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# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

**Paper 0486/12**
**Poetry and Prose**

## Key messages

Successful candidate responses:
- show a detailed knowledge of poems and prose texts studied
- answer the question set
- provide textual support
- include detailed exploration of the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:
- show limited or general knowledge of texts studied
- do not maintain a close focus on the question
- make unsupported assertions
- describe or simply identify writer's techniques.

## General comments

Examiners reported much evidence of candidates' personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poems and prose texts they had studied. No rubric errors were reported.

### Textual knowledge

The most successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of texts and contained well-selected references (both direct quotations and indirect references) to support the chosen line of argument. These responses selected judiciously from the poems or prose extracts printed on the question paper and avoided attempts to write exhaustively on every aspect of either poem or extract without regard to the question. Several candidates made use of ellipses to reduce the length of quotations but in so doing cut out the word(s) providing pertinent support.

### Focus on the question

The strongest responses maintained a clear focus on the question throughout, with candidates carefully selecting their material and tailoring it to meet the specific demands of the question. Less successful responses sometimes showed a detailed understanding of character or theme but lacked focus on the question, often neglecting key words in the question such as 'powerfully' (**Question 1**), 'vividly' (**Question 2**), 'moving' (**Question 3**) etc. These key words are designed to elicit exploration of qualities of the writing. There were instances, too, of candidates losing focus on the question, writing excessively about background material rather than the text itself. By way of example, this was often the case with **Question 4** on Kofi Awoonor's poem *The Sea Eats the Land at Home.*

Candidates are advised to address the key words given in a question from the outset and omit introductions that include extraneous background material or lengthy statements of intent. Likewise, conclusions that simply re-state the main points of the answer are to be avoided.

### Writers' effects

Those responses which demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the texts tended to display a closer and more convincing analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. In the case of poetry and passage-based questions, candidates can quote from the text printed on the question paper, and are encouraged to do so in order to support their assertions. For the prose general essay questions, those candidates who had learned at least some direct quotations were better placed to probe critically a writer's use of language.


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**Personal response**

Strong responses were characterised by thoughtful and perceptive comments argued and supported with care. These responses engaged directly with those words in questions specifically included to elicit a personal response to the writing. Weaker responses offered less in the way of personal response and more in the way of established readings of texts. These answers tended to rely on explanation and unsupported assertion rather than critical analysis, sometimes neglecting to address the particular angle of the question.

## Comments on specific questions

**Question 1: Cold in the Earth**

Responses to this question recognised the importance of the passage of time and the changes in emotions over time. Most responses made reference to my 'Only Love' and the use of repetition and paradox. Stronger responses not only identified emotions but also explored the powerful ways in which Brontë conveys them. In less successful responses, literary devices tended to be logged and rhyme schemes simply described rather than explored more deeply.

**Question 2: For Heidi With Blue Hair**

Most responses competently addressed the content and ideas of the poem, making reference to Heidi's outrageous hair style, her rebellious attitude, the father-daughter relationship and the reactions of the 'twittering' teachers. The significance of the reference to the death of Heidi's mother was often usefully discussed. There were a number of strong responses to this question, which explored pertinent aspects of the writing: the effects of the language used to describe the headmistress's reaction, the use of parenthetical asides, and the use of direct speech. Less successful responses tended to include explanations and assertions without any critical probing of the writing.

**Question 3: The Caged Skylark**

Stronger responses showed not only a clear understanding of the poem but also applied their knowledge and understanding to the precise demands of the question, addressing in particular the key words 'vividly convey'. Stronger responses showed an ability to concentrate successfully on the skylark while drawing the parallel with man and his soul, and ensuring relevance to the question was maintained. Less successful responses lacked development of key points.

**Question 4: The Sea Eats the Land at Home**

The strongest responses centred on how Awoonor makes this such a moving poem by highlighting the language of invasion, the focus on two individual women, the helplessness against the cruel forces of nature and the references to the gods. These responses contained a convincing critical analysis of human powerlessness, using much well-selected reference to support their assertions. Elsewhere, there were interpretations that referred to the colonialism of Africa, but often these were characterised by unsupported assertions and insufficient focus on the key word 'moving'. Centres should remind candidates of the need to address the particular question rather than provide an extended and more general commentary of a text.

**Question 5: Heron at Port Talbot**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

**Question 6: Neighbours**

All responses to this question demonstrated knowledge of the 'story' behind the poem, though many were descriptive or explanatory with only intermittent focus on the actual question. Some responses were predominantly focused on the neighbourliness and hope. Only the strongest responses addressed the key word 'disturbing'. These responses were particularly convincing on the theme of abuse of innocence and included considered exploration of the effects of language. Less successful responses were characterised by simple assertions that aspects of the poem were disturbing without explaining why.


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**Question 7: Mansfield Park**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

**Question 8: Mansfield Park**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

**Question 9: My Ántonia**

There were no responses seen.

**Question 10: My Ántonia**

There were no responses seen.

**Question 11: In Custody**

Responses to this question contained more successful attempts at addressing the key word 'moving', with candidates citing the description of Deven's childhood memories as he recites Nur's poetry. Attempts at considering what was entertaining were less successful, overall. Many asserted that Nur's dismissive treatment of Deven and Deven's sense of awe in the presence of his idol were 'entertaining' but they lacked a more detailed explanation of why that was. The least successful responses merely narrated what happens in the extract with minimal focus on the question.

**Question 12: In Custody**

The responses to this question focused on Sarla and Imtiaz, with the strongest responses displaying knowledge of their traits. There was, however, insufficient consideration of the ways in which Desai makes the characters 'particularly memorable'. Centres should stress the importance of developing a detailed knowledge of the texts, part of which includes recourse to pertinent references candidates might use to support their points and to explore the ways in which writers achieve particular effects: in this case, how Desai uses language to make her characters 'memorable'.

**Question 13: Hard Times**

There were a number of very convincing responses to this question, exploring aspects of Dickens's use of language, structure and form in creating striking impressions of life in the Gradgrind family. These responses selected material judiciously from the extract and used apt and concise quotations to support their critical analysis of Dickens's writing. The strongest responses explored the image of the Ogre and the significance of the description of Stone Lodge. There was much genuine personal response expressing horror at the Gradgrind children's lack of exposure to anything imaginative. Less successful responses tracked the extract somewhat mechanically, sometimes adopting a narrative approach that neglected to address the main thrust of the question.

