

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11
Poetry and Prose 11

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of poems and prose texts studied
- answer the question
- provide textual support
- include detailed exploration of the ways by which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have a sketchy or limited knowledge of texts studied
- lose focus on the question set
- make unsupported assertions
- describe or simply identify writer's techniques.

General comments

Examiners reported much evidence of candidates' personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poems and prose texts they had studied. Occasionally, there was a sense that prose extracts were being approached as 'unseen' texts in answers which lacked an awareness of the wider context of the novel or story. There were very few rubric errors.

Textual knowledge

The most successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of texts and contained well-selected references (both direct quotations and indirect references) to support the chosen line of argument. These responses selected judiciously from the poems or prose extracts printed on the question paper and avoided attempts to write exhaustively on every aspect of either poem or extract. This latter approach often led to both a descriptive approach and a loss of focus on the question.

Focus on the question

The strongest responses kept the question in sight throughout the response, with candidates selecting their material and tailoring it to meet the specific demands of the question. Less successful responses sometimes showed a detailed understanding of character or theme but lost focus on the question, often failing to take note of key words such as 'powerful', 'striking' and 'vivid', which are designed to elicit candidates' responses to qualities of the writing. There were instances, too, of candidates losing focus on the question as they wrote excessively about background material rather than the text itself.

Candidates are advised to address the key words of a question straight away and take time to write 'courtesy' introductions (e.g. 'In this essay, I am going to...'). Likewise, conclusions that simply re-state, often at length, the main points of the answer are best avoided. Teachers should remind candidates that answering the question is more important than following a pre-conceived idea about what constitutes a model essay.

Writers' effects

Candidates who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were better able to analyse closely and convincingly the ways in which writers achieve their effects. In the case of poetry and passage-based questions, it is

possible to quote from the text printed in the question paper. For the prose general essay questions, those candidates who had learnt at least some direct quotation were better placed to probe critically a writer's use of language.

However, when considering a writer's use of language, there is no particular merit in:

- simply identifying or logging writers' use of devices
- merely listing those words belonging to what is often termed a 'semantic' or 'lexical' field
- writing about possible connotations of words without considering their meanings within context.

Personal response

Strong individual responses were characterised by thoughtful and perceptive comments argued and supported with care. These responses engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit a personal response to the writing.

Less confident candidates offered less in the way of personal response and more in the way of established readings of poems and the more traditional prose texts; these answers tended to rely on explanation and unsupported assertion rather than critical analysis.

In some responses, personal response was limited to comments on how 'relatable' a character or situation was.

In the prose questions, the extract was overwhelmingly chosen ahead of the essay question. Stronger answers knew the text well and provided some development in their responses; weaker answers were more narrative-based and/or lacking in textual knowledge. There were very few answers on Austen and Narayan and only a handful on Cather.

The poetry questions were more evenly answered, with lots of answers to the first four questions. However, there were very few answers to **Question 6** and even fewer to **Question 5**. Stronger candidates responded to language; very good answers paid attention to poetic elements such as rhyme, alliteration and metaphor. A number of weaker answers became self-limiting because they provided a run-through of the poem without relating this to the question set (see below for specific examples).

Questions on individual texts:

Section A: Poetry

Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5

Question 1

Tears Idle Tears: there were some good readings of this poem which paid attention to its language and structure. Stronger candidates were able to identify the speaker's uncertainty and grief and explored the notion that the tears are 'idle'. Less successful answers had only a tenuous understanding 'grief' and wrote generally about the poem's 'sadness'. Some candidates identified literary devices but were unable to explain or interpret them in a convincing manner.

Question 2

Elegy For My Father's Father: there were some very confident answers which included some thoughtful responses to the poem's ambiguous approach to the grandfather, identified striking effects which created the mood of respect for the old man and made some exploration of language. Weaker answers were less responsive to the prompt of 'striking effects' and many answers took this to be synonymous with 'shocking effects'. Although they were often able to make some relevant comments, in weaker responses there was misinterpretation of 'drunken stars' as showing the old man was an alcoholic.

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1

Question 3

lion heart: weaker candidates showed very basic understanding of the surface meaning of the poem. Many candidates simply explained it, and, in extreme cases, in a very factual way (almost getting into a discussion

of Singapore's GDP). Weaker responses ignored the prompt 'imagery': candidates decided either that the question was asking them about 'images of power' rather than how the poet uses 'imagery to powerful effect', or that 'imagery' could apply to anything at all within the poem (e.g. 'You conquered the shore' is a 'visual image'). Likewise, there was little sense that the question was asking about how the poem's use of language was effective. There were some good ideas about various aspects of the poem but few sustained interpretations.

Question 4

Heart and Mind: this was another popular question. However, weaker responses struggled to make any sense of the poem. Some tried very hard to interpret the opposition between heart and mind, but in the process lost sight of the question about how the writing makes you 'feel'. Those who responded directly to the question were able to identify links between fire and human passion, references to strength, and recognition of separation between the heart and mind.

Gillian Clarke: from Selected Poems

Question 5

Family House: there were very few answers on this poem, many of which treated the poem as unseen. A few more successful answers showed sound understanding though few made response to language.

Question 6

My Box: candidates that chose this did well, linking 'the box' to the couple's relationship and its value as a legacy, through an exploration of the language. Weaker answers showed very little understanding of the 'imagery' that was being specifically highlighted in the question prompt, and similarly were often unsure about whose 'powerful feelings' were being asked about here (the speaker's, her lover's, the reader's?).

Section B: Prose

No Longer At Ease

Question 7

Apart from the responses which were just a summary of the narrative of the text, there were some very confident responses, linking the reasons for the financial difficulties and Obi's possible future relationship with Clara. Some focused on the relationship between Obi and Sebastian, some on the expectations of him as a Western-educated Government worker, and some on his relationship with Clara. Weaker answers lacked focus on Obi's thoughts and feelings and gave summaries on the way in which he descends into corruption and bribery.

Question 8

There were very few answers to this question and they tended to be rather assertive and perhaps uninformed about exactly what effect the Christian religion had on Obi; for example, writing unconvincingly about corruption and about how this was caused by Christian colonial settlers.

Mansfield Park

Question 9

There were only a few answers to this question and they were mainly narrative and with little understanding of what was 'amusing'.

Question 10

There were so few attempts at this question that it is not possible to make general comments.

My Ántonia

Question 11

Good responses showed understanding of the context and the narrative perspective. Weaker responses did not make use of the wealth of available material, and the weakest did not grasp the basics of the Shimerdas' poverty.

Question 12

There were so few attempts at this question that it is not possible to make general comments.

Hard Times

Question 13

Good responses showed understanding of the deeper implications of Stephen's situation. Most candidates identified and sympathised with him. Stronger answers referenced his lack of education, his respectful attitude towards Bounderby, Mrs Sparsit's contempt and his desperation to gain their sympathy. Some candidates obviously relished the opportunity to comment on Dickens's social comment and/or narrative style, about which they were well-informed. Weaker answers struggled with the material.

Question 14

Good responses were able to reference the disastrous lives of Louisa and Tom by comparison to Sissy who was not brought up on facts. There were a few narrative answers, which produced examples of characters hurt by Gradgrind's theories without analysing the 'terrible damage' done to them.

Spies

Question 15

Some weaker responses were evident where the text was obviously well-known but candidates could find little to say about Stephen's feelings and ended up making assertions about his freedom from Keith and his growing maturity. Other responses were hindered by the approach: there was a strong indication that many candidates were tackling the extract as though it was 'unseen'. Answers were more successful when they showed some knowledge of the immediate context and the reasons behind Stephen's situation, and responded directly to 'vividly' while making at least some attempt to discuss the use of language and to the build-up of tension.

Question 16

There were some very successful answers which referred in particular to the contrast between Peter's heroic nature as a fighter pilot and his descent into poverty and sickness as a deserter. The best answers considered his pivotal role in the plot and themes of the novel and were able to give good detailed support for their ideas. Some weaker answers showed a lack of understanding of who Uncle Peter is, and most simply explained/narrated without addressing how he might be 'memorable'.

The Secret River

Question 17

This question afforded the opportunity to integrate textual discussion with an understanding of deeper implications. Weaker answers mostly grasped the basics, although some of them ignored the significance of the section about Sal's family or were hazy about how much richer and further up the social scale they were. Candidates generally found it easy to stay on task, though some spent a good deal of time discussing Sal too, which did not tend to add to the response, or did not fit with the question.

Question 18

Some weaker candidates mostly used the extract in **Question 17** to answer this question (despite the rubric instruction) which, though relevant, was self-limiting. Stronger candidates were successfully able to argue

how they admired William at first but by the end of the novel his weaknesses led them to dislike or despise him. A few answers ignored the fact that the question asked 'To what extent' and simply explained why Thornhill was admirable. This mostly hinged on his rags to riches story but there were occasional signs of a more nuanced approach, in particular in terms of how Sal featured in this.

The English Teacher

There were so few attempts at these questions that it is not possible to make general comments.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 21

Weaker responses were descriptive and simply summarised how Tommy's life was unhappy, as laid out in the extract. Many promising answers selected very useful textual details for quotation ('screaming bore', 'kid of many dreams and schemes') without commenting on the language quoted. More developed answers considered the extent to which Tommy was his own 'prison' and responded to the detail with which Malamud presents both his shady past and his tedious present. There were very few very good responses to Malamud's use of language. A few weak answers became distracted into writing about the story as a whole.

Question 22

There were some well-developed answers which considered not just the loss of space, privacy and freedom of association, but also the frightening elements of how Ward so easily turns into something he always hated, and the way in which the government kept actual population figures hidden from the population. Some commented on aspects of Ballard's language such as the repetition of 'cubicle'. Weaker answers showed a lack of real engagement with the word 'frightening' and gave an account of the negative features of the world, rather than acknowledging the notion of fear specifically. Some answers became distracted into a factual approach to world overpopulation and its hazards.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12
Poetry and Prose 12

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- have a sketchy or limited knowledge of texts studied
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Less confident candidates offered less in the way of personal response and more in the way of established readings of poems and the more traditional prose texts; these answers tended to rely on explanation and unsupported assertion rather than critical analysis.

In some responses, personal response was limited to comments on how 'relatable' a character or situation was.

