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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11

Paper 11 Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

Successful answers featured:

- a relevant and carefully argued response to the question
- detailed knowledge supporting the points made
- careful commentary on the writer's choice of words and on the effects created
- an individual and perceptive personal response.

Successful answers avoided:

- long introductions summarising the whole of the answer in advance
- long conclusions repeating what has already been said
- giving a great deal of unneeded biographical information
- commenting on how the use of commas and colons adds to the mood and tone of a poem
- commenting on rhyme schemes and verse forms without relating them to the question
- using the passage to answer the discursive question on a text.

And most significantly they avoided:

- using the poem or passage as an Unseen exercise.

General Comments

Many candidates wrote developed and informed responses showing clear engagement with both prose and poetry. They knew they had to support with textual evidence and were often keen to explain what the writers were aiming to do.

This was the first June session for the new specification and it was clear that candidates had responded well to the two question format, since there were very few rubric errors and very few examples of rushed or incomplete final answers. The style of the questions was the same as in previous years, but all the poems were printed on the paper, which candidates apparently found of benefit. In the prose section there was no change to the passage-based questions; the most radical change was that candidates did not have their texts with them since this is now a closed book examination.
It appears that some weaker answers resulted from approaching the paper almost as an Unseen exercise. This was particularly noticeable with the poetry, which a lot of candidates seemed to be totally unprepared for, and where some unsupported interpretations were offered. Weaker answers to the prose passages were also the result of insufficient textual knowledge - these were unable to discuss implications or relate the part to the whole.

Some weaker essay answers attempted to base a response almost exclusively on the passage selected for the previous passage-based question on the same text. This was self-penalising as it made it almost impossible for a candidate to produce a relevant, or widely-enough ranging response to the essay question concerned.

Some answers did less well because they spent too much time making general statements about authors and texts instead of focusing on what is asked and constructing a clearly argued and supported response to the wording of any question attempted. Good answers were characterised by a detailed knowledge of the text, a careful and sustained focus on the demands of the question, intelligent and well-selected reference to the text, and thorough analysis of such references, showing how writers succeed in creating their desired effects. There were many candidates who clearly knew the texts quite well but tried to write down everything

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they knew rather than making relevant selections and planning. Biographical details, which are often inaccurate or speculative, are not a good substitute for analysis.

The major reason for candidates not achieving good marks was their lack of focus on the questions asked. Many weaker answers did not spend enough time on identifying the key words of the question and tailoring their knowledge and understanding to those words.

Comments on Specific Questions

SECTION A: POETRY

THOMAS HARDY: from *Selected Poems*

Question 1

Explore the ways in which Hardy's words and images create feelings of sadness in *The Darkling Thrush.*

Candidates often selected appropriately and commented on their chosen images. For many, the first two stanzas attracted the greatest attention, and there was plenty of explanation of the season and the time of day – frost, winter, 'the weakening eye of day', the images of death and decay – 'broken lyres', 'haunted', 'the Century's corpse', 'spectre-gray' and the speaker's mood – 'fervourless'. Few went on to consider the last two stanzas, and thereby deprived themselves of opportunities to make slightly more sophisticated comment.

Question 2

How does Hardy make memories so vivid in *The Going?*

Weaker answers contained too much biographical material instead of careful literary analysis, and there was evidence of inattentive reading. For example, many assumed that the speaker was the one who was 'indifferent' in line 3. Some less successful answers made some implausible assertions in their search for significance, for example seeing some sort of medical portent in the reference to 'red-veined rocks'. There were also some unsupported assertions about the rhyme scheme of the poem. More successful responses focused on the question, and looked for vividness in the language of the poem.

From JO PHILLIPS ed: *Poems Deep and Dangerous*

Question 3

In what ways does Shakespeare's writing make *Shall I compare thee…?* Such a powerful love poem?

There was a general understanding of the comparison between the loved one and summer, though not usually explored in any detail, and a sense in some competent answers of the notion of the eternal quality of the love. Weaker answers often took the form of paraphrases, although these often gave up before reaching the end of the poem. Some very good answers appraised the poem as a sonnet, and explicitly dealt with the idea of a 'powerful love poem'.

Question 4

How does Heaney make this memory of childhood in *Follower* so vivid for you?

This poem was often handled at least competently, with some appreciation of the imagery, and in most cases recognition of the poet's admiration for the power and skill of his father. For a poem so rich in phonic effects, the extent to which answers discussed language writing was limited. A few answers took a rather odd stance suggesting that the father had been abusive and that Heaney was showing his hostility to him. This did not show knowledge and understanding of the poem or the poet.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: from part 4

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Question 5

Explore the ways in which Muir vividly conveys a sense of mystery in *Horses.*

This produced some detailed and sensitive responses which looked closely at the language and imagery of the poem and explored its ambivalence. It also produced weak, generalised responses which were filled with misreadings and questionable interpretations. These were often the result of careless reading. For example, in commenting on the 'struggling snakes' simile, they tended to assume that the horses themselves were being compared with them, rather than the furrows. There was much identification of religious imagery, and in the best answers there was an understanding of its significance. However, there was plenty of material in the poem for candidates to work with, and most found at least something worthwhile to say. The discriminator was of course the extent of focus on the 'sense of mystery' and those answers which showed no understanding of the child's viewpoint and the difference between that and the adult perception had difficulty in making much of this.

Question 6

How does Rossetti strikingly create a sense of wonder in *A Birthday?*

Rossetti was nearly as popular as Muir, and again, candidates usually found something worthwhile to say. However, the 'sense of wonder' in the question was handled in a variety of ways, some more fruitful than others. In basic responses, candidates took the question to mean 'I wonder who her love is', and wrote about the ways in which the poem teases the reader into speculation before the final (non-) revelation. There were some prevalent misreadings. In particular, the reference to 'peacocks with a hundred eyes' was taken literally, and several candidates discussed the hyperbole and its literal impossibility. Less successful responses made much of the importance of the rainbow as a symbol of hope, without considering the accompanying shell at all. There were also some strong responses which evaluated the imagery thoughtfully and offered a consistent reading of the poem, identifying the 'love' as, variously, 'God', 'the man of her dreams' or 'her new baby' (or, in one case, Death). The religious interpretation of the poem was often asserted rather than argued.

JANE AUSTEN: *Northanger Abbey*

Question 7

How does Austen make you feel about the way James, Isabella and John behave towards Catherine at this moment in the novel?

There were some reasonably developed personal responses showing some indignation on Catherine's behalf and understanding that James Morland fails to support his sister, that Isabella is resentful, sarcastic and hostile and that John Thorpe behaves in an outrageously high-handed way by giving a false message to Miss Tilney. All their motives are purely self-interested. Competent answers commented on Catherine's moral superiority, and very good answers were able to demonstrate it through exploration of the writing. The best answers were aware of the ironic view and the way in which previous perceptions of the characters e.g. James as the kind and protective brother, are overturned.

Question 8

In what ways does Austen strikingly portray the desire for wealth in the novel?

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment possible.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

Question 9

How does Dangarembga make this an amusing and revealing moment in the novel?

There were some reasonable responses, most of which found amusement in the behaviour of Tambu's father, and in Tete Gladys's struggles to get out of the car. Few really appreciated what the family's reception revealed of Babamukuru's status within the extended family.

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Question 10

Explore the ways in which Dangarembga shows the importance of food in the novel.

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment possible.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

Question 11

How does Desai vividly convey Arun's thoughts and feelings to you at this moment in the novel?

Most captured Arun's nervousness and sense of alienation, and commented on his perception of the materialism he witnessed on his walk. They were also able to draw some comparisons with his homeland, India, but there was a tendency to make sweeping generalisations on this point. 'Vividly' tended not be explored.

Question 12

How does Desai make the suffering of women in their marriages so vivid in the Indian part (Part One) of the novel?

Most responses dealt with Anamika and one other marriage, usually Mamapapa's, although some did mention Uma. There were some strong responses to the way in which Anamika is bullied and abused by her husband and mother-in-law and to the way in which Papa insists on Mama having another baby even when she is not really strong enough. Few mentioned Aruna (perhaps because she does not appear to suffer). There were some weak general responses which made some comments about arranged and forced marriages without relating them to specific cases.

HELEN DUNMORE: *The Siege*

Question 13

How does Dunmore's writing make this moment in the novel so sad?

Most candidates recognised the sadness of the situation here, but few really considered Dunmore's writing in any detail. Some very weak answers treated this as an Unseen option.

Question 14

How, in your view, does Dunmore make Andrei such an admirable character?

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment possible.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 15

How does Eliot vividly reveal Dunstan's character to you at this moment in the novel?

There were only a few responses to this question and surprisingly the level of knowledge of the character was weak. The context was very important here and there is plenty of opportunity in the passage to examine Eliot's writing in detail but nobody did so.

Question 16

Explore **two** moments in the novel which Eliot's writing makes particularly moving for you.

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment possible.

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SUSAN HILL: *I'm the King of the Castle*

Question 17

How does Hill strikingly convey the emotions of the two boys at this moment in the novel

This was usually done reasonably well, with some very sensitive attention to the nuances of emotion felt by both boys. The extract was often examined in close detail, and candidates demonstrated a clear knowledge and understanding of the context. Most candidates understood that there has been a power-shift and that Kingshaw is in the ascendant, and they also saw how Hooper, by sheer aggression, chips away at this. The best answers were able to see how pathetic fallacy foreshadows later events. There were attempts to link the blackbird with the dead crow earlier in the novel but with limited success. Generally answers gave the impression that the book had been read and enjoyed.

Question 18

Explore the ways in which Hill shows how the relationship between Mr Hooper and Mrs Kingshaw makes matters worse for Charles Kingshaw.

Most candidates were able to construct an argument in support of the premise although there was a tendency to lose focus on the relationship between the adults and to generalise about how things went from bad to worse for Kingshaw, incorporating the relationship in the catalogue. There were several answers which identified specific stages in the relationship, noting their impact on Kingshaw, and there was a fairly universal indictment of Mrs Kingshaw in particular. The best answers showed an impressively detailed knowledge of the text and quoted from it freely.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Question 19

How does Stevenson's writing create suspense here?

This was a popular question and generally quite well handled, with some close attention to the ways in which Dr Lanyon was described and some good insight into the ways Stevenson's writing promotes speculation in his readers. Candidates picked up on the catalogue of dates, the refusal of Jekyll to meet his best friends, Lanyon's dire physical condition, the extremity of his emotion about Jekyll. Better answers saw that Utterson's viewpoint to some extent determines the viewpoint of the reader; weak answers often misread the passage (which they might not have seen before) and mistook Jekyll for Lanyon.

Question 20

Explore the ways in which Stevenson's writing makes **two** violent moments in the novel particularly gripping.

Answers dealt with the trampling of the girl and the Carew murder. In less successful responses there was a good deal of narration, and 'particularly gripping' was taken as self-evident. The best answers used their personal response as the starting point and illustrated their answers with specific details of the events.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

From *The Destructors.* How does Greene make T. such a compelling character at this moment in the story?

This question was often well handled. Candidates clearly understood the term 'compelling' and identified aspects of T's character and behaviour which contributed to his status as such. There was a good deal of background material about immediate post-war conditions, often used to enhance a response, although some candidates mis-identified the war in question which was unhelpful. Sometimes there was a focus on the social comment rather than on the detail of the extract, which limited the response.

Question 22

Explore the ways in which the writer makes **either** *My Greatest Ambition* (by Morris Lurie) **or** *A Horse and Two Goats* (by R. K. Narayan) particularly amusing.

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Both stories had their admirers, although Narayan was slightly more popular than Lurie. The question elicited a good deal of narration, whichever option was taken, but there was evidence that the stories had been enjoyed in many answers.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12

Paper 12 Poetry and Prose

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Comments on Specific Questions

***SECTION A*: POETRY**

THOMAS HARDY: from *Selected Poems*

Question 1

Explore the ways in which Hardy creates such moving impressions of Marty South and the man she loves in *The Pine Planters*.

The key words here were 'moving impressions' and it was expected that candidates might comment on the apparent closeness of the working relationship, Marty's sense of being unnoticed, and her sense of hopelessness. She knows that Giles is preoccupied with the woman he has seen but she knows that the woman cannot offer love as she can. In less good answers, there was a tendency towards an overview approach to this question. Candidates very often explained rather than analysed when answering. They understood the poem, but very rarely looked at sufficient detail of language to note any progression or range of 'moving emotions'. Better answers were able to make much of the second part of the poem and its symbolism; weaker answers made little or nothing of this. Differentiation came from the degree of focus on the language and imagery, for example on the image of the seed and on the young tree.

Question 2

How do Hardy's words and images make a memorable moment so vivid in *Neutral Tones?*

There were some superb, engaged and insightful responses to this question. Good candidates were able to focus well on the specific demands of the question: 'words and images'. They were able to keep in mind the requirement to discuss the 'vivid' nature of the writing and argue their views with frequent, well-chosen reference to the poem. Even less strong responses managed to make some comment on the colourlessness (white sun, gray ash, grayish leaves) which reflects the lack of life in the relationship, on the sense of boredom between the couple, and on the imagery connected with death and decay. Even the weakest answers showed understanding of the situation.

From JO PHILLIPS ed: *Poems Deep and Dangerous*

Question 3

How does Laskey make *Registers* so moving?

The obvious points for discussion were the moving nature of the situation of a father missing his child who has just started School, how Laskey conveys the emptiness of the house and the things he misses and how he conveys the alien nature of the School. Candidates found this poem very accessible and often engaged with it at a personal level. The best responses always commented on images such as the 'warm primordial cave', 'chit-chat under the blankets', 'an ear/always open' contrasting these well with 'the sensible house' and 'nothing stirs but the washing-machine'. Such responses often made much of the final stanza and sometimes made great play of the harsh-sounding 'Miss Cracknell's tongue' in contrast to the warmer, more homely images of the early lines. Weaker answers limited themselves to explanation of the situation, and rarely explored the language in any depth of detail, self-penalising when the answer required candidates to show how Laskey makes the poem 'so moving'. Some suggested this 'mother' was seeing a son off to university, which was one of the examples of lack of preparation cited in the general introduction above. Another one or two thought that Jack was dead.

Question 4

In what ways does Clare convey to you the powerful emotions of the speaker in First Love?

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Many candidates interpreted the many painful images as just different ways of the narrator telling us that he was swept off his feet in a rather clichéd manner. The depth of the narrator's pain and the destructive effect of this unrequited passion upon his whole being was rarely explored. It is as if the rather superficial description 'the peasant poet' (referred to by many candidates) pre-supposes a lack of depth to what is, in reality, a deceptively complex poem. In most answers there was a sound enough basic understanding of the poem but not enough was made of the powerful nature of the language, the striking images, and – particularly – the rhetorical questions of stanza 3, though very good answers made sensitive and thoughtful responses to 'they spoke as chords do from the string' and were rewarded accordingly. Strong answers focused on how the extremity of the speaker's reactions is conveyed by the imagery, and commented on the melancholy nature of: 'seemed midnight at noonday'...'deadly pale'...'turned to clay'...Is love's bed always snow?' They also responded to the drama and immediacy of the poem. Little was offered by many on the melancholy nature of much of the second half of the poem.

***SONGS OF OURSELVES:* from part 4**

Question 5

To what extent does Atwood make you feel that human activities are pointless in *The City Planners?*

Many less good answers did not focus on the question properly and merely wrote what they knew about the poem and what they asserted Atwood's attitudes to be. A good start would have been to define terms: what is meant by 'pointless'? Many did not see the poem was, in part, about impermanence and therefore focused on narrative detail. A number of very weak responses simply attempted a paraphrase. Many attempted to provide lengthy 'green' discussions appearing to use the poem as a platform for developing a political stance. The vast majority of responses discussed the antipathy of the poet to urban living, and her hostility to planners. Better answers showed the ability and technique to point out that 'human activities are pointless' is but one aspect of the poem, and could then select the areas of the poem that were relevant, and direct well-supported response to answer the question. Weaker answers often neglected to comment at all on the final two stanzas. Clearly these are crucial to a full understanding of the poet's attitudes but often candidates overlooked them.

Question 6

How does Rossetti create a sense of extreme emotion in *The Woodspurge?*

The vast majority of candidates wrote in an analytical manner and in detail. Some less successful answers did include flights of fancy as to the reasons behind the extreme emotions and some irrelevant biographical detail was put forward by others. Most discussed the poem's 'perfect grief' with some assurance and accuracy. Better answers featured discussion of the spiritual symbolism in the poem. The symbolism of the wind and the sense of the speaker's purposeless wandering was equally well understood. However, some responses were diminished, to some extent by arguing that there is a neat, fully rounded ending. Hence, there were suggestions that the comfort and reassurance he gains from the sight of the woodspurge fills him with sufficient joy to make him forget all about his sorrows. There is no textual support for this. Instead, the flower (particularly if its religious connotations are recognised) offers some hope to cling to only. Some weak answers never even discussed the woodspurge itself despite it being the poem's title and, therefore, of importance.

JANE AUSTEN: *Northanger Abbey*

Question 7

How does Austen's writing make this ending of the novel satisfying for you?

This was well-answered in the main. As well as recognising that all the loose ends are tied up, most saw that the joyous tone of the ending owes much to the omniscience of the narration and the endearing familiarity between the writer and the reader. Some referred to the affection that Austen seems to have for her own fictitious creations, feeling that she enjoyed the way things turned out favourably just as much as the reader. Perceptive responses also pointed out that there is no real redemption for the General. There were also some sensible comments about the use and mockery of the Gothic genre.

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Question 8

In what ways does Austen strikingly contrast John Thorpe and Henry Tilney?

As with the previous question, there was a distinct sense of engagement with the characters on the part of the candidates. They were able to enumerate the unpleasant traits of John Thorpe with relish and the virtues of Henry also. In general, however, they found it difficult to go beyond this, though some noted their directly opposing views of the modern novel and what this indicated about their respective characters. Consideration of the satire involved in creating these characters as more prosaic counterparts to the hero and villain of the gothic genre would have been a fruitful avenue to explore.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

Question 9

How does Dangarembga vividly convey the reactions of the characters at this moment in the novel?

Most candidates were able to focus clearly on what was asked and all produced some relevant comment. Weaker answers offered a limited range, often making nothing of how Dangarembga conveys the reactions of Babamukuru himself during the passage, and underplaying those of Tambu and Nyasha. Better answers were able to note the 'how?' of this question, and therefore explore the language of the presentation of the reactions of the whole range of characters present in the extract. The best answers were able to do all this and still fit in a little consideration of how all that is revealed in this scene fits into the wider considerations of the novel.

Question 10

'Babamukuru has his family's best interests at heart.' How far does Dangarembga's writing persuade you that this is true?