**Question 14: Hard Times**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

**Question 15: The Secret River**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

**Question 16: The Secret River**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.


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**Question 17: A Separate Peace**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

**Question 18: A Separate Peace**

The small number of candidates answering on this text tackled the general essay question rather than the extract question (**Question 17**). The strongest of the responses showed a general understanding of main issues such as the age of the boys and the likelihood that they will have to fight. They commented on different attitudes to the subject of enlisting and the effect of war on their generation, and Leper's experience was often usefully referred to. Less successful responses lacked the level of detail required for a convincing and perceptive critical analysis of the text. Some responses centred almost exclusively on Gene's 'internal' war, with little focus on what the question terms 'the war'.

**Question 19: Cry, The Beloved Country**

Most responses showed an awareness of the extract's position within the wider novel, and an understanding of Stephen's suffering due to Absalom's defection and the realisation that the latter will never go to St Chad's. The strongest responses focused on the key word 'moving', exploring the effects created by the language and structure of the letter, the tone of the conversation, the repeated references to hurt and pain, and the revealing silences. Those responses that did not show evidence of such critical probing nonetheless included comment on the magnetic pull of Johannesburg and what it symbolises. The least successful responses offered simple narrative accounts of the extract.

**Question 20: Cry, The Beloved Country**

There were too few responses to make useful comment.

**Question 21: Stories of Ourselves – The Bath**

Most responses to this question contained plenty of reasons for how and why the old woman should be considered with pity and sympathy. Personal responses to the perils and horrors of ageing were evident and sympathetically handled. The strongest responses explored narrative viewpoint, the descriptions of the hostile environment and the vocabulary associated with both pain and powerlessness. The main reasons for not achieving higher marks were adopting too descriptive an approach, not focusing on the question and paying insufficient attention to Frame's use of language in creating such a sad picture of the old woman.

**Question 22: Stories of Ourselves – The Fall of the House of Usher**

Responses to this question were variable – the strongest showed a detailed knowledge of the story, and included much pertinent language and quotations to support this. Several of these also included relevant coverage of how the details fitted the 'Gothic horror' model. Reference was made to the description of the house, the tarn, weather, protagonists and the horrific detail of being buried alive. Although less successful responses reflected a somewhat superficial knowledge of the text, they did demonstrate an understanding of the story's disturbing tone, in general terms.


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# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

**Paper 0486/22**
**Drama**

## Key messages

- Successful answers focused on the set question throughout and clearly developed three or four main points.
- Good answers used direct quotation from the text to support the main points.
- Strong responses commented and analysed but avoided narration and lengthy explanation.
- The strongest answers responded to the playwright's methods and showed awareness of the text on stage.

## General comments

Most responses showed detailed knowledge and understanding of the set texts. *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Raisin in the Sun* were new to the paper. Strong personal responses to the text typically centred on the characters and their predicaments. For instance, Beneatha gained admiration for her determination to be independent and not be swayed by her family's expectations in trying to become a doctor in *A Raisin in the Sun*, and Marco gained sympathy for his efforts in trying to provide for his family in *A View from the Bridge.* Many candidates empathised with Juliet as her father does what he thinks is best for her, with Desmond for his clumsy but sincere marriage proposal to Catherine in *The Winslow Boy* and with Macduff's determination to 'feel it as a man' on hearing of the murder of his wife and family by Macbeth. All questions required candidates to consider their text on stage: strong answers showed an awareness of the playwright's methods and intentions as well as the audience's likely response.

Successful responses focused on the question, beginning by identifying the issues raised by it and the main points to be explored in addressing it. Weaker answers often started by narrating part of the action of the play, or by giving extraneous historical background. A number of answers to both passage-based and discursive questions contained narrative which was not relevant. The key to a literary response is to evaluate the author's methods. Commenting on the effects of interaction between characters, the dialogue used, stage effects and likely audience response is also strongly advised.

Strong answers to passage-based questions developed comments beyond an account of what characters say and do to a consideration of the effects achieved by the playwright and their intent. Some responses identified whole-text themes and discussed how these related to the passage. In order to make such comments relevant, a clear link between the passage and theme, on the one hand, and the question on the other, needs to be made explicit in candidates' responses. Briefly stating the context informed comments on the structure of the text, such as foreshadowing. In strong answers, comments were supported by brief quotations from the passage and it was made clear how these supported the comments made.

Convincing answers to discursive questions addressed the question directly, with a focus on key words such as: *'admire'*, '*sympathy for'* and '*dramatic impact'*. These contained a clear overview and a well-developed argument supported by carefully selected material, often in the form of brief quotations. Some answers were limited in their exploitation of supporting material, reflecting an insufficient knowledge of the play. In others it was not made clear how the reference to the text supported the point being made. Some weaker answers included irrelevant background information, mixed up characters or revealed a lack of knowledge of the plot.

Very few rubric infringements were observed. These involved candidates on component 22 answering two passage-based or two discursive questions. In these cases, the higher mark was credited.


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**Comments on specific questions**

**Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun***

**Question 1**

Stronger responses briefly set the context of the passage along the lines of the following: Travis has asked Ruth for 50 cents which he needs for school. When she refuses him, he wants to go to the store to carry groceries to earn the money. Most candidates commented on the Younger's poverty as the source of the conflict. Strong answers developed this by considering the characters' conflicting approaches: Ruth is the realist; she refuses Travis the money because they do not have any to spare and she is desperate for the family to try to live within its means. Her disapproval of Walter is made clear as she looks at him with '*murder in her eyes'* and her despair is clear as she sinks her head on the table and tells Walter to leave her alone. Walter, for his part, is the dreamer, trying to protect his son from the drudgery of poverty. The fact that Walter not only gives Travis the 50 cents, but an additional 50 cents, in defiance of his wife, illustrates his misplaced self-belief; he 'knows' he is right. Strong responses included relevant sections of the passage in order to illustrate the conflict, for example: Walter's sarcasm toward Ruth; his intimidating her by standing over her; her cold attitude of '*disgust'* towards him; her nagging '*refrain'*; and her refusal to engage. Weaker responses provided an account of what happens in the scene but neglected to consider how the characters' attitudes towards each other are conveyed in the writing.