Question-specific comments

Question 1

Praise Song For My Mother

Good responses identified the metaphors 'water', 'moon's eye' and 'sunrise' and candidates were able to relate this 'nature' imagery to qualities possessed by her mother, i.e. essential for life, as a watchful eye in dark times and giving her a reason to get up in the morning and approach the day with optimism. On the fourth stanza, many made valid points that fish need gills to breathe and survive, and that the poet is nostalgic for the lovely food her mother cooked. The final line was also well-handled with observations that they might have been her mother's last direct words to her and that she was being encouraged to enjoy and experience life. One excellent response noted the plural as significant, suggesting her mother is encouraging her to think of infinite opportunities. Less successful responses tried to identify language features without relating them to the question or the poem's deeper implications.

Question 2

Anthem For Doomed Youth

Weaker responses were characterised by candidates spending too long recounting (in a heartfelt way) all that they had learnt about the awful conditions in the war and the waste of life, though without relating their comments to the poem or the question. These general comments were not incorrect but were not supported by, or rooted in, the detail of the poem. Most candidates were able to make some relevant comment about the 'cattle' simile. Those with a confident understanding of the rituals of mourning that feature in the poem offered more perceptive responses. Few offered a convincing analysis of the ways in which Owen uses sounds to powerful effect in the poem. A discriminating factor was the extent to which candidates responded to the ending of the poem.

Question 3

Coming Home

Most candidates commented on each character, but weaker responses were limited by simply working through the poem. Candidates were on stronger ground where they focused on Sheers' feelings. There were some useful comments about why the mother's hug is 'awkward' for him, suggesting that she will always see him as her 'child', no matter what age he is, and this is not comfortable for him. The responses which explored how Owen uses language 'vividly' to convey his feelings provided more confident analyses since they were rooted more securely in the detail of the poem. Those who grasped that the 'tune (the grandfather) plays faster' indicates a progressively shaky hand often took this further to suggest Sheers must be feeling

apprehensive about his grandfather's impending death. In weaker responses there was confusion about how long the son had been away, with some assuming he had not been home since he was a child, ignoring the clue of 'each year'.

Question 4

Father Returning Home

Weaker responses did not move beyond the literal, leading to misunderstanding. An example of this was that 'unseeing eyes' meant that he was blind or nearly so, though many candidates did recognise that he was too tired or familiar with the scene outside the train to notice it. The most successful responses linked it to his feeling of 'estrangement' later in the poem. The majority worked through the poem detailing in a general way his long day, dirty clothes, poor diet, lack of care from his family and desire to be on his own. Few, however, commented in depth on the poem's images or addressed 'striking' impressions. Stronger responses commented on his dreams including past and future relatives but not the present ones. Some managed to link his dreams to his disenchantment with the current 'man-made world', and some made a good attempt at analysing the 'word dropped from a long sentence' simile, for example, suggesting that he is small and insignificant in the world, that he does not stand out, that no-one will notice if he is not there.

Question 5

Lunchtime Lecture

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 6

Friesian Bull

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 7

No Longer At Ease extract

Stronger responses, which focused on the question, commented on feeling 'disgusted' with Obi for 'cheating' on Clara and for both Obi and Christopher for treating the Irish girls as 'objects'. Christopher was identified as a bad influence on Obi, and some commented on the word 'appropriated' as emphasising his attitude to women. Weaker responses spent too much time making judgemental comments on the characters' morality rather than focusing on Achebe's writing, and a number of candidates assumed that 'Mother' in the extract was the girls' mother. A small number did, however, attempt some exploration of language, for example, that 'discovered' suggests that they are artefacts to be found. Very good responses grasped the deeper implications not only about Obi's relationship with Clara but also the underlying influence of colonialism.

Question 8

No Longer At Ease essay

The quality of the response depended on the strength of a candidate's knowledge of the text. More successful responses showed a sound knowledge of the scenes between Obi and Clara, his mother and father. Most were aware of his mother's threatened suicide. Weaker responses did not explore the detail of the way in which Obi presents the relationship with his parents or show understanding of the confusion between religion and culture/traditional beliefs when considering Obi's loyalties to his family. This particularly applied to Obi's father; only the best responses understood that although he is a Christian he still holds to traditional beliefs. The least successful responses worked their way through the novel, starting with Obi and Clara's first meeting, continuing with the voyage back home and a long narration of their difficulties, moving onto Obi's bribery and downfall – with only glancing references to the question.

Question 9

Mansfield Park extract

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 10

Mansfield Park essay

Many candidates worked their way through the main characters with a degree of understanding. Weaker responses lacked specific textual reference, while better responses made good use of references and quotations from throughout the novel. Most candidates thought that the staging of the play was a bad idea, though only the best responses explored its significance within the novel.

Question 11

My Antonia extract

More successful responses focused on the physicality of the struggle and the injuries sustained by Jim, with a few commenting on the farcical nature of his escape. There was some thoughtful consideration of the effect this incident has on Jim's feelings for Antonia. Less successful responses wrote of the content of the extract in general narrative terms, without exploring the words and images that contribute to the drama of the moment.

Question 12

My Antonia essay

Good responses showed secure knowledge of the novel and a sympathetic personal response towards Antonia, identifying the change in her behaviour when she moved to town and recognising her vulnerability. Most were aware of the overarching significance of her friendship with Jim and his influence in her life. However, it was necessary to focus on 'Cather's portrayal' in order to satisfy the AO3 criterion, looking at the perspective from which events in the novel are described and the language used to describe Antonia's experiences. The least successful answers offered a potted history of her life, without achieving a close focus on this part of the question.

Question 13

Hard Times extract

Candidates approached this question with enthusiasm, showing knowledge of how the scene fitted into the wider context of the novel and expressing a lively personal response towards the character of Bounderby. Better answers focused on Bounderby's aggressive behaviour and language as contrasted with Mrs. Pegler's affectionate tone; a few responses drew attention to the way in which Dickens guides the reader's response via the authorial voice. The strongest answers divided their response equally between the question's key words 'unpleasant' and 'ridiculous' and were able to find convincing evidence for each.

Question 14

Hard Times essay

Few responses were seen. Candidates were clearly aware of the Coketown/circus dichotomy within the novel, and in some cases this helped them towards gaining some credit towards AO3. Weaker responses were characterised by vague and general references to characters such as Sissy and Mr. Sleary without being able to pinpoint particular scenes or dialogue, so were not sufficient to achieve the higher bands on this question.

Question 15

Spies extract

The strongest responses focused on 'dramatic' and made some valid points; these candidates were able to place it securely within the context of the novel as well as exploring Frayn's dramatic techniques in detail. Those who explored Stephen's reliance on sounds to give him clues in the darkness, as well as the way the narrative voice alternates between the older Stefan's explanations and young Stephen's confusion, were rewarded for their close reading. In weaker responses, there was confusion about what exactly was happening in the extract, who was involved and how it fitted in to the other events in the novel.

Question 16

Spies essay

Candidates approached this question with enthusiasm and evident knowledge, discussing Stephen's shift from early admiration of Mr. Hayward to subsequent fear, as we come to understand the meaning of the scarf around Mrs. Hayward's neck and Keith's violent behaviour in the den. The best responses explored not only Mr. Hayward's behaviour but his language, and the way in which the innocuous phrase 'old bean' becomes laced with menace as the novel progresses. Stronger responses considered these aspects in detail without lapsing into narrative, which proved to be the main weakness of less successful answers.

Question 17

Secret River extract

This was well answered on the whole, and candidates were able to identify a range of Thornhill's feelings. Weaker responses made uneven use of the extract, with more concentration on the first half than the second; in fact, the second, with its rich and detailed descriptions of Thornhill's Point, provided much material for evidence of Will's growing love of the land and anxiety to possess it for himself. There was much textual detail here to help candidates to answer the first part of the question: 'How does Grenville vividly convey'. The best responses made much of the final sentence: 'The thought of that point of land became a private thing, a bead of warmth in his heart'.

Question 18

Secret River essay

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

The English Teacher extract

Good responses focussed both on the question and on the language of the extract. The best answers wrote sensitively about Krishna's happiness at finally communicating with Susila and how Death does not need to be the end. By contrast, weaker responses were too general and gave far too much background information without focus on the detail of the extract. Many made valid points about how this is a satisfying ending but without close enough reference to the text and language. Often in less successful responses there was a tendency to narrate Krishna's life up to this point, thereby summarising the book and neglecting the detail of the extract in order to address the question.

Question 20

The English Teacher essay

Candidates generally had a good overview, with details of the Headmaster's approach more readily given, and candidates enjoyed comparing this with the Mission School. They made sound contrasts between traditional and modern, between stolid and creative, between the modes of education in Albert Mission College and in the Headmaster's School. Many candidates remembered the incident about 'honours' being spelt incorrectly; however, weaker responses lacked specific textual evidence other than this. Less confident answers lapsed into a description of Krishna's teaching and boredom rather than the approach of the college

itself, and from there it was a short step to his unhappiness and lack of satisfaction with life, instead of sustaining a focus on the question.

Question 21

Games at Twilight

Most candidates worked through the extract, listing Ravi's changing feelings from fear and determination, through confusion and pride to despair and misery. These were competent attempts and usually supplemented with textual support, though sometimes rather pedestrian and list-like. Better responses focused on Ravi's thoughts and feelings, selecting and exploring appropriate detail from the extract. The strongest responses explored with some sensitivity Desai's use of language and narrative viewpoint.

Question 22

The Phoenix

Responses to this question were strongly personal and candidates appeared to enjoy exploring views on human nature in the light of this tale. Most were able to contrast Lord Strawberry and Poldero in their treatment of the phoenix; some also commented on the public's thirst for sensational events. Some thoughtful candidates pointed out that Lord Strawberry himself was flawed, since he took the phoenix from its natural habitat to satisfy his own desires. A few pointed out that the crowd who paid to see a bird burn to death was not entirely escaping censure. As always with the general question, the thoroughness and detail of reference to the text in support of the argument was a discriminating factor.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13
Poetry and Prose 13

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of poems and prose texts studied
- answer the question
- provide textual support
- include detailed exploration of the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- are able to step away from pre-learned formula and demonstrate insight and originality of thought in relation to the question
- relate points to the question
- write concise and focused introductions and conclusions.

Less successful responses:

- have a sketchy or limited knowledge of texts studied
- lose focus on the question set
- make unsupported assertions
- describe or simply identify writer's techniques
- write lengthy introductions and conclusions which are repetitive and sometimes irrelevant
- muddle literary terms

General comments

Examiners reported much evidence of candidates' personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poems and prose texts they had studied. Occasionally, there was a sense that prose extracts were being approached as 'unseen' texts in answers which lacked an awareness of the wider context of the novel or story. There were very few rubric errors.