Responses tended to be weak and limited in range of reference, and merely accepted 'Babamukuru has his family's best interests at heart' without much exploration of how else his actions could be interpreted. This was self-limiting and did not attempt to address 'how far?' They might have considered the ways in which Babamukuru helps not only his immediate family but also the extended family, including Nhamo and Tambu, the seriousness with which he takes his duties, the autocratic way in which he treats the rest of the family, particularly his daughter, and Tambu over her parents' wedding and his petulant reaction when challenged, e.g. when Maiguru leaves the family home.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

Question 11

How does Desai make this such a memorable moment in the novel?

The passage allowed candidates to draw key comparisons between the characters. Mr Patton came in for a lot of stern criticism, whilst Arun and Mrs Patton were treated with great sympathy. Astute responses took time, quite relevantly, to make a few references to Arun's home experiences and the similar attitude towards food demonstrated by the two fathers. Better answers analysed the language closely and gave apt support for points, particularly the symbolism of Mr Patton's dealing with the meat, the presentation of the barbecue as a religious rite, the emphasis on blood and sacrifice. The best candidates were able to discuss Melanie and Rod's absence from the scene and particularly, the side-lining of Melanie by her father.

Question 12

Explore the ways in which Desai persuades you that there are similarities between Papa and Mr Patton.

Most candidates saw the obvious similarities between the men's behaviours and, more importantly, their attitudes – to family, to their wives, their view of themselves as the head of the household. The most sensitive responses explored the way the women were treated and how they were expected to behave. The two daughters were given attention by the best candidates and great sympathy, particularly for Uma, was expressed.

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HELEN DUNMORE: *The Siege*

Question 13

How does Dunmore's writing make this such a dramatic and significant moment in the novel?

Weaker responses failed to grasp the importance of the narrative perspective of the passage. It is a third person account but centred upon Anna's viewpoint. Hence, she is not fully aware, as a small child, of the significance of the meeting between her mother and Marina Petrovna. The reader is aware of the hostility and can pick up that Mikhail and Marina are having an affair. This is partially lost on the child Anna but not on the adult woman. This is also a significant moment in its revelation of the love triangle. Much depended on candidates' knowledge of how the novel will develop to understand fully the significance of the meeting but the passage itself has many moving moments to explore e.g. the desperate hugging of the small child by her mother which expresses, in a very physical way, Vera's fears for their future. Stronger answers paid close attention to the intensity of the language: ' tight, tight...burning...stiff with anger...air like thunder...slashing the dark,' etc.

Question 14

Explore **two** moments in the novel where Dunmore's portrays the impact of war on people's lives.

There were too few responses to make general comment appropriate.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Question 15

How does Eliot make this moment in the novel so disturbing?

This was an extremely popular text and the passage based question was, by, far, the more popular of the two and the better handled. This was obviously a passage to arouse strong feelings in candidates and it was interesting to find differing opinions of Molly but not so much of Godfrey. The opening of the passage with the image of Godfrey enjoying himself got candidates straight into their response. The discriminating factor was, again, the amount of depth and detail provided in the answer. The question produced a wide range of answers, from the narrative and undirected right through to the detailed and expertly-supported. There was much in the passage to find disturbing, but weaker candidates did not look closely enough at the passage itself and wanted to see this as just the start of something disturbing for Godfrey: that he might be unmasked, or that his father would be very angry. Better answers saw this as part of the disturbing aspect of the passage, but noted also much of the description of Molly and her child, the conditions at the time, the thirst for revenge Molly harboured, her reliance on opium, the description of this drug as 'demon…' and which 'enslaved body and soul' etc. Here candidates were engaging with the writing and not just the situation, which is chiefly what characterised a good answer and set it apart from a basic response. Eliot's writing here allowed much discussion of the opium addiction, the use of pathetic fallacy, Molly's conflicting emotions - her role as mother - and the background to her desire for revenge. Some excellent answers were also able to point to the effectiveness of the authorial comments within the passage underlining some of its ironies which all contributed to how the passage proved so disturbing

Question 16

To what extent does Eliot's writing make you feel sympathy for Nancy?

Candidates found much to sympathise with and admire in Nancy but did not always tie this to how Eliot's writing made this come about. The loss of her baby was universally cited and there was some useful reference to the way she is treated by Godfrey during their courtship, and the fact that she is not told the truth, or secrets are kept from her. Overwhelmingly, they thought Godfrey not worthy of her. They knew her background and the reasons for her behaviour and rarely criticised her to any extent. Less successful answers rarely considered 'to what extent' Eliot made the reader feel sympathy. Little consideration was given to the rigidity of Nancy's beliefs, or her concern for respectability which would certainly have broadened the response along the lines the question invited. Engaged responses were the norm, however, with some apt support, including neat quotations. Candidates who had studied this text generally showed good recall of the details.

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SUSAN HILL: *I'm the King of the Castle*

Question 17

How does Hill's writing make this moment in the novel revealing and significant?

This was the more popular of the two questions by far. All responses gave clear evidence of knowing the characters, their antipathy and the reasons behind their poor relationship. Context was useful in answering this question, and better answers were able to show and argue that here Hooper regains the initiative from Kingshaw and look at the new side of Kingshaw which Hill reveals here. Basic answers revealed some understanding of the way Hooper and Kingshaw discuss the dead rabbit, but made too little of its significance, and were unable to show much of what it revealed about the two boys. Much was asserted about the theme of death, but argument about this was often limited and under-supported. The best responses really drilled down into the language; weaker responses tended to skirt around the language or repeat the same points which were not always substantiated. Many spent too long discussing 'foreshadowing' and what was being flagged up for future chapters. The best answers focused the material carefully on both 'revealing' and 'significant' and supported opinions with well-argued material backed with intelligently selected reference to the passage. Weaker answers offered less of a range and were rather narrative whilst still being able to make some important points about what is shown of the relationship between Hooper and Kingshaw at this point in the novel.

Question 18

Explore the ways in which Hill memorably presents Kingshaw's relationship with Fielding.

Answers focused on the positive, with admiration for Fielding and empathy with Kingshaw. How Hooper spoils all this was given very scant reference on the whole but would have taken the answers to the next level. 'Memorably' was, perhaps, under-explored in practically all responses, but the better answers saw this relationship as a yardstick for 'natural' relationships and a gauge of how distorted the relationship between Hooper and Kingshaw is shown to be. There is no battle between Fielding and Kingshaw; they play together and enjoy each other's company. Fielding's mother was mentioned by many candidates, extending the scope of the answer somewhat, but better answers were able to direct this to make it largely relevant to the question. The trick was to direct all the material to the way Hill writes. Only the best answers mentioned Hill at all while discussing the relationship of the boys. More successful responses highlighted the symbolism of the meeting of the two boys in church whilst Kingshaw is praying. Whilst many highlighted the differences between their home lives, few managed to convey the warmth and serenity of Kingshaw's first meeting with Fielding's mother which is in such stark contrast with what has gone on before.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Question 19

In what ways does Stevenson's writing vividly convey Mr Utterson's disturbed state of mind at this moment in the novel?

Candidates had no difficulty in identifying the causes of the turmoil in Utterson's mind and enumerating its different manifestations but often stopped short of exploring the atmospheric settings e.g. his darkened bed chamber and the foggy streets of the city and then going on to link these external factors to his increasingly feverish imagination. In this way the written style belongs to the Gothic genre in terms of both subject matter and the melodramatic outpouring of fears and emotion. This sense of the text being of its time and of its kind is one way in which answers achieved the higher band marks, though conversely, some weaker answers spent a good deal of time stating how Victorian the novel is without showing a clear idea of what they meant. Weak answers did little but explain the situation, but better answers were able to focus on Mr Utterson's disturbed state of mind and pick out some of the indicators in the passage: the sleepless night, his repeated vision of the child-trampling, Hyde's lack of a face, for example. Many answers were able to go much further, however, and these engaged with the requirements of the question – the 'ways Stevenson's writing vividly conveys' the disturbed state of Utterson's mind. These strong answers explored some of Stevenson's language. His mind is 'toiling...besieged'; his imagination 'enslaved...haunted'. He is 'baffled' and has an 'inordinate' curiosity. The ghostly Hyde 'glides stealthily' through a 'labyrinth' of streets. Perceptive responses often commented on the usually rational and 'unimpressionable' natures of Utterson and Enfield and that they are notwithstanding both repulsed by Hyde.

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Question 20

How does Stevenson make Dr Jekyll's relationship with Mr Hyde so fascinating?

Some weak responses attempted to answer this using material from the passage for **Question 19** despite its seeming lack of relevant material, with inevitable self-penalising consequences. Sound answers contained general statements concerning the good and evil aspects of the two characters and assertions of the lack of pure goodness in Jekyll in comparison with the liberated evil of Hyde. But there was too little detailed reference to parts of the text, and illustration was almost always in the form of generalisation in these answers. The 'how?' of the question was never fully addressed, and this seemed to indicate a lack of really detailed knowledge of the text. Good answers showed a clear understanding of the text's central premise of the recognition of good and evil within all of us and the societal need to suppress the latter. In the main the best answers recognised the strictures of Victorian society in terms of respectability and the desire to rebel against it.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 21

From *The Fly in the Ointment.* How does Pritchett make this such a powerful ending to the story?

Most candidates understood the basic ideas behind the story and the relationship between father and son. Most candidates saw the hypocrisy and gave the father short shrift. Very impressive was the ability of the majority of the candidates to comment on how Pritchett leads the reader along then adds a twist. As always, better answers explored the language in order to support their ideas. These were able to respond to the 'how' of the question by analysis of the writer's language and by keeping the 'powerful ending' clear in their argument. Candidates tended to be much clearer in their analysis of the father's character than that of the son. They recognised that greed is in his blood and that nothing has been learned from his recent trauma. But the relationship between father and son here is very complex. Many less good answers did not try to discuss the son's 'embarrassment' at his father's predicament and his shame at some of his own thoughts. Though he dreads having the old man on his hands now and clearly feels a lot of bitterness towards him, he uses 'gregarious, optimistic, extravagant, uncontrollable, disingenuous' to describe his father - at least two of these adjectives have positive connotations. Exploring this contradiction was a feature of better responses.

Question 22

Explore the ways in which the writer makes **either** *The Custody of the Pumpkin* (by P G Wodehouse) **or** *At Hiruharama* (by Penelope Fitzgerald) particularly amusing.

There were some strange notions of what constitutes 'amusing', let alone 'particularly' so. This was more true in the case of the Fitzgerald story, where candidates struggled very hard indeed to explain how anything was amusing. This story was answered almost entirely using narrative and at points asserting which parts of the narrative the candidate deemed 'amusing', though this often needed a lot of arguing to be convincing. For instance, some candidates found it amusing that a baby had been thrown out with the afterbirth of its elder twin: something that could have been argued clearly enough, but which was merely asserted. Many answers on this story only briefly mentioned Brinkman, and never convincingly showed that the characterisation of this man was in many ways the most comic thing in the story. Answers on the Wodehouse story were much better, and some offered a range of relevant material, directing it quite well to the terms of the question. Characterisation caused fewer problems here, and the woolly-minded Emsworth, the silly-ass Freddie, the gruff and gravelly Scot, McAlister, were at least 'explained' in terms of comic impact. The material was relevant and less narrative-based, and there was clearly some engagement with the story, though some candidates still lost a little focus when they went off at a tangent with general material on satire of the English upper classes. The best answers spelled out the dottiness of the aristocracy – starting with the binoculars and the cow. Comparing the master servant relationship was a rich ground for discussion as was the relationship of father and son.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13

Paper 13 Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

Successful answers featured:

- a relevant and carefully argued response to the question
- detailed knowledge supporting the points made
- careful commentary on the writer's choice of words and on the effects created
- an individual and perceptive personal response.

Successful answers avoided:

- long introductions summarising the whole of the answer in advance
- long conclusions repeating what has already been said
- giving a great deal of unneeded biographical information
- commenting on how the use of commas and colons adds to the mood and tone of a poem
- commenting on rhyme schemes and verse forms without relating them to the question
- using the passage to answer the discursive question on a text.

And most significantly they avoided:

- using the poem or passage as an Unseen exercise.

General Comments

Many candidates wrote developed and informed responses showing clear engagement with both prose and poetry. They knew they had to support with textual evidence and were often keen to explain what the writers were aiming to do.

This was the first June session for the new specification and it was clear that candidates had responded well to the two question format, since there were very few rubric errors and very few examples of rushed or incomplete final answers. The style of the questions was the same as in previous years, but all the poems were printed on the paper, which candidates apparently found of benefit. In the prose section there was no change to the passage-based questions; the most radical change was that candidates did not have their texts with them since this is now a closed book examination.
It appears that some weaker answers resulted from approaching the paper almost as an Unseen exercise. This was particularly noticeable with the poetry, which a lot of candidates seemed to be totally unprepared for, and where some unsupported interpretations were offered. Weaker answers to the prose passages were also the result of insufficient textual knowledge-these were unable to discuss implications or relate the part to the whole.

Some weaker essay answers attempted to base a response almost exclusively on the passage selected for the previous passage-based question on the same text. This was self-penalising as it made it almost impossible for a candidate to produce a relevant, or widely-enough ranging response to the essay question concerned.

Some answers did less well because they spent too much time making general statements about authors and texts instead of focusing on what is asked and constructing a clearly argued and supported response to the wording of any question attempted. Good answers were characterised by a detailed knowledge of the text, a careful and sustained focus on the demands of the question, intelligent and well-selected reference to the text, and thorough analysis of such references, showing how writers succeed in creating their desired

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effects. There were many candidates who clearly knew the texts quite well but tried to write down everything they knew rather than making relevant selections and planning. Biographical details, which are often inaccurate or speculative, are not a good substitute for analysis.

The major reason for candidates not achieving good marks was their lack of focus on the questions asked. Many weaker answers did not spend enough time on identifying the key words of the question and tailoring their knowledge and understanding to those words.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

How do Hardy's words create strong feelings about the passage of time in *During Wind and Rain*?

This was generally quite well handled, with secure understanding of the main themes and images of the poem. What was sometimes lacking was a consideration of 'strong feelings', except nostalgia.

Question 2

Explore the ways in which Hardy makes the poem *Drummer Hodge* so moving for you.

Most candidates covered at least the first part of the poem confidently, although there was less certainty in the handling of the stellar imagery. Personal response, invited in the term 'moving', was less prominent, however, most candidates offering explanations of the poem.

Question 3

How does Banks movingly convey the effect of her accident on both herself and her son in *The Gift*?

Most candidates were able to demonstrate an appreciation that the accident had led to a new relationship between mother and son. The bird's wing image was generally appreciated, and the car imagery was also understood. Stronger answers dealt sensitively with the pain/tenderness imagery, and considered the force of the last line of the poem in depth.

Question 4

How does Lochhead use words and images to striking effect in *Launderette*?

Answers to this question were generally successful. Understanding was good, and candidates identified a range of good points for discussion. Most saw the ways clothes in some ways symbolised the lives of the customers, and identified what their washing said about them.

Question 5

Explore the ways in which Bhatt uses powerful words and images in *A Different History.*

There were many weaker responses which focused on words and images without any consideration of the meaning of the poem, an approach which inevitably restricted the performance of such candidates against AO2. Many candidates gave a very general response to the first stanza which discussed culture, religion, myths and colonisation, often at the expense of a consideration of the text. Such candidates frequently went on to consider the second stanza as an attack particularly and exclusively on British colonialism. Better answers adopted a more nuanced approach, and responded sensitively and perceptively to Bhatt's words and images, often commenting on the ambiguities they found in the poem.

Question 6

How does MacCaig create a sense of the unexpected in *Summer Farm*?

This question produced some very strong responses. Nearly all candidates found something to say about some of the quirky natural imagery in the first few stanzas, although in some cases careless reading led to

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misunderstanding. Common misreadings included hedges being green as glass and the barn diving up into the sky. This was one poem where comment on punctuation and enjambement could have contributed fruitfully to consideration of the question. Most answers did not appreciate that the hen staring at nothing with one eye was a consequence of the hen's anatomy rather than the result of some ocular mishap. Good answers were able to move beyond this to discuss metaphysical elements of thought, demonstrating at times a sophisticated personal response.

Section B

Question 7

In what ways does Austen make this moment in the novel so entertaining?

This question was sometimes handled effectively, with good appreciation of Isabella's duplicity and a measured assessment of how Catherine's Gothic concerns were gently mocked by Austen. Weaker answers did not move beyond the literal, but many of the answers were clearly informed by good understanding about the social and historical context of the novel.

Question 8

Mr and Mrs Allen are supposed to be looking after Catherine in Bath. To what extent does Austen's writing persuade you that they do this successfully?

Most answers gave a one-sided judgement of the couple's success, although very strong responses clearly differentiated Mr from Mrs Allen, showing a balanced and thoroughly detailed knowledge of the role of both and arriving at a balanced assessment.

Question 9

How does Dangarembga make this such an amusing and revealing moment in the novel?

Weaker answers did not distinguish between the two characters, and very few were able to focus on the 'amusing and revealing' strands of the question. Tambu's misunderstanding of the term 'peasant' was almost universally missed.

Question 10

Does Dangarembga's writing make you feel respect or pity for Nyasha – or both?

Some significantly restricted their chance of a good reward by using only the question 9 extract as a basis for their answer. Others tended to deal, often rather censoriously, with Nyasha's rebellious streak, sometimes expressing admiration for her attempt to assert her independence.

Question 11

How does Desai make you strongly sympathise with Uma at this moment in the novel?

This elicited some very sound responses. Most dealt well with the job offer, Uma's initial reaction and her parents' reactions, often with plenty of appropriate textual detail in support. The 'strongly sympathise' of the question was well answered, with better answers offering some consideration of 'how' Desai achieves this. One or two took a more critical view of Uma's perceived failure to stand up for herself. Among the general censure of Mamapapa's inadequate parenting, some more sophisticated responses pointed out that Mamapapa themselves thought they were doing a good job, which intensified the sympathy readers might feel for Uma.

Question 12

Explore the ways in which Desai makes Mira-masi a memorable character.

Too few answers to make general comment appropriate.

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Question 13

How does Dunmore's writing movingly portray Vera's death in this passage?

Question 14

Explore the ways in which Dunmore vividly conveys to you the importance of food in the novel.

There were too few answers on either of these questions to make general comment appropriate.

Question 15

How does Eliot vividly convey to you the significance of this moment for Silas?

This was often handled well, certainly in terms of what is happening in the extract, although the ability to identify 'significance' was often a good discriminator. Some candidates attempted to use prepared answers on Silas's gold with self-limiting results. Others successfully contrasted Lantern Yard and Raveloe, and made good use of the details of Silas moving closer to the fire, and his apology to Jem and what that says about Silas's character.

Question 16

How does Eliot's writing make Dunstan (Dunsey) Cass such a dislikeable character?

Candidates were often able to move beyond the prepared character study to produce often scathing assessments of Dunsey, making good use of their knowledge of his role in the novel. The better answers demonstrated their awareness that the writer was at work shaping our responses to the character.

Question 17

How does Hill vividly convey the unfairness which Charles Kingshaw experiences at this point in the novel?