**Question 2**

Strong personal responses were made in admiration of Beneatha's strength and independence. Most responses cited her desire to be a doctor despite Walter's disapproval and the fact that she is black, female and from a poor family. Stronger answers quoted from her many criticisms of Walter to illustrate her strength. As well as admiration, there was also criticism of her ready acceptance of the sacrifices the family make to fund her college education and of how she *'flits'* between expensive hobbies as she tries to '*express herself*'. Her belittling of Mama's religion was a further point of criticism. Stronger answers matched her attraction to Asagai with her interest in her own African roots. Perceptive answers pointed out that it is under his influence that Beneatha has her hair cut short and leaves it naturally curly, rather than *'mutilating'* it by continually straightening it – a few candidates pointed out that Asagai uses strong language in *'mutilate'*, to indicate how she is denigrating her own culture. Weaker answers typically used little textual material or gave an account of Beneatha's actions in the play without addressing the question.

**Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge***

**Question 3**

Strong answers briefly described the context as follows: Eddie is determined that Marco apologises for accusing him of informing, while Marco is equally determined to seek revenge for that betrayal. Successful answers identified key methods used by Miller, such as the creation of tension, the action on stage, and the heightened emotions. Beatrice, Catherine and Rodolpho's attempts to make peace – with Eddie dramatically refusing each attempt – were also alluded to. Miller increases tension by emphasising that Marco is on his way. Eddie's agitation is conveyed in his actions as he *'snaps'* away from Rodolpho and hoists up his trousers ready for action. Rodolpho unselfishly tries to placate Eddie by apologising, but is unsuccessful. In despair, Beatrice resorts to putting into words what has been avoided until this moment: Eddie's desire for Catherine. Her speech elicits powerful candidate responses: '*in horror' 'shocked' 'weeping' 'in agony'*. Perceptive responses demonstrated an awareness of the text on stage, noting Miller's use of timing to heighten dramatic power with the arrival of Marco and his call to fight at the very moment when Eddie is distressed. The power of this moment is heightened by everyone on stage freezing for an instant, before the fight starts. Weaker answers tended to track the passage from start to finish, giving an account of who says what, instead of commenting on Miller's methods. Some weak answers neglected to give the context and a few narrated without making direct reference to the text.

**Question 4**

Candidates needed to know the play well in order to be able to select a range of relevant material to use in their responses. Some candidates limited their entire response to a few straightforward comments on Marco's character – a hard-working and caring family man – and to a narrow expression of sympathy for his situation in life: no employment back home to provide for his wife and children, nor money for medicine to treat his sick child, leading him to come to America to earn money to send back to his family. Strong responses selected from a wider range of material, for instance, sympathising with Marco when he felt he


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needed to protect Rodolpho from Eddie's increasing anger. The chair-lifting incident was often mentioned in relation to this; the most successful responses making it clear how this example supported their answer. The strongest answers sympathised with Marco for Eddie's betrayal of him and his brother in relation to Immigration. These showed a clear understanding of Marco's struggle between his sense of honour and desire for revenge on the one hand, and with a need to overcome the impediments of the American justice system on the other; a consideration of Marco's conversation with Alfieri was useful in illustrating this. Typical of weaker answers was a tendency to narrate events without comment, to use little textual reference in support of comments made, or to persist in comparing Marco with Rodolpho throughout without directly addressing the question.

**Terence Rattigan: *The Winslow Boy***

**Question 5**

Strong responses contained a detailed analysis of the passage. Full consideration was given to how Rattigan shows Catherine and Sir Robert sparring on equal terms. Catherine questions him sharply on his weeping, causing Sir Robert to compare her to a prosecutor questioning a witness. Many candidates quoted Sir Robert: '*It is not hard to do justice – very hard to do right',* but only a few succeeded in relating this to the question to show that right has been done; the right of the individual to have a fair trial and bring a case against the establishment, rather than whether the crime of theft was committed by Ronnie or not. Many candidates commented on Ronnie's lack of interest, illustrated by his being at the cinema when the verdict was given, but only a few considered Rattigan's intent in emphasising that the case was never primarily about him. It was relevant to point out Catherine's poor first impressions of Sir Robert, but only as a way of indicating how she changed and came to respect his abilities. Some answers expected a declared love affair between the two and judged that the hints of attraction ('*playfully', 'provocative hat')* were not an effective way to end. However, Rattigan's intent was not taken into account in these answers. The emphasis is on issues of individual freedom: Catherine supports women's rights as strongly as ever. Rattigan chooses to end the play with a suggestion of what women's emancipation might bring. Weaker answers simply narrated, and neglected to consider the author's intentions in deliberately understating the success of the trial.

**Question 6**

Responses to this question were mixed. Strong answers not only demonstrated a knowledge of Desmond's character as a cricketing 'has-been', a dull and reliable friend of the family and a figure of fun, but they evaluated his contribution to the dramatic impact in the play. They saw him as a foil to other men: his self-deprecation is in stark contrast to Sir Robert's arrogance, and his role as suitor to Catherine makes us compare him with John – unfavourably at first, his age in stark relief when John declares he was a boyhood cricketing hero of his – but his steadfastness outlasts the ungallant John. Catherine's response to him remains lukewarm: she '*forgets*' he is invited to lunch, his love is a '*family joke'*, and his declaration of love is unexciting. Stronger responses explored how Rattigan uses Desmond to comment on the limited options open to women: Catherine says '*even an old maid must eat'*. Desmond furthers the plot by introducing the Winslows to Sir Robert and by informing Catherine of Sir Robert's refusal of the position of Lord Chief Justice in taking their case. Weaker responses were limited to a few straightforward points; they needed to consider how the author uses Desmond.

**William Shakespeare: *Macbeth***

**Question 7**

Successful answers focused on the question and the passage. These described Macbeth's overconfidence at the start, buoyed by a false sense of security in the prophecies. A few responses included an analysis of the language of '*Our castle's strength/Will laugh a siege to scorn'* as evidence of Macbeth's contempt, shown in the image of the castle's strength laughing in mockery of the enemy, and in the sneer of the alliterated '*siege to scorn'.* Many candidates accurately commented that Macbeth is too *'full with horrors'* to flinch at an unexpected cry to emphasise how evil he has become having murdered so many. This lack of natural feeling is continued on hearing of his wife's death. Several candidates asserted inaccurately that Macbeth is grief-stricken. Rather, he ponders on the meaningless of life in general. Candidates needed to analyse how language is used here instead of loosely paraphrasing. Shakespeare uses images of light and stage to convey how life is brief and endeavour worthless. '*Out, out, brief candle'* emphasises the brevity and fragility of life; the repetition reproducing the spluttering of a candle as it expires. Macbeth's own life, *'full of sound and fury'* in its violence, can be seen as '*signifying nothing'* in the characterisation of life as something as brief and meaningless as an actor's time on stage. Many candidates commented that the report on Birnam Wood moving shocks Macbeth because of the prophecy '*Fear not, til Birnam wood/Do come to Dunsinane'*.