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In some responses, personal response was limited to comments on how 'relatable' a character or situation was.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Explore the ways in which Larkin creates a feeling of hope in this poem. ('The Trees')

The Larkin poem was quite popular and produced some successful answers. Stronger answers recognised the sense of the new beginning, the link between hope, re-birth, and the comparison between trees and humans. Some of these commented effectively on the cyclical nature of the poem (for example, the rings of grain). Successful answers managed to offer some evaluation of how the sense of hope is presented in the poem; for example, making the case that hope and despair are both present and intertwined in the poem. These answers also successfully commented writing features such as on the form of the poem, the use of repetition, the imagery and the use of question and answer.

Weaker responses struggled to keep the focus on 'hope'. Some of the weaker answers worked through the poem, listing points and features without drawing out their significance or relating them to the question. Other weaker responses wrote at length about a very limited range of references and repeated ideas in order to lengthen their response.

Overall, responses to this question covered the full range of band descriptors from excellent to very limited.

Question 2

How does Adcock's writing create sympathy for Heidi in 'For Heidi With Blue Hair'?

This was a very popular choice with some strong answers that were engaged, detailed and lively. Many candidates demonstrated good textual understanding of the poem, producing personal responses in which they clearly identified with Heidi and admired her father. Most of these answers provided convincing reasons for sympathising with Heidi. Good answers were also able to explore the injustice demonstrated by the school and staff, selecting relevant quotations and points from the poem to support their responses. Many candidates expressed enjoyment of Adcock's mockery of the school system and staff and responded effectively to writing effects around these ideas.

Weaker answers described the actions of Heidi, her father and the school without fully unpacking the significance or exploring the writing effects. A few candidates were uncertain whether Heidi had deliberately challenged the school rules or whether the school was aware of her mother's death. Some responses

allowed their outrage at the school's actions to dominate to the extent that comment on language features was neglected. Similarly, a few candidates pursued personal tangents regarding grief and neglected to root their points in the text.

Overall, this was a choice with many pleasing responses, which allowed candidates to do justice to their ability.

Question 3

How does Lochhead vividly depict the passing of time in this poem? ('For My Grandmother Knitting')

This was the most popular choice of poem. There were many engaged responses, which identified with either the grandmother or the grandchildren or both. Many candidates wrote with assurance about the phases in the grandmother's life, and the response of the grandchildren to her situation in older age. Many responses considered the question and focused on the 'once' and 'now' structure in addressing the passage of time. Candidates were also able to recognise that the grandmother knits to retain her sense of purpose – comparing her full and busy life in the past with the enforced leisure of her later years.

Stronger answers responded in detail to writing effects such as the word play on action verbs and the imagery describing the stages of her life.

Weaker answers did less well in responding to writing effects and frequently listed features without linking these in any way to meaning. A common error was to demonise the grandchildren, making their words to the grandmother sound cruel and callous when, in reality, they are meant kindly. Other weaker answers accused the grandmother of being useless or focused more on sympathy than on the passage of time. A few weaker answers did not focus on the question but wrote in detail about respecting one's elders.

Overall, however, most answers displayed an understanding of the key ideas of this poem, with some response to writing effects.

Question 4

How does the poet movingly convey his thoughts about growing old in 'Stabat Mater'?

This was a much less popular choice although there were a few very good answers in which candidates responded effectively and convincingly to the specific effects of writer's use of language. These answers showed a clear understanding of the changing relationships between the mother, father and son and showed an appreciation of the mother's role. Stronger answers successfully interpreted the poet's message in the final two lines, some seeing it as Hunt realising that older age will come to him and others that he will inevitably move away from his parents as he matures. Strong answers also understood and explained the significance of the title.

Weaker responses struggled to fully understand the parents' relationship and some candidates interpreted the distance between mother and father as a lack of love. Some of the weaker answers gave a rather narrative explanation of the changes in their relationship over time and listed structural features without linking these to meaning.

Surprisingly, there were several responses which did not refer at all to the meaning and significance of the title.

Question 5

Explore the ways in which Clarke makes this poem so moving. ('Catrin')

There were fewer responses to this question. Stronger answers realised the complexity of the mother-daughter relationship, and appreciated the conflicting feelings of the mother. They understood the strength of the bond despite the difficulties in the relationship and explored ideas about the struggle for independence both mother and daughter experience. Stronger answers were able to draw out the significance of images such as the umbilical cord/rope.

Less strong answers were not always sure of meaning; for example, some suggested that Clarke disliked her daughter or that the baby had died. A few candidates did not recognise that the first stanza was about the birth of her daughter. Some of these responses struggled to clearly express the meaning of the imagery.

Question 6

How does Clarke make 'Miracle on St David's Day' such a powerful poem?

This was the least popular choice but generally very successful when answered. Most responses were deeply engaged and provided individual personal responses, which commented in depth on the tone and feeling of the poem. Candidates managed to communicate the poet's sense of awe at the events which unfolded on that St David's day. The best responses recognised the importance of the 'scene-setting' and the poet's mixed feelings about the effectiveness of reading to the 'insane', both of which help to magnify the sheer wonder of the labourer's recitation. Candidates were able to select relevant points from the poem and commented in detail on a wide range of writing features such as the language used to describe the patients, the descriptions of the daffodils, or the use of sound and rhythm. Many answers explored the religious and natural imagery, relating it to the shifting mood of the poem and the revelation at its heart. Nearly all answers recognised the poignancy of the event.

There were few weak answers. These tended to list the literary features and made comments about the nature of the patients without understanding the miracle at the heart of the poem.

Overall, this question produced responses of high quality.

Question 7

How does Achebe powerfully convey Obi's thoughts and feelings at this moment in the novel? (From Chapter 7)

This was the preferred question on this text and there was an overall understanding of Obi's thoughts and feelings. Most candidates were able to explore the connections between Obi's conversation with Joseph and the subsequent shopping trip with Clara, seeing how the trip revealed the problems inherent in their relationship and how it foreshadowed the problems to come. Many candidates commented on Obi's arrogance and his manipulative language.

Some of the stronger candidates were able to pinpoint the state of Obi's mind – his confusion over the situation and the sense of overwhelming obstacles that were facing the future marriage. Many of these more successful answers also explored some of the writing features such as the play on words (for example the zip), the structure of sentences and the dialogue between Joseph and Obi.

There were, however, some weak answers, which showed no knowledge of the rest of the text and were confused by the nature of the relationships between the characters. Several of the weaker responses slipped into narrative and personal opinion and spent a lot of time explaining the cultural challenges presented by Clara being an Osu. Others made over-generalizations about Obi's reasons for marrying her without supporting their ideas from the text. This resulted in a neglect of appreciation of writing effects (AO3).

Overall, responses to this question were reasonably developed.

Question 8

Explore the ways in which Achebe movingly portrays Obi's relationship with his mother.

There were not enough answers on this text for meaningful comment.

Question 9

How does Austen make this such a revealing moment in the novel? (From Chapter 21)

This was attempted by few candidates as the discursive question for this text was more popular. A few candidates were able to identify 'revealing' points in the passage such as the nature and motives of Maria and Sir Thomas in the forthcoming marriage to Mr Rushworth. A small number explored the deeper implications concerning the father's natural concern for the well-being of his daughter competing with the more materialistic and aspirational aspects of his make-up. Among the stronger answers, a very few candidates commented on the extent to which these concerns are typical of Sir Thomas's time and class.

However, weaker responses missed these deeper implications and the 'revelation' was confined to plot development or some general comments about the characters of Sir Thomas and Maria. In general,

candidates made very little response to writing effects in the passage such as variations in sentence structure or the frequency of abstract nouns denoting human qualities.

Question 10

Explore the ways in which Austen makes Mrs Norris so unlikeable.

This was a much more popular choice in this text and nearly all candidates enjoyed expressing their dislike for Mrs Norris. Some responses elicited real venom for Mrs Norris – testimony to the power of Austen’s writing. This was evidenced by some excellent use of supporting references, which showed that Mrs Norris’ words and deeds had clearly stuck in the minds of many. These more successful answers were aware of how Austen manipulates readers to dislike the character and commented clearly on author’s intent. Stronger responses were also able to comment on some of the authorial asides and the role of Mrs Norris as a target for Austen’s humour.

A weakness, however, was the unwillingness of many to go beyond listing of Mrs Norris’s faults to a consideration of her motives and pretensions, which are wrapped up in the social order of the day. A few responses simply listed some key points about Mrs Norris, without any further explanation.

Question 11

How does Cather make this moment in the novel so moving? (From Book 4, Chapter 4)

There were very few responses to this question but this beautiful passage had its admirers amongst those who attempted the question. Candidates were aware of the context and commented relevantly about Jim and Antonia’s present situation. They appreciated how the leave taking between Jim and Antonia was ‘moving’. Most responses recognised the power of the natural imagery and the beauty of the prairie and made some relevant comments about this.

However, some of the key features in the passage were not highlighted enough in weaker responses, such as the symbolism of the two orbs, and the growing darkness. This resulted in some answers that tended to run through the passage in a narrative manner.

Question 12

Explore the ways in which Cather makes Ambrosch such a memorable character.

There were so few answers on this text that meaningful comment is not possible.

Question 13

How does Dickens make this moment in the novel both amusing and disturbing? (From Book 1, Chapter 2)

This was quite a popular choice and, in general, successfully tackled with enthusiasm and confidence. Most candidates showed good overall knowledge of the plot and characters, as well as an awareness of the historical context and social issues of the time. Most candidates provided strong personal responses in which they noted with ease the faults in the educational approach, Sissy’s difficulty in conforming, and the ridiculous qualities in the characters of Mr Gradgrind and the gentleman. Candidates were also successful in highlighting the endearing behaviour of the schoolchildren in trying to second-guess the right answers to the man’s questions. Most candidates considered both of the key ideas in the question – ‘amusing’ and ‘disturbing’ and provided well-balanced answers. Some of the stronger answers made the connection between this dreary form of ‘education’ and the factory work most of the children would inevitably move on to in the future. Candidates took the opportunities to explore the abundance of writing features in the passage. Many of them commented on the forcefulness of language, the recitation of ideas by the children, and the rhetorical effects such as repetition.

A common element in weaker responses was a tendency to narrate what was said and why, repeating the same point about the importance of facts several times. These responses did not often draw out the significance of points made. Other weaker responses went through the passage but did not refer at all to the language.