Less good answers gave a paraphrase, with candidates working through from start to finish pointing out and commenting on unfairnesses. Stronger answers pointed out how Hill hints at what is to come, and attempted to deal with 'How' by commenting on Hill's use of language, such as sentence structure and repetition. Conversely, some weaker responses picked up the word 'unfairness' and wrote in general terms about Kingshaw's treatment without specifically focusing on the extract.

Question 18

Does Hill's writing make it possible for you to feel any sympathy for Hooper?

This was often handled well. Some candidates took the invitation to cast around to find reasons to sympathise, often landing on the lack of a mother-figure and the inadequacy of his father's parenting as reasons to sympathise, and sometimes going on from that to attempt to excuse his treatment of Kingshaw. Candidates who from the outset attempted a balanced assessment rather than an attempt to excuse Hooper were often more successful. There were many who commented sharply on his reaction to Kingshaw's suicide in arriving at their conclusion that his 'psychopathic' (candidates' word) characteristics more than swamped any possible feeling of sympathy for him.

Question 19

In what ways does Stevenson's writing make this moment in the novel so disturbing?

This was another popular question, the relative brevity of the passage perhaps attracting candidates away from what they perceived as the more challenging alternative on this text. Candidates dealt quite well with the atmosphere as described by Stevenson, with reasonable use of textual detail. Fewer went on to consider the impact and significance of the old woman, although there were some well-made points, and fewer still pointed out the incongruity between the location of Hyde's home and his potential wealth.

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Question 20

How does Stevenson strikingly portray the friendship between Mr Utterson and Dr Jekyll in the novel?

Weaker answers revealed a lack of sufficient detailed knowledge to follow the relationship through the text. Better responses considered the nature of their friendship, or Utterson's similarities to Jekyll, his role as a foil to the latter or the lengths to which he is prepared to go for his friend.

Question 21

How does Hughes make this such a powerful ending to the story?

Candidates spent a good deal of time considering the significance of the horse and discussing the man's reasons for being there. A number opted for a 'man v. nature' interpretation, others considered the pull of the city v. the lure of childhood, and others regarded the horse as in some way spectral, all in an attempt to determine what had been cut out of the man's brain. What differentiated stronger responses was the ability to go beyond their chosen interpretation to consider why this made for such a powerful ending.

Question 22

What does the writer make you feel about **either** Mr Twycott in *The Son's Veto* (by Thomas Hardy) **or** the husband in *Sandpiper* (by Ahdaf Soueif)?

In many cases, this was a consequence of confusion over characters, often leading to a lack of focus. Candidates were often benignly disposed to Mr Twycott on the basis that he married Sophie out of what they perceived as pity, and that he left her his property in his will. Some candidates wrote about the son – who is a Mr Twycott too – but tended to concentrate on what he did rather than what they felt about him. Few indeed considered Hardy's narrative method. In the case of *Sandpiper,* candidates who had clearly prepared a response to a question about the wife found difficulty in adapting their knowledge of the story to write about the husband.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/21

Paper 21 Drama

Key Messages

Good answers:

- were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance and viewed them from an audience's point of view.
- paid explicit attention to the wording of the question and to balancing both strands, where appropriate.
- focused clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy biographical detail or elaborate context setting.
- gave a detailed response to author's dramatic and linguistic effects supported by well-selected reference to the text, most effectively in the form of quotation.
- gave a fresh personal response and avoided formulaic approaches.

General comments

In answers to passage-based questions, the strongest answers integrated knowledge of the context into the answer as a whole. The key to success was to explore the passage in detail, quote from it extensively and comment on the content of the dialogue, the language used, the stagecraft, the dramatic effectiveness and the impact on the audience. Less successful responses barely quoted from the passage or quoted at length without comment. Some answers used line references instead of quotations which was less helpful.

The least effective answers had no introduction and narrated or paraphrased the passage. Some were more concerned with spotting themes, sometimes inaccurately, than in answering the question.

In answer to the discursive questions, the strongest answers defined the terms of the question and maintained relevance throughout. Such answers ranged selectively across the text, looked at chosen moments in some detail and gave support for their answers in the form of quotation. In response to 'How far...' or 'To what extent...' questions, successful answers balanced the argument and came to a specific and thoughtful conclusion. They did not lose sight of the text as drama and considered both the structure of the play and audience response to key scenes. If the question asked for consideration of two moments or two elements both were given equal consideration. Less successful responses used only material from the passage-based question in support or lost focus on the question, giving lengthy narrative, historical background or thematic content at the expense of a focus on the question.

Weak answers referred to plays as 'novels' or 'stories' and to the audience as 'readers', thought Shakespeare's audience was Victorian and Wilde's Elizabethan.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers. There were some rubric infringements with candidates either answering two passage-based or two discursive answers.

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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

There were many very effective answers to this richly complex moment in the play. These considered the dramatic aspects of the scene, such as the ominously dark setting, Sue startling Ann, in more ways than one, the conflict that emerges between them, and the revelation of Sue's feelings about Chris and the Kellers in general. Such answers demonstrated clear understanding of Sue's self-interested views and her dramatic request for Ann to set up housekeeping elsewhere. The best answers saw the materialism versus idealism theme being played out here and explored how Miller portrays Sue as selfish, underhand, sarcastic and patronising through the language he gives her.

Less successful answers showed very limited understanding of the scene, thought that Jim disliked Chris, that Sue and Ann were old friends and omitted Sue's revelatory request altogether.

Question 2

This question was well answered when candidates went beyond a re-telling of the plot to explore the impact of Kate's self-deception on herself, the other characters and the audience. Such responses considered both her self-deception about Larry and about Joe and commented on how this leads to tension and conflict and contributes to the climax of the play. Reference to the text was precise and wide-ranging.

Less successful candidates tended to write about the nature of the self-deception without being able to connect this to its dramatic impact in the play as a whole.

J.B.PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

This question required candidates to both stand back and to be selective. It asked about the passage as an ending to Act One and successful answers considered its power as such. Priestley's techniques such as slow revelation, creation of tension and suspense, use of striking exits and entrances and use of cliff-hanger were explored in developed answers. The central revelation of Gerald's affair and the subsequent conflict between Sheila and Gerald were emphasised in strong responses. The instructions for actors in the stage directions were given due credit and Sheila's transformation from spoilt rich girl to Inspector's ally and co-interrogator was intelligently observed.

Less effective answers tended to write too much about the first half of the scene at the expense of giving its ending a full consideration. The movement of dramatic interest from Sheila to Gerald was left undetected.

Question 4

Successful answers to this question looked at both the immature aspects of Eric's behaviour and his growing maturity as the play progresses. Points on both sides of the argument were supported by detailed reference to moments in the play and by apt quotation. Evidence was drawn from his relationships with his parents, Sheila and Eva Smith and from his ultimate siding with the Inspector, in alliance with his sister.

Less successful candidates had some ideas about Eric and often balanced their argument but were unable to make precise and detailed reference to the text. Better answers achieved a stronger focus on the dramatic revelation of his relationship with Eva and the way in which he responds to this moment.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Merchant of Venice

Question 5

This question was answered well when candidates explored the passage in full. Candidates commented on the emotive language used by the Duke and his perceived bias on Antonio's behalf. They cited Shylock asserting his legal rights and quasi-religious quest to receive justice. Many candidates defended Shylock's right not to explain his 'strange apparent cruelty' but others saw that this showed him as purely vengeful and driven by hatred. The dialogue between Shylock and Bassanio was cited on both sides of the argument.

Less successful candidates paid far more attention to how Shylock had been treated earlier in the play, than to the passage itself. Many ignored the implicit comparison between Antonio and Shylock's list of detested animals or did not consider Shylock's speech at all. Some mistakenly thought that Shylock was being compared to a rat or a dog.

The most successful responses combined awareness of the play as a whole with a close analysis of what is said here, and did not underestimate the indefensible nature of some of Shylock's behaviour.

Question 6

Good answers wrote about Portia's beauty, intelligence, independence and generosity with some enthusiasm offering supporting reference from across the play as a whole. Some qualified their admiration by questioning her choice of Bassanio and her treatment of Shylock.

Less successful candidates found things to admire but could not back this up with specific references to the text. The trial scene was often ignored and arguments were generalised.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 7

Most answers to this question understood that Bottom's enthusiasm and desire to play every part is entertaining and wrote appropriately about Flute's reluctance to cross-dress and Snug's comic desire to study the lion's part. The frustrations of poor Peter Quince in trying to control Bottom were also explored. There were, however, weaker answers that did not venture much beyond saying that the mechanicals are working class and therefore funny because they are uneducated. A detailed consideration of the language in the passage, such as the oxymoronic 'Lamentable Comedy', Bottom's bombastic lines from the play, his malapropisms (such as 'condole' and, 'generally'), his use of repetition, was a rare occurrence. Many answers were humourlessly condemnatory of the mechanicals 'stupidity' showing no personal response to their enthusiasm, innocence and ambition.

Question 8

Successful answers to this question considered the 'Love is blind' theme, the behaviour of Bottom and the love-in-idleness induced madness of the lovers. Ideas were supported by apt reference to the text.

Less successful answers wrote about the fairies instead of the mortals, considered whether Puck really held that view, as opposed to the audience or referred exclusively to the passage in **Question 7** in their answers.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest

Question 9

This question was usually answered well. Candidates commented on the striking differences in characterisation between Prospero and Miranda, the ways in which Shakespeare's language emphasises both Prospero's power and Miranda's compassion and the effective way in which their 'back story' is revealed. The strongest responses explored the striking nature of Shakespeare's withholding of information.

Less successful candidates showed only superficial knowledge of the scene, did not understand that 'no harm' has been 'done' to the ship, therefore making unfounded claims about Prospero's cruelty. Some also thought that he was not Miranda's biological father.

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Question 10

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

OSCAR WILDE: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 11

Many successful responses started from a secure understanding of the context of the scene. They knew why Gwendolen was visiting Jack/Ernest's country home, understood her surprise and disquiet at the existence and attractive appearance of Cecily and grasped that both girls mistakenly thought they were engaged to the same man. Their opening conversational exchange was examined in some detail for its insincerity and absurdity. The increasing hostility and Cecily's dramatic final line were considered in some detail. Such answers responded to the lightness of the humour.

Less successful answers tended to ignore the content and context of the scene and to spend the entire answer making unconvincing and often inaccurate general comments about the nature of Victorian life, the role of women and Wilde's satire.

Question 12

Effective responses started by choosing some of the main themes of the play such as marriage or money. This meant that their comments on Wilde's criticisms could be supported by concrete reference and relevant quotation. Lady Bracknell's interrogation of Jack was used effectively in this respect.

Less successful candidates tended to make sweeping statements about hypocrisy and class divisions without citing much evidence from the play for the views expressed. Some candidates thought that Jack was poor, unable to distinguish between lack of background and family and lack of income. A lack of quotation was a feature of these answers, with candidates not even managing to remember: 'A handbag?'

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/22

Paper 22 Drama

Key Messages

Good answers:

- were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance and viewed them from an audience's point of view.
- paid explicit attention to the wording of the question and to balancing both strands, where appropriate.
- focused clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy biographical detail or elaborate context setting.
- gave a detailed response to author's dramatic and linguistic effects supported by well-selected reference to the text, most effectively in the form of quotation.
- gave a fresh personal response and avoided formulaic approaches.

General comments

In answers to passage-based questions, the strongest answers integrated knowledge of the context into the answer as a whole. The key to success was to explore the passage in detail, quote from it extensively and comment on the content of the dialogue, the language used, the stagecraft, the dramatic effectiveness and the impact on the audience. Less successful responses barely quoted from the passage or quoted at length without comment. Some answers used line references instead of quotations which was less helpful.

The least effective answers had no introduction and narrated or paraphrased the passage. Some were more concerned with spotting themes, sometimes inaccurately, than in answering the question.

In answer to the discursive questions, the strongest answers defined the terms of the question and maintained relevance throughout. Such answers ranged selectively across the text, looked at chosen moments in some detail and gave support for their answers in the form of quotation. In response to 'How far...' or 'To what extent...' questions, successful answers balanced the argument and came to a specific and thoughtful conclusion. They did not lose sight of the text as drama and considered both the structure of the play and audience response to key scenes. If the question asked for consideration of two moments or two elements both were given equal consideration. Less successful responses used only material from the passage-based question in support or lost focus on the question, giving lengthy narrative, historical background or thematic content at the expense of a focus on the question.

Weak answers referred to plays as 'novels' or 'stories' and to the audience as 'readers', thought Shakespeare's audience was Victorian and Wilde's Elizabethan.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers. There were some rubric infringements with candidates either answering two passage-based or two discursive answers.

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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

There were many very strong answers to this richly complex moment in the play. Successful responses established the dramatic context for George's arrival speedily and economically, noting the way the audience has been primed by the phone call, Ann's apprehension, Kate's warning to Joe and Jim's precise grasp of the situation. They often saw the significance of Joe's guilty withdrawal and were clear as to the purpose of George's first trip home. The effect of Jim's urgent words and movements in building suspense and tension was carefully weighed, as was the portrayal of George's intensity and rudeness. The power of Jim's images such as' blood in his eye…explode…' was often closely analysed. Some saw the exchange between Sue and Jim as comic relief but the best answers responded to Sue's underlying bitterness. The revealing nature of George's sarcastic remarks about the law, the business and Larry's tree was often intelligently handled.

Less successful answers tended to work through the extract with no sense of the broader dramatic context and George's purpose, often hinting at understanding but not expressing this. Some got rather distracted in speculating about what Chris does or does not know, or admit to knowing. A few spent so long establishing the complexities of the situation and explaining what Joe has done to Steve that they left little time to scrutinise the extract.

Question 2

Successful candidates explained what they understood by' A man among men' from the start of their answer and kept their definition in view throughout. For some, it meant that Joe appears exceptional; for others ordinary; and for many, both of these apparently contradictory ideas in different ways. The best answers recognised the complexity of the characterisation. Some placed the quotation neatly in the context of the description of Joe as a typical uneducated man who has worked hard and made good for his family, but then has been lured into appalling acts by a corrupted and materialistic version of the American Dream. The words of Chris in their final confrontations were skilfully deployed by some to qualify the original quotation. There were some subtle arguments about the compromises men make for their families linking Joe to Jim and citing Joe's own 'A man can't be a Jesus...' remark. Many different conclusions were reached, even about Joe's suicide but what mattered was the quality of the argument and the support provided rather than the line of argument pursued.

Less successful answers tended to write a conventional character study without defining the terms of the question or were limited to thematic discussions. Some were so seduced by Joe's characterisation of himself as regular guy, working selflessly for his family, facing down his doubters and rebuilding his company, that they rather downplayed his lies, his treatment of Steve, the deaths he caused.

J.B.PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

The most effective responses conveyed a confident grasp of the engagement party context and of Mr Birling's inappropriately egotistical speech making, and many saw the way in which Priestley is revealing his short-sightedness and callous disregard for his employees to prepare us for the contrast with the Inspector's omniscience and insistence on social responsibility. The dramatic irony of his hopelessly misplaced optimism was often thoroughly explored and the background knowledge that the play was first performed in 1946 but set in 1912, subtly and relevantly deployed. One candidate thought that, Birling inadvertently provides a metaphor for himself in the Titanic '…a complacent lack of vision is setting him up for failure…he and his family are on course for a metaphorical iceberg'. Strong answers ranged widely across the extract, exploring his arrogance, pomposity, self-centredness, rudeness, stupidity, and were alert not just to the repetitious self-aggrandisement of his long speeches, but also to the patronising interactions with his children and his failure to respond to his wife's hints.

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Less effective answers only considered the dramatic irony, making one central point about Birling's stupidity and ignoring his interactions with the other characters. Some over-used generalised material about Capitalism and Priestley's Socialism and became completely detached from the extract. The least successful answers took the passage at face value, missed the ironies completely and showed limited understanding of the rest of the play.

Question 4

Strong answers kept the mystery clearly in view and ranged selectively across the play, exploring ideas such as: the perfect timing of the Inspector's arrival to interrupt and undermine Birling's lecture on self-interest, the vagueness about his background, his omniscience, his remarkably accurate prophecies of doom, his manipulation of the photographs to keep the characters (and the audience) waiting, his withering eye-contact and charismatic presence and the use of lighting to emphasis this, his moralising rather than investigative approach, his lack of deference, his name and the double twist of the ending.

Less successful answers lost the focus on mystery and became preoccupied by tangential ideas like the susceptibility of Sheila and Eric to the Inspector's influence or Priestley's use of a mouthpiece, or drifted into a narrative approach without foregrounding the question and selecting appropriately. Some spent far too long speculating on the Inspector's real identity, with unconvincing ideas of him being an embodiment of the Birling's absent conscience, God, the reincarnation of Eva Smith (or her child), or an unspecified ghoul.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Merchant of Venice

Question 5

This question was answered well when candidates quickly established the context for this dialogue which precedes the third and final casket selection and demonstrated clearly what is at stake here. The best answers were characterised by close attention to the richness of the language: some saw that Portia is uncharacteristically discomposed by Bassanio's presence and by her divided loyalties and that this is reflected in her broken, and contradictory speech patterns; some contrasted her response to Bassanio neatly with her response to the previous two suitors; some contrasted her desire for delay with Bassanio's impatience; the images of helplessness and imprisonment and the extended ' rack…treason…confess..' metaphor were often intelligently explored but equally often misunderstood in weaker responses. The very best noted the two examples of Bassanio completing Portia's lines to suggest his impatience and the couple's compatibility and realised that Portia's long final speech, which introduces the atmospheric music and the heroic allusion to Hercules, is not really addressed to Bassanio but acts like a commentary on the unfolding spectacle.

Less successful responses paid far more attention to the casket story, preceding and following the extract, than the extract itself. There was often a generalised awareness of the intensity of feeling between the two lovers but great difficulty engaging with the language. Words and phrases were sometimes lifted out of their contexts and accompanied by conclusions which misrepresented the feelings being expressed. Such responses rarely considered the second half of the passage.

Question 6

Successful answers used an examination of the exact nature of Shylock's punishment as a logical starting-point and evaluated Shylock's level of culpability throughout their answer. Conclusions varied enormously: some saw Shylock as an almost heroic figurehead for a beleaguered minority who suffers appalling discrimination at the hands of dominant Christians and, in trying to fight back, finds that he has lost his wealth, his occupation, his religion and identity; others focused on Shylock as a murderous and merciless 'revenger' who sharpens his knife with sadistic relish and insists on the terms of his inhuman bond, as a dictatorial and unfeeling father and master, as scheming, money-obsessed, manipulative, bigoted and callously resistant to all pleas for clemency. The best answers tended to be those which avoided oversimplification, weighed up competing arguments and reached thoughtful conclusions, based on specific references from the play as a whole. Many strong candidates made thoughtful distinctions between the likely responses of Elizabethan and post-Holocaust audiences to Shylock and often found the conversion to Christianity a particularly excessive punishment. The punishments which hit Shylock in his pocket were generally felt to be far more appropriate.

