the question asked, rather than to provide a general commentary on the content of the passage. Similarly, strong answers to discursive questions will also select the most relevant material from the play with which to support an answer to the particular question asked. Candidates needed to make clear how the textual reference supported the point being made. General background on the playwright's life and times, or a general summary of the plot, do not allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet the assessment objectives.

Good answers to this drama paper made a response to the features of the genre, such as how characters convey emotion on stage. Writers sometimes directly tell the actor how to do this in stage directions. Thus, in *A View from the Bridge*, Catherine's emotions are shown in the repeated stage direction: '*She is weeping*'. Strong answers not only quoted that direction, but developed to show understanding of why Catherine is weeping, and to consider the effect of this on the audience. Entrances and exits are dramatic devices which are sometimes worthy of comment when answering a particular question. Thus, good answers often chose to comment on Macbeth's entrance in the passage for **Question 9**, because at that exact moment King Duncan is lamenting his misplaced trust in the previous Thane of Cawdor, then greets Macbeth with '*O worthiest cousin!*', which raises doubts in the audience's minds about whether his trust in Macbeth is equally misplaced. The apt selection of dramatic features for comment depends on the passage and the question. An awareness of how the writer uses such features on stage, and their effect on the audience, is the key to a good response to drama.

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Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Strong answers briefly set the context of the passage as the arrival of Brady in Hillsboro, while weaker answers often gave lengthy introductions to the theories of evolution or fundamentalism that did not relate directly to the question or passage. Candidates wrote more convincingly on 'revealing', and often only implicitly considered 'dramatic'. Thus stronger answers not only commented that the importance of Brady is revealed in the enthusiasm of his welcome, shown here in the enormous buffet lunch, but they judged the abundance of food to be comically exaggerated, especially when Brady '*is a great eater*', and is warned about over-eating by his wife, which forewarns the audience of his later death. The portrayal of his politician's desire to be everyone's friend was noted, especially in his deception of Rachel in order to get her to reveal details about Cates. Stronger answers commented on how Brady's subterfuge is staged as he physically draws Rachel away from the others. Many candidates also commented on how Rachel's love for Cates is revealed in the way she stands up for him, despite dramatically shrinking from the attention of the crowd.

Question 2

All answers saw admirable qualities in Drummond. A mark of stronger answers was the selection of apt material from the text to support views. Common responses included: how Drummond stands up for his beliefs in freedom of thought and justice; how he shows his cleverness in his quick-thinking in court; how he claims the moral victory of the case; and his integrity in defending Brady's 'right to be wrong' to Hornbeck. Several candidates also commented on the staging at the end of Drummond holding the Bible in one hand, and Darwin's 'Theory of Evolution' in the other as he considers them to hold equal weight, strong candidates showed how this supports Drummond's belief that individuals should have the freedom to decide their own views.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

The most successful answers showed an overview of the content of the passage in establishing that this is where Catherine makes her choice between Rodolpho and Eddie. They also maintained a firm focus on what is 'moving', successfully identifying that the various issues hindering Catherine and Rodolpho's relationship are resolved as they declare their love for each other, the development of their relationship is assured at the close of the scene. Many candidates identified Catherine's expressions of intense emotion as moving – the direction '*she is weeping*' is repeated and her emotion emerges in her tentative speech with many dashes. Stronger answers analysed the moving nature of Rodolpho's strong language in defence of his love, and his use of the caged bird metaphor to show Catherine that she is right to leave Eddie. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase parts of the extract, often with some misreading of Rodolpho's motives.

Question 4

Most candidates responded well to the relationship at the start of the play, and were able to use detailed textual references from Act One to support answers. Thus, Eddie was seen as being an overprotective father to Catherine, disliking anything new which indicates she is growing up and independent of him: examples were given of him disliking new clothing which shows her mature figure ('wavy walk', heels like 'Garbo'), or her wanting to get a job. The development of his inappropriate feelings for her further on in the play was not handled as clearly nor was it as well-supported. Stronger candidates identified Rodolpho's arrival and Catherine's developing love for him as a catalyst for Eddie's jealousy, with a key element being Eddie's inability to recognise his feelings as inappropriate. Stronger candidates usefully referred to Alfieri and Beatrice's views, as well as to Catherine's distress at Eddie's extreme disapproval of Rodolpho. Catherine's child-like attitude to Eddie was read by a few candidates as her deliberately trying to provoke a sexual reaction from Eddie, an asserted view without textual evidence.