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His anger at the witches' equivocation is unleashed on the messenger in '*Liar and slave!'* In dramatic contrast to the moment of quiet contemplation, the stage now fills with action as Macbeth commands his troops to '*Arm, arm and out'*. Strong responses pointed out that Macbeth reminds us of the brave warrior we saw at the start of the play as he voices his desire to die '*with harness on our back'*; the effect of this is to encourage us to evaluate where he went wrong. Weak responses often included lengthy assertions of Macbeth's evil or insane state of mind without textual support, often narrating events from earlier in the play.

**Question 8**

Most responses demonstrated knowledge of what Macduff does in the play: he supports the rightful king, Malcolm, in mounting opposition to Macbeth's rule and he kills Macbeth. Responses needed to explore Shakespeare's use of Macduff in creating dramatic impact. Macduff is a foil to Macbeth; the similarities between Macduff and Macbeth are outlined at the start of the play – both are brave warriors loyal to King Duncan – the effect of which is to emphasise the different choices subsequently made by the two. Macbeth, representing evil, chooses to satisfy his ambition through murder, while Macduff, representing good, chooses to remain loyal to the rightful heir, Malcolm. The play can thus be seen to show good overcoming evil. Strong responses went beyond the idea that Macduff is simply a foil. In immediately suspecting that Macbeth murdered Duncan, his character serves to create dramatic anticipation as the audience wait to see how he acts on his suspicions. The witches' warnings to '*Beware Macduff'* add to this. Macbeth's murder of his family increases Macduff's desire for revenge. When Macduff brings Birnam Wood to Dunsinane as camouflage for his troops, he reveals to the audience an undermining of Macbeth's trust in the witches' prophecies, thus heightening dramatic anticipation around how he will kill Macbeth. The audience knows Macduff will kill Macbeth with the words '*untimely ripped'* [from his mother's womb]. In hailing Malcolm as king, the natural order is dramatically restored. Weaker responses typically lacked textual support, neglected to comment on dramatic impact, focused too much on Macbeth, or confused Macbeth with Banquo or Malcolm. Some answers made extensive and extraneous references to other Shakespeare plays.

**William Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet***

**Question 9**

Strong answers briefly gave the context: Romeo and Juliet met for the first time earlier this evening at the Capulet's ball. Romeo has entered the Capulet's grounds and has found Juliet on her balcony. Strong answers considered the importance of staging here: Juliet does not know Romeo is there. The effect of this is that convention is bypassed: Juliet immediately shows the strength of her feelings towards Romeo. The positioning of Juliet on the balcony has the effect of making Romeo literally look up to her; this is reflected in his speech, as he calls her '*bright angel'*. Most candidates commented on how both Romeo and Juliet are prepared to give up their names for each other, and some considered the implications for them of renouncing their families. Stronger responses explored the language used, with Juliet repeating his name in love and despair, then reasoning '*What's in a name?'* as she implores the Romeo of her imagination to '*doff thy name'* and in exchange '*Take all myself'.* The strength of her love is declared in this offer before she knows Romeo is there, while the fact that he too is ready to give up his name shows that his love is equal to hers. Her concern for his safety also indicates her love, while his dismissal of this danger shows the strength of his. Weaker answers narrated the plot or explained Romeo's love for Rosaline, often paraphrasing or explaining Juliet's '*What's in a name'* speech without due attention to the question or to the rest of the passage.

**Question 10**

Most candidates explored Capulet's caring side by successfully evoking his discussion of Paris's request to marry Juliet. Paris is a noble youth, related to the Prince and a good match for Juliet, as well as the family. Capulet expresses concern at Juliet's youth, and makes plain that her agreement is needed before he will give consent. He shows his love for her by calling her '*the hopeful lady of my earth'.* Juliet goes along with the idea when she says she will '*look to like'*. Strong responses revealed clarity of understanding as to why Capulet brings forward her marriage to Paris: he is seeking to help her overcome her grief at her cousin Tybalt's death. He is unaware of her marriage to Romeo. He expects her to be grateful and is quick to anger when she refuses to marry Paris. The violence of his insults is shocking. Stronger responses explored the language used to express Capulet's anger: *'you baggage', 'my fingers itch',* he even threatens to throw her out of her home, *'hang, beg, starve, die in the streets'*. This is no caring father. Yet when she pretends to agree, all is forgiven: '*My heart is wondrous light'.* After her death, he shows his love for her: '*with my child my joys are buried'* and ends the feud in her name. Weaker answers neglected to employ a sufficient range of supporting reference.


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# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

**Paper 0486/32**
**Drama (Open Text)**

## Key messages

- Successful answers focused on the set question throughout and clearly developed three or four main points.
- Good answers used direct quotation from the text to support the main points.
- Strong responses commented and analysed but avoided narration and lengthy explanation.
- The strongest answers responded to the playwright's methods and showed awareness of the text on stage.

## General comments

Most responses showed detailed knowledge and understanding of the set texts. *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Raisin in the Sun* were new to the paper. Strong personal responses to the text typically centred on the characters and their predicaments. For instance, Beneatha gained admiration for her determination to be independent and not be swayed by her family's expectations in trying to become a doctor in *A Raisin in the Sun*, and Marco gained sympathy for his efforts in trying to provide for his family in *A View from the Bridge.* Many candidates empathised with Juliet as her father does what he thinks is best for her, with Desmond for his clumsy but sincere marriage proposal to Catherine in *The Winslow Boy* and with Macduff's determination to 'feel it as a man' on hearing of the murder of his wife and family by Macbeth. All questions required candidates to consider their text on stage: strong answers showed an awareness of the playwright's methods and intentions as well as the audience's likely response.

Successful responses focused on the question, beginning by identifying the issues raised by it and the main points to be explored in addressing it. Weaker answers often started by narrating part of the action of the play, or by giving extraneous historical background. A number of answers to both passage-based and discursive questions contained narrative which was not relevant. The key to a literary response is to evaluate the author's methods. Commenting on the effects of interaction between characters, the dialogue used, stage effects and likely audience response is also strongly advised.

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Very few rubric infringements were observed. These involved candidates on component 22 answering two passage-based or two discursive questions. In these cases, the higher mark was credited.