Less successful answers often omitted the courtroom scene entirely in order to shape an artificially sympathetic response to Shylock and made no mention of the punishments finally agreed upon. Others spent far too long speculating about the responses of different audiences in different eras or drifted into

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generalisations about hatred, revenge, discrimination and religious intolerance without focusing on the question and text. Quite a few candidates thought Jessica to be describing her father, rather than Gobbo, as a 'merry devil'.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 7

The key to success here was to pay close attention to the language of the extract and to trace Hermia's dramatically evolving moods in some detail. In strong answers the context was securely grasped and the dramatic irony of Hermia's complete faith in Lysander when we know him to be in pursuit of Helena was thoughtfully unpicked, along with the effect of the framing device involving us watching Oberon and Puck watching Hermia and Demetrius. The best answers selected and explored the impact of specific ironies, of Hermia's Titania-style images of global disorder and of her unmaidenly aggression and sarcastic abuse of Demetrius with exploration of the animal imagery she uses.

Less successful candidates were unclear about the context and often insisted that Puck was entirely responsible for Hermia's animosity towards Demetrius but without understanding Lysander's absence or that Puck had also juiced Titania's eyes, and very few grasped that the opening word, 'This', refers to Titania's involvement with Bottom. Such answers tend still to confuse the lovers' names.

Question 8

This was rarely attempted, but there were some successful arguments based on the disturbing gender politics in the play, often exploring the attitudes of Egeus and Theseus in the opening scene, or Oberon's abuse of his power or the treatment of Helena. The elusive nature of comedy was often confirmed in answers from serious-minded candidates who were clearly disturbed rather than amused by most of the play, including the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* and all of Bottom's dream.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest

Question 9

Many candidates managed to range widely and selectively across the passage, to explore the moving nature of the love, the reunions, the forgiveness and the reconciliation, and to recognise the impact of the scene as a final and largely joyful resolution. Prospero's highly theatrical revelation of the young lovers, their touching endearments, Miranda's witticism about 'fair play', the symbolism of the chess game and Alonso's astonishment were often explored in some detail. Alonso's inability to trust his own eyes and the similarity of his first reaction to Miranda to that of his sons on first meeting her in Act One were often thoughtfully pointed out, and the layers of irony in Miranda's innocent response to the 'goodly creatures' and in Sebastian's 'high miracle' exclamation also intelligently unpicked. The best answers were able to visualise the onstage action and to engage with the kneeling and the joining of hands as well as the language; the significance of Prospero's single speech and spirit of forgiveness was handled thoughtfully and Antonio's complete silence was also registered with interest. Strong answers also managed to discuss the significance of Prospero's willingness to forgive, of Gonzalo's tearful summing-up, of the merging of the houses of Naples and Milan and of the availability of a seaworthy ship in which to make good their escape.

Less successful candidates confronted by so much action, tended to lose both strands of the question and to describe the unfolding events. Some were unselective and wrote too much about the significance and symbolism of the chess game. Many were convinced that Miranda and Ferdinand are already married, rather than betrothed. Some were uncertain as to the order of events and unclear that Prospero's confrontation with Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian (and his forgiveness of them) has already taken place.

Question 10

Strong answers moved well beyond a narrative response to the magic in the play, to engage with the memorable music and spectacle. The detail of the timely sleep-control, the celebratory Masque and Juno's chariot, the harpies, nymphs, hunting dogs and disappearing banquets were fully explored and the impact on an audience registered. The ferocity of the opening storm was often contrasted with the tranquillity of the final scene and miraculous recovery of the ship, and the best noted that the audience, like Miranda, is taken in by the illusion, and believes the opening storm to be genuine and life-threatening. Links between Prospero and the playwright as a weaver of illusions were often intelligently made, using close reference to the Epilogue.

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Weaker answers, however, confined their answers to a discussion of the narrative role of magic, rather than its impact on the audience. There was a notable lack of close textual reference in less successful answers and a reliance on historical context, which gained no credit.

OSCAR WILDE: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 11

Many successful responses started from a secure understanding of the complex context which proved particularly important in exploring the extract's many dramatic ironies, particularly in Cecily's references to a 'double life". The best answers not only cited humour as a key feature of the scene but were able to explore the sources of the humour in some detail: the verbal and situational ironies, the paradoxes and reversals, the ridiculousness of the attitudes, the willingness of Algernon to adapt speedily in order to impress Cecily and his largely unsuccessful flirtatiousness, her surprising assertiveness and the way the sheltered ward runs rings round the urbane dandy. The running jokes about Algernon's obsession with food and fashion were often fully explored.

Less successful responses tended to select a funny line, label it as humorous and to move on without being able to develop a focused commentary. Some wrote too much about the contextual complications and the imminent revelation that both Algernon and Jack are assuming the Ernest persona, and lost focus on the liveliness of the dialogue. Many weaker answers focused too much on Wilde's satire or the historical background at the expense of looking at the content of the passage itself.

Question 12

Effective responses started by placing the quotation and correctly attributing it to Gwendolen's deluded mother, and constructed detailed and well-supported arguments to demonstrate its inappropriateness. She has refused several proposals, keeps a 'sensational' diary, believes in 'style, not sincerity', shapes a steely and condescending response to Cecily's revelations, disobeys her mother, is used to getting what she wants, is controlling, demanding, decisive, independent thus spoilt and complex.

Less successful candidates tried to refute the description but tended to rely on a narrow range of ideas and references and sometimes a film rather than the text. Responses to Gwendolen occasionally missed the humour and lightness of tone entirely and became highly censorious and judgmental. The quotation was frequently attributed to Jack.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/23

Paper 23 Drama

Key messages

Good answers:

- were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance and viewed them from an audience's point of view.
- paid explicit attention to the wording of the question and to balancing both strands, where appropriate.
- focused clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy biographical detail or elaborate context setting.
- gave a detailed response to author's dramatic and linguistic effects supported by well-selected reference to the text, most effectively in the form of quotation.
- gave a fresh personal response and avoided formulaic approaches.

General comments

In answers to passage-based questions, the strongest answers integrated knowledge of the context into the answer as a whole. The key to success was to explore the passage in detail, quote from it extensively and comment on the content of the dialogue, the language used, the stagecraft, the dramatic effectiveness and the impact on the audience. Less successful responses barely quoted from the passage or quoted at length without comment. Some answers used line references instead of quotations which was less helpful.

The least effective answers had no introduction and narrated or paraphrased the passage. Some were more concerned with spotting themes, sometimes inaccurately, than in answering the question.

In answer to the discursive questions, the strongest answers defined the terms of the question and maintained relevance throughout. Such answers ranged selectively across the text, looked at chosen moments in some detail and gave support for their answers in the form of quotation. In response to 'How far...' or 'To what extent...' questions, successful answers balanced the argument and came to a specific and thoughtful conclusion. They did not lose sight of the text as drama and considered both the structure of the play and audience response to key scenes. If the question asked for consideration of two moments or two elements both were given equal consideration. Less successful responses used only material from the passage-based question in support or lost focus on the question, giving lengthy narrative, historical background or thematic content at the expense of a focus on the question.

Weak answers referred to plays as 'novels' or 'stories' and to the audience as 'readers', thought Shakespeare's audience was Victorian and Wilde's Elizabethan.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers. There were some rubric infringements on Paper 23 with candidates either answering two passage-based or two discursive answers.

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Comments on Specific Questions

***Section A* DRAMA**

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

Most candidates understood the tensions between Chris and Joe arising from being 'dishonest' with Kate in her belief that Larry is still alive. Some candidates explained at length the difficulty of getting Kate to accept Larry's death, and the repercussions for the family, crucially because accepting Larry is dead is to accept Joe's guilt in having sent the faulty cylinders. Better answers addressed the question on how Miller reveals the tensions, and they analysed the stage directions: notably, '(*Slight pause)*', which shows how tense the awkward conversation is. Many also quoted the directions for Joe as he '*simply moves away'*, accurately pointing out that this shows how Joe avoids confrontation – which Chris points out in the last line: '*You have such a talent for ignoring things'*. The strongest answers used the whole passage, from the symbolic cracking of Larry's tree in the night to Chris's newly acknowledged desire to marry Annie and to comments on how tensions have now come to a head for the Kellers at this moment in the play. Weaker responses focused on stage directions and punctuation without contextualising or exploring them in terms of the question.

Question 2

Candidates engaged with the character, Keller, and varied as to whether they were shocked by his suicide or not. Some answers explained Joe's dishonesty and how it came to be revealed, arguing that he had no other option but to kill himself. The extent to which candidates were able to analyse Miller's build-up towards this point determined the quality of the response. Some candidates took the view that, although Miller made clear the reasons for Keller to kill himself, the actual suicide itself was very shocking because it was so unexpected at that moment – Joe says he is going inside to get his jacket. These candidates focused more on the ending of the play, and other characters' reactions to the suicide, as well as their own. Either response is acceptable, provided it is fully supported by reference to the text. The best responses focused on the terms of the question, 'To what extent…' producing a balanced response rooted firmly in the text. Some weaker answers consisted of general discussion about Joe and the plot of the play, rather than remaining focused on the question.

J.B.PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

Most candidates were able to comment profitably on the tensions between Gerald and Sheila, shown in their sarcastic comments to each other. Many sided with Sheila, as she discovers exactly where her fiancé was last summer. Some candidates focused more on the inspector, considering his prompting of Gerald, the stage directions of '*with authority*', '*sharply*' and '*harshly*', all of which show that the inspector firmly intends to achieve his aim of imparting blame for Eva/Daisy's death. Other candidates focused predominantly on the Birling's and their desire to keep Sheila ignorant of undesirable truths, as they try to get her to leave the room; Mrs Birling's determination to quieten Sheila when she says *'…we killed her*.'; the Birling's own ignorance of reality, as they are so shocked by the revelations of the drunken womaniser Meggarty; and Mr Birling's shocked reaction to Sheila's knowing comment about a friend's lucky escape from Meggarty with '*just a torn blouse'*. The drama of the passage lies in its revelations, and the reactions from characters. A few candidates showed insight into the inspector's methods, *'one line of enquiry at a time'*, commenting on the fact that though Eric himself was not present at that moment, it was clear that he too would be involved in Eva Smith's suicide.

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Question 4

Some candidates merely explained what each Birling had done to Eva, and asserted that they denied responsibility. Stronger answers evaluated Mr and Mrs Birling's characters to show why they treated Eva as they do: Mr Birling's belief in capitalism driving him to keep wages low and so refusing a request for higher pay, despite recognising the value in Eva as a good worker and potential leader; Mrs Birling's prejudice against 'girls of that class' prompting her to refuse help to Eva when she asks the charity for money. These answers often considered the Birling's defensiveness and refusal to admit guilt when challenged by the inspector, and often compared their reactions to Sheila and Eric, who both accept their own responsibility.

Some candidates mentioned the Birling's fear of losing their respectability and knighthood. Stronger answers considered the Birling's relief towards the end when the inspector is revealed as a hoax by Gerald, and their immediate resumption of old attitudes, that is, everything is fine as long as no-one knows. Most candidates considered Gerald's discovery and Mr Birling's telephone call as the end of the play but the very best candidates went on to considered the final telephone call to the Birling household, explaining that an inspector was on his way. Whatever arguments candidates used in their answers, they needed to be supported by detailed reference to the text to gain high marks. The best answers considered the inspector's message of social responsibility and the apocalyptic message should this not be learnt. A few responses were self-penalising as they focused solely on the passage for **Question 3**, and what the Birling's learned here about Gerald, and the sordid details of Meggarty and the night life of Brumley rather than the lessons learned from the suicide of this young woman and the part they played.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Merchant of Venice

Question 5

It was useful here for candidates to briefly identify the context of the passage within the play, following the trial. Most candidates realised that Portia and Nerissa had the rings, and that the arguing in this passage ends well, but some did not make clear that Portia and Nerissa were deliberately baiting their men, teasing them for breaking their vows to keep the rings until the '*hour of death'*. Stronger answers responded to both 'entertaining' and 'satisfying'. They analysed the humour in the passage, of Gratiano unknowingly comparing the judge's clerk to Nerissa, and trying to put the blame onto Bassanio. Satisfaction was seen in the dramatic irony of the audience, also knowing what Portia and Nerissa are doing here, and enjoying their power over the men, especially as Portia had experienced helplessness in the early part of the play, over the selection of her husband. Many candidates explored the writing closely: the symbolism of the rings as valuable, everlasting love; Nerissa's hints about the judge's clerk and the deliberate goading of Bassanio by Portia. Bassanio's attempts at appeasing Portia in his last speech, and her rebuttal of him using the same language, was closely analysed. It was also deemed 'satisfying' that after the trial scene, there was a sense that all will soon be resolved and that harmony reigns.

Question 6

The majority of candidates considered Antonio to be kind, citing his readiness to lend Bassanio money, and his willingness to put himself and his fortune at risk for him. Most also considered Antonio's treatment of Shylock, focusing directly on the terms of the question, 'To what extent…' Some were able to use much textual detail here, to good effect. More perceptive answers suggested that it was Antonio's poor treatment of Shylock which made Shylock determined to enforce the bond, the terms of his loan. Very few candidates considered Antonio's actions in asking for clemency for Shylock and the exacting conditions that he converts to Christianity, thereby depriving him of not only his religious faith but his livelihood too. Some candidates spent too long considering Shakespeare's audience of the day, compared to that of today. Antonio's behaviour towards Shylock may have been more common to Shakespeare's audience but the answer here needed to be firmly rooted in the text of the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 7

Candidates who answered this question were able to provide detailed explanations of the mounting confusion between the lovers, due to Puck and Oberon's meddling, as the potion does its work. Stronger answers explored how the language conveys these emotions: for example, Lysander's hurtful and stark words to Hermia, '.*The hate I bare thee…',* or the many images of Helena and Hermia's closeness as girls, '*double cherry',* making Helena's feelings of betrayal now feel so painful. The drama lies in the ironies of the

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situation and the best answers explored this, and the language, fully. Weaker answers tended to retell the plot and to confuse the lovers.

Question 8

Some limited their response to narrating the events of the four Athenian lovers asserting that love is indeed blind. Others widened their answers to consider Titania and Bottom, Titania and Oberon, and even Pyramus and Thisbe. Better answers here explored the ideas of fickleness in love or the importance of appearances. To gain high marks, ideas must be supported by well-selected textual references and not rely on narrative.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest

Question 9

Weaker answers tended to retell the passage, with little reference to the question, or exploration of the situation. Most responses showed some awareness of the humour of Trinculo and Stefano's drunken antics. Some candidates considered how serious Caliban is in the passage, intent as he is on murder. Stronger answers explored how language creates the humour or seriousness. Trinculo's distaste of his own smell '*all horse-piss'* was much quoted, as was '*O King Stephano!*' which was rather premature. The more serious and disturbing image at the start of the passage, of Prospero as a '*blind mole'* who might hear their footsteps, was also quoted, as was Caliban's desperate urging of the others to get on with the murder. Caliban's imagined punishments were considered, '…*he'll fill our skins with pinches*;' and '*all be turn'd to barnacles, or to apes'*, and compared with the real punishment of being hunted by dogs unleashed by Prospero and Ariel. These stronger answers often commented on the effects of the dramatic irony, with Prospero and Ariel invisibly watching the action, along with the audience, as the three villains fall into Prospero's trap.

Question 10

This question often prompted a sensitive, well-developed response which explored the relationship from its beginnings, when Prospero released Ariel from the tree, to Ariel's indebtedness and gratitude. Candidates saw genuine fondness in the language between the two, '*My brave spirit'* and '*my noble master'.* They pointed out that Ariel was motivated to carry out Prospero's wishes exactly, so that he would be freed and also explored Prospero's anger and exasperation towards Ariel when he asked when he would be freed. Some candidates profitably compared Prospero's relationship with Ariel to that with Caliban. The best responses showed a good understanding of the dramatic impact of the relationship supporting this with relevant textual detail. These responses also considered the irony in Prospero's treatment of Ariel, by comparing it to how Sycorax had attempted to use Ariel. Good answers considered Ariel's 'dramatic' role in the reconciliation, the requirement for a resolution and in receiving Prospero's orders for his 'last service' and eventual achievement of his freedom.

OSCAR WILDE: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 11

The majority of candidates responded here to Gwendolen's power and controlling manner, showing how she dictates how Jack proposes to her and accepts him before he asks her. Many explored how this power is conveyed, considering her lengthy speech compared to Jack's, how she interrupts him, her arrogance as shown in '*I am never wrong'*, and her certainty of being right about the name 'Ernest'. Jack's response to her power was also explored, in his stuttering, halting speech, the brevity of his speech and the fact that he asks whether he can propose to her. Fewer candidates developed their answers to consider 'amusingly'. Those who did, also commented on Wilde's intention of mocking social norms such as traditional proposals of marriage and the absurd fashions some people followed as Gwendolen insists that the name 'Ernest '*produces vibrations'*. There was a tendency for weaker candidates to write about the Victorians, social and historical background and even Wilde's personal life, without consideration of the terms of the question and the detail of the passage.

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Question 12

This in general was thoroughly answered in terms of listing the monstrous things Lady Bracknell says and does. She is powerful, ruthless, arrogant, conservative, hypocritical and very 'proper'. Her mercenary nature causes her to reverse her opinion of Cecily when she discovers how rich she is. Jack will only be placed on the list of eligible suitors if he is able to produce at least one parent. She is rude to Miss Prism (and everyone else too). Very good answers were able to move on from the 'monstrous' behaviour to consider just how funny Lady Bracknell is, simply because she makes such outrageous remarks which normally people would not do in polite society, and dominates every scene in which she appears on stage. Some candidates went into detail on Wilde's intentions in creating her character to satirise Victorian upper-class repressive values. As always, this is useful information as long as it is addressing the question and firmly rooted in the text. The best answers were able to explore 'How far…' by producing some sense of balance in assessing Jack's comment, and in considering that Lady Bracknell having made a good marriage herself, only wants the best husband for her daughter, Gwendolen.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31

Paper 31 Drama (Open Text)

Key Messages

Good answers:

- were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance and viewed them from an audience's point of view.
- paid explicit attention to the wording of the question and to balancing both strands, where appropriate.
- focused clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy biographical detail or elaborate context setting.
- gave a detailed response to author's dramatic and linguistic effects supported by well-selected reference to the text, most effectively in the form of quotation.
- gave a fresh personal response and avoided formulaic approaches.

General comments

In answers to passage-based questions, the strongest answers integrated knowledge of the context into the answer as a whole. The key to success was to explore the passage in detail, quote from it extensively and comment on the content of the dialogue, the language used, the stagecraft, the dramatic effectiveness and the impact on the audience. Less successful responses barely quoted from the passage or quoted at length without comment. Some answers used line references instead of quotations which was less helpful.

The least effective answers had no introduction and narrated or paraphrased the passage. Some were more concerned with spotting themes, sometimes inaccurately, than in answering the question.