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TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

All candidates identified the drama of the conflict in the passage, which shows the contrast of Grace's violently expressed views here, with the calm and homely character which Grace exhibits elsewhere. Many candidates identified some of the stage directions as showing how Rattigan directs the portrayal of Grace's emotions, such as: '*hysterically*', '*with rising voice*' and '*with sudden violence*'. The strongest answers went on to consider that audiences would be surprised and shocked by the unaccustomed strength of Grace's feelings, and that the intention of the author is to encourage the audience to consider Grace's suggestions, that Arthur is pursuing the case out of '*plain pride and self-importance*'. Some answers omitted any comment on Arthur: some strong answers considered the language of his expressed concern for '*Justice*' to be rather pompous and emotionless when compared with Grace. His speech is more reasoned, with Grace's more emotional. Most personal views were sympathetic towards Grace at this moment.

Question 6

All candidates recognised admirable qualities in Catherine, such as: her kindness to Ronnie and Dickie, her political awareness, her determination to do what is 'Right', and the personal sacrifices she makes in giving up her marriage. While some knowledge of the social context of the play is useful to answer the question, no credit can be given for lengthy historical background without reference to the play. Some candidates successfully used their knowledge of the limited opportunities for women to support themselves in England before the First World War, to emphasise the extent of Catherine's sacrifice when her marriage to John is broken because her financial future is far from secure. Stronger answers explored how Rattigan portrays Catherine as different from Grace or Miss Barnes; she is more forceful, with direct speech and clear opinions – she doesn't follow convention in suppressing her opinions with John, which Dickie suggests men prefer. The selection of apt supporting material was key to a strong response.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most candidates showed understanding of the dramatic role of the Chorus in the play, such as: to provide necessary background information, to indicate the passing of time, and to set the next scene for the audience. A few weaker answers were unable to relate their overview of the function of the Chorus with the detail of this particular passage. Most good answers selected from the content to consider the drama of: the excited mood of anticipation of the '*youth of England*' as they prepare for war with France; the wickedness of the three traitors and the suspense of their fate; and the humorous movement of the play from London to Southampton, with reassurance of no sea-sickness when we are transported to France. Several strong answers explicitly analysed Shakespeare's use of language, to consider, for instance: the effect of '*fire*' used to describe the inflamed enthusiasm of the '*youth of England*' as they burn to fight for their country; the patriotism expressed in the '*greatness*' of England; the contrasting description of the French as they '*shake in their fear*'; and the word-play as the guilty traitors accepted French '*gilt*' for their treason: '*O guilt indeed!*'.

Question 8

Strong responses showed understanding of different sides to Pistol's character. Most tended to find memorable the humour Pistol creates, which often arises from misunderstandings such as his attempts at French with M. le Fer, his attempts at grandiose language and his use of jokes and puns. His slapstick antics with Fluellen and the leeks was also noted as comic. Stronger answers considered Pistol's more disreputable side in his mercenary reasons for going to war, and his desire to go back to his old life as '*bawd*' and '*cutpurse*' afterwards, aiming to dine off lies about his battle scars. Some answers found most memorable Pistol's more caring side, shown as he pleads for Bardolph's life. Stronger answers also considered how Shakespeare uses Pistol to convey a contrast between his poverty and the noblemen of the play; and also how the notions of nobility and military honour are undercut by Pistol's cowardly actions. Weaker answers tended to assert and repeat points and lacked detail in supporting evidence from the text.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 9

There is much in this passage which is dramatic and significant. Most candidates selected these points: the dramatic irony of Duncan's trust of the previous traitor, Thane of Cawdor, when he also trusted the new Thane, who is also a traitor; the drama of Macbeth's entrance at that precise moment, followed by Duncan's extravagant praise of him, which raises doubts in the audience's minds about whether his trust in Macbeth is equally misplaced; and the drama and significance of Duncan's confirmation of his heir as Malcolm, which puts up a hurdle which Macbeth has to take action to '*o'er-leap*', thus pushing the plot forward. Stronger answers explicitly analysed some of the language, such as: the significance of Duncan's use of natural growth imagery, humbly extended by Banquo, showing them both as natural and good characters, and the 'star' imagery used by Duncan as a shining light on '*nobleness*', but told by Macbeth not to shed light on his '*dark*' deeds, which shows the contrast in the characters. Some weaker responses showed confusion over the plot, with some candidates thinking that Macbeth is given the title of Thane of Cawdor in the passage, and others thinking that Macbeth is already actively planning Duncan's murder, thus missing the impact of the news of Malcolm as heir.