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**Comments on specific questions**

**Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun***

**Question 1**

Stronger responses briefly set the context of the passage along the lines of the following: Travis has asked Ruth for 50 cents which he needs for school. When she refuses him, he wants to go to the store to carry groceries to earn the money. Most candidates commented on the Younger's poverty as the source of the conflict. Strong answers developed this by considering the characters' conflicting approaches: Ruth is the realist; she refuses Travis the money because they do not have any to spare and she is desperate for the family to try to live within its means. Her disapproval of Walter is made clear as she looks at him with '*murder in her eyes'* and her despair is clear as she sinks her head on the table and tells Walter to leave her alone. Walter, for his part, is the dreamer, trying to protect his son from the drudgery of poverty. The fact that Walter not only gives Travis the 50 cents, but an additional 50 cents, in defiance of his wife, illustrates his misplaced self-belief; he 'knows' he is right. Strong responses included relevant sections of the passage in order to illustrate the conflict, for example: Walter's sarcasm toward Ruth; his intimidating her by standing over her; her cold attitude of '*disgust'* towards him; her nagging '*refrain'*; and her refusal to engage. Weaker responses provided an account of what happens in the scene but neglected to consider how the characters' attitudes towards each other are conveyed in the writing.

**Question 2**

Strong personal responses were made in admiration of Beneatha's strength and independence. Most responses cited her desire to be a doctor despite Walter's disapproval and the fact that she is black, female and from a poor family. Stronger answers quoted from her many criticisms of Walter to illustrate her strength. As well as admiration, there was also criticism of her ready acceptance of the sacrifices the family make to fund her college education and of how she *'flits'* between expensive hobbies as she tries to '*express herself*'. Her belittling of Mama's religion was a further point of criticism. Stronger answers matched her attraction to Asagai with her interest in her own African roots. Perceptive answers pointed out that it is under his influence that Beneatha has her hair cut short and leaves it naturally curly, rather than *'mutilating'* it by continually straightening it – a few candidates pointed out that Asagai uses strong language in *'mutilate'*, to indicate how she is denigrating her own culture. Weaker answers typically used little textual material or gave an account of Beneatha's actions in the play without addressing the question.

**Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge***

**Question 3**

Strong answers briefly described the context as follows: Eddie is determined that Marco apologises for accusing him of informing, while Marco is equally determined to seek revenge for that betrayal. Successful answers identified key methods used by Miller, such as the creation of tension, the action on stage, and the heightened emotions. Beatrice, Catherine and Rodolpho's attempts to make peace – with Eddie dramatically refusing each attempt – were also alluded to. Miller increases tension by emphasising that Marco is on his way. Eddie's agitation is conveyed in his actions as he *'snaps'* away from Rodolpho and hoists up his trousers ready for action. Rodolpho unselfishly tries to placate Eddie by apologising, but is unsuccessful. In despair, Beatrice resorts to putting into words what has been avoided until this moment: Eddie's desire for Catherine. Her speech elicits powerful candidate responses: '*in horror' 'shocked' 'weeping' 'in agony'*. Perceptive responses demonstrated an awareness of the text on stage, noting Miller's use of timing to heighten dramatic power with the arrival of Marco and his call to fight at the very moment when Eddie is distressed. The power of this moment is heightened by everyone on stage freezing for an instant, before the fight starts. Weaker answers tended to track the passage from start to finish, giving an account of who says what, instead of commenting on Miller's methods. Some weak answers neglected to give the context and a few narrated without making direct reference to the text.

**Question 4**

Candidates needed to know the play well in order to be able to select a range of relevant material to use in their responses. Some candidates limited their entire response to a few straightforward comments on Marco's character – a hard-working and caring family man – and to a narrow expression of sympathy for his situation in life: no employment back home to provide for his wife and children, nor money for medicine to treat his sick child, leading him to come to America to earn money to send back to his family. Strong responses selected from a wider range of material, for instance, sympathising with Marco when he felt he


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needed to protect Rodolpho from Eddie's increasing anger. The chair-lifting incident was often mentioned in relation to this; the most successful responses making it clear how this example supported their answer. The strongest answers sympathised with Marco for Eddie's betrayal of him and his brother in relation to Immigration. These showed a clear understanding of Marco's struggle between his sense of honour and desire for revenge on the one hand, and with a need to overcome the impediments of the American justice system on the other; a consideration of Marco's conversation with Alfieri was useful in illustrating this. Typical of weaker answers was a tendency to narrate events without comment, to use little textual reference in support of comments made, or to persist in comparing Marco with Rodolpho throughout without directly addressing the question.

**Terence Rattigan: *The Winslow Boy***

**Question 5**

Strong responses contained a detailed analysis of the passage. Full consideration was given to how Rattigan shows Catherine and Sir Robert sparring on equal terms. Catherine questions him sharply on his weeping, causing Sir Robert to compare her to a prosecutor questioning a witness. Many candidates quoted Sir Robert: '*It is not hard to do justice – very hard to do right',* but only a few succeeded in relating this to the question to show that right has been done; the right of the individual to have a fair trial and bring a case against the establishment, rather than whether the crime of theft was committed by Ronnie or not. Many candidates commented on Ronnie's lack of interest, illustrated by his being at the cinema when the verdict was given, but only a few considered Rattigan's intent in emphasising that the case was never primarily about him. It was relevant to point out Catherine's poor first impressions of Sir Robert, but only as a way of indicating how she changed and came to respect his abilities. Some answers expected a declared love affair between the two and judged that the hints of attraction ('*playfully', 'provocative hat')* were not an effective way to end. However, Rattigan's intent was not taken into account in these answers. The emphasis is on issues of individual freedom: Catherine supports women's rights as strongly as ever. Rattigan chooses to end the play with a suggestion of what women's emancipation might bring. Weaker answers simply narrated, and neglected to consider the author's intentions in deliberately understating the success of the trial.