In answer to the discursive questions, the strongest answers defined the terms of the question and maintained relevance throughout. Such answers ranged selectively across the text, looked at chosen moments in some detail and gave support for their answers in the form of quotation. In response to 'How far...' or 'To what extent...' questions, successful answers balanced the argument and came to a specific and thoughtful conclusion. They did not lose sight of the text as drama and considered both the structure of the play and audience response to key scenes. If the question asked for consideration of two moments or two elements both were given equal consideration. Less successful responses used only material from the passage-based question in support or lost focus on the question, giving lengthy narrative, historical background or thematic content at the expense of a focus on the question.

Weak answers referred to plays as 'novels' or 'stories' and to the audience as 'readers', thought Shakespeare's audience was Victorian and Wilde's Elizabethan.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers. There were some rubric infringements with candidates either answering two passage-based or two discursive answers.

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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

There were many very effective answers to this richly complex moment in the play. These considered the dramatic aspects of the scene, such as the ominously dark setting, Sue startling Ann, in more ways than one, the conflict that emerges between them, and the revelation of Sue's feelings about Chris and the Kellers in general. Such answers demonstrated clear understanding of Sue's self-interested views and her dramatic request for Ann to set up housekeeping elsewhere. The best answers saw the materialism versus idealism theme being played out here and explored how Miller portrays Sue as selfish, underhand, sarcastic and patronising through the language he gives her.

Less successful answers showed very limited understanding of the scene, thought that Jim disliked Chris, that Sue and Ann were old friends and omitted Sue's revelatory request altogether.

Question 2

This question was well answered when candidates went beyond a re-telling of the plot to explore the impact of Kate's self-deception on herself, the other characters and the audience. Such responses considered both her self-deception about Larry and about Joe and commented on how this leads to tension and conflict and contributes to the climax of the play. Reference to the text was precise and wide-ranging.

Less successful candidates tended to write about the nature of the self-deception without being able to connect this to its dramatic impact in the play as a whole.

J.B.PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

This question required candidates to both stand back and to be selective. It asked about the passage as an ending to Act One and successful answers considered its power as such. Priestley's techniques such as slow revelation, creation of tension and suspense, use of striking exits and entrances and use of cliff-hanger were explored in developed answers. The central revelation of Gerald's affair and the subsequent conflict between Sheila and Gerald were emphasised in strong responses. The instructions for actors in the stage directions were given due credit and Sheila's transformation from spoilt rich girl to Inspector's ally and co-interrogator was intelligently observed.

Less effective answers tended to write too much about the first half of the scene at the expense of giving its ending a full consideration. The movement of dramatic interest from Sheila to Gerald was left undetected.

Question 4

Successful answers to this question looked at both the immature aspects of Eric's behaviour and his growing maturity as the play progresses. Points on both sides of the argument were supported by detailed reference to moments in the play and by apt quotation. Evidence was drawn from his relationships with his parents, Sheila and Eva Smith and from his ultimate siding with the Inspector, in alliance with his sister.

Less successful candidates had some ideas about Eric and often balanced their argument but were unable to make precise and detailed reference to the text. Better answers achieved a stronger focus on the dramatic revelation of his relationship with Eva and the way in which he responds to this moment.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Merchant of Venice

Question 5

This question was answered well when candidates explored the passage in full. Candidates commented on the emotive language used by the Duke and his perceived bias on Antonio's behalf. They cited Shylock asserting his legal rights and quasi-religious quest to receive justice. Many candidates defended Shylock's right not to explain his 'strange apparent cruelty' but others saw that this showed him as purely vengeful and driven by hatred. The dialogue between Shylock and Bassanio was cited on both sides of the argument.

Less successful candidates paid far more attention to how Shylock had been treated earlier in the play, than to the passage itself. Many ignored the implicit comparison between Antonio and Shylock's list of detested animals or did not consider Shylock's speech at all. Some mistakenly thought that Shylock was being compared to a rat or a dog.

The most successful responses combined awareness of the play as a whole with a close analysis of what is said here, and did not underestimate the indefensible nature of some of Shylock's behaviour.

Question 6

Good answers wrote about Portia's beauty, intelligence, independence and generosity with some enthusiasm offering supporting reference from across the play as a whole. Some qualified their admiration by questioning her choice of Bassanio and her treatment of Shylock.

Less successful candidates found things to admire but could not back this up with specific references to the text. The trial scene was often ignored and arguments were generalised.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 7

Most answers to this question understood that Bottom's enthusiasm and desire to play every part is entertaining and wrote appropriately about Flute's reluctance to cross-dress and Snug's comic desire to study the lion's part. The frustrations of poor Peter Quince in trying to control Bottom were also explored. There were, however, weaker answers that did not venture much beyond saying that the mechanicals are working class and therefore funny because they are uneducated. A detailed consideration of the language in the passage, such as the oxymoronic 'Lamentable Comedy', Bottom's bombastic lines from the play, his malapropisms (such as 'condole' and, 'generally'), his use of repetition, was a rare occurrence. Many answers were humourlessly condemnatory of the mechanicals 'stupidity' showing no personal response to their enthusiasm, innocence and ambition.

Question 8

Successful answers to this question considered the 'Love is blind' theme, the behaviour of Bottom and the love-in-idleness induced madness of the lovers. Ideas were supported by apt reference to the text.

Less successful answers wrote about the fairies instead of the mortals, considered whether Puck really held that view, as opposed to the audience or referred exclusively to the passage in **Question 7** in their answers.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest

Question 9

This question was usually answered well. Candidates commented on the striking differences in characterisation between Prospero and Miranda, the ways in which Shakespeare's language emphasises both Prospero's power and Miranda's compassion and the effective way in which their 'back story' is revealed. The strongest responses explored the striking nature of Shakespeare's withholding of information.

Less successful candidates showed only superficial knowledge of the scene, did not understand that 'no harm' has been 'done' to the ship, therefore making unfounded claims about Prospero's cruelty. Some also thought that he was not Miranda's biological father.

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Question 10

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

OSCAR WILDE: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 11

Many successful responses started from a secure understanding of the context of the scene. They knew why Gwendolen was visiting Jack/Ernest's country home, understood her surprise and disquiet at the existence and attractive appearance of Cecily and grasped that both girls mistakenly thought they were engaged to the same man. Their opening conversational exchange was examined in some detail for its insincerity and absurdity. The increasing hostility and Cecily's dramatic final line were considered in some detail. Such answers responded to the lightness of the humour.

Less successful answers tended to ignore the content and context of the scene and to spend the entire answer making unconvincing and often inaccurate general comments about the nature of Victorian life, the role of women and Wilde's satire.

Question 12

Effective responses started by choosing some of the main themes of the play such as marriage or money. This meant that their comments on Wilde's criticisms could be supported by concrete reference and relevant quotation. Lady Bracknell's interrogation of Jack was used effectively in this respect.

Less successful candidates tended to make sweeping statements about hypocrisy and class divisions without citing much evidence from the play for the views expressed. Some candidates thought that Jack was poor, unable to distinguish between lack of background and family and lack of income. A lack of quotation was a feature of these answers, with candidates not even managing to remember: 'A handbag?'

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32

Paper 32 Drama (Open Text)

Key Messages

Good answers:

- were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance and viewed them from an audience's point of view.
- paid explicit attention to the wording of the question and to balancing both strands, where appropriate.
- focused clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy biographical detail or elaborate context setting.
- gave a detailed response to author's dramatic and linguistic effects supported by well-selected reference to the text, most effectively in the form of quotation.
- gave a fresh personal response and avoided formulaic approaches.

General comments

In answers to passage-based questions, the strongest answers integrated knowledge of the context into the answer as a whole. The key to success was to explore the passage in detail, quote from it extensively and comment on the content of the dialogue, the language used, the stagecraft, the dramatic effectiveness and the impact on the audience. Less successful responses barely quoted from the passage or quoted at length without comment. Some answers used line references instead of quotations which was less helpful.

The least effective answers had no introduction and narrated or paraphrased the passage. Some were more concerned with spotting themes, sometimes inaccurately, than in answering the question.

In answer to the discursive questions, the strongest answers defined the terms of the question and maintained relevance throughout. Such answers ranged selectively across the text, looked at chosen moments in some detail and gave support for their answers in the form of quotation. In response to 'How far...' or 'To what extent...' questions, successful answers balanced the argument and came to a specific and thoughtful conclusion. They did not lose sight of the text as drama and considered both the structure of the play and audience response to key scenes. If the question asked for consideration of two moments or two elements both were given equal consideration. Less successful responses used only material from the passage-based question in support or lost focus on the question, giving lengthy narrative, historical background or thematic content at the expense of a focus on the question.

Weak answers referred to plays as 'novels' or 'stories' and to the audience as 'readers', thought Shakespeare's audience was Victorian and Wilde's Elizabethan.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers. There were some rubric infringements with candidates either answering two passage-based or two discursive answers.

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Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

There were many very strong answers to this richly complex moment in the play. Successful responses established the dramatic context for George's arrival speedily and economically, noting the way the audience has been primed by the phone call, Ann's apprehension, Kate's warning to Joe and Jim's precise grasp of the situation. They often saw the significance of Joe's guilty withdrawal and were clear as to the purpose of George's first trip home. The effect of Jim's urgent words and movements in building suspense and tension was carefully weighed, as was the portrayal of George's intensity and rudeness. The power of Jim's images such as' blood in his eye…explode…' was often closely analysed. Some saw the exchange between Sue and Jim as comic relief but the best answers responded to Sue's underlying bitterness. The revealing nature of George's sarcastic remarks about the law, the business and Larry's tree was often intelligently handled.

Less successful answers tended to work through the extract with no sense of the broader dramatic context and George's purpose, often hinting at understanding but not expressing this. Some got rather distracted in speculating about what Chris does or does not know, or admit to knowing. A few spent so long establishing the complexities of the situation and explaining what Joe has done to Steve that they left little time to scrutinise the extract.

Question 2

Successful candidates explained what they understood by' A man among men' from the start of their answer and kept their definition in view throughout. For some, it meant that Joe appears exceptional; for others ordinary; and for many, both of these apparently contradictory ideas in different ways. The best answers recognised the complexity of the characterisation. Some placed the quotation neatly in the context of the description of Joe as a typical uneducated man who has worked hard and made good for his family, but then has been lured into appalling acts by a corrupted and materialistic version of the American Dream. The words of Chris in their final confrontations were skilfully deployed by some to qualify the original quotation. There were some subtle arguments about the compromises men make for their families linking Joe to Jim and citing Joe's own 'A man can't be a Jesus...' remark. Many different conclusions were reached, even about Joe's suicide but what mattered was the quality of the argument and the support provided rather than the line of argument pursued.

Less successful answers tended to write a conventional character study without defining the terms of the question or were limited to thematic discussions. Some were so seduced by Joe's characterisation of himself as regular guy, working selflessly for his family, facing down his doubters and rebuilding his company, that they rather downplayed his lies, his treatment of Steve, the deaths he caused.

J.B.PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

The most effective responses conveyed a confident grasp of the engagement party context and of Mr Birling's inappropriately egotistical speech making, and many saw the way in which Priestley is revealing his short-sightedness and callous disregard for his employees to prepare us for the contrast with the Inspector's omniscience and insistence on social responsibility. The dramatic irony of his hopelessly misplaced optimism was often thoroughly explored and the background knowledge that the play was first performed in 1946 but set in 1912, subtly and relevantly deployed. One candidate thought that, Birling inadvertently provides a metaphor for himself in the Titanic '…a complacent lack of vision is setting him up for failure…he and his family are on course for a metaphorical iceberg'. Strong answers ranged widely across the extract, exploring his arrogance, pomposity, self-centredness, rudeness, stupidity, and were alert not just to the repetitious self-aggrandisement of his long speeches, but also to the patronising interactions with his children and his failure to respond to his wife's hints.

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Less effective answers only considered the dramatic irony, making one central point about Birling's stupidity and ignoring his interactions with the other characters. Some over-used generalised material about Capitalism and Priestley's Socialism and became completely detached from the extract. The least successful answers took the passage at face value, missed the ironies completely and showed limited understanding of the rest of the play.

Question 4

Strong answers kept the mystery clearly in view and ranged selectively across the play, exploring ideas such as: the perfect timing of the Inspector's arrival to interrupt and undermine Birling's lecture on self-interest, the vagueness about his background, his omniscience, his remarkably accurate prophecies of doom, his manipulation of the photographs to keep the characters (and the audience) waiting, his withering eye-contact and charismatic presence and the use of lighting to emphasis this, his moralising rather than investigative approach, his lack of deference, his name and the double twist of the ending.

Less successful answers lost the focus on mystery and became preoccupied by tangential ideas like the susceptibility of Sheila and Eric to the Inspector's influence or Priestley's use of a mouthpiece, or drifted into a narrative approach without foregrounding the question and selecting appropriately. Some spent far too long speculating on the Inspector's real identity, with unconvincing ideas of him being an embodiment of the Birling's absent conscience, God, the reincarnation of Eva Smith (or her child), or an unspecified ghoul.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Merchant of Venice

Question 5

This question was answered well when candidates quickly established the context for this dialogue which precedes the third and final casket selection and demonstrated clearly what is at stake here. The best answers were characterised by close attention to the richness of the language: some saw that Portia is uncharacteristically discomposed by Bassanio's presence and by her divided loyalties and that this is reflected in her broken, and contradictory speech patterns; some contrasted her response to Bassanio neatly with her response to the previous two suitors; some contrasted her desire for delay with Bassanio's impatience; the images of helplessness and imprisonment and the extended ' rack…treason…confess..' metaphor were often intelligently explored but equally often misunderstood in weaker responses. The very best noted the two examples of Bassanio completing Portia's lines to suggest his impatience and the couple's compatibility and realised that Portia's long final speech, which introduces the atmospheric music and the heroic allusion to Hercules, is not really addressed to Bassanio but acts like a commentary on the unfolding spectacle.

Less successful responses paid far more attention to the casket story, preceding and following the extract, than the extract itself. There was often a generalised awareness of the intensity of feeling between the two lovers but great difficulty engaging with the language. Words and phrases were sometimes lifted out of their contexts and accompanied by conclusions which misrepresented the feelings being expressed. Such responses rarely considered the second half of the passage.

Question 6

Successful answers used an examination of the exact nature of Shylock's punishment as a logical starting-point and evaluated Shylock's level of culpability throughout their answer. Conclusions varied enormously: some saw Shylock as an almost heroic figurehead for a beleaguered minority who suffers appalling discrimination at the hands of dominant Christians and, in trying to fight back, finds that he has lost his wealth, his occupation, his religion and identity; others focused on Shylock as a murderous and merciless 'revenger' who sharpens his knife with sadistic relish and insists on the terms of his inhuman bond, as a dictatorial and unfeeling father and master, as scheming, money-obsessed, manipulative, bigoted and callously resistant to all pleas for clemency. The best answers tended to be those which avoided oversimplification, weighed up competing arguments and reached thoughtful conclusions, based on specific references from the play as a whole. Many strong candidates made thoughtful distinctions between the likely responses of Elizabethan and post-Holocaust audiences to Shylock and often found the conversion to Christianity a particularly excessive punishment. The punishments which hit Shylock in his pocket were generally felt to be far more appropriate.

Less successful answers often omitted the courtroom scene entirely in order to shape an artificially sympathetic response to Shylock and made no mention of the punishments finally agreed upon. Others spent far too long speculating about the responses of different audiences in different eras or drifted into

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generalisations about hatred, revenge, discrimination and religious intolerance without focusing on the question and text. Quite a few candidates thought Jessica to be describing her father, rather than Gobbo, as a 'merry devil'.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 7

The key to success here was to pay close attention to the language of the extract and to trace Hermia's dramatically evolving moods in some detail. In strong answers the context was securely grasped and the dramatic irony of Hermia's complete faith in Lysander when we know him to be in pursuit of Helena was thoughtfully unpicked, along with the effect of the framing device involving us watching Oberon and Puck watching Hermia and Demetrius. The best answers selected and explored the impact of specific ironies, of Hermia's Titania-style images of global disorder and of her unmaidenly aggression and sarcastic abuse of Demetrius with exploration of the animal imagery she uses.

Less successful candidates were unclear about the context and often insisted that Puck was entirely responsible for Hermia's animosity towards Demetrius but without understanding Lysander's absence or that Puck had also juiced Titania's eyes, and very few grasped that the opening word, 'This', refers to Titania's involvement with Bottom. Such answers tend still to confuse the lovers' names.

Question 8

This was rarely attempted, but there were some successful arguments based on the disturbing gender politics in the play, often exploring the attitudes of Egeus and Theseus in the opening scene, or Oberon's abuse of his power or the treatment of Helena. The elusive nature of comedy was often confirmed in answers from serious-minded candidates who were clearly disturbed rather than amused by most of the play, including the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* and all of Bottom's dream.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest

Question 9

Many candidates managed to range widely and selectively across the passage, to explore the moving nature of the love, the reunions, the forgiveness and the reconciliation, and to recognise the impact of the scene as a final and largely joyful resolution. Prospero's highly theatrical revelation of the young lovers, their touching endearments, Miranda's witticism about 'fair play', the symbolism of the chess game and Alonso's astonishment were often explored in some detail. Alonso's inability to trust his own eyes and the similarity of his first reaction to Miranda to that of his sons on first meeting her in Act One were often thoughtfully pointed out, and the layers of irony in Miranda's innocent response to the 'goodly creatures' and in Sebastian's 'high miracle' exclamation also intelligently unpicked. The best answers were able to visualise the onstage action and to engage with the kneeling and the joining of hands as well as the language; the significance of Prospero's single speech and spirit of forgiveness was handled thoughtfully and Antonio's complete silence was also registered with interest. Strong answers also managed to discuss the significance of Prospero's willingness to forgive, of Gonzalo's tearful summing-up, of the merging of the houses of Naples and Milan and of the availability of a seaworthy ship in which to make good their escape.

Less successful candidates confronted by so much action, tended to lose both strands of the question and to describe the unfolding events. Some were unselective and wrote too much about the significance and symbolism of the chess game. Many were convinced that Miranda and Ferdinand are already married, rather than betrothed. Some were uncertain as to the order of events and unclear that Prospero's confrontation with Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian (and his forgiveness of them) has already taken place.

Question 10

Strong answers moved well beyond a narrative response to the magic in the play, to engage with the memorable music and spectacle. The detail of the timely sleep-control, the celebratory Masque and Juno's chariot, the harpies, nymphs, hunting dogs and disappearing banquets were fully explored and the impact on an audience registered. The ferocity of the opening storm was often contrasted with the tranquillity of the final scene and miraculous recovery of the ship, and the best noted that the audience, like Miranda, is taken in by the illusion, and believes the opening storm to be genuine and life-threatening. Links between Prospero and the playwright as a weaver of illusions were often intelligently made, using close reference to the Epilogue.

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Weaker answers, however, confined their answers to a discussion of the narrative role of magic, rather than its impact on the audience. There was a notable lack of close textual reference in less successful answers and a reliance on historical context, which gained no credit.