Question 10

All answers understood Lady Macbeth's role in the murder. Stronger answers addressed 'how far' and argued their case well, using effective textual evidence to support their points. Thus evidence of her strong character was relevant, and also her view of her husband as too kind, arguing that she had to prompt him to action by mocking his courage and belittling his manhood. More thoughtful candidates considered the effect of her carefully-chosen taunts on a warrior renowned for bravery in war. Some emphasised that because Macbeth had decided not to go ahead with the plan to murder Duncan, then without his wife's words, Duncan would not have been killed. However, many candidates held Macbeth equally responsible, since he was the one who actually stabbed and killed Duncan. Weaker answers asserted views without much textual detail in support, or spent too long exploring events after the murder.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

- Good answers explicitly addressed the question, and maintained a strong focus on it throughout.
- The strongest responses made points which were clear, well-developed and always supported with precise reference to the text.
- Effective answers responded to features of drama such as: on-stage action, dialogue between characters, significant entrances and exits and the playwright's intended reaction from the audience.
- Strong responses avoided lengthy or irrelevant introductions, and narrating the plot.

General comments

There were sound responses to all texts and questions this session, with candidates showing good knowledge of their set texts. They often made a strong personal response, sometimes to the situation the characters are in or to the choices they make. Thus, there was much admiration for the moral qualities and selfless decisions made by both Catherine Winslow in *The Winslow Boy*, and Drummond in *Inherit the Wind*, as they strive to see 'Right' prevail. Candidates often showed their enjoyment of their chosen texts, evident in responses to the disreputable but amusing Pistol from *Henry V*, or in responses to the moving passage from *A View from the Bridge* which shows Catherine choosing her lover Rodolpho over her guardian Eddie. Lady Macbeth provoked strong responses, with candidates varying in how far they were convinced of her responsibility for Duncan's death: the best answers selected relevant material from the play to support reasoned arguments.

Careful selection of the most relevant material to support an answer was key to making a good response to both passage-based and discursive questions. Candidates need to consider the question and what an answer entails before starting to write their response. Strong answers are expected to select key points from a passage with which to answer the question asked, rather than to provide a general commentary on the content of the passage. Similarly, strong answers to discursive questions will also select the most relevant material from the play with which to support an answer to the particular question asked. Candidates needed to make clear how the textual reference supported the point being made. General background on the playwright's life and times, or a general summary of the plot, do not allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet the assessment objectives.

Good answers to this drama paper made a response to the features of the genre, such as how characters convey emotion on stage. Writers sometimes directly tell the actor how to do this in stage directions. Thus, in *A View from the Bridge*, Catherine's emotions are shown in the repeated stage direction: '*She is weeping*'. Strong answers not only quoted that direction, but developed to show understanding of why Catherine is weeping, and to consider the effect of this on the audience. Entrances and exits are dramatic devices which are sometimes worthy of comment when answering a particular question. Thus, good answers often chose to comment on Macbeth's entrance in the passage for **Question 9**, because at that exact moment King Duncan is lamenting his misplaced trust in the previous Thane of Cawdor, then greets Macbeth with '*O worthiest cousin!*', which raises doubts in the audience's minds about whether his trust in Macbeth is equally misplaced. The apt selection of dramatic features for comment depends on the passage and the question. An awareness of how the writer uses such features on stage, and their effect on the audience, is the key to a good response to drama.

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Comments on specific questions

J LAWRENCE AND R E LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Strong answers briefly set the context of the passage as the arrival of Brady in Hillsboro, while weaker answers often gave lengthy introductions to the theories of evolution or fundamentalism that did not relate directly to the question or passage. Candidates wrote more convincingly on 'revealing', and often only implicitly considered 'dramatic'. Thus stronger answers not only commented that the importance of Brady is revealed in the enthusiasm of his welcome, shown here in the enormous buffet lunch, but they judged the abundance of food to be comically exaggerated, especially when Brady '*is a great eater*', and is warned about over-eating by his wife, which forewarns the audience of his later death. The portrayal of his politician's desire to be everyone's friend was noted, especially in his deception of Rachel in order to get her to reveal details about Cates. Stronger answers commented on how Brady's subterfuge is staged as he physically draws Rachel away from the others. Many candidates also commented on how Rachel's love for Cates is revealed in the way she stands up for him, despite dramatically shrinking from the attention of the crowd.