**Question 6**

Responses to this question were mixed. Strong answers not only demonstrated a knowledge of Desmond's character as a cricketing 'has-been', a dull and reliable friend of the family and a figure of fun, but they evaluated his contribution to the dramatic impact in the play. They saw him as a foil to other men: his self-deprecation is in stark contrast to Sir Robert's arrogance, and his role as suitor to Catherine makes us compare him with John – unfavourably at first, his age in stark relief when John declares he was a boyhood cricketing hero of his – but his steadfastness outlasts the ungallant John. Catherine's response to him remains lukewarm: she '*forgets*' he is invited to lunch, his love is a '*family joke'*, and his declaration of love is unexciting. Stronger responses explored how Rattigan uses Desmond to comment on the limited options open to women: Catherine says '*even an old maid must eat'*. Desmond furthers the plot by introducing the Winslows to Sir Robert and by informing Catherine of Sir Robert's refusal of the position of Lord Chief Justice in taking their case. Weaker responses were limited to a few straightforward points; they needed to consider how the author uses Desmond.

**William Shakespeare: *Macbeth***

**Question 7**

Successful answers focused on the question and the passage. These described Macbeth's overconfidence at the start, buoyed by a false sense of security in the prophecies. A few responses included an analysis of the language of '*Our castle's strength/Will laugh a siege to scorn'* as evidence of Macbeth's contempt, shown in the image of the castle's strength laughing in mockery of the enemy, and in the sneer of the alliterated '*siege to scorn'.* Many candidates accurately commented that Macbeth is too *'full with horrors'* to flinch at an unexpected cry to emphasise how evil he has become having murdered so many. This lack of natural feeling is continued on hearing of his wife's death. Several candidates asserted inaccurately that Macbeth is grief-stricken. Rather, he ponders on the meaningless of life in general. Candidates needed to analyse how language is used here instead of loosely paraphrasing. Shakespeare uses images of light and stage to convey how life is brief and endeavour worthless. '*Out, out, brief candle'* emphasises the brevity and fragility of life; the repetition reproducing the spluttering of a candle as it expires. Macbeth's own life, *'full of sound and fury'* in its violence, can be seen as '*signifying nothing'* in the characterisation of life as something as brief and meaningless as an actor's time on stage. Many candidates commented that the report on Birnam Wood moving shocks Macbeth because of the prophecy '*Fear not, til Birnam wood/Do come to Dunsinane'*.


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His anger at the witches' equivocation is unleashed on the messenger in '*Liar and slave!'* In dramatic contrast to the moment of quiet contemplation, the stage now fills with action as Macbeth commands his troops to '*Arm, arm and out'*. Strong responses pointed out that Macbeth reminds us of the brave warrior we saw at the start of the play as he voices his desire to die '*with harness on our back'*; the effect of this is to encourage us to evaluate where he went wrong. Weak responses often included lengthy assertions of Macbeth's evil or insane state of mind without textual support, often narrating events from earlier in the play.

**Question 8**

Most responses demonstrated knowledge of what Macduff does in the play: he supports the rightful king, Malcolm, in mounting opposition to Macbeth's rule and he kills Macbeth. Responses needed to explore Shakespeare's use of Macduff in creating dramatic impact. Macduff is a foil to Macbeth; the similarities between Macduff and Macbeth are outlined at the start of the play – both are brave warriors loyal to King Duncan – the effect of which is to emphasise the different choices subsequently made by the two. Macbeth, representing evil, chooses to satisfy his ambition through murder, while Macduff, representing good, chooses to remain loyal to the rightful heir, Malcolm. The play can thus be seen to show good overcoming evil. Strong responses went beyond the idea that Macduff is simply a foil. In immediately suspecting that Macbeth murdered Duncan, his character serves to create dramatic anticipation as the audience wait to see how he acts on his suspicions. The witches' warnings to '*Beware Macduff'* add to this. Macbeth's murder of his family increases Macduff's desire for revenge. When Macduff brings Birnam Wood to Dunsinane as camouflage for his troops, he reveals to the audience an undermining of Macbeth's trust in the witches' prophecies, thus heightening dramatic anticipation around how he will kill Macbeth. The audience knows Macduff will kill Macbeth with the words '*untimely ripped'* [from his mother's womb]. In hailing Malcolm as king, the natural order is dramatically restored. Weaker responses typically lacked textual support, neglected to comment on dramatic impact, focused too much on Macbeth, or confused Macbeth with Banquo or Malcolm. Some answers made extensive and extraneous references to other Shakespeare plays.

**William Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet***

**Question 9**

Strong answers briefly gave the context: Romeo and Juliet met for the first time earlier this evening at the Capulet's ball. Romeo has entered the Capulet's grounds and has found Juliet on her balcony. Strong answers considered the importance of staging here: Juliet does not know Romeo is there. The effect of this is that convention is bypassed: Juliet immediately shows the strength of her feelings towards Romeo. The positioning of Juliet on the balcony has the effect of making Romeo literally look up to her; this is reflected in his speech, as he calls her '*bright angel'*. Most candidates commented on how both Romeo and Juliet are prepared to give up their names for each other, and some considered the implications for them of renouncing their families. Stronger responses explored the language used, with Juliet repeating his name in love and despair, then reasoning '*What's in a name?'* as she implores the Romeo of her imagination to '*doff thy name'* and in exchange '*Take all myself'.* The strength of her love is declared in this offer before she knows Romeo is there, while the fact that he too is ready to give up his name shows that his love is equal to hers. Her concern for his safety also indicates her love, while his dismissal of this danger shows the strength of his. Weaker answers narrated the plot or explained Romeo's love for Rosaline, often paraphrasing or explaining Juliet's '*What's in a name'* speech without due attention to the question or to the rest of the passage.

**Question 10**

Most candidates explored Capulet's caring side by successfully evoking his discussion of Paris's request to marry Juliet. Paris is a noble youth, related to the Prince and a good match for Juliet, as well as the family. Capulet expresses concern at Juliet's youth, and makes plain that her agreement is needed before he will give consent. He shows his love for her by calling her '*the hopeful lady of my earth'.* Juliet goes along with the idea when she says she will '*look to like'*. Strong responses revealed clarity of understanding as to why Capulet brings forward her marriage to Paris: he is seeking to help her overcome her grief at her cousin Tybalt's death. He is unaware of her marriage to Romeo. He expects her to be grateful and is quick to anger when she refuses to marry Paris. The violence of his insults is shocking. Stronger responses explored the language used to express Capulet's anger: *'you baggage', 'my fingers itch',* he even threatens to throw her out of her home, *'hang, beg, starve, die in the streets'*. This is no caring father. Yet when she pretends to agree, all is forgiven: '*My heart is wondrous light'.* After her death, he shows his love for her: '*with my child my joys are buried'* and ends the feud in her name. Weaker answers neglected to employ a sufficient range of supporting reference.