Overall, however, candidates responded well to this question and provided strong personal responses with a sense of engagement.

Question 14

Explore the ways in which Dickens vividly conveys the hypocrisy of Bounderby.

This question was not as popular as the extract but candidates who chose to write about Mr Bounderby's hypocrisy found plenty of detail to explore. As in the extract question, candidates showed a good overall knowledge of the plot and novel, and had prepared well. Their responses included relevant examples of his actions and attitudes. Candidates commented on his lies about his upbringing, his treatment of his mother and his heartlessness towards Stephen Blackpool. Nearly all responses provided a strong personal response and many expressed their extreme dislike for the character. Nearly all candidates were able to remain focused on the question of Mr Bounderby's hypocrisy.

However, although nearly all candidates had an overall knowledge and understanding of the character, there was a tendency in weaker responses to rely on narration and to neglect to consider any of the writing effects such as the imagery Dickens uses to describe Mr Bounderby, the exaggeration of his comments about himself or how the narrator has implied comment about him.

Question 15

How does Frayn make this a revealing and entertaining moment in the novel? (From Chapter4)

This extract from 'Spies' was by far the most popular choice in this session. The weaker responses showed relevance and there were many engaged and convincing answers. Most candidates had a good overall knowledge of the plot and characters and most candidates were able to note some of the key points in the passage such as the context: the boy's attempts to spy on Keith's mother, her mysterious disappearance and the frantic actions of the boys in trying to find her. Many, but not all, responses considered both key words in the question. It seemed harder for candidates to identify 'revealing' points but many pinpointed the relationship between Stephen and Keith, the actual whereabouts of Keith's mother, Stephen's anxiety or Keith's bossiness. The 'revealing' aspect of the question offered a way into the deeper implications of the passage. For all the amusing insights into the mind of Stephen, a real mystery has actually emerged with the unaccountable behaviour of Mrs Hayward.

'Entertaining' aspects of the passage were recognised: Stephen's panic, the intensity of their search, their over active imaginations. Stronger responses explored with insight the humour at the expense of Stephen and Keith in relation to the spy game, but were able to consider its more sinister significance. Stronger answers also commented on Stephen's perspective, being able to explore what he did or did not understand at the time and finding their seriousness in the chase entertaining.

Many candidates provided some response to writing effects and noted features such as the pace created by short sentences at the start and the use of ellipsis in allowing the reader to share Stephen's confusion. Stronger answers engaged quite deeply with the text and explored the sensory imagery, sentence structure, pace and use of descriptive vocabulary, such as 'we run stupidly after her'.

Although most candidates at least attempted a response to writing effects, weaker responses listed events and simply said they were entertaining or significant with no explanation. Some attempted to engage with the narrative perspective but struggled to go beyond Stephen being confused at this stage of the novel. A few candidates were uncertain as to what Stephen understood about Mrs Hayward and how she had arrived at Dee's house and a small number neglected language entirely and did not engage with the 'entertaining' aspect at all.

Question 16

What does Frayn make you feel towards the older Stephen at the end of the novel?

One excellent response considered the question in retrospect – piecing together the aspects of Stephen's later life from what we are told and pinpointing how the profound effect the incidents of his childhood had affected him.

In less successful responses, candidates misinterpreted the question, describing Stephen's problems as a child, rather than as an adult. Other candidates told the story without any focus on the question. It is possible that because candidates' focus in reading the novel was primarily on the younger Stephen, it was difficult for candidates to identify with the older Stephen. Hence, candidates seemed to go through a process of writing their way towards a conclusion in the hope that it would help them to clarify their thoughts.

Question 17

How does Grenville make this such a powerful moment in the novel? (From Part 3)

This question was one of the most popular choices overall and generally well answered.

Most candidates showed a good knowledge of plot and character and understood the context. Most appreciated the significance of Thornhill's background and his desperate longing for something to call his own. Many candidates observed how Thornhill was challenged by the reaction of the land to his arrival and stronger answers showed how this foreshadowed the conflict with the aborigines later in the novel. Most candidates recognised the extreme emotions exhibited in Thornhill and made meaningful comments about this.

The passage was very rich in writing features and most candidates were able to make some response to these. Stronger answers sensitively explored the language and commented on features such as the atmosphere, mood and tone, the symbolism of the land 'mocking' him or resisting his efforts to claim ownership.

Some of the weaker answers spent too much time simply explaining why the land was so important to Thornhill. Others retold the events of Thornhill's arrival and focused on his excitement without any reference to the challenges he faces. A few covered only part of the extract.

Overall, however, this question was well done, with some excellent responses from candidates.

Question 18

How does Grenville depict the clash of cultures between the settlers and the Aboriginal people in Sydney and at Thornhill's Point?

The discursive option for this novel was not nearly as popular as the extract question but candidates who chose this generally found enough to write about.

Candidates often showed good knowledge and understanding of the novel and chose relevant points to support their argument. Most candidates noted key differences between the cultures such as the attitude to land ownership and the different approaches to lifestyle such as dress and food. Many candidates identified the lack of communication between the two groups as a key cause of the clash. A few of the stronger answers noted the mysteriousness of the Aboriginal people and the frustration of Thornhill and the other white people in their inability to understand each other.

Most answers provided some personal response to the conflict between the two groups.

However, very few answers included any response to any of the writing effects. Candidates missed opportunities to comment on the language used, the rich imagery or the author's intent.

Question 19

How does Narayan make this such an amusing and significant moment in the novel? (From Chapter 6)

The extract question from this text was much more popular than the discursive option. Those attempting this question wrote about the amusing aspects quite effectively, showing their overall knowledge and understanding of the novel. Candidates generally recognised the contrast between the two approaches to education and some commented on the wonderfully responsive child-centred learning witnessed by Krishna. Some candidates saw this as a link to his journey towards self-enlightenment after the death of Susila.

Stronger answers recognised the humour of the children's attitude to the story and appreciated how this moment was the start of his Krishna's new life. Stronger answers also responded well to some of the literary features such as the use of questions or the vocabulary used to describe emotions.

A common weakness in some responses was a focus on the humour but not on the other key word in the question – 'significant'. Some of the weaker responses were determined to stress the influence of British colonialism on education and although this has some validity in this context, it is not at the heart of the passage. This resulted in a lack of focus in a number of responses.

In general, this question was reasonably tackled.

Question 20

In what ways does Naryan make Krishna's memories of Susila so powerful?

There were too few answers on this text for meaningful comment.

Question 21

How does Highsmith make this such a striking introduction to Ming? (Ming's Biggest Prey)

Most responses noted the location, Ming's 'luxurious' lifestyle and appreciated the complexity of Ming's attitudes to people. Many delighted in pointing out the anthropomorphic features of the egotistical cat, and provided relevant examples from the passage. There was also awareness in most responses of the enmity between Teddy and Ming, and better answers related the way Ming is treated by Teddie to a sense of justice at the end of the story. In general, most candidates considered the question and focused on what was striking about the introduction.

A common weakness was that candidates 'ploughed' their way through the passage without really drawing out the full significance of points or writing features. Some weaker responses spent a lot of time explaining why Ming is not a human, many explaining at length when and how the reader discovered that he is not a cat. A few were confused as to the nature of Ming's relationship with Teddie or did not mention it at all.

Overall, there was some response to writing effects, in particular candidates attempted to comment on the humour. Very few, however, commented on the sensuousness of the language, the mood and atmosphere, or the imagery.

Question 22

Explore the ways in which Shadbolt makes the narrator memorable in The People Before.

Insufficient responses on which to base comments.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/21
Drama 21

Key messages

- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question, remained focussed on the question and avoided narrative.
- Better candidates briefly contextualised the passage in passage-based questions, looked at the text in detail, commented on the author's effects and used quotations from it in support.
- Convincing discursive answers selected relevant material from across the whole text, using direct quotation in support.
- Weaker candidates used quotation without exploring meaning or made unsupported assertions after a quotation. To be rewarded, quotations should be analysed fully.
- Weaker responses also saw a focus on stage directions and punctuation without then exploring them in the context of the passage, or linked explicitly to the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

The most popular texts were *A View from the Bridge* and *Macbeth*. More candidates responded to *Inherit the Wind* this session, but they were comparatively few. Very few answered on *The Winslow Boy*. There were insufficient responses to *Henry V* to make appropriate comment in the report.

Many candidates showed knowledge of their set texts and it was clear that they often enjoyed and engaged with the characters and themes. The strongest responses directed their material to the specific demands of the question but there were still many less successful responses where candidates tended to write all they know about a text with scant relevance to the actual question. Candidates should address the key word of the question from the start and make pertinent links to it throughout the response to avoid loss of focus and lapses into narrative. A few candidates made the mistake of answering the discursive essay using the passage which was self-penalising as there was rarely anything of relevance in the passage.

In attempting to answer the 'How' part of a question there are still candidates who focus on stage directions and punctuation without some exploration of them in context. This is usually done by working through the passage, highlighting these aspects, and simply asserting, for example, that this makes a passage dramatic without demonstrating an understanding of what is happening in the scene. In addition, comments on directing the scene – how characters would dress, speak or move on stage – are not required, or rewarded, at IGCSE level so are a waste of valuable examination time that could be more profitably used. Candidates need to be reminded that to show understanding of the text as performance, the dramatic impact of stage directions, dialogue and characters' actions should be explored without assuming the director's role.

Weaker candidates frequently gave lengthy introductions to answers before addressing the passage or question, sometimes running out of time before reaching the relevant information. Narrative overviews of a passage or working through, line by line, explaining the situation were other features of weaker responses. Some candidates would benefit from a brief plan to help them to maintain focus and to be more selective with choice of references thereby avoiding a quotation-driven response.

Most candidates used their time well though there were many brief answers where candidates simply retold the plot. There were very few rubric infringements on Paper 2 this session and candidates on both Papers endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly.

Comments on specific questions

J. LAWRENCE & R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

This was not a popular choice of text and proved to be challenging for many candidates where knowledge and understanding was not secure. To answer the question fully candidates needed to focus on both what was ‘*dramatic*’ and ‘*revealing*’ for the audience. The key word ‘*How*’ should have alerted the candidates for the need to explore dramatic techniques. Few candidates made use of the whole passage and apart from the stage direction ‘*laughter*’ there was little discussion of the atmosphere in the courtroom. Many launched immediately into Brady’s line ‘*How dare you attack the Bible*’ with comments then alluding to Drummond being against religion or the Bible. Such assertions showed a lack of understanding of the central argument by just perceiving Drummond as anti-religion. Weaker candidates worked through the passage narrating events at a literal level whilst some referred to a previous year’s question and tried to argue that this moment was a ‘David and Goliath’ moment, clearly missing the point that the roles here between Drummond and Brady had been reversed.