OSCAR WILDE: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 11

Many successful responses started from a secure understanding of the complex context which proved particularly important in exploring the extract's many dramatic ironies, particularly in Cecily's references to a 'double life". The best answers not only cited humour as a key feature of the scene but were able to explore the sources of the humour in some detail: the verbal and situational ironies, the paradoxes and reversals, the ridiculousness of the attitudes, the willingness of Algernon to adapt speedily in order to impress Cecily and his largely unsuccessful flirtatiousness, her surprising assertiveness and the way the sheltered ward runs rings round the urbane dandy. The running jokes about Algernon's obsession with food and fashion were often fully explored.

Less successful responses tended to select a funny line, label it as humorous and to move on without being able to develop a focused commentary. Some wrote too much about the contextual complications and the imminent revelation that both Algernon and Jack are assuming the Ernest persona, and lost focus on the liveliness of the dialogue. Many weaker answers focused too much on Wilde's satire or the historical background at the expense of looking at the content of the passage itself.

Question 12

Effective responses started by placing the quotation and correctly attributing it to Gwendolen's deluded mother, and constructed detailed and well-supported arguments to demonstrate its inappropriateness. She has refused several proposals, keeps a 'sensational' diary, believes in 'style, not sincerity', shapes a steely and condescending response to Cecily's revelations, disobeys her mother, is used to getting what she wants, is controlling, demanding, decisive, independent thus spoilt and complex.

Less successful candidates tried to refute the description but tended to rely on a narrow range of ideas and references and sometimes a film rather than the text. Responses to Gwendolen occasionally missed the humour and lightness of tone entirely and became highly censorious and judgmental. The quotation was frequently attributed to Jack.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33

Paper 33 Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

Good answers:

- were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance and viewed them from an audience's point of view.
- paid explicit attention to the wording of the question and to balancing both strands, where appropriate.
- focused clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy biographical detail or elaborate context setting.
- gave a detailed response to author's dramatic and linguistic effects supported by well-selected reference to the text, most effectively in the form of quotation.
- gave a fresh personal response and avoided formulaic approaches.

General comments

In answers to passage-based questions, the strongest answers integrated knowledge of the context into the answer as a whole. The key to success was to explore the passage in detail, quote from it extensively and comment on the content of the dialogue, the language used, the stagecraft, the dramatic effectiveness and the impact on the audience. Less successful responses barely quoted from the passage or quoted at length without comment. Some answers used line references instead of quotations which was less helpful.

The least effective answers had no introduction and narrated or paraphrased the passage. Some were more concerned with spotting themes, sometimes inaccurately, than in answering the question.

In answer to the discursive questions, the strongest answers defined the terms of the question and maintained relevance throughout. Such answers ranged selectively across the text, looked at chosen moments in some detail and gave support for their answers in the form of quotation. In response to 'How far...' or 'To what extent...' questions, successful answers balanced the argument and came to a specific and thoughtful conclusion. They did not lose sight of the text as drama and considered both the structure of the play and audience response to key scenes. If the question asked for consideration of two moments or two elements both were given equal consideration. Less successful responses used only material from the passage-based question in support or lost focus on the question, giving lengthy narrative, historical background or thematic content at the expense of a focus on the question.

Weak answers referred to plays as 'novels' or 'stories' and to the audience as 'readers', thought Shakespeare's audience was Victorian and Wilde's Elizabethan.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers.

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Comments on Specific Questions

***Section A* DRAMA**

ARTHUR MILLER: All My Sons

Question 1

Most candidates understood the tensions between Chris and Joe arising from being 'dishonest' with Kate in her belief that Larry is still alive. Some candidates explained at length the difficulty of getting Kate to accept Larry's death, and the repercussions for the family, crucially because accepting Larry is dead is to accept Joe's guilt in having sent the faulty cylinders. Better answers addressed the question on how Miller reveals the tensions, and they analysed the stage directions: notably, '(*Slight pause)*', which shows how tense the awkward conversation is. Many also quoted the directions for Joe as he '*simply moves away'*, accurately pointing out that this shows how Joe avoids confrontation – which Chris points out in the last line: '*You have such a talent for ignoring things'*. The strongest answers used the whole passage, from the symbolic cracking of Larry's tree in the night to Chris's newly acknowledged desire to marry Annie and to comments on how tensions have now come to a head for the Kellers at this moment in the play. Weaker responses focused on stage directions and punctuation without contextualising or exploring them in terms of the question.

Question 2

Candidates engaged with the character, Keller, and varied as to whether they were shocked by his suicide or not. Some answers explained Joe's dishonesty and how it came to be revealed, arguing that he had no other option but to kill himself. The extent to which candidates were able to analyse Miller's build-up towards this point determined the quality of the response. Some candidates took the view that, although Miller made clear the reasons for Keller to kill himself, the actual suicide itself was very shocking because it was so unexpected at that moment – Joe says he is going inside to get his jacket. These candidates focused more on the ending of the play, and other characters' reactions to the suicide, as well as their own. Either response is acceptable, provided it is fully supported by reference to the text. The best responses focused on the terms of the question, 'To what extent…' producing a balanced response rooted firmly in the text. Some weaker answers consisted of general discussion about Joe and the plot of the play, rather than remaining focused on the question.

J.B.PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

Most candidates were able to comment profitably on the tensions between Gerald and Sheila, shown in their sarcastic comments to each other. Many sided with Sheila, as she discovers exactly where her fiancé was last summer. Some candidates focused more on the inspector, considering his prompting of Gerald, the stage directions of '*with authority*', '*sharply*' and '*harshly*', all of which show that the inspector firmly intends to achieve his aim of imparting blame for Eva/Daisy's death. Other candidates focused predominantly on the Birling's and their desire to keep Sheila ignorant of undesirable truths, as they try to get her to leave the room; Mrs Birling's determination to quieten Sheila when she says *'…we killed her*.'; the Birling's own ignorance of reality, as they are so shocked by the revelations of the drunken womaniser Meggarty; and Mr Birling's shocked reaction to Sheila's knowing comment about a friend's lucky escape from Meggarty with '*just a torn blouse'*. The drama of the passage lies in its revelations, and the reactions from characters. A few candidates showed insight into the inspector's methods, *'one line of enquiry at a time'*, commenting on the fact that though Eric himself was not present at that moment, it was clear that he too would be involved in Eva Smith's suicide.

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Question 4

Some candidates merely explained what each Birling had done to Eva, and asserted that they denied responsibility. Stronger answers evaluated Mr and Mrs Birling's characters to show why they treated Eva as they do: Mr Birling's belief in capitalism driving him to keep wages low and so refusing a request for higher pay, despite recognising the value in Eva as a good worker and potential leader; Mrs Birling's prejudice against 'girls of that class' prompting her to refuse help to Eva when she asks the charity for money. These answers often considered the Birling's defensiveness and refusal to admit guilt when challenged by the inspector, and often compared their reactions to Sheila and Eric, who both accept their own responsibility.

Some candidates mentioned the Birling's fear of losing their respectability and knighthood. Stronger answers considered the Birling's relief towards the end when the inspector is revealed as a hoax by Gerald, and their immediate resumption of old attitudes, that is, everything is fine as long as no-one knows. Most candidates considered Gerald's discovery and Mr Birling's telephone call as the end of the play but the very best candidates went on to considered the final telephone call to the Birling household, explaining that an inspector was on his way. Whatever arguments candidates used in their answers, they needed to be supported by detailed reference to the text to gain high marks. The best answers considered the inspector's message of social responsibility and the apocalyptic message should this not be learnt. A few responses were self-penalising as they focused solely on the passage for **Question 3**, and what the Birling's learned here about Gerald, and the sordid details of Meggarty and the night life of Brumley rather than the lessons learned from the suicide of this young woman and the part they played.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Merchant of Venice

Question 5

It was useful here for candidates to briefly identify the context of the passage within the play, following the trial. Most candidates realised that Portia and Nerissa had the rings, and that the arguing in this passage ends well, but some did not make clear that Portia and Nerissa were deliberately baiting their men, teasing them for breaking their vows to keep the rings until the '*hour of death'*. Stronger answers responded to both 'entertaining' and 'satisfying'. They analysed the humour in the passage, of Gratiano unknowingly comparing the judge's clerk to Nerissa, and trying to put the blame onto Bassanio. Satisfaction was seen in the dramatic irony of the audience, also knowing what Portia and Nerissa are doing here, and enjoying their power over the men, especially as Portia had experienced helplessness in the early part of the play, over the selection of her husband. Many candidates explored the writing closely: the symbolism of the rings as valuable, everlasting love; Nerissa's hints about the judge's clerk and the deliberate goading of Bassanio by Portia. Bassanio's attempts at appeasing Portia in his last speech, and her rebuttal of him using the same language, was closely analysed. It was also deemed 'satisfying' that after the trial scene, there was a sense that all will soon be resolved and that harmony reigns.

Question 6

The majority of candidates considered Antonio to be kind, citing his readiness to lend Bassanio money, and his willingness to put himself and his fortune at risk for him. Most also considered Antonio's treatment of Shylock, focusing directly on the terms of the question, 'To what extent…' Some were able to use much textual detail here, to good effect. More perceptive answers suggested that it was Antonio's poor treatment of Shylock which made Shylock determined to enforce the bond, the terms of his loan. Very few candidates considered Antonio's actions in asking for clemency for Shylock and the exacting conditions that he converts to Christianity, thereby depriving him of not only his religious faith but his livelihood too. Some candidates spent too long considering Shakespeare's audience of the day, compared to that of today. Antonio's behaviour towards Shylock may have been more common to Shakespeare's audience but the answer here needed to be firmly rooted in the text of the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A Midsummer Night's Dream

Question 7

Candidates who answered this question were able to provide detailed explanations of the mounting confusion between the lovers, due to Puck and Oberon's meddling, as the potion does its work. Stronger answers explored how the language conveys these emotions: for example, Lysander's hurtful and stark words to Hermia, '.*The hate I bare thee…',* or the many images of Helena and Hermia's closeness as girls, '*double cherry',* making Helena's feelings of betrayal now feel so painful. The drama lies in the ironies of the

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situation and the best answers explored this, and the language, fully. Weaker answers tended to retell the plot and to confuse the lovers.

Question 8

Some limited their response to narrating the events of the four Athenian lovers asserting that love is indeed blind. Others widened their answers to consider Titania and Bottom, Titania and Oberon, and even Pyramus and Thisbe. Better answers here explored the ideas of fickleness in love or the importance of appearances. To gain high marks, ideas must be supported by well-selected textual references and not rely on narrative.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Tempest

Question 9

Weaker answers tended to retell the passage, with little reference to the question, or exploration of the situation. Most responses showed some awareness of the humour of Trinculo and Stefano's drunken antics. Some candidates considered how serious Caliban is in the passage, intent as he is on murder. Stronger answers explored how language creates the humour or seriousness. Trinculo's distaste of his own smell '*all horse-piss'* was much quoted, as was '*O King Stephano!*' which was rather premature. The more serious and disturbing image at the start of the passage, of Prospero as a '*blind mole'* who might hear their footsteps, was also quoted, as was Caliban's desperate urging of the others to get on with the murder. Caliban's imagined punishments were considered, '…*he'll fill our skins with pinches*;' and '*all be turn'd to barnacles, or to apes'*, and compared with the real punishment of being hunted by dogs unleashed by Prospero and Ariel. These stronger answers often commented on the effects of the dramatic irony, with Prospero and Ariel invisibly watching the action, along with the audience, as the three villains fall into Prospero's trap.

Question 10

This question often prompted a sensitive, well-developed response which explored the relationship from its beginnings, when Prospero released Ariel from the tree, to Ariel's indebtedness and gratitude. Candidates saw genuine fondness in the language between the two, '*My brave spirit'* and '*my noble master'.* They pointed out that Ariel was motivated to carry out Prospero's wishes exactly, so that he would be freed and also explored Prospero's anger and exasperation towards Ariel when he asked when he would be freed. Some candidates profitably compared Prospero's relationship with Ariel to that with Caliban. The best responses showed a good understanding of the dramatic impact of the relationship supporting this with relevant textual detail. These responses also considered the irony in Prospero's treatment of Ariel, by comparing it to how Sycorax had attempted to use Ariel. Good answers considered Ariel's 'dramatic' role in the reconciliation, the requirement for a resolution and in receiving Prospero's orders for his 'last service' and eventual achievement of his freedom.

OSCAR WILDE: The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 11

The majority of candidates responded here to Gwendolen's power and controlling manner, showing how she dictates how Jack proposes to her and accepts him before he asks her. Many explored how this power is conveyed, considering her lengthy speech compared to Jack's, how she interrupts him, her arrogance as shown in '*I am never wrong'*, and her certainty of being right about the name 'Ernest'. Jack's response to her power was also explored, in his stuttering, halting speech, the brevity of his speech and the fact that he asks whether he can propose to her. Fewer candidates developed their answers to consider 'amusingly'. Those who did, also commented on Wilde's intention of mocking social norms such as traditional proposals of marriage and the absurd fashions some people followed as Gwendolen insists that the name 'Ernest '*produces vibrations'*. There was a tendency for weaker candidates to write about the Victorians, social and historical background and even Wilde's personal life, without consideration of the terms of the question and the detail of the passage.

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Question 12

This in general was thoroughly answered in terms of listing the monstrous things Lady Bracknell says and does. She is powerful, ruthless, arrogant, conservative, hypocritical and very 'proper'. Her mercenary nature causes her to reverse her opinion of Cecily when she discovers how rich she is. Jack will only be placed on the list of eligible suitors if he is able to produce at least one parent. She is rude to Miss Prism (and everyone else too). Very good answers were able to move on from the 'monstrous' behaviour to consider just how funny Lady Bracknell is, simply because she makes such outrageous remarks which normally people would not do in polite society, and dominates every scene in which she appears on stage. Some candidates went into detail on Wilde's intentions in creating her character to satirise Victorian upper-class repressive values. As always, this is useful information as long as it is addressing the question and firmly rooted in the text. The best answers were able to explore 'How far…' by producing some sense of balance in assessing Jack's comment, and in considering that Lady Bracknell having made a good marriage herself, only wants the best husband for her daughter, Gwendolen.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41

Paper 41 Unseen

Key Messages

- Candidates should always be prepared to respond to either poetry or prose.
- Good answers use short quotations followed by comment on what the writer's language reveals to the reader, rather than over-long quotation.
- The Assessment Objectives are equally weighted: strong answers balance knowledge and understanding with analysis of language and form and interpretative personal response.

General Comments

There was a generally high level of achievement. Most candidates were very aware of the need to move beyond paraphrase or a response to the text at surface level. Competent answers made some use of quotation and comment on language; many moved beyond identification of linguistic features to make sensitive comment on their effect, and the best answers shaped individual interpretations of the texts grounded in close observation of detail but were prepared to explore deeper implications and suggested meanings.

A poem which appears, on the surface, to be very straightforward may have a sub-text which needs to be drawn out. If the text is short, strong responses will explore linguistic and structural features in some depth and relate them to the deeper meanings of the poem or passage. Longer narrative passages allow candidates to respond more selectively. Prose responses do need to go beyond paraphrase for higher marks. The prose texts and extracts chosen will have interesting uses of language and imagery for readers to explore. Looking at narrative viewpoint or voice is a good start, just as attention to voice can lead to appreciation of the tone of a poem. Good answers analysed both poetry and prose as consciously crafted pieces of writing: they understood that the writer is not identical with the poetic voice we hear, or with the characters whose point of view is described. Stepping back to explore the overall impact made by the writing on the reader is a good idea before beginning a critical response.

Less successful essays often spent too long on an introduction which merely repeated the words of the question or bullet points. Stronger answers gave a brief overview of the whole text before exploring detail and were able to communicate the impression the text made on them. Some exploration of the implications of the title of a poem and its relation to the contents often provided an interesting way in, or some reflection on the overall structure and development of the text. However, many good answers simply moved straight into analysis, often helped by the first bullet point. There were obviously no marks for simply repeating the words of the rubric, but careful reading of the preamble and bullet points did help to avoid misunderstandings, as they clarified characters, situation, genre and the gender of the writer.

Some candidates wrote lengthy plans or first drafts. This was not necessary and took time away from constructing a full and detailed response. There is certainly no need to write out lengthy quotations, as the question paper can be annotated during the reading time. It is a good idea to organise a response around a set of linked observations and arguments. This kind of checklist is much more useful than a checklist of technical terms. The best-planned responses tended to follow the structure and development of the passage, as do the bullet points, rather than having (for example) separate paragraphs for language, form and structure. Essay plans based on acronyms often led to mechanical responses which explored features of the text without relating them to meaning, or an overall personal response.

Many impressive answers were seen which showed linguistic sophistication, and perceptive response to the writer's use of language. There were, however, some over-lengthy answers which rarely rose far above the level of extended paraphrase, with excessive amounts of quotation. There were also weaker responses which spent too long identifying features of the language or structure of the text, without considering their meaning or effectiveness. Thus attention to detail was sometimes at the expense of the meaning of the

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whole text. This was especially evident among candidates who used checklists or acronyms to structure their answers, instead of reading through the whole text first, and considering the question carefully. Questions always encourage candidates to look at 'how' a text works, and the bullet points can be very helpful in structuring a response which can explore both content and techniques. Mind-maps and ordered sequences of observations based around language, tone and reader response worked better for planning, especially when the bullet points were used as a guide.

The bullet points are advisory not mandatory. Very strong answers often showed deft integration of bullet-point material within an individual overall argument. Others used the bullets as a paragraph plan: they do help candidates to observe the effects of some features of the writing, understanding the structure of the passage and begin to evaluate both the ways in which the text ends and the possible implications of that ending for understanding of the whole.

Some candidates might have achieved higher marks with more attention to quotation technique. Quotations need not be lengthy: indeed single-word quotations can be highly effective if they are clearly related to context. It is most effective when quotation is followed by comments on the effect of the choice of words or images. The impact of language on the reader needs to be explored, and diction, syntax or imagery related to meaning and to emotional resonance. The vast majority of candidates realised the need to give textual support to their reading, but more would achieve higher marks if that textual support was used to make comment on the effects of language.

Language, knowledge, understanding and personal response are equally weighted as they correspond to the four Assessment Objectives. Competent answers demonstrated secure knowledge of the surface meaning of their texts, while deeper understanding of implied meaning was needed for Band 4 and above. Some reference to the ways in which writers use language is also a prerequisite for higher marks. However, 'clear critical understanding' (Band 2) implies an appreciation of the ways in which the text is consciously crafted by the writer, and the ability to link this to a sensitive appreciation of its impact on the reader. Personal response was demonstrated in good answers, and many possible interpretations of the sub-text of a poem or extract clearly supported by the text and based on sensitive response to language and imagery were highly rewarded. There was no one 'correct' answer in interpreting each passage, but responses did well when they were well-grounded, showing insight and perception.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The poem by Don Paterson 'Why Do You Stay Up So Late?' from his collection *Rain* concerned a father–son relationship which made sense to those who attempted to respond to the poem. Candidates liked the idea that the poem was addressed directly to the boy and that it attempted to convey the experience of writing poetry through an analogy to a childhood game. Good answers wrote very effectively about the experiences by the rock pool and some wrote with sensitivity and appreciation about the ways in which the poet describes his own creative process. The best gave equal attention to both stanzas and explained what the two experiences had in common. The third bullet point proved a good discriminator of the strongest responses, as it invited interpretation of what was implicit in developing the vivid descriptive language of both stanzas.