Question 2

All answers saw admirable qualities in Drummond. A mark of stronger answers was the selection of apt material from the text to support views. Common responses included: how Drummond stands up for his beliefs in freedom of thought and justice; how he shows his cleverness in his quick-thinking in court; how he claims the moral victory of the case; and his integrity in defending Brady's 'right to be wrong' to Hornbeck. Several candidates also commented on the staging at the end of Drummond holding the Bible in one hand, and Darwin's 'Theory of Evolution' in the other as he considers them to hold equal weight, strong candidates showed how this supports Drummond's belief that individuals should have the freedom to decide their own views.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

The most successful answers showed an overview of the content of the passage in establishing that this is where Catherine makes her choice between Rodolpho and Eddie. They also maintained a firm focus on what is 'moving', successfully identifying that the various issues hindering Catherine and Rodolpho's relationship are resolved as they declare their love for each other, the development of their relationship is assured at the close of the scene. Many candidates identified Catherine's expressions of intense emotion as moving – the direction '*she is weeping*' is repeated and her emotion emerges in her tentative speech with many dashes. Stronger answers analysed the moving nature of Rodolpho's strong language in defence of his love, and his use of the caged bird metaphor to show Catherine that she is right to leave Eddie. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase parts of the extract, often with some misreading of Rodolpho's motives.

Question 4

Most candidates responded well to the relationship at the start of the play, and were able to use detailed textual references from Act One to support answers. Thus, Eddie was seen as being an overprotective father to Catherine, disliking anything new which indicates she is growing up and independent of him: examples were given of him disliking new clothing which shows her mature figure ('wavy walk', heels like 'Garbo'), or her wanting to get a job. The development of his inappropriate feelings for her further on in the play was not handled as clearly nor was it as well-supported. Stronger candidates identified Rodolpho's arrival and Catherine's developing love for him as a catalyst for Eddie's jealousy, with a key element being Eddie's inability to recognise his feelings as inappropriate. Stronger candidates usefully referred to Alfieri and Beatrice's views, as well as to Catherine's distress at Eddie's extreme disapproval of Rodolpho. Catherine's child-like attitude to Eddie was read by a few candidates as her deliberately trying to provoke a sexual reaction from Eddie, an asserted view without textual evidence.

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TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

All candidates identified the drama of the conflict in the passage, which shows the contrast of Grace's violently expressed views here, with the calm and homely character which Grace exhibits elsewhere. Many candidates identified some of the stage directions as showing how Rattigan directs the portrayal of Grace's emotions, such as: '*hysterically*', '*with rising voice*' and '*with sudden violence*'. The strongest answers went on to consider that audiences would be surprised and shocked by the unaccustomed strength of Grace's feelings, and that the intention of the author is to encourage the audience to consider Grace's suggestions, that Arthur is pursuing the case out of '*plain pride and self-importance*'. Some answers omitted any comment on Arthur: some strong answers considered the language of his expressed concern for '*Justice*' to be rather pompous and emotionless when compared with Grace. His speech is more reasoned, with Grace's more emotional. Most personal views were sympathetic towards Grace at this moment.

Question 6

All candidates recognised admirable qualities in Catherine, such as: her kindness to Ronnie and Dickie, her political awareness, her determination to do what is 'Right', and the personal sacrifices she makes in giving up her marriage. While some knowledge of the social context of the play is useful to answer the question, no credit can be given for lengthy historical background without reference to the play. Some candidates successfully used their knowledge of the limited opportunities for women to support themselves in England before the First World War, to emphasise the extent of Catherine's sacrifice when her marriage to John is broken because her financial future is far from secure. Stronger answers explored how Rattigan portrays Catherine as different from Grace or Miss Barnes; she is more forceful, with direct speech and clear opinions – she doesn't follow convention in suppressing her opinions with John, which Dickie suggests men prefer. The selection of apt supporting material was key to a strong response.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most candidates showed understanding of the dramatic role of the Chorus in the play, such as: to provide necessary background information, to indicate the passing of time, and to set the next scene for the audience. A few weaker answers were unable to relate their overview of the function of the Chorus with the detail of this particular passage. Most good answers selected from the content to consider the drama of: the excited mood of anticipation of the '*youth of England*' as they prepare for war with France; the wickedness of the three traitors and the suspense of their fate; and the humorous movement of the play from London to Southampton, with reassurance of no sea-sickness when we are transported to France. Several strong answers explicitly analysed Shakespeare's use of language, to consider, for instance: the effect of '*fire*' used to describe the inflamed enthusiasm of the '*youth of England*' as they burn to fight for their country; the patriotism expressed in the '*greatness*' of England; the contrasting description of the French as they '*shake in their fear*'; and the word-play as the guilty traitors accepted French '*gilt*' for their treason: '*O guilt indeed!*'.