Better candidates could comment on what was happening and understood this was the climax to the trial, where, initially on the verge of defeat as his witnesses are denied the stand, Drummond turns the tables on Brady and reduces him to a ‘*trembling*’ wreck who has lost the support of the spectators. His mocking tone and sarcasm featured highly in these responses and candidates were able to quote and analyse the text effectively to support comments.

Question 2

Relatively few answers were submitted to this question with the word ‘*fascinating*’ ignored by all but a few candidates. Weaker responses wrote individual character studies, or retold the plot, failing to look at the relationship in the context of the play. Others commented on the opening scene of the play, citing Rachel’s support for Bert and her advice to him to conform to the community’s belief. Responses tended to be romantic, suggesting that it is their love and not Drummond’s success in the court that overcomes the obstacles facing Bert. The best responses cited Rachel’s struggles due to her father’s obsession with religious belief and saw her as a ‘*dynamic*’ character, acknowledging her development throughout the play and their ultimate departure from the community.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This was the most popular text and question and was often soundly answered with many candidates finding the passage accessible and enjoyable. The best candidates paid attention to the whole of the passage, ensuring that the ‘chair incident’ was commented on. They engaged with the scene and found material to explore in Eddie’s boxing lesson as a cover for asserting his strength and dominance over Rodolpho; Catherine’s ‘alarm’ at the scene; Rodolpho’s subtle but intended affront to Eddie by dancing with Catherine and Marco’s intervention. These responses developed interpretations about Eddie’s real intentions and jealousy of Rodolpho’s and Catherine’s relationship. They also understood Marco’s intentions and made good use of the stage directions throughout, especially the ones immediately before the curtain falls: ‘*weapon*’, ‘*warning*’ and ‘*smile of triumph*’. These responses clearly understood the scene as a ‘dramatic ending’ to the Act and the implications for the rest of the play, with stronger responses explicitly discussing how this chair lifting scene foreshadows the end of the play where Marco turns the knife back on Eddie and kills him.

Weaker candidates retold the story up to this point before working through the passage, line by line, frequently running out of time before addressing the question, or cited the rising tension in the scene without developing or supporting this assertion. They also accepted Eddie’s explanation that he had no intention of hurting Rodolpho and that he genuinely wanted to help Rodolpho to be able to defend himself. Very few candidates showed understanding of the symbolic reference to the song ‘Paper Doll’.

Question 4

Fewer candidates answered this question. To answer the question fully, candidates needed to respond to Eddie's *'feelings'* and how they were a *'disturbing part of the play'*. Better responses explored Eddie's specific feelings of jealousy and love for Catherine and his hatred and anger towards Rodolpho. They explored Eddie's over-protectiveness; how, as his jealousy increases, his moods and tones shift when talking to Catherine, Beatrice and Rodolpho, and how his fear of Catherine's marriage to Rodolpho overcomes him. The best answers explicitly explored his feelings for Catherine, why they were disturbing and the dramatic impact this has on the play, citing: the breakdown in relationship with Beatrice, his kissing of both Catherine and Rodolpho as well as his later decision to snitch to the Immigration Bureau, bringing about his own demise at the hands of Marco at the end of the play.

Weaker responses tended to narrate events rather than explore Eddie's feelings and how this drives the plot, adding the word *'disturbing'*, rather than developing logical conclusions. They focused on the early scenes of the play suggesting that Eddie was simply over-protective of his niece. There was much confusion about Eddie's relationship to Catherine with some condemning Eddie for his *'incestuous love'* and others defending him as he was not a blood relative of Catherine.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

There were comparatively few responses to either question on this text. Responses to the passage were, for the most part, inclined to paraphrase, centring on Dickie's character, particularly his laziness and his resentment towards his brother. Responses struggled to illustrate what was *'revealing'* about the passage, though some argued that it revealed Dickie as a typical adolescent (though at Oxford) who is unfortunately tormented by an unreasonable, authoritative and demanding father. Very few who attempted the question seemed to find anything *'entertaining'* here with just the occasional comment on the use of the names of animals as dances, as in the *'Bunny Hop'* and *'Fox Trot'*.

Question 6

Very few responses were seen, and they were generally weak with candidates adopting a narrative approach. Better candidates had a grasp of Watherstone's part in the play and commented on how he is influenced both by money and his father to the detriment of Catherine and their engagement.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Too few answers were submitted on this text to make general comment appropriate.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 9

This was a popular question and the passage was rich in material to answer how the writer made this *'such a powerfully dramatic moment'*. Many candidates showed both knowledge and understanding of the text with the realisation that Ross was the bringer of bad news for Macduff personally and that the situation in Scotland was declining. Less successful candidates retold the passage with little focus on the question, or focused on the first part of the passage, developing Ross' delay in breaking the news of the *'savagely slaughtered'* wife and children of Macduff. There was a tendency for weaker candidates to spend too much time on the context of the passage leaving little time for close exploration of the text. More successful responses referenced the dramatic irony in the passage and commented on the audience's anticipation of Macduff's reaction. They focused on this inhumane killing as an impetus for revenge, strengthening Macduff's resolve to fight against Macbeth. They explored Ross's *'lie'* in delaying the news, with the best candidates exploring the ambiguity of his words that *'they were well at peace'*. Many of these answers explored *'dispute it like a man'* to develop the idea of masculinity. There was some engagement with the language and imagery of the passage with some insightful comments on Macduff's anguish in the exclamatory *'O, hell-kite!'* and his struggle to comprehend the murders of his wife and children in the rhetorical questions that follow. Some incorrectly stated that we learn in this scene that Macduff is not *'born of woman'* and the line *'make our women fight'* was taken literally as if women were to be made to fight in the army against Macbeth.

Question 10

Fewer candidates chose the discursive question and the word '*vividly*' was generally overlooked in weaker responses. '*Madness*' was interpreted in a range of ways from 'anger' to 'crazy' to Lady Macbeth's actual descent into madness as reflected in her hallucinations, sleepwalking and confessions of the murder of Duncan. Some candidates highlighted her ambition and desire for power as a form of madness. Others worked through the play citing her manipulation of Macbeth as a clear indication of her insanity and quoted her words '*unsex me here*' as additional signs of a mad woman, asserting that only someone who had lost her senses would wish to become manly to commit murder.

Better candidates explored Act 5 with reference to Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and the doctor's observations. Her constant reference to blood and inability to remove the blood from her hands, '*Out, damned spot!*' were well documented, and the irony in her initial words to Macbeth that '*a little water clears us of this deed*' contrasted with '*all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand*'. Her ultimate suicide was considered by some candidates as enough evidence to demonstrate that she was mad.

Weaker candidates narrated events, confusing Macbeth and Lady Macbeth at times, and added that she was 'crazy' at the end of most sentences without exploring how this made her so. There was also evidence of candidates having learned numerous quotations which they used, irrespective of their value in answering the question.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/22
Drama 22

Key messages

- Successful responses included a concise introduction which focused on the set question and the main points being used to answer it.
- The strongest answers commented and analysed but avoided excessive explanation, description, historical background detail and narrative re-telling.
- Strong candidates showed detailed textual knowledge and made specific reference to the text, rather than dealing solely in generalities.
- A personal engagement with the text, ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

The most successful answers often began with the candidate focussing clearly on the question and citing three or four aspects of the text that they then used to answer it. The least successful either narrated the context at considerable length in answer to passage-based questions or gave historical information which often had no immediate relevance to the question.

Whilst most candidates understood the content of the set passages, some did not go beyond explaining what the characters say and do. This was most evident in the Shakespeare passages but this also applied to more contemporary texts. Many needed to make the leap from decoding the meaning to analysing the author's methods. A few pertinent comments on the stage effects used and on the diction, imagery or interaction between the characters would make a major difference to attainment.

Strong candidates knew the whole play in detail and could draw on a wide range of textual references, usually in the form of exact quotation from the play as a whole. In answer to the passage-based questions, they gave brief contextual information and used a considerable amount of short, pertinent quotation from the passage. It would benefit candidates on the open book Paper 32 to refer back briefly so that they are clear on the context of the passage within the play. As the passage is printed on the paper, there is no reason not to use quotations from it. Candidates should, however, be discouraged from merely using line numbers and expecting the Examiner to find the words to which they are referring.

Effective answers showed precise knowledge of plot and characterisation. There were instances this session of some candidates appearing to have only superficial knowledge of the set texts, sometimes referring to scenes in film versions that do not exist in the play or conversely not knowing scenes in the play which do not appear in a film. This puts them at a disadvantage. There were serious gaps in knowledge in some answers. For example, candidates confused the characters in *Macbeth* and knowledge of the plot was sometimes insecure.

There were some rubric infringements where candidates on 0486 22 answered two passage-based or two discursive questions, and answers were sometimes wrongly numbered. Some candidates do not number their questions at all or, on 2010 22, write the numbers of both questions on their set text on each question. It would be helpful to both candidates and Examiners if the importance of denoting clearly and unambiguously which question they are answering is emphasised. There were some candidates who mistimed their answers on 0486 22, spending too long on the first answer but otherwise there were few brief or imbalanced scripts.

Comments on specific questions

J.LAWRENCE and R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Strong answers to this question understood that the main drama centres on Bert's refusal to 'quit' and the revelation that Rachel has to testify against him. Her vivid speech about her fear of her father was also cited as contributing to the power of the scene. Drummond's gentle handling of the situation and support for Bert was appreciated in sensitive answers.

Less successful responses kept returning to the basic issue of evolution versus fundamentalist Christianity in the play, without properly considering the passage or the question. There was a misconception that Bert thought he was wrong about teaching evolution, rather than his doubting the wisdom of pursuing his beliefs through the court. Most, however, understood that Rachel's love for him was prompting her to prevent his further suffering by urging him to renege.

The power of the language in the scene could have been more fully explored, very few really picked up on the power of phrases such as '*They'll crucify me!*', '*genuinely panicked*' or '*unconscious of his presence or her surroundings*' or '*distraught*'.