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# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

**Paper 0486/42**
**Unseen**

## Key messages

- Differentiation came from the extent to which each of the assessment objectives was addressed
- Strong responses explored meaning well beyond the literal surface meaning and considered the writers' purposes
- Quality of comment on descriptive language, especially imagery, was often a discriminator
- In order to achieve the highest marks, personal response requires confident interpretation of the text and its meaning for the reader.

## General comments

The texts were a poem by David Malouf painting a surprisingly sinister image of his grandmother and a passage from the beginning of Charles Dickens' last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend.* Candidates appeared to enjoy the non-literal aspects of the writing, the dark elements to the atmosphere of both texts and opportunities to engage with the richness of the writing. The prose question proved to be a little more popular than the poetry in this session, and questions proved to be of almost identical facility. This paper gives candidates a chance to prove what they have individually learned, by applying skills of analysis and evaluation to an entirely unseen text, and forming their own interpretation, independently of what they have been taught. The range of past papers and past examiner reports and mark schemes for this paper are useful tools for practising unseen interpretation skills. They can also be supplemented by reflection on key skills for Literature study.

The five Assessment Objectives are fundamental to assessment and differentiation in this paper. Candidates must show knowledge of the whole text and at least its surface meaning, supporting this through frequent brief quotation (AO1). However, it is the deeper understanding of implicit meaning which distinguishes stronger answers (AO2). Such responses demonstrate an ability to look beyond surface meaning and draw inferences based on details in the text, both about characters and the reader's response to them. They also reflect an understanding of the writer's purpose. The rubric is intended to support candidates. For example, in **Question 2** in this session, candidates were told that the extract is from the beginning of a novel. This should prompt candidates to expect creation of setting, atmosphere and anticipation, along with the introduction of characters or discoveries which might be significant later in the novel. Candidates are advised to think about why writers wrote the text in a particular style. This is what is meant by 'critical understanding' in the higher-level descriptors in the Mark Scheme.

The quality of comment on language, structure and form (AO3) is also a discriminator. Stronger answers begin with an overview which not only addresses the meaning of the text beyond its surface narrative but also shows an appreciation of the text's overall structure. An understanding of structure, and the ability to divide the text into between three and five different sections, enables candidates to relate part to whole, and to explore how individual details might contribute to the overall impression of the piece. The quality of comment on descriptive passages and rhetorical devices, especially imagery, distinguishes stronger from weaker responses. Analysis of the writer's effects is most successful when integrated within a cohesive argument which interprets the text and evaluates effects in terms of the direction and impact of the writing.

The final Assessment Objective, AO4, underpins the structure of a critical appreciation. It requires candidates to demonstrate a critical understanding of the text, and to comment on what it means to them, as readers. Qualities of empathy and imagination are important elements of literary criticism and the best responses show confident individual interpretations of the texts.

Examiners do not mark with a particular model answer in mind. Nor do they mark with a fixed view of the 'correct' interpretation of the text. It is evidence of candidates' engagement with the texts, and their


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extrapolation of meaning from close reading that is examiners' focus. Stronger answers comment on the text as a whole. Centres can develop their candidates' preparedness for this paper by embedding unseen interpretation throughout Literature courses, and using unseen texts to practise key skills for effective reading and writing in response to literary texts.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

*At My Grandmother's* by David Malouf is not a conventional elegy for an admired relative. Indeed, the grandmother's house is not a comfortable place to be, and she is in some respects a sinister figure. Both the second and third stanzas state that the boy 'feared' being there. As he is only helping her with her knitting – as explained in the rubric – the nature of his fear is obscure and depends on implicit feelings revealed through the poet's imagery. Many responses discussed the boy's fears of being trapped in that 'shuttered' room stuffed with unfriendly objects when he would rather be out enjoying the 'afternoon late summer' atmosphere with his friends. Such responses typically developed on this by explaining why the boy feels like a 'prisoner' and how he resents the way the summer 'leaked its daylight through his head'. Deeper understanding of the boy's implicit fears and feelings relied on a closer reading of patterns of imagery in the first stanza. Stronger answers focused on two persistent patterns in the poem's images, those related to water, such as 'underwater world' and those related to time, beginning with 'the wide arms of a gilded clock' in the first stanza. Some, supported by the third bullet which references 'time and memory' highlighted the close connection between these two patterns as reflected in the phrase 'time like water'. A few showed real insight pointing to the image of the 'wide arms' of the clock, and linking this not just to the boy's sense that his time is being wasted, but also to the 'wide ache of his arms' in the final stanza when he is holding her knitting. These answers showed the benefits of considering the text as a whole and its patterns of language before writing a critical commentary stanza by stanza.

In the first stanza, the image of time 'held' in the clock established a more extended meditation on time and on why the boy feels trapped in the grandmother's room. There is some sense of threat even outside the room with the 'bright envenomed leaves' hinting at a tropical setting, and the stagnant nature of the room being evoked by the water imagery, made more accessible by glossing 'wide Sargasso sea'. Many noticed that the grandmother appears to be trapped in her memory, and that her knitting is how she has 'wound out her griefs' and trapped the small boy in them. Speculations about what those griefs might be were evident in a number of responses with some demonstrating an overly literal interpretation of the image of the 'drowned' children's faces in the third stanza. Going beyond surface meaning does not mean that candidates are obliged to construct a back story for a text: they only need to work with the evidence in front of them. The 'underwater world' that makes up the grandmother's room is clearly a gloomy and murky place, where the boy feels uncomfortable; a 'prisoner to weeds and coral'.

The boy's fears are more explicit in the second stanza which features more concrete descriptions of the parrot and the butterflies. Not all responses demonstrated an understanding of the fact that the parrot was a stuffed rather than a live bird, but most commented on the oxymoron of the creature 'screeching soundless', another example of how the natural world seems to be stilled, silent or stagnant in that room. Likewise, it isn't quite clear if the butterflies are part of a collection or a way of describing the grandmother's jewellery but in either case they are not alive. The sense of the room as a place where dead things are preserved was understood and often developed. Some responses drew attention to the 'faded' or 'sable', with the effect of combining senses such that the room becomes a place of darkness. Among the strongest interpretations were those reflecting a perception of the boy as a prisoner of fate, some alluding to Greek mythology in the description of the 'skeins' of wool the boy holds in his 'outstretched arms' as his grandmother appears, like the Parcae, to wind out his destiny.