Question 8

Strong responses showed understanding of different sides to Pistol's character. Most tended to find memorable the humour Pistol creates, which often arises from misunderstandings such as his attempts at French with M. le Fer, his attempts at grandiose language and his use of jokes and puns. His slapstick antics with Fluellen and the leeks was also noted as comic. Stronger answers considered Pistol's more disreputable side in his mercenary reasons for going to war, and his desire to go back to his old life as '*bawd*' and '*cutpurse*' afterwards, aiming to dine off lies about his battle scars. Some answers found most memorable Pistol's more caring side, shown as he pleads for Bardolph's life. Stronger answers also considered how Shakespeare uses Pistol to convey a contrast between his poverty and the noblemen of the play; and also how the notions of nobility and military honour are undercut by Pistol's cowardly actions. Weaker answers tended to assert and repeat points and lacked detail in supporting evidence from the text.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 9

There is much in this passage which is dramatic and significant. Most candidates selected these points: the dramatic irony of Duncan's trust of the previous traitor, Thane of Cawdor, when he also trusted the new Thane, who is also a traitor; the drama of Macbeth's entrance at that precise moment, followed by Duncan's extravagant praise of him, which raises doubts in the audience's minds about whether his trust in Macbeth is equally misplaced; and the drama and significance of Duncan's confirmation of his heir as Malcolm, which puts up a hurdle which Macbeth has to take action to '*o'er-leap*', thus pushing the plot forward. Stronger answers explicitly analysed some of the language, such as: the significance of Duncan's use of natural growth imagery, humbly extended by Banquo, showing them both as natural and good characters, and the 'star' imagery used by Duncan as a shining light on '*nobleness*', but told by Macbeth not to shed light on his '*dark*' deeds, which shows the contrast in the characters. Some weaker responses showed confusion over the plot, with some candidates thinking that Macbeth is given the title of Thane of Cawdor in the passage, and others thinking that Macbeth is already actively planning Duncan's murder, thus missing the impact of the news of Malcolm as heir.

Question 10

All answers understood Lady Macbeth's role in the murder. Stronger answers addressed 'how far' and argued their case well, using effective textual evidence to support their points. Thus evidence of her strong character was relevant, and also her view of her husband as too kind, arguing that she had to prompt him to action by mocking his courage and belittling his manhood. More thoughtful candidates considered the effect of her carefully-chosen taunts on a warrior renowned for bravery in war. Some emphasised that because Macbeth had decided not to go ahead with the plan to murder Duncan, then without his wife's words, Duncan would not have been killed. However, many candidates held Macbeth equally responsible, since he was the one who actually stabbed and killed Duncan. Weaker answers asserted views without much textual detail in support, or spent too long exploring events after the murder.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42
Unseen

Key messages

- The standard in this session is generally high, with good understanding of how to address the Assessment Objectives for the Unseen paper.
- Most engage with the details of the writing but some spend too much time on the surface narrative instead of considering implicit meaning.
- Viewpoint is especially important in prose writing, while poetry should not be approached as if it is necessarily autobiographical.
- Some responses use paraphrase instead of quotation, and some use quotation for comment on the content, and not the quality of the writing: quotation should be precise and should support a point.
- Stronger answers have a confident introductory overview of the whole text, and appreciate the importance of how a text ends.

General comments

The standard of responses in this session was once again high. Most answers are an appropriate length with plenty of textual support to show knowledge and at least surface understanding of the text chosen. The texts and questions are carefully chosen to ensure that all the Assessment Objectives for this syllabus are addressed. Candidates are fully aware of the need to address the stem question (in **bold**) and often made effective use of the bullet points to shape their responses and guide them towards a conclusion. Candidates also make careful use of the introductory rubric which usually clarifies any difficulties they might encounter in literal understanding, and so few made errors here. Most candidates understood that knowledge of the surface meaning of the text is best illustrated by frequent, brief quotation. There were some who responded mainly through paraphrase of the text. The danger of this approach is that it results in little more than a narrative account and often amounts to copying. Quotation should be more than illustrative, and the quality of comment which follows quotation often distinguishes stronger responses from weaker, as analytical comment on implied meaning and the writer's choice of words and language techniques allows AOs 2 and 3 to be addressed.

Assessment Objective 2 requires candidates to go beyond surface meaning and consider questions of tone, implication and interpretation. Close work with language, structure and form (AO3) allows a deeper interpretation to emerge, and at best there was also critical consideration of the writer's craft and conscious choices, by exploring the choice of narrative voice and perspective. Viewpoint is especially important in prose passages: candidates should consider through whose eyes we see the events of the extract, and the words and actions of other characters. Poets too do not simply present their own personal feelings: they often use a voice or persona and dramatize their emotions. Although we often use the term 'the poet' to denote a lyrical poem describing personal experiences, we should not assume poets are writing about personal experiences. Sometimes we use the term 'the speaker' to denote a character who is dramatized – in the first person – by the poet, but whose experiences might be very different from their own.