Question 2

The majority of responses showed a sound knowledge of Reverend Brown's fundamentalist viewpoint, his relationship with his daughter, his opposition to Bert and his support of Brady. There was intelligent comment on how the unquestioning support he stirs up for Brady creates such drama when Brady falls from grace and perhaps leads Brady to underestimate the opposition. Most candidates knew that he damned his own daughter but his hell-fire preaching at the prayer meeting could have been explored more fully. Strong answers recognised how Brown's treatment of Tommy Stebbins had led Bert to doubt a faith which preached forgiveness but practised the opposite, an issue raised at a crucial moment in the trial. Stronger responses commented on the irony in the fact that those who followed him blindly were often ignorant or illiterate such as Elijah. Rachel's rejection of her father at the end of the play, creating a satisfying ending, was also left unconsidered by most.

A few candidates confused Brown and Brady and some ignored the rubric and used the information in the passage-based question. This rubric was designed to prevent candidates from writing an answer which was too narrow and thus putting themselves at a disadvantage. They should be reminded to take serious note of such instructions.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

There were many very successful answers to this question. Candidates responded to Miller's presentation of Rodolpho as a larger-than-life character with a personality and talents contrasting to both the more taciturn Marco and Eddie's longshoreman machismo. They saw his boasting and exaggeration as strikingly confident and amusing. Better answers went on to explore the striking response of both Catherine and Eddie to Rodolpho, foreshadowing the conflict to come. The underlying motivation for Eddie stopping Rodolpho singing and telling Catherine to remove her high heels was understood. Stage directions such as '*with iron control...his face puffed with trouble*', were well utilised to make the point clear. The symbolism of the Paper Doll lyrics and the exchange about sugar did not go unobserved.

Some candidates went too far in saying that Eddie was already deciding that Rodolpho was effeminate at this early stage and that singing was generally considered a female occupation in the 1950s. Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett and other crooners of Italian heritage might have found that surprising. Similarly, some candidates asserted that Rodolpho was already '*bowing to his passport*' and while an interesting case can be (and was) made for that interpretation, some candidates tended to take Eddie's later view of Rodolpho at face value.

Question 4

Sophisticated responses considered the extent to which Beatrice is totally admirable, rather than writing a rather bland assertion of her kindness and loyalty. Strong candidates balanced her sterling qualities with a

recognition that she is jealous of Catherine, that she promotes her niece's marriage to Rodolpho through some degree of self-interest and, arguably, does not act upon her perception of Eddie's feelings for Catherine until it is too late. Very few noted that she sees herself as partly to blame: '*Whatever happened we all done it*'. Some candidates quoted Catherine's criticism of her to prove that she was not a good wife to Eddie, which reveals more about Catherine's relationship with her uncle than it does a fair perception of her Aunt. Of course total admiration was an acceptable answer and many pointed out her perception and honesty, love for both her niece and her husband and her desperation to save him from himself at the end of the play.

There were misconceptions in less confident responses. Many thought that she attended Catherine and Rodolpho's wedding and that she slept on the floor to accommodate the cousins. Some candidates said she was silent throughout and never challenged Eddie, both palpably not the case. Sophisticated answers showed awareness that despite her perception, she was as powerless as Alfieri in stopping things taking their inevitable course

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Knowledge of the play as a whole played a part in the strongest answers to this question. Whilst commenting on the entertainment factor of the dancing, Dickie and Catherine's banter and jokes, their quick reaction to Arthur's entrance and his sardonic comments on the doctor, candidates noted that main issues of the play are raised throughout the scene. The financial impact of the court case is beginning to bite and take a toll on Arthur Winslow's health. John has postponed the wedding owing to his father's attitude to the scandal; women are more attractive if they suppress their opinions, especially if they are political. The foreshadowing of John's jilting of Catherine was fully explored in the strongest responses.

Less effective responses seemed unaware of the context of the passage and of these issues in the play. Some thought Ramsey Macdonald was another of Catherine's suitors.

Question 6

Confident responses to this question effectively used textual support for their views. Comments were made on: the difficulties Violet would face as an uneducated working class woman if she was fired by the Winslows; Miss Barnes managing to enter the male bastion of journalism only to write about curtains; Grace's lack of a voice in her patriarchal household; Catherine being disbarred by class, gender and education from properly paid employment and the political establishment. Though most commented on Catherine having to marry, few looked at her having to seriously consider Desmond's proposal and Sir Robert's attitude to women's suffrage did not feature in many answers.

Some responses showed knowledge of the issues facing women at the time the play is set but did not relate this sufficiently to events in the play itself.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most candidates found the characters' dispute about tactics in the middle of a war situation amusing and commented on the entertainment factor of the different national dialects. The volatility of Macmorris was contrasted with Gower's attempts at peacemaking. Less successful responses thought Macmorris was a Scot and that Jamy was going to get married, a misinterpretation of: 'that sall I, marry'. It was surprising that not more was said about Fluellen, who is a more well-established character in the play.

Question 8

The majority of candidates opted for this question on *Henry V*. Better answers explored the arguably 'ruthless' moments in the play: his response to the tennis balls; the execution of the traitors; the hanging of Bardolph; the speech to the Governor of Harfleur; the abandonment of Falstaff and the killing of the French prisoners. Henry's actions were justified in terms of what a king has to do contrasting with what would be counted as ruthless in a private man or alternatively contrasted with the band of brothers he creates with his men.

In some less successful responses the term 'ruthless' was not understood or the essay was one on leadership in general rather than focussing on the question set. Some candidates did not take into account that the traitors were guilty and that treason is punishable by death even in modern times, whereas the killing of the prisoners is against the code of war. Few mentioned that at the end of the ruthless Harfleur speech to the Governor, Henry says '*show mercy to them all*'. Some thought marrying Princess Catherine was ruthless, perhaps not grasping the political realities of a peace treaty.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 9

There were some high quality responses to this question which recognised Macbeth's state of mind being reflected in his duplicitous dialogue with Banquo. Candidates understood the irony of Macbeth's exhortations for Banquo to attend the feast but knew that the audience is not yet aware of Macbeth's plan to murder him, though their possible suspicions are confirmed in Macbeth's soliloquy. Strong candidates observed his deflection of suspicion from himself to Duncan's sons. Better answers commented not only on what was revealed of his state of mind in the soliloquy but also on the powerful language Shakespeare uses to convey this. Comments on '*stick deep...fruitless...barren...unlineal...seeds*' and the repetition and exclamation demonstrated an understanding of Macbeth's reasons for fearing Banquo and the depth of this fear. Better answers also looked at his comparison between himself and Banquo and that the latter had the wisdom to act in safety, hence threatening his hold on the crown.

There were many common misconceptions. Many candidates did not realise that Macbeth is the king at this point in the play. The reference to Mark Antony and Caesar was referred to as a biblical allusion and many thought that Mark Antony has betrayed Caesar. '*Prophet-like*' was mistakenly seen as referring to Banquo rather than to the witches. Several candidates did not understand the convention of the soliloquy and thought that Macbeth was talking to the servant or that soliloquising was a sign of insanity. Similarly they misinterpreted the '*Who's there?*' at the end of the passage as paranoia, rather than him acknowledging the arrival of the assassins. Less successful answers either narrated events leading up to this passage, or went beyond it to make lengthy comment on Banquo's ghost. Some wrote well on the conversation with Banquo but ignored the soliloquy or vice-versa. In general, although most candidates understood the passage, closer attention to the language would have raised the level of most responses.

Question 10

A secure starting point in response to this question was to know who Malcolm was. A significant number of candidates confused him with Macduff or even Fleance. The next requirement was to know something of what he did in the play. Most candidates knew that he fled after his father's murder and most thought this was a sign of cowardice rather than of astute political acumen, missing the point that the dead guards appeared to be the culprits so there was no murderer to be apprehended. Some answers did not venture much beyond this and a generalised response with little reference to events in the play was a characteristic answer to this question in weaker responses.

The strongest candidates could quote Malcolm's reasons for escaping from Macbeth's castle, '*there's daggers in men's smiles*', explored his reasons for testing Macduff and the way in which he does this, commented on the alliance he had made with the English (not British) king, analysed his manipulation of Macduff to avenge his family, saw his military prowess and the fulfilment of the prophecy in making Birnam Wood move and commented on his humility, as evidenced by his thanking of the captain who saves him in the early scenes, and gracious acceptance of the throne at the end of the play. Better answers also looked at the imagery of medicine, symbolising his purgation of sick Scotland perishing under Macbeth's tyranny.

There were misconceptions in less successful answers that he was not a warrior. A few misunderstood the scene of his testing Macduff, believing that he was all the things that he later admits are lies. Stronger candidates saw this as a sign he would be a better king than his father who only ever saw the good in people.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/23
Drama 23

Key messages

- Successful answers showed detailed knowledge of the set text by selecting the most relevant material with which to address the focus of the question.
- Convincing responses developed comments beyond narrative and explanation of surface meaning to show deeper awareness of the ideas and attitudes relevant to the question.
- The best answers analysed the ways the playwrights created dramatic effects in their writing, such as: action on stage, dialogue between characters and likely audience reaction.
- Candidates who communicated their engagement with the text through an informed personal response enlivened answers at all levels.

General comments

There were sound responses to all texts and questions this session, with candidates showing good knowledge of their set texts. Their enjoyment of the plays was often made clear in the way they engaged with the characters. For example, on *Henry V*, candidates explored Henry's softer side in his humorous attempts to woo Princess Katherine. Many candidates strongly expressed their sympathy for Catherine and her life-changing decision to forego marriage in order to 'Let Right be Done' in *The Winslow Boy*, or for Rachel in her agonising dilemma in *Inherit the Wind*, as she finds herself manipulated into testifying against her future husband. Context questions on both *A View from the Bridge* and *Macbeth* asked candidates to consider the protagonist. Stronger candidates felt confident enough to criticise Eddie for trying to break up Catherine and Rodolpho's relationship, or to criticise Macbeth for his lack of compassion to servants, soldiers and his wife, who are all suffering at his hands. Less confident candidates asserted sympathy towards these misguided characters. The best answers analysed the writing to show how authors encouraged a particular response to a character.

There were some excellent answers to both passage-based and discursive questions this session. These often began with the candidate addressing the question directly and giving three or four points which they went on to develop in answer to it. Weaker answers often avoided focusing on the question and opened with a synopsis of the whole play, a general homily on the human condition, or gave general historical or cultural information.