The strangely disembodied movements of the grandmother in the final stanza were interpreted in a number of responses as further contributing to an implicitly threatening atmosphere, where time and memory are fluid. One or two responses touched on the explicit violence in the 'stiff, bejewelled fingers/ pinned at her throat' or 'moving on grey wings', as indicating that she was murderous, or about to be murdered, or bat-like, perhaps even a kind of vampire. This last suggestion is not far-fetched and fits with the final image of how 'the old grey hands wind out his blood'. In strong answers these phrases were interpreted as emerging from the boy's over-active imagination; some describing his exaggerations as hyperbolic, or inappropriate. A few responses indicated disapproval of the boy's attitude to his grandmother – a valid personal response and one indicative of greater understanding than those interpreting the poem as praise for someone the boy admired and felt sentimentally towards.


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Some candidates clearly struggled with the form of this poem, referring to it as 'free verse'. Those who understood that it is in fact in 'blank verse' and so has a regular rhythm, despite the absence of rhyme or a regular stanza pattern, were also able to appreciate the effect of enjambment, in contrast to earlier end-stopping. A few noticed that Malouf always uses enjambment when describing the process of knitting, and these were often the same candidates who understood that the boy feels the grandmother is weaving his destiny. Others noticed that descriptions here replicate those of the second stanza: dead objects, implicit violence, and stiff preservation. Some noticed the return of sea imagery (or suggestions of wreckage) in the 'spindrift faces' of the ghosts. Those who noticed the movement from 'word to word' or the reference to the grandmother's 'voice' understood that she is talking as she knits, and that this seems to bring an unhappy past back to life, of other children ('who played at hope and ball') now trapped in the 'gilded frames' of her collection of pictures. Many described the presence of these ghosts, as children who also 'once sat' where the boy is sitting and felt their time being unravelled. Candidates who effectively addressed the third bullet point showed realised that this gives more supporting detail to the image of the 'still Sargasso/ of memory', an idea of being trapped in the past, unable to escape and a witness to 'the wrack and debris of the years'. A few very strong answers revealed an understanding that the boy is in fact trapped by his own thoughts rather than by the grandmother herself. In his reluctance to be there, he has transformed her into a mythological creature unwinding his destiny and provoking fear about the passing of time and of his own, as well as her, mortality.

**Question 2**

The question, bullet points and rubric were intended to encourage candidates to think about the mysterious, disturbing and ominous atmosphere created in the text, to focus on the characters of the father and daughter and to provide an overview of how this dark and sordid scene might prepare the reader for a novel about mystery, salvage and corruption. Candidates often used the bullet points as an essay plan, and that is an entirely legitimate technique, although not the only approach to effectively answering the question.

The father is unnamed, and Gaffer Hexam is indeed a relatively minor character in the novel, but he dominates this extract and the descriptive language which surrounds him made it easy for candidates to write about him. While most perceived him as an omniscient narrator, some argued that we see him through the perspective of his daughter, Lizzie, as no one else is there (or at least no one living). This latter was a valid interpretation, and one linked to the idea of her 'look of dread or horror' in suggesting that she fears him. Many noticed that scavenging in the river is something 'they often did', a 'business-like activity' for him, correctly linking this activity to his joy in discovering money at the end of the passage. Some picked up the animalistic imagery in the description of the 'half savage' with a 'hungry look' and 'a certain likeness to a bird of prey', while being disturbed by his wildness, untidiness and evident greed. His coarse appearance and manners also attracted comment. However, many appreciated that this is what poverty has reduced him to, and wrote with sympathy about those reduced to what they can salvage from what a materialistic society has discarded. Some found him an almost inhuman figure, reinforced by his lack of a name or clear identity, and the way the boat seems 'allied to the bottom of the river' because it is covered in 'slime and ooze'. Seeing him as at home in the filth and muck of his trade, some felt he was a morally dubious or corrupted figure.

The daughter, Lizzie, elicited greater sympathy. While the dirty business and the search for whatever remained in the water were 'things of usage' for him, they provoke in her a 'look of dread or horror'. The differences in attitudes and tensions between them were described as disturbing by many candidates, as was Lizzie's silence and refusal to respond to her father's questions. Nevertheless, many noticed perceptively that she is an active character and not just a passive victim: she shows 'skill' in manoeuvring the boat, her actions are 'lithe' and she is a partner in the business. However, her gesture when 'she pulled the hood of a cloak over her head' is observed as being in contrast to his steady 'gaze' and 'shining eyes'. Stronger answers revealed an awareness of something left unsaid, and of her gesture being one of guilt or shame. She seems more emotionally affected by the 'deepening shadows' and murky atmosphere, and does not share her father's delight in finding the money. Her 'very pale' face contrasts with his 'roused' and excited state. Some felt that she wanted to hide something rather than celebrate the 'luck' of discovery.

The third bullet point elicited a focus on description and atmosphere. Strong responses demonstrated an appreciation of the literal darkness of the scene, seeing this as a metaphor for a gloomy or even illicit atmosphere. Many noted the reference to dirt, to darkening light and 'deepening shadows', in some cases describing the scene as Gothic. Such descriptions were supported by historical references made in the text or by comparisons with Stephen Crane's 'The Open Boat' (in *Stories of Ourselves*). Those responses which highlighted the contrast between long descriptive sentences and short sentences ('So the girl eyed him') to describe the tension on the boat, demonstrated an ability to comment confidently on structure as well as language.


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The key to the passage is the one moment of light which contrasts with the gloom, although it proves to be a red light', and this, in many responses, was quite aptly described as sinister or as a moment of warning. It is a 'slant of light from the setting sun', part of the crepuscular atmosphere, but it highlights a 'rotten stain'. Most responses noted the rotten stain, but some attributed it to the water rather than to the bottom of the boat. More perceptive responses showed an understanding that it is this which makes Lizzie shiver. Those responses which made the point that it 'bore some resemblance to the outline of a muffled human form' showed an understanding of exactly what Lizzie's father does: he robs human corpses for their money. Some responses revealed a clarity of understanding of literal meaning, observing that the presence of a corpse excites Lizzie's father, while the thought of the dead bodies, and the sight of blood, disturbs Lizzie. This enabled more focused comment on what is implicit about the state of a society where the poor live by scavenging among the dead. Some candidates realised that the body referred to in this passage may turn out to be significant later in the novel, and many thought the genre might be mystery, horror or even a detective story. All these are valid responses to the atmosphere created. Finally, some very thoughtful and well-supported responses noted a satirical element in the extent to which the boatman is dehumanised.


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