Characteristically, stronger answers considered the individual words chosen by the writer and why they were so effective in a particular context, and what they revealed about the emotions of the speaker or observer. By close word-level analysis, these candidates were also able to appreciate the overall tone of the writing and its effect on the mood of the reader. Short quotation can highlight these choices and link them back to the overarching themes of the text, and the mood it creates, while also exploring the linguistic details which make such a moment effective. Answers which analysed techniques and effects and then linked them to the themes of the text (or to the question) were especially effective.

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Good answers often had evidence of effective planning, with a particular focus on how characters' feelings are conveyed. Annotating the text and observing its different stages and cumulative structure is another good way to prepare. With a sense of the text's overall direction and underlying ironies, it is easier to write an effective introduction. Good introductions avoid narrative paraphrase, simply repeating the terms of the question or listing a series of language devices. Instead, they have an overview of the whole text, and how individual parts relate to the overall impact of the writing on the reader. Adjectives which describe emotive impressions and appreciation of genre, tone and mood will help candidates to write introductions which are more focused on the meaning of the text than a simple declaration of intentions.

Candidates would benefit from considering the text carefully as a whole, before dividing it into sections and writing in detail about particular descriptions, word or phrases. They may wish to consider who is writing (the viewpoint of the speaker and narrator) and the writer's purpose and intended effect. The genre of the piece of writing will give an indication of the writer's purpose, and some help is usually given in the rubric before the question is printed in bold. For example, a novel will use description for a very different purpose from travel writing or autobiography/memoir. Similarly, a lyrical poem presents a particular mood or moment: it is not necessarily autobiography, even if we use the shorthand 'the poet' to describe the speaker. These are literary texts, and therefore readers should expect meaning to go beyond the literal and there may well be irony or an indication that the emotions and perceptions of the narrator or viewpoint presented are not entirely reliable. The ability to appreciate ironies, apparent contradictions, contrasts and implications is indicative of more successful work.

The main part of the answer should be guided by the structure of the text: it is important to consider narrative developments and changes in tone and viewpoint, and to consider the possibility of irony or contrast. Later developments in the passage or poem may lead the reader to reconsider their first impressions. Good planning can take account of these shifts in meaning and use them to show deepening understanding of the layers of meaning within a text. There will always be more to consider in poems and passages than the simple narrative, and we should not take the judgements of the speakers and characters at face value, but be aware their possible manipulation by the writer.

The structure of poems receives more comment than that of prose passages. Many candidates comment on stanza form, rhythm and the effect of line endings. Learners might also practise comment on paragraphing, use of dialogue, description and interior monologue in prose, and the effects of sentence structure. Longer sentences demonstrate connections between actions and feelings in a poetic style. Short sentences are abrupt. They call the reader's attention to the drama or to a moment when time stands still. Any such assertions about the writer's use of structural manipulation should be fully supported and explained; generalisations about how structural features typically work are unhelpful unless they can be linked to both the text at hand and the question being asked.

Good conclusions should be brief and should aim to achieve an overall evaluation of the writer's purpose and the effect of the writing on the reader. Careful planning and timing are important to ensure candidates do not spend too long on earlier parts of the passage, give enough attention to later developments, and can look at the whole text again and appreciate the reasons why the writer shaped it in that way. Conclusions are especially helpful in demonstrating that the final Assessment Objective has been met. AO4 demands an informed, critical and evaluative personal response to the text and question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem, *Ava Remembers Her Canaries* is by an American poet and singer/songwriter Emily Rose Cole and was written just a few years ago, so its recreation of the thoughts and feelings of a young girl growing up in the coalmining state of Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century is an act of imaginative fiction rather than an autobiography. Most candidates tended to identify the poet with the speaker, which was acceptable in terms of answering the question correctly given the limited contextual information provided.

The poem has both a narrative twist and two dream-sequences, which are clearly set out as different from the main surface narrative. It provides the imaginative viewpoint of a young girl and the more guilt-laden reflections of her older self. Very few who wrote about the poem had any difficulty in appreciating the link between Ada's liberation of the canaries and the subsequent death of her father and other miners in an explosion. A minority were unable to see the tragedy inherent in the girl's actions and some only gradually or superficially realised the irony of the language earlier in the text.