There were some sensitive responses to passage-based questions which developed comments beyond narrative and explanation of the surface meaning of the text to show a deeper awareness of the ideas and attitudes relevant to the question. Briefly stating the context helped to root the answer in the text. Candidates needed to select the most appropriate elements from a passage with which to answer the question asked, rather than going through the passage line by line, sometimes giving a general and irrelevant commentary. In strong answers, comments were supported by many brief quotations from the passage and candidates made clear how the text supported the points made. Most candidates could improve their answers significantly by commenting directly on how the author uses dramatic features such as the interaction between characters, action on stage, dialogue, and likely audience reaction. Dramatic entrances and exits are often worthy of comment, such as John's petulant exit at the end of the passage for **Question 5**, or the way Rachel is helped by her father to exit at the end of the passage for **Question 1**.

There were some convincing answers to discursive questions. These featured a sound overview of the play and a clearly expressed and developed argument supported by close textual reference. The best way to incorporate textual support is to quote accurately. Some candidates could respond to the question but did not know the play well enough to select supporting material, and so their answer was severely limited. Candidates needed to make clear how the textual reference supported the point being made. General

historical or cultural information merely detracted from the focus on the question. Some very weak answers were uncertain of plot details and sometimes mixed up characters.

There were very few rubric infringements.

Comments on specific questions

J Lawrence and R E Lee: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Good answers stated the context, of Rachel giving evidence at Cates's trial; she is being questioned by Brady for the prosecution. Most candidates were able to point out the drama of Rachel's distress at being forced to give evidence against her will which might incriminate her future husband, using her hesitations and broken speech in support. Stronger answers analysed Brady's hectoring style of questioning, with examples from the text. Some candidates referred to Brady's deceit earlier at the banquet when he tricks Rachel into revealing incriminating details about Cates. Sensitive answers moved beyond explaining the action to explore in depth Rachel's complex emotions created by her loyalty to Bert, her reluctance to incriminate him, her own beliefs, and her fear of her father and of public exposure. Good answers also considered the impact of other characters: the scary and biased Judge, Cates's love for Rachel and desire to spare her further trauma, the contrast of Cates with her father's coldness, Drummond's jumping up and down to lodge objections, and his kindness in acceding to Cates's request not to question Rachel. Candidates who looked at staging found drama in the reactions of the people in the courthouse, in Hornbeck's 'guffaws', in Rachel's inability to speak, and in the Reverend Brown's cold actions at the end. Weaker answers tended to explain Rachel's timidity in giving evidence, without much development or support, and tended not to address the drama of the passage explicitly.

Question 2

Most candidates responded well to Hornbeck as a humorous and witty character, and were able to quote instances of his humour, such as when he sees a monkey and calls it 'Grandpa'. Better answers recognised Hornbeck's function as an observer and commentator, and gave examples of his mockery of Hillsboro, such as calling it 'The buckle on the Bible Belt.' Some sophisticated answers focused well on Hornbeck's contribution to dramatic impact, considering such aspects as his dramatic contrast both in appearance as a 'sophisticated city-dweller' to the southerners living in Hillsboro, and in his beliefs which represent the progressive evolutionist ideas held by people from the North. His mockery and harsh criticism dramatically cut through the reverence the Hillsboro people have of Brady, Rev Brown and fundamentalism. A few strong candidates successfully explored the ending, where Hornbeck's cynicism is too much for Drummond, who points out that he is there to defend freedom of thought: 'Brady had the same right as Cates: the right to be wrong!' Some weaker answers were limited by their uncertainty of which side Hornbeck was on, and therefore what he was mocking.

Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Successful answers firmly established the context – that Eddie is visiting Alfieri to seek legal means to stop Catherine's relationship with Rodolpho. These answers also showed understanding that Eddie's unacknowledged desire for Catherine is what makes him dislike Rodolpho and is inflaming Eddie's possessive feelings towards Catherine. Sensitive answers continued with a detailed analysis of how Miller conveys Eddie's desperate state of mind in his speech, and placed this in the context of Eddie's determination to convince Alfieri of Rodolpho's femininity, and thus unsuitability as a partner for Catherine. Many candidates analysed Eddie's uncomfortable body language, his rambling grievances against Rodolpho and his agitated interruptions of Alfieri, all of which convey Eddie's distress. His embarrassed attempts at 'accusing' Rodolpho amount to no more than that he has blond hair, a slight build, enjoys singing, and has dressmaking skills. Eddie's interruptions show he does not want to hear Alfieri's logical dismissals. Eddie's jealousy of Rodolpho arises because Catherine is attracted to him; Eddie is tormented by the thought of Rodolpho 'laying his hands on her'. Perceptive candidates commented on the irony of Eddie's fervent denial that he would inform on Rodolpho as an illegal immigrant, and often sympathised with the intensity of Eddie's feelings of desperation and hopelessness.

A significant number of candidates limited their answer to an analysis of Eddie's speech and movements. A few of these answers became repetitive as they worked through the passage, making the same point on Eddie's distress with different textual support. Some of these answers provided a strong answer to how Miller conveys Eddie's agitation, but to gain high marks candidates also needed to show understanding of the content and context of the passage, by considering why Eddie was there, what he was implying about Rodolpho, why he was doing this, and why he was so distressed.

The weakest answers often contained misapprehensions about Eddie's motives. Some candidates stated that Eddie just wanted a more macho partner than Rodolpho for Catherine; or that Eddie held a latent desire for Rodolpho himself; or that Eddie just wanted to maintain his own masculinity in exerting control over Catherine. These responses were unconvincing and without support from the text.

Question 4

Most answers began with details of the first impressions of each brother: Marco's maturity, strength, desire to work hard, and his responsibility for his family and for Rodolpho, in contrast to Rodolpho's youthful exuberance and desire to enjoy his new life to the full. Weaker answers limited their answers to this description of the brothers, perhaps with apt and accurate quotation in support. Stronger candidates developed their answers to consider the drama created by Eddie's response to each brother according to his sense of masculinity. Thus Eddie accepts Marco because he conforms to his idea of a 'man'; but he increasingly uses fake ammunition against Rodolpho's perceived femininity as his relationship with Catherine develops. The boxing and chair-lifting incidents were often cited; to show a full understanding of their drama, candidates needed to explore these in more detail to consider Eddie's motives for belittling Rodolpho to Catherine, and Marco's menacing warning to Eddie not to harm Rodolpho or he will have to deal with Marco too. The best answers went on to explore the dramatically different ways in which the brothers react to Eddie's treachery at the end: how Rodolpho tries to appease Eddie and avert tragedy in contrast to Marco's implacable desire for revenge.

Terence Rattigan: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Good responses stated the context of the passage: that John has pressured Catherine to agree to marry him and to drop the case. Most answers focused mainly on Catherine and her unenthusiastic response to John as she agrees to the marriage 'slowly' and 'wearily'; candidates tended to attribute this to her lack of love for John rather than her dislike of being pressured into dropping the case. After the phone call raises the possibility of continuing with the case, most candidates recognised the drama of Arthur giving Catherine the choice of what to do, because she is the one who stands to lose most, and the suspense of Catherine having to make the agonising decision. The delivery of her decision in a 'flat voice' and her refusal to look at John were often interpreted as evidence of her lack of feelings for John, rather than an indication of how hard she has found the decision to make because of her love for him. The injustice of his demands on Catherine was often not explored, nor was his petulant exit as he slams the door as he leaves. Stronger answers took an overview of the passage and also considered the power of the suspense created by the drama of the phone call on stage, by the five characters waiting while Sir Robert talks, by our only hearing one side of the conversation, and by waiting for the significance of the call to be explained.

Question 6

A strong response often began with clear points in a succinct introduction, such as that Rattigan shows how Sir Robert is an outstanding lawyer through his intelligence, his passion to let right be done and through the sacrifice he makes for the case. The candidate here was then able to explore how these features of Sir Robert played out in the drama, using close textual reference and quotation in support. Candidates needed to know the text well to select the most relevant material, such as his skilful interrogation of Ronnie, his passion shown by his physical exhaustion, and the sacrifice of refusing the honour of the position of Lord Chief Justice to continue with the case. Weaker answers tended to assert Sir Robert was an outstanding lawyer because he was good at his job and won cases, and was well-dressed, without using relevant details from the text in support.

William Shakespeare: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most answers recognised the entertainment value of the empty and exaggerated bragging of the French lords about their horses, and many grasped some of the sexual banter too. Better answers commented on how the lords' sarcastic remarks directed at the Dauphin revealed their true attitude towards him and undermined his arrogant boastfulness. Some strong answers contrasted the bombast of the French lords with Henry's honest admission of his army's frailty in the previous scene. Weaker answers tended to show an overview without exploring the writing in detail.

Question 8

Most answers recognised the differences in the hesitant and kindly Henry portrayed in the courtship scene, compared with the steely warrior elsewhere. Better answers were able to use detailed supporting text in support; weaker answers remained general and assertive. Stronger answers commented on the fact that Henry requests Katherine's love, suggesting she share a partnership with him, rather than him demanding her hand in marriage as a victorious and powerful king. Indeed, some candidates pointed out Henry's self-deprecation in his depiction of his soldier's inadequacy as a poet, dancer and suitor. His affectionate humour and the romance of the kiss and the tender '*Kate*' were also selected for comment. Perhaps the more cynical candidates pointed out that in reality Katherine has little choice, since the political realities of a peace treaty demanded that she marry Henry; but her lack of choice does not detract from his gentle attempts to woo her consent.

William Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

Question 9

There were some perceptive answers which went beyond a surface reading to show understanding of the deeper implications of Macbeth's thoughts and feelings. Thus, most candidates commented on Macbeth's arrogant fearlessness, using the prophecies to support the idea of his invincibility, while others considered this to be bravado which covered up doubt and fear, and which necessitated frequent repeating of the terms of the prophecies by way of reassurance. Some candidates saw his insulting the servant as evidence of his tyrannical rule, where he mocks those weaker than himself for showing fear and orders that those who talk of fear are killed; perceptive candidates thought this extreme aggression also masked his own underlying fear. These also commented on Macbeth's feelings of loss and that he has '*liv'd long enough*'; they analysed the use of autumnal imagery and his regrets that he cannot experience a homely old age with friends, since he has sacrificed '*honour, love and obedience*'. Most answers recognised that, with the entrance of Seyton, Macbeth's mindset returns to that of an aggressive warrior as he professes he will fight to the death with the suitably gory imagery of '*from my bones my flesh be hack'd*', and with his declaration of bravery (or bravado) to end the passage. Some candidates thought Macbeth simply showed his love for his wife by ordering the doctor to cure her; a more subtle reading explored how Macbeth may also be thinking of himself when he asks the doctor whether he can '*minister to a mind diseas'd*'. A few candidates also explored Macbeth's desperation or perhaps longing in his request of the doctor to cleanse his land of her disease too.