The poem appears to be conversational in tone, with its casual opening address to the young boy in answer to his question. However, it is strictly structured and the stanzas mirror one another in rhythm and rhyme. As some of the rhymes are half-rhymes or sight-rhymes they were not always obvious to candidates, but they are a clear indication that the poem is carefully and consciously crafted. This is characteristic of the creative tensions within the poem for stronger candidates to explore. Most appreciated that the young boy is playing a game. Some were puzzled by why the time was 'lost' or the stones 'stolen'. Stronger answers were able to link this to the stolen moments which the poet reshapes during the lost hours of the night. Other descriptions also carry an allegorical message when read in the light of the second stanza, so 'polishing' the stones could be prepared to polishing words and lines of verse. Only a few of them 'blink the secret colour' which is locked away in their 'stony sleep'. Hence the poet also needs to reject those words and phrases which do not yield their treasure. The dull events of the day don't always yield poetic jewels, but some have 'secret colour' which only the polish of the poet's art can reveal. The strongest answers realised that the poet is putting this art into practice in this very poem.
Good answers appreciated that both the boy and the poet are collectors and they polish what might be unconsidered trifles to others. Some came to see a kind of alchemy at work, transforming the dull and quotidian into the bright and treasured. The best of these also paid attention to the music of the verse, as well as its imagery and could hear the affirmative sounds of the couplets which conclude each stanza. Many picked up the idea that both boy and poet are unlocking potential, and some appreciated the implications of

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finding magical potential in unpromising and everyday things. Most appreciated that the poem does explain the creative process to the boy and shows him that where he finds inspiration.

Some enjoyed the contrast between 'dark' and 'dead' things and 'colour' and 'surprise'. Many explored the paradox of finding brightness in the dead of night, and were able to link this to finding the 'secret colour' in the dark stones. The best responses moved fluently between both stanzas and so were able to explore these connections in some detail. Good answers could see the symmetry between the two stanzas. They appreciated that the imagery highlights the value in things others find dull. They noted, for instance, that as the stones 'sleep' and 'blink' they are clearly alive to the boy, and similarly the poet's nights bring his daily observations to life. Candidates were able to balance an understanding of the poem's structure with personal response to its imagery, picking out the poet's concern with what is precious and surprising. Thus the poet was understood to be a collector of things he valued, in order to attempt to capture their true essence.

The best answers engaged with the more difficult and complex images in the final stanza. The poet has 'no pool to help': some interpreted this as meaning nature alone cannot be counted on for assistance. The poet needs his art to come to his aid. Others noticed the repetition of 'look' and pointed out that more than a second glance is needed for poetic insight. Strong answers noted that he has to 'make a mirror' in his eyes, so ideas need to 'resonate within him' or 'reflect himself' and perhaps his family. Painting it with 'the tear' is important. Some thought this a melancholy suggestion and found the mood of this stanza sad or lonely. Others responded more sentimentally to the hint that the poet needed to engage his emotions in order to unlock the deeper meaning of those quotidian moments. One or two brought out the links between ways in which rocks can be polished and the poet finding emotional brightness within ordinary moments in everyday life. Certainly he is suggesting that writing can bring life and colour, and can sometimes surprise. Some candidates realised that this can be linked directly to the poet's choice of form and the bright sounds of his final couplets, implying completion.

Question 2

The prose extract from the short story 'A Glutton for Punishment' proved interesting to a wide range of candidates. In the complete story Walter Henderson's only real skill in life is his ability to 'die' while playing gangsters or Cowboys and Indians as a child. He is described as 'a chronic, compulsive failure, a strange little boy in love with the attitudes of collapse'. Candidates responded to the details of Walter's failure, often writing with pity and sympathy about his situation in the extract. Almost all were able to engage with the details of description and with the tension of the interview, followed by the embarrassment of the 'walk of shame' back to his desk. They noted, often with admiration, how he attempted to keep his head high until revealing the truth of his humiliation to his secretary. Stronger responses noted that both Henderson and Crowell are hiding their true feelings: the boss pretends to be in control but is clearly embarrassed and nervous of Henderson's potential reaction. Henderson hides his true feelings from Crowell and from his colleagues after almost giving himself away in 'the terrible second' when the blood rushes to his throat and he realises he might be about to cry. They understood the fragility behind his bravado in the final paragraph, and that his confident walk back was just a show for the benefit of the others.

The key to writing well about this extract was appreciation of how much of it is seen through Walter's eyes and understanding of the limitations of his viewpoint. He seems to be observing Crowell's dominant body language at the same time he reveals his own deeper nervousness and insecurity by lacing his fingers tight behind his knees. Good answers realised that the news would come as a shock to him, but not a surprise. Many saw the fake friendliness of the gesture of offering a cigarette which the boss had no intention of sharing, and some pointed out the abruptness of the verbal exchange and even the implicit violence of giving the news 'straight from the shoulder' like a killer blow. While the euphemisms, corporate clichés and flannel which George uses to soften the impact are no surprise, Walter's reactions are more interesting. He notes that his last shred of hope has 'slipped away' and seems to find this funny as well as a shock. Good answers recognised that it is disturbing that Walter describes his own emotions so much from the outside, almost as if they belonged to someone else. He is a self-dramatising person who is beginning to reveal an almost surreal detachment from his real situation. Some realised that this may be why he failed in his job and that his 'abilities' might be better suited to a very different organisation.

Strong answers also responded to the detailed description of George's handprints on the glass of his desk. Some thought the simile comparing the 'gray, perfect' imprints of their moisture to a skeleton was some sort of *memento mori*. Others believed this revealed just how nervous the apparently confident Crowell really was. The best explored how odd it is that Walter focuses on this detail at this moment, and is so 'fascinated'. It seems bizarre that he concentrates on the look of his situation rather than its impact on his real life. However, this is consistent with his detachment throughout the interview and even more with the movie imagery with which he chooses to embellish his final walk back to his desk.

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There is an interesting tension in the portrayal of Crowell. Although he seems to Henderson to be an image of death, to the impartial reader he seems genuinely nervous, and candidates noted how hesitantly he speaks, that he has a 'regular guy's smile' and seems 'genuinely relieved that the worst was over'. Stronger answers also showed awareness that the bullet points concentrate more on Walter, and could read that Crowell's language and gestures suggest he is disconcerted by Walter's reactions. He has little to say, but the moment when the 'friendly and humiliating' gesture almost brings tears to his eyes reveals the depth of his emotions. It is also revealing that Crowell calls him 'boy', as if part of him has never grown up. Walter seems to be checking up on his own reactions, and just like George is described as 'relieved' and 'smiling' nervously. Some found it interesting that boss and victim are described in similar ways. Others realised that this is in fact revealing Walter's own tendency to dramatise and fake his own emotions.

This becomes much clearer in the paragraph full of cinematic terminology and metaphors. This paragraph tended to discriminate between competent and very good answers, and the best responses explored its linguistic peculiarities. Henderson sees his walk back as an accomplishment carried off 'with style'. He is conscious of how he looks to Crowell and to his former colleagues, both friends and foes. The 'subtle play of well-controlled emotion' in his face is clearly a cover for the true emotions revealed to us in the previous paragraphs. It is 'like a movie' rather than real life, and some compared it to Crowell's earlier fake bonhomie. Some noticed how the reader is given a screenplay which presents Henderson's face and 'trim and straight' figure from a variety of viewpoints, but in reality, ultimately, all these viewpoints are really Henderson's own. In his imagination he is a hero, but the nervous glances of his colleagues begin to hint at the truth. Some candidates expressed sympathy for the unfortunate Mary, who bears the brunt of Walter's bluntly expressed confession. Will she herself have a job the next day, or a new boss? These are not Walter's concerns, as he seems wrapped up in his own drama, and detached from any real-life consequences. One candidate saw Walter's walk back as *'uncomfortable, fake and forced'.* The best answers explored the differences between our own responses and Walter's surreal and unsettling preoccupation with the figure he cuts. Most answers showed good understanding of the surface narrative, but stronger answers responded sensitively and in detail to its more disconcerting implications.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42

Paper 42 Unseen

Key Messages

- Candidates should always be prepared to respond to either poetry or prose.
- Good answers use short quotations followed by comment on what the writer's language reveals to the reader, rather than over-long quotation.
- The Assessment Objectives are equally weighted: strong answers balance knowledge and understanding with analysis of language and form and interpretative personal response.

General Comments

There was a generally high level of achievement. Most candidates were very aware of the need to move beyond paraphrase or a response to the text at surface level. Competent answers made some use of quotation and comment on language; many moved beyond identification of linguistic features to make sensitive comment on their effect, and the best answers shaped individual interpretations of the texts grounded in close observation of detail but were prepared to explore deeper implications and suggested meanings.

A poem which appears, on the surface, to be very straightforward may have a sub-text which needs to be drawn out. If the text is short, strong responses will explore linguistic and structural features in some depth and relate them to the deeper meanings of the poem or passage. Longer narrative passages allow candidates to respond more selectively. Prose responses do need to go beyond paraphrase for higher marks. The prose texts and extracts chosen will have interesting uses of language and imagery for readers to explore. Looking at narrative viewpoint or voice is a good start, just as attention to voice can lead to appreciation of the tone of a poem. Good answers analysed both poetry and prose as consciously crafted pieces of writing: they understood that the writer is not identical with the poetic voice we hear, or with the characters whose point of view is described. Stepping back to explore the overall impact made by the writing on the reader is a good idea before beginning a critical response.

Less successful essays often spent too long on an introduction which merely repeated the words of the question or bullet points. Stronger answers gave a brief overview of the whole text before exploring detail and were able to communicate the impression the text made on them. Some exploration of the implications of the title of a poem and its relation to the contents often provided an interesting way in, or some reflection on the overall structure and development of the text. However, many good answers simply moved straight into analysis, often helped by the first bullet point. There were obviously no marks for simply repeating the words of the rubric, but careful reading of the preamble and bullet points did help to avoid misunderstandings, as they clarified characters, situation, genre and the gender of the writer.

Some candidates wrote lengthy plans or first drafts. This was not necessary and took time away from constructing a full and detailed response. There is certainly no need to write out lengthy quotations, as the question paper can be annotated during the reading time. It is a good idea to organise a response around a set of linked observations and arguments. This kind of checklist is much more useful than a checklist of technical terms. The best-planned responses tended to follow the structure and development of the passage, as do the bullet points, rather than having (for example) separate paragraphs for language, form and structure. Essay plans based on acronyms often led to mechanical responses which explored features of the text without relating them to meaning, or an overall personal response.

Many impressive answers were seen which showed linguistic sophistication, and perceptive response to the writer's use of language. There were, however, some over-lengthy answers which rarely rose far above the level of extended paraphrase, with excessive amounts of quotation. There were also weaker responses which spent too long identifying features of the language or structure of the text, without considering their

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meaning or effectiveness. Thus attention to detail was sometimes at the expense of the meaning of the whole text. This was especially evident among candidates who used checklists or acronyms to structure their answers, instead of reading through the whole text first, and considering the question carefully. Questions always encourage candidates to look at 'how' a text works, and the bullet points can be very helpful in structuring a response which can explore both content and techniques. Mind-maps and ordered sequences of observations based around language, tone and reader response worked better for planning, especially when the bullet points were used as a guide.

The bullet points are advisory not mandatory. Very strong answers often showed deft integration of bullet-point material within an individual overall argument. Others used the bullets as a paragraph plan: they do help candidates to observe the effects of some features of the writing, understanding the structure of the passage and begin to evaluate both the ways in which the text ends and the possible implications of that ending for understanding of the whole.

Some candidates might have achieved higher marks with more attention to quotation technique. Quotations need not be lengthy: indeed single-word quotations can be highly effective if they are clearly related to context. It is most effective when quotation is followed by comments on the effect of the choice of words or images. The impact of language on the reader needs to be explored, and diction, syntax or imagery related to meaning and to emotional resonance. The vast majority of candidates realised the need to give textual support to their reading, but more would achieve higher marks if that textual support was used to make comment on the effects of language.

Language, knowledge, understanding and personal response are equally weighted as they correspond to the four Assessment Objectives. Competent answers demonstrated secure knowledge of the surface meaning of their texts, while deeper understanding of implied meaning was needed for Band 4 and above. Some reference to the ways in which writers use language is also a prerequisite for higher marks. However, 'clear critical understanding' (Band 2) implies an appreciation of the ways in which the text is consciously crafted by the writer, and the ability to link this to a sensitive appreciation of its impact on the reader. Personal response was demonstrated in good answers, and many possible interpretations of the sub-text of a poem or extract clearly supported by the text and based on sensitive response to language and imagery were highly rewarded. There was no one 'correct' answer in interpreting each passage, but responses did well when they were well-grounded, showing insight and perception.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

The poem, 'Waiting In' by Anthony Thwaite proved engaging to candidates. Candidates, guided by the bullet points, responded immediately to the surface narrative and the mood created by the poet for his persona, frustrated, restless and ultimately despairing. Many chose to link it to their own experiences of waiting, such as waiting for results or for the exam season to end! Stronger responses explored the hints in the writing that it is about waiting for a delivery in a more metaphorical, or even metaphysical, sense. Good answers realised that the poem plays games with time, not least through the different tenses deployed, and goes beyond describing a literal experience, even if that is its starting point. Some appreciation of underlying implications, possible symbols and certainly the suggestions which arose from figurative language was essential for higher marks. Although nothing happens, the poem does show development of mood, progressively darkening just like the imagined day, and begins to meditate on life's meaninglessness or triviality, and perhaps the process of ageing.

Many candidates appreciated that a poem does not need to have a single meaning and that images can be interpreted in different ways. They took an exploratory approach to the sub-text, and its more existential implications, by working through the poem carefully and by paying particular attention to similes and metaphors – although not all were able to distinguish between these. There were many intelligent responses to form and structure. Some were not able to locate any regular rhyme scheme, but those who did realised that the surprising structure provides both repetition and deviation, as there are alternating rhyme and rhyming couplets but the reader has to wait until the final line of each stanza for the second line to be paired up. Hesitation is provided by the use of punctuation which breaks up the iambic rhythm of each line, and by short sentences and syntactical variation. These, like the change of tenses, complicate the poem's relationship to time. Many realised that the poet's use of enjambment cuts across the poem's rhythms and rhymes and can represent elongated time or the frustration of being made to wait: '*the poet makes it feel like the sentences don't arrive on time'*. Candidates who related comments on form and structure to meaning were much more successful than those who simply identified 'caesura' and 'enjambment' or made very general comments on the ways in which they made lines run more quickly or more slowly.

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Good answers realised that the poet portrays himself as having to 'wait in': he is trapped indoors and cannot go out. Some saw this as a metaphor for isolation, loneliness or self-pity, or an allegory for a kind of purgatory. The mysteriousness of who 'they' are, or what the delivery might be, contributes to the sense of unease. Some strong answers even made a comparison to 'Waiting for Godot'. Others, less successfully, tried to supply a narrative from possible hints in the text: he was waiting for a birthday present, he is an impatient child, he is waiting for contact from relatives. Many thought 'waiting for the bell' referred to life at school rather than a doorbell; more profound thoughts were provoked when candidates compared it to a passing bell, or the speaker's own death knell. Many appreciated the significance of the line ending which elongated time 'late/Into the afternoon', and the best appreciated how to quote these lines correctly, and that it is a common convention to begin each line of poetry with a capital letter. Even better were those responses which appreciated the contribution of assonance and internal rhyme in prolonging the wait, or dramatising the sense of frustration. Many noticed the abrupt sentence 'Nothing arrives.' Again, this needed comment on its effect, and wider implications for higher reward. Similarly, the surprising similes in the fifth and sixth lines needed exploration: the comparison to 'vanished lives' is disconcerting and hints at mortality, while the 'distant towers' create a surreal, dream-like atmosphere. Most believed that time was personified, which is not strictly accurate; it was important to look at the choice of verb, as 'drifts' suggests more than just slow movement, and to realise that time is the poet's antagonist in this poem, with all that implies.

The abrupt opening sentences of the second stanza complicate the amount of time the poet has been waiting. Is it a day or a much longer period of time? Better responses explored a range of possible implied meanings, and picked up what is suggested when the sky is described as 'bruised' – it was not necessary to identify the possibility of a 'transferred epithet' but it was impressive if the candidate's answer picked up the very subjective way in which the speaker views the world. At this stage many began to question his state of mind or his values: a number explored the idiom of 'let the time be spent' and concluded that perhaps his attitude to time was too transactional, or that his passivity was defeatist. One or two wondered why he didn't visit the depot; others explored why this might be connected to an attitude to life.
Most picked up the mounting irritation of the final complete stanza, some linking it to an old man's impatience at the lack of a 'promised end'. Some realised it is the day which is 'Nagging at age and irritation', not the poet himself, or linked 'waste' and 'whole' and saw that the rhythm emphasises these words to express that sense of irritation. Others made much of the 'heavy curtains' – a symbol of tiredness, defeat or the end of life as well as the end of the day? – or the repetition of 'restless' and how this makes us explore the meaning of that word. Most recognised the sibilant sounds but some confused 'slips into sleeplessness' with the more expected 'sleepiness' and so missed the subtle distinction here. The poet remains restless even at the end of the day. This also suggests that he is not resigned to, but rather defeated by, the lack of delivery, and very good responses observed that the last line is almost like a *da capo* sign suggesting that the poem keeps repeating itself on an endless loop. Candidates drew their own conclusions about the man's fate: some felt pity, while others read the poem as an exhortation to seize the day. The quality of engagement with language and implied meaning decided the marks awarded.