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Most wrote sensitively about the girl's care for the canaries' eggs, and how she 'christened' them before they were even born. They noticed the tender verb 'nestling' or the alliterative box of 'cotton and cedar chips'. Some noticed the odd names they were given – 'Sentinel and Lookout and Firedamp' – and understood their reference to the birds' destiny in the coal mine. Some saw this as a reflection of the girl's admiration of her father, and the influence of her language. A few noticed the clipped, unsentimental and rather rough nature of her father's language: 'Ten's old enough for a job' and 'Someone's gotta breed 'em'. Those who did were also aware of a clash of language, emotions and values between father and daughter which becomes significant later in the story, as is the irony of the names given to the birds. Some also noted the absence of a maternal figure, and were able to see the significance of this in interpreting the father-daughter relationship.

Irony is also present in the simile which describes how the new born chicks 'burst into the world/like dynamite'. There is an interesting contrast between the bitter hindsight of the speaker and the way the innocent child's understanding of the world of her father is portrayed. Some noted that the 'flaking metal palace' of Ava's perspective is probably no more comfortable for the canaries than the cage with 'flimsy bars' in which her father locks Sentinel in the next stanza. They also noticed how unlikely the image of the bird being 'taught … rhythm' by the girl's 'washboard strokes' as she does her chores really is. These candidates were aware that we are in the world of Ava's innocent imagination rather than reality.

Appreciation of Ava's innocent viewpoint was most successful among those who were aware of tensions and contrast in her relationship with her father. Such responses often paid attention to the punctuation in the third stanza to appreciate that Ava and her father are arguing: '*He has a family! … So do the miners*.' Is her father's kiss affectionate and tender, or patronising and controlling? The image of how the girl says 'my tiny heels dug into dirt' received some intelligent commentary, as it works both visually and audibly to demonstrate her stubbornness.

Those who wrote well about the two dream sequences, '*I used to dream …*', were candidates who realised that they were closely linked by structural connections. They are like a refrain, using repetition, links and lists, sensuous and emotive language, powerful and disturbing imagery and active verbs to create powerful visual images of the girl's state of mind. They are like a chorus in a song. They are related to the girl's memories of the birds and of her father, and her terror of the mines. Both have powerful images of flame and furnace, 'swallowing song' and burning grief. They are set out as single sentences, in stanzas separate from the rest. These are the clue to the deeper meaning of the poem, as they are separated by the girl's decision to free the canaries from their cage with the consequence that the miners have no early warning of the explosion which can kill them, bringing grief to Ava and the other families.

The drama of Ava's 'liberation' of the birds was very well handled by most candidates, who appreciated the gentle language and sounds and scents which surround her act, giving it childish innocence. They commented on the tenderness and delicacy of her actions as she 'crept', 'cradled', 'stroked', 'launched' and 'watched'. Some noticed the fairy tale imagery of their 'rush to meet the moon' and realised that it is comparable to the 'metal palace' of the second stanza. They are less likely to thrive in the wild than the young child realises. Several noticed the melancholy music of the next stanza: 'rusted creaks' and the 'cage door beaten like a broken wing', and linked this to the girl's own saddened feelings but also a premonition of future grief. Some noticed that songs and music are a motif in the poem, as well as dreams and images of flight.

Almost all candidates were powerfully struck by the portrayal of lingering grief and guilt in the final stanzas of the poem, and noticed how the girl is literally haunted every night by the memory of the deaths she indirectly caused, with the 'headline seared' on her lips. Fewer realised that the relationship with her father is contradictory to the end, with the 'five raised ridges from his belt buckle' showing that she was punished for her act, and that their last meeting was a painful one.

Many wrote effectively about the disturbing images of guilt and self-harm in the final stanza which certainly suggested that there is more to this poem than an act of historical reconstruction, and that it explores very contemporary issues of gender, parental authority, guilt and loss of innocence.

Question 2

The prose extract from early in the novel *Stoner* (1965) by the American writer John Williams describes difficult relations between parents and children. Few had any difficulty in appreciating why William Stoner's decision to remain at university rather than return home to the family farm would cause conflict and grief for his family. The tension of the scene, full of awkward silences and stilted conversation, was generally well understood. Some thought Stoner was at home rather than still at university, the evening after his graduation

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ceremony, and there was some disagreement about whether his silence at the end of the passage showed guilt, stubbornness, regret or even a decision to change his mind. Literal misunderstandings were few, and many wrote sensitively not just about the way the characters' emotions are conveyed but also the descriptive elements of the writing, noticing that the passage begins in 'shadows' and ends in 'darkness'.

The sombre setting matches the lack of enlightenment and the painfully suppressed emotions within the family. Some realised that the phrase 'did not want to disturb him in his new estate' indicates a social gap between the new graduate and his inarticulate family. A few noticed the father's ungrammatical language and awkward, halting expression, and many noticed that the mother does not say a word, and only expresses her emotions 'with the shame and awkwardness of one who seldom weeps'.

The strongest responses were those which realised that, although the descriptive language of the passage and the dialogue are fairly distributed between William and his parents, we only see the older generation through William's eyes, and it is really *his* emotions which shape the whole passage. Most candidates could see that this is perhaps a defining moment in the relationship between the son and his parents, and appreciated how he is asserting his independence and autonomy, and a rejection of their more old-fashioned ideas of homestead and manual labour. Fewer brought out his implicit feelings and how his observations of the body language of his parents may show family relationships have already become painful, and demonstrate the distance between them. We see the inner world of Stoner and his thoughts, because we share his viewpoint, but we only see the parents from the outside, as he sees them, and this shapes our sympathies. Some did question Stoner's own opinions, noticing his initial hesitance and evasion and wondering whether he is regretting his decision at the end of the passage.

Many discussed the awkwardness of the opening paragraph. Some thought that William had already spoken of his intentions, although the passage contradicts this. It is possible that his parents are, even at this point, in denial of something so far unspoken, and which is expressed in their 'sideways' glances and the silence. The repeated references to silence and the later paradoxical reference to William listening to 'the silence' of the room received detailed attention. Fewer referred to the way silence is embedded in the syntax of the writing, such as the bald opening sentence: 'There was another silence'.

Body language was the focus for some effective commentary and analysis of what it suggested: William's 'voice louder and more forceful than he intended' shows his awkwardness and avoidance of confrontation, while his parents' 'dull and expressionless' faces hint at their lack of emotional and intellectual openness. Another short sentence – 'no one moved' – enacts the awkward silence and stolid atmosphere, while his father's initial response shows an inability or unwillingness to understand what William is implying. Stoner's rubbing of his face 'with open hand' indicates his disbelief and embarrassment, while his father's hands tightening on his kneecaps suggests repressed physical power and anger. 'I seen you get through this evening' is an odd way for a parent to talk about graduation, and hints at how awkward the father feels about the world of education.

The key passage which tended to discriminate between answers was the next paragraph. This very much gives us Stoner's understanding of the situation, his 'sense of significance and purpose' and growing despair at how little impact this makes on his father. Strong responses noted the similes here. When Stoner describes his words falling 'as if from the mouth of another' he is showing us his own sense of alienation and awareness of how little effect his explanations have on his father. The simile comparing the impact of his words on his father's expression 'as a stone receives the repeated blows of a fist' calls out for more detailed exploration. This kind of phrase offers opportunities for close analysis and appreciation of the emotions it implies. The image suggests not just how expressionless his father is, but also how little impact the young man's words have made. Indeed, they appear much more likely to hurt him than his father. Stoner is focusing much more on his own emotions than those of his parents – partly because he is not convinced that they have any. Those who appreciated the selfishness of Stoner's thoughts wrote about this moment with particular critical insight.

Many wrote effectively about the clash of wills between father and son, and could see the aggression behind the father's apparent passivity and incomprehension. Some saw rising panic in Stoner as 'his parents' faces confronted him' and 'he almost cried out to them'. Defeat is evident in his father's 'husky and tired' voice and some sympathised with the depiction of his age and disappointment. Like all parents, he believed he 'was doing the best'; only a few picked up the implied suggestion that sending Stoner to university was a mistake. The awkward glances, and stammered responses from Stoner only increase the tension, rather than resolving it, and some justifiably suggested that the father's interruption of William's offer of help is quite aggressive and his last comment – 'your ma and me can manage' – is more defiant than conciliatory.

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Most noticed that the mother says nothing throughout the passage and wrote feelingly about her own body language, ‘her face twisted as if in pain’ and her ‘crying, deeply and silently’. Some felt that Stoner was now confronting his own emotions more honestly, and realising the pain he had called. A few noticed how the father speaks for her and does not allow her to express herself. Many wrote sensitively about the mother-son relationship and how her grieving silence pushes Stoner out of the room. The gloominess of the final paragraph is heightened by the description of the way he ‘got heavily to his feet’, groped his way up the ‘narrow stairs’ and stare ‘with open eyes into darkness’. There were interesting critical responses to what this descriptive imagery might suggest about the future he is heading towards, after rejecting his family’s plans.

This passage clearly provoked interesting and thoughtful personal responses, and the generational clash was something many candidates could empathise with. A discriminating critical response will also step back and consider the way we are presented with a single, biased viewpoint and consider the ways in which we might judge and evaluate that perspective.

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