Question 2

The extract from D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* had plenty of interesting uses of language to comment on, and the characterisation of Brangwen made it easy to respond to the deeper implications of this apparently straightforward moment. Stronger answers looked at the writer's purpose and related descriptive passages to the emotions of the characters. This was aided by Lawrence's strong writing in this passage, and the ways in which he takes us into Brangwen's consciousness. The final bullet point in particular discriminated between stronger and weaker responses. Many had plenty to say about the contrasts between outside and inside the barn, or about the young girl Anna. The best answers invariably explored Brangwen's thoughts and emotions in some depth and explored the motif of the shawl as a link between his bond with his daughter and that with his own mother.
The significance of the 'big shawl' only emerges later in the passage, which is why it is a good idea to have a sense of the whole text before writing about details. An overview of the whole extract at the beginning of the answer distinguished many stronger responses. Some good answers realised how unusual Brangwen's method of calming the child is, and saw the reasons for Tilly's objection. Some began by paralleling the child's tempestuous emotions and the storm outside. Others picked up how little Brangwen himself says, and that his actions spoke louder than his words. Most wrote effectively about the writer's use of contrast. This was especially effective when the sound of the words – 'butt' and 'burst', 'trickling' and 'sputtering' – was set alongside imagery of darkness and light. There was some excellent close reading of the effects of sensuous writing, as the barn 'smelled warm even if it was not warm' and the synaesthesia of the idea that 'one breathed darkness' outside. Many noticed that the light of the lantern has very different effects inside and outside the barn. The barn thus became for many a sanctuary or even a sacred space, certainly a haven from the rougher elements. Good responses were analytical and not just descriptive: they explored what kind

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of experience Brangwen wanted the girl to have, or how she responds to seeing him at work. Unusual language such as 'the child, all wonder, watched what he did' or 'A new being was created in her for the new conditions' received developed, and often sensitive and detailed attention.

Stronger responses showed awareness of the shift in tone from the storm to the sense of stillness and calm, reflected in the behaviour of the cattle. They showed sensitivity to detail and its effects, especially impressive when linked to the writer's purpose in developing the bond between father and daughter and the sense of awe and stillness within the barn. Some noticed that there were still 'shadows' cast by the instruments in the barn, and that the child initially shrinks at the look of the cows, or linked her 'storm of sobbing' to the conditions outside. A few struggled with the word 'pathetic', linking it to its current and idiomatic derogatory meaning – even associating this with Brangwen's response to his daughter – instead of realising it was linked to pathos.
Good answers saw the bond developing between farmer and child; both are 'still', both are calmed by the rhythmic sounds and as she clings 'soft and warm' to the working man she calms him and creates a dream-like state. The contrast between the steady light and warmth within and the driving hostility outside was again noticed, and strong essays were alert to the parallel with the strength of the family bond in contrast to harshness beyond the sanctuary offered by the barn, the sensuous 'silky folds of the paisley shawl' and its nostalgic connotations for Brangwen. Some speculated, not incorrectly, about why he might have felt alienated from 'the old irresponsibility and security' and made mature and sophisticated comment on his longing for the simple life of 'a boy at home'. These candidates suggested that the farmer is recapturing his own lost innocence as well as restoring calm and innocence to the child. They wrote powerfully about Lawrence's play of darkness and light – one or two even referred to *chiaroscuro* – and saw the emotive effects of his descriptive language. They were thus able to understand his 'blank' mind as positive, his worries at rest. Thus the strength of the writing produced some vivid and sensitive critical responses. Those able to link description to subtle changes of mood and atmosphere in detail were highly rewarded. Many showed clear understanding which was well supported, but the best explored the more difficult suggestions with imagination and insight. Some saw the scene in the barn as a secular nativity or Brangwen's experience as an epiphany. Others appreciated *'the farmer reflecting on his own life and holding new life in his arms'* or commented on the barn as a *'womb-like safe haven'*. Such responses scored very highly.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43

Paper 43 Unseen

Key Messages

- Candidates should always be prepared to respond to either poetry or prose.
- Good answers use short quotations followed by comment on what the writer's language reveals to the reader, rather than over-long quotation.
- The Assessment Objectives are equally weighted: strong answers balance knowledge and understanding with analysis of language and form and interpretative personal response.

General Comments

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A poem which appears, on the surface, to be very straightforward may have a sub-text which needs to be drawn out. If the text is short, strong responses will explore linguistic and structural features in some depth and relate them to the deeper meanings of the poem or passage. Longer narrative passages allow candidates to respond more selectively. Prose responses do need to go beyond paraphrase for higher marks. The prose texts and extracts chosen will have interesting uses of language and imagery for readers to explore. Looking at narrative viewpoint or voice is a good start, just as attention to voice can lead to appreciation of the tone of a poem. Good answers analysed both poetry and prose as consciously crafted pieces of writing: they understood that the writer is not identical with the poetic voice we hear, or with the characters whose point of view is described. Stepping back to explore the overall impact made by the writing on the reader is a good idea before beginning a critical response.

Less successful essays often spent too long on an introduction which merely repeated the words of the question or bullet points. Stronger answers gave a brief overview of the whole text before exploring detail and were able to communicate the impression the text made on them. Some exploration of the implications of the title of a poem and its relation to the contents often provided an interesting way in, or some reflection on the overall structure and development of the text. However, many good answers simply moved straight into analysis, often helped by the first bullet point. There were obviously no marks for simply repeating the words of the rubric, but careful reading of the preamble and bullet points did help to avoid misunderstandings, as they clarified characters, situation, genre and the gender of the writer.

Some candidates wrote lengthy plans or first drafts. This was not necessary and took time away from constructing a full and detailed response. There is certainly no need to write out lengthy quotations, as the question paper can be annotated during the reading time. It is a good idea to organise a response around a set of linked observations and arguments. This kind of checklist is much more useful than a checklist of technical terms. The best-planned responses tended to follow the structure and development of the passage, as do the bullet points, rather than having (for example) separate paragraphs for language, form and structure. Essay plans based on acronyms often led to mechanical responses which explored features of the text without relating them to meaning, or an overall personal response.

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meaning or effectiveness. Thus attention to detail was sometimes at the expense of the meaning of the whole text. This was especially evident among candidates who used checklists or acronyms to structure their answers, instead of reading through the whole text first, and considering the question carefully. Questions always encourage candidates to look at 'how' a text works, and the bullet points can be very helpful in structuring a response which can explore both content and techniques. Mind-maps and ordered sequences of observations based around language, tone and reader response worked better for planning, especially when the bullet points were used as a guide.

The bullet points are advisory not mandatory. Very strong answers often showed deft integration of bullet-point material within an individual overall argument. Others used the bullets as a paragraph plan: they do help candidates to observe the effects of some features of the writing, understanding the structure of the passage and begin to evaluate both the ways in which the text ends and the possible implications of that ending for understanding of the whole.

Some candidates might have achieved higher marks with more attention to quotation technique. Quotations need not be lengthy: indeed single-word quotations can be highly effective if they are clearly related to context. It is most effective when quotation is followed by comments on the effect of the choice of words or images. The impact of language on the reader needs to be explored, and diction, syntax or imagery related to meaning and to emotional resonance. The vast majority of candidates realised the need to give textual support to their reading, but more would achieve higher marks if that textual support was used to make comment on the effects of language.

Language, knowledge, understanding and personal response are equally weighted as they correspond to the four Assessment Objectives. Competent answers demonstrated secure knowledge of the surface meaning of their texts, while deeper understanding of implied meaning was needed for Band 4 and above. Some reference to the ways in which writers use language is also a prerequisite for higher marks. However, 'clear critical understanding' (Band 2) implies an appreciation of the ways in which the text is consciously crafted by the writer, and the ability to link this to a sensitive appreciation of its impact on the reader. Personal response was demonstrated in good answers, and many possible interpretations of the sub-text of a poem or extract clearly supported by the text and based on sensitive response to language and imagery were highly rewarded. There was no one 'correct' answer in interpreting each passage, but responses did well when they were well-grounded, showing insight and perception.

Interpretation should develop through and by means of close reading and the use of textual evidence. Candidates can go a long way through simply committing themselves to the detailed, attentive consideration of the ideas or feelings being expressed, focused textual support by means of well-chosen, integrated quotation and a thoughtful, developed analysis of the effects achieved by the writer.

Question 1

Candidates were clearly intrigued by the elements of ambiguity and mystery in the poem, Josephine Haslam's *'Albino',* and many relished the opportunity to develop their own lines of explanation and interpretation. The range of possible readings proffered was too wide to detail here but, for the most part, they centred around ideas of prejudice and discrimination and of racism, in particular. A number of candidates reflected thoughtfully on possible symbolic meanings relating more broadly to the individual's position within society and the often fraught nature of that relationship, especially for those deemed to be abnormal, idiosyncratic or just plain 'different' from the crowd. Many candidates obviously empathized strongly with the creature and wrote movingly about the poet's presentation of loneliness, isolation and alienation. Some saw this as reflecting their own experience of growing up. In relation to the idea of growth, some candidates developed powerfully positive and affirmative readings based on notions of a painful but ultimately liberating movement towards self-fulfilment and self-identity. For some, this came through the attainment of social acceptance and a place within a collective identity and history ('blackbryd, ouzel, merle…'). For others, the poem represented the celebratory, transcendent triumph of the individual living simply for him or herself.
Good answers showed an ability to move beyond a simple, literal reading of the text towards one which explored its possible metaphorical or symbolic meanings and resonance. Such a movement is, on one level, inherent in the term 'deeper implications' to be found in the Mark Scheme. However, if in such a movement the text itself is side-lined or jettisoned altogether, candidates will not generally score at all highly. The bullet points which supplemented the question invited candidates to work their way through the 'narrative' of the poem and to respond to the ways in which the poet's imaginative vision of the bird and her 'fascination' with it changes and develops. In tracing such a development, high-scoring answers explored in detail the shifts and

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contrasts in the language used by the poet. The first two stanzas offered a wealth of opportunities to unpick the connotations and suggestiveness implicit in the poet's presentation of the ambiguous existence of the albino bird as a 'ghost', a 'shadowless' being, a mere 'absence' and a 'negative'. Good answers were sensitive to the sounds of words and their effect, sibilance here accentuating perhaps the bird's insubstantial nature and the smooth, gliding nature of its flight. While many candidates identified supernatural and darkly ominous or sinister connotations in the description, others saw also a subtle, translucent beauty in the delicacy and elegance of the 'light and boneless' creature and its silent, unobtrusive movement. The great majority of candidates recognized a transition to the poet's appreciation of a more substantial, perhaps more conventional beauty in the final seven lines of the poem. A response to images of lustrous blackness, gold and spring flowers evoked associations with grandeur, preciousness and vital, natural life.

High-scoring answers characteristically tended to trace how such shifts in perception and language were embedded also in the formal and structural properties of the poem. The beginning of the third stanza was seen as a turning point in what a number of candidates saw as the argumentative, polemical nature of the poem in its challenging of assumption and prejudice, a characteristic evident for some in the tone adopted in the very first line. As well as the use of the stanza form, irregular though it may be, to shape the narrative and attitudinal development of the poem, many candidates identified the extensive use of run-on lines or enjambment. While it is a simple enough thing to identify such a feature, it is not always easy to comment convincingly on its effects in helping to shape the poem's meaning and the reader's response to it. Very good answers were able to discuss how the somewhat unusual use of enjambment across stanzas contributed to a sense of, on the one hand, a supple fluency and speed of physical movement or, on the other, what one might term the ontological movement in the bird's transition from one state of being to another. As when discussing the effects of, say, syntax or punctuation, students need to be trained not to make general assertions – that, for instance, a high incidence of punctuation necessarily 'slows down' or, conversely 'speeds up' the writing – but to judge each case in its particular context. A thoughtful, sensitive attentiveness to the meanings being elaborated and to the moods and tones of the writing is key here.

Many answers forged a confident, engaged and, at times, profoundly moving response to the text based on clear understanding and a nuanced appreciation of the writing.

Question 2

The extract from Brian Keenan's memoir *I'll Tell Me Ma* elicited at the very least broadly competent responses from almost all the candidates who attempted this question. In fact, the great majority of candidates responded with clear enjoyment and interest to the subject matter and the manner in which it is presented. In response to the first bullet point, candidates were able to discuss the narrator's fear of the lake and his concerns about its forbidden nature, its depth, the reeds and the wild swans. There were a number of straightforward but relatively detailed and well-supported responses to the first two paragraphs here. Higher-scoring answers responded with a closer and more reflective focus on the particularities of the language that worked to communicate that sense of fear such as: 'the black sheen of unmoving water…film of algae…like green confetti…ominous…flapping furiously…alien presence'. Most candidates were able to comment on the effects generated by the writer's personification of the lake swans in heightening the boy's sense of apprehension.

When it comes to prose analysis, there are few better places for the candidate to start than by stepping back to consider the nature of the narrative in question and particularly the narrative perspective at work. It is not just the fact of the use of a first person narrative which is crucial here. After all, a third person narrative is equally able to enter vividly and intimately into the consciousness of a character. What is significant here is the effect of an adult narrator reminiscing about a childhood experience and attempting to re-create the emotional and psychological sensations he had as a young boy – to present things as he saw them at the time. This explains to a large degree the heightened nature of the imaginative engagement with the experience and of the language used to describe it. The writer himself refers to how 'intensely' he watched his father in the water and it is this intensity which gives the writing its particular textures and tones. A sense of awed mystery and a deep-seated fear of the unknown runs through the passage on a number of levels. Perceptive responses picked up on the way in which the lake's depth of forty feet is not actually presented as a fact but as a rumour ('I had heard…') which had clearly engaged the boy's fascination. Likewise, it his innocence and propriety which contributes to his troubled sense of the transgressive nature of his father's actions and which helps shape his personification of the swans as some form of guardians of the lake and as forbidding and 'austere' figures of authority. The workings of his boyish imagination become increasingly intense and dark as the passage develops with such elements as the disturbing idea of the father's head being moved by an invisible hand below the surface or his emerging from 'black depths'.

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It is of course the writer's vivid exploration of the boy's feelings as he watches his father become unrecognizable as he enters the water which is at the heart of the passage and is the focus of the question. The ability of candidates to explore beyond surface meaning, to analyse language sensitively and in depth, and to evaluate their own personal response in relation to these feelings were central discriminators. Careful readings tended to identify certain ambivalence in the boy's response, something which was reflected on one level in the choice of similes. For instance, while admiration for the ease and fluency of the father's swimming was seen to be implicit for many candidates in its being compared to that of a seal, some saw something rather more sinister in the father's sliding through the weeds into the water 'like a sea snake'. Most candidates recognized that such unsettling elements do indeed predominate in the final paragraph. In many high-scoring scripts, there was a focus on the recognition of the father's 'otherness' from the boy's perspective, his alien or bestial nature once in the water, and a developed response to how this mysterious, almost magical transformation is presented by the writer. Much good work was achieved in this context through the close unpicking of what might be suggested by language choices such as 'thing', 'swallowed' and 'melted', amongst others. Some perceptive responses linked the primal, unhuman qualities of the father as seen through the eyes of the son with the wild, untamed or uncivilized nature of the lake as described at the beginning of the passage.

Most candidates picked up on the writer's observation that watching his father made him 'lonely and afraid'. Many were able though to take the idea of loneliness further to explore ideas of a more profound alienation from the father or 'the man who made aeroplanes and who brought home animals'. The father's wave, which, while an 'encouragement', was also felt by the boy to be merely a 'passing gesture', was seen in some sensitive readings to be false and inauthentic, indicative of what candidates sensed as an obscure feeling on the son's part of having been betrayed by the father. Some sophisticated responses placed the moment in the wider context of the boy's emotional development, seeing it perhaps as an archetypal 'rite of passage' in its tracing of a movement from innocence to experience, a movement at whose heart is bewilderment, fear and loss. The foregrounding of such an instance of clear critical understanding in a conceptualized introductory overview at the beginning of the essay can be of tremendous value in giving a strong line of direction and coherence to the analysis which follows.

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/05
Coursework

Key messages

Successful essays discuss characters in plays and prose texts as literary constructs rather than real-life people.

Critical essay tasks should be framed in such a way that they require candidates to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects. This will help to target the higher bands of the assessment criteria.

Guidance on task-setting can be found in the *Coursework Training Handbook for IGCSE Literature (English)*. This document provides examples of suitable and unsuitable tasks.

Teacher annotation of candidate work is an important part of the moderation process. It is through the focused ticking, marginal comments and summative comments by teachers that a Centre has the opportunity to offer a rationale for the marks awarded to coursework assignments.

General comments

Texts and Tasks

There was much evidence in candidate work of a sustained critical engagement with the texts that had been studied. Popular texts this session included *Much Ado About Nothing, Julius Caesar, A View from the Bridge, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Great Gatsby,* and *I'm the King of the Castle*. Those Centres which offered coursework tasks on poetry or short stories were in general careful to ensure that at least two poems or two stories had been written about in candidates' assignments. A number of candidates submitted comparisons of poems or stories. It should be remembered that comparison is not a requirement of this syllabus nor do the assessment criteria reward it. Indeed there was some evidence to suggest that less confident candidates struggled with this particular aspect of the assignments they worked on. There were fewer instances of candidates providing extraneous biographical or historical background material. Most candidates recognised the need to engage with the key terms of the tasks from the start of their essays.

In general, tasks had been set that allowed candidates to fulfil the assessment criteria. Occasionally tasks were set that did not invite an explicit consideration of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. A task such as 'Is Birling guiltier than the other characters?' is an example of such a task, where Birling is regarded almost as a real-life person rather than a character in a play intended for performance on the stage. The most successful assignments on drama texts showed an appreciation of the text as a 'play' rather than a 'book'.

For critical assignments, it is important that candidates include the task in full - not an abbreviation or approximation of it - so that other readers, including the external Moderator, can judge how successfully the task has been addressed as they read the assignment.

For empathic assignments, the candidate should state clearly both the character and the particular moment in the text. Empathic tasks enable candidates to engage creatively with key aspects such as theme, characterisation and use of language. Successful responses are rooted in the recognisable world of the text. The most successful empathic responses share these features:

- the character is central to the text
- the text is a significant one such as a novel or play
- the voice is a clearly recognisable one for both the character and chosen moment.

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Less successful empathic responses tended to focus on characters in short stories (where there is less material on which to draw) or minor characters lacking a distinctive voice.

It is good practice for all IGCSE Literature teachers within a centre to check the validity of their coursework tasks towards the beginning of the course. There is no requirement to submit potential tasks to Cambridge for approval. All that is necessary is for teachers to follow the guidance on task-setting in the *Coursework Training Handbook* and judge their own tasks against the examples (suitable and unsuitable) given.

Internal Moderation and Annotation

For the majority of centres there was clear evidence of internal standardisation having taken place. In these centres, the assignments themselves and the candidate record forms bore evidence of debate among teachers about the appropriateness of particular marks. It was particularly helpful to see comments explaining why marks had been moderated either up or down. Most Centres took great care over the annotation of candidate work as they recognised the importance of its role in justifying the award of particular marks. As stated in previous reports, meaningful annotation makes the process of moderation accountable and transparent. Any Centre that submits clean copies of candidates' work, devoid of teacher annotation, has effectively misunderstood the purpose of moderation.

All Centres are encouraged to adopt the good practice present in many Centres by:

- making use of focused ticking to credit specific valid and thoughtful points made by the candidate
- adding brief comments in the margin about strengths and weaknesses of the response
- adding a summative comment either at the end of each assignment or on the individual record card.

Comments should, of course, relate to the relevant band descriptors.

Administration

It is important that the two pieces of work are attached securely (e.g. by means of a treasury tag) to the individual record card. These should not be submitted in plastic folders.

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