More basic answers commented simply on Macbeth's misplaced confidence in the prophecies, his desire to fight until the death, and his wish for his wife to be cured. Some very weak answers tended to explain the prophecies, both how they arose and how they are fulfilled. Some spent time equating Seyton with Satan, but there is nothing in the text to support this reading.

Question 10

The strongest answers knew the text well and were able to argue a convincing case for Banquo's admirable qualities, sometimes with the exception that he could have acted in some way on his suspicions of Macbeth's foul play. These sound answers were able to draw on the text to show that Banquo fought valiantly as a warrior for Duncan; that despite being favoured with a prophecy of his own, he remains loyal to the king and does nothing to promote his own interests; that he is a close friend of Macbeth and warns him to be cautious of the witches, seeing them as '*instruments of darkness*'; and finally that he has a close and protective relationship with his son, Fleance and tries to ensure his son's survival when he himself is attacked and murdered by Macbeth's henchmen. Some perceptive answers made the point that the initial similarities between Banquo and Macbeth serve to emphasise the differences, so that Banquo's admirable qualities emphasise Macbeth's wickedness.

Weaker answers often suggested unconvincingly that Banquo was admirable because he had been unfairly murdered by Macbeth, or that he was admirable because his ghost showed that Macbeth was guilty. While most candidates knew who Banquo was, that he had his own prophecy from the witches, and that Macbeth ordered him to be murdered, there were some who did not know the play well enough to develop these points, or to support them with detailed reference to the text. These answers sometimes focused more on Macbeth's guilt rather than Banquo's admirable qualities. A few candidates spent a long part of their answer giving details of how the real Banquo was related to James I and how Shakespeare was compelled to present him in a good light to appease the monarch; such material was difficult to credit in a literary response.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31
Drama (Open Text) 31

Key messages

- The most successful responses considered the key words in the question, remained focussed on the question and avoided narrative.
- Better candidates briefly contextualised the passage in passage-based questions, looked at the text in detail, commented on the author's effects and used quotations from it in support.
- Convincing discursive answers selected relevant material from across the whole text, using direct quotation in support.
- Weaker candidates used quotation without exploring meaning or made unsupported assertions after a quotation. To be rewarded, quotations should be analysed fully.
- Weaker responses also saw a focus on stage directions and punctuation without then exploring them in the context of the passage, or linked explicitly to the question.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

The most popular texts were *A View from the Bridge* and *Macbeth*. More candidates responded to *Inherit the Wind* this session, but they were comparatively few. Very few answered on *The Winslow Boy*. There were insufficient responses to *Henry V* to make appropriate comment in the report.

Many candidates showed knowledge of their set texts and it was clear that they often enjoyed and engaged with the characters and themes. The strongest responses directed their material to the specific demands of the question but there were still many less successful responses where candidates tended to write all they know about a text with scant relevance to the actual question. Candidates should address the key word of the question from the start and make pertinent links to it throughout the response to avoid loss of focus and lapses into narrative. A few candidates made the mistake of answering the discursive essay using the passage which was self-penalising as there was rarely anything of relevance in the passage.

In attempting to answer the 'How' part of a question there are still candidates who focus on stage directions and punctuation without some exploration of them in context. This is usually done by working through the passage, highlighting these aspects, and simply asserting, for example, that this makes a passage dramatic without demonstrating an understanding of what is happening in the scene. In addition, comments on directing the scene – how characters would dress, speak or move on stage – are not required, or rewarded, at IGCSE level so are a waste of valuable examination time that could be more profitably used. Candidates need to be reminded that to show understanding of the text as performance, the dramatic impact of stage directions, dialogue and characters' actions should be explored without assuming the director's role.

Weaker candidates frequently gave lengthy introductions to answers before addressing the passage or question, sometimes running out of time before reaching the relevant information. Narrative overviews of a passage or working through, line by line, explaining the situation were other features of weaker responses. Some candidates would benefit from a brief plan to help them to maintain focus and to be more selective with choice of references thereby avoiding a quotation-driven response.

Most candidates used their time well though there were many brief answers where candidates simply retold the plot. There were very few rubric infringements on Paper 2 this session and candidates on both Papers endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly.

Comments on specific questions

J. LAWRENCE & R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

This was not a popular choice of text and proved to be challenging for many candidates where knowledge and understanding was not secure. To answer the question fully candidates needed to focus on both what was ‘*dramatic*’ and ‘*revealing*’ for the audience. The key word ‘*How*’ should have alerted the candidates for the need to explore dramatic techniques. Few candidates made use of the whole passage and apart from the stage direction ‘*laughter*’ there was little discussion of the atmosphere in the courtroom. Many launched immediately into Brady’s line ‘*How dare you attack the Bible*’ with comments then alluding to Drummond being against religion or the Bible. Such assertions showed a lack of understanding of the central argument by just perceiving Drummond as anti-religion. Weaker candidates worked through the passage narrating events at a literal level whilst some referred to a previous year’s question and tried to argue that this moment was a ‘David and Goliath’ moment, clearly missing the point that the roles here between Drummond and Brady had been reversed.

Better candidates could comment on what was happening and understood this was the climax to the trial, where, initially on the verge of defeat as his witnesses are denied the stand, Drummond turns the tables on Brady and reduces him to a ‘*trembling*’ wreck who has lost the support of the spectators. His mocking tone and sarcasm featured highly in these responses and candidates were able to quote and analyse the text effectively to support comments.

Question 2

Relatively few answers were submitted to this question with the word ‘*fascinating*’ ignored by all but a few candidates. Weaker responses wrote individual character studies, or retold the plot, failing to look at the relationship in the context of the play. Others commented on the opening scene of the play, citing Rachel’s support for Bert and her advice to him to conform to the community’s belief. Responses tended to be romantic, suggesting that it is their love and not Drummond’s success in the court that overcomes the obstacles facing Bert. The best responses cited Rachel’s struggles due to her father’s obsession with religious belief and saw her as a ‘*dynamic*’ character, acknowledging her development throughout the play and their ultimate departure from the community.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

This was the most popular text and question and was often soundly answered with many candidates finding the passage accessible and enjoyable. The best candidates paid attention to the whole of the passage, ensuring that the ‘chair incident’ was commented on. They engaged with the scene and found material to explore in Eddie’s boxing lesson as a cover for asserting his strength and dominance over Rodolpho; Catherine’s ‘alarm’ at the scene; Rodolpho’s subtle but intended affront to Eddie by dancing with Catherine and Marco’s intervention. These responses developed interpretations about Eddie’s real intentions and jealousy of Rodolpho’s and Catherine’s relationship. They also understood Marco’s intentions and made good use of the stage directions throughout, especially the ones immediately before the curtain falls: ‘*weapon*’, ‘*warning*’ and ‘*smile of triumph*’. These responses clearly understood the scene as a ‘dramatic ending’ to the Act and the implications for the rest of the play, with stronger responses explicitly discussing how this chair lifting scene foreshadows the end of the play where Marco turns the knife back on Eddie and kills him.

Weaker candidates retold the story up to this point before working through the passage, line by line, frequently running out of time before addressing the question, or cited the rising tension in the scene without developing or supporting this assertion. They also accepted Eddie’s explanation that he had no intention of hurting Rodolpho and that he genuinely wanted to help Rodolpho to be able to defend himself. Very few candidates showed understanding of the symbolic reference to the song ‘Paper Doll’.

Question 4

Fewer candidates answered this question. To answer the question fully, candidates needed to respond to Eddie's *'feelings'* and how they were a *'disturbing part of the play'*. Better responses explored Eddie's specific feelings of jealousy and love for Catherine and his hatred and anger towards Rodolpho. They explored Eddie's over-protectiveness; how, as his jealousy increases, his moods and tones shift when talking to Catherine, Beatrice and Rodolpho, and how his fear of Catherine's marriage to Rodolpho overcomes him. The best answers explicitly explored his feelings for Catherine, why they were disturbing and the dramatic impact this has on the play, citing: the breakdown in relationship with Beatrice, his kissing of both Catherine and Rodolpho as well as his later decision to snitch to the Immigration Bureau, bringing about his own demise at the hands of Marco at the end of the play.

Weaker responses tended to narrate events rather than explore Eddie's feelings and how this drives the plot, adding the word *'disturbing'*, rather than developing logical conclusions. They focused on the early scenes of the play suggesting that Eddie was simply over-protective of his niece. There was much confusion about Eddie's relationship to Catherine with some condemning Eddie for his *'incestuous love'* and others defending him as he was not a blood relative of Catherine.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

There were comparatively few responses to either question on this text. Responses to the passage were, for the most part, inclined to paraphrase, centring on Dickie's character, particularly his laziness and his resentment towards his brother. Responses struggled to illustrate what was *'revealing'* about the passage, though some argued that it revealed Dickie as a typical adolescent (though at Oxford) who is unfortunately tormented by an unreasonable, authoritative and demanding father. Very few who attempted the question seemed to find anything *'entertaining'* here with just the occasional comment on the use of the names of animals as dances, as in the 'Bunny Hop' and 'Fox Trot'.

Question 6

Very few responses were seen, and they were generally weak with candidates adopting a narrative approach. Better candidates had a grasp of Watherstone's part in the play and commented on how he is influenced both by money and his father to the detriment of Catherine and their engagement.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Too few answers were submitted on this text to make general comment appropriate.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 9

This was a popular question and the passage was rich in material to answer how the writer made this *'such a powerfully dramatic moment'*. Many candidates showed both knowledge and understanding of the text with the realisation that Ross was the bringer of bad news for Macduff personally and that the situation in Scotland was declining. Less successful candidates retold the passage with little focus on the question, or focused on the first part of the passage, developing Ross' delay in breaking the news of the *'savagely slaughtered'* wife and children of Macduff. There was a tendency for weaker candidates to spend too much time on the context of the passage leaving little time for close exploration of the text. More successful responses referenced the dramatic irony in the passage and commented on the audience's anticipation of Macduff's reaction. They focused on this inhumane killing as an impetus for revenge, strengthening Macduff's resolve to fight against Macbeth. They explored Ross's *'lie'* in delaying the news, with the best candidates exploring the ambiguity of his words that *'they were well at peace'*. Many of these answers explored *'dispute it like a man'* to develop the idea of masculinity. There was some engagement with the language and imagery of the passage with some insightful comments on Macduff's anguish in the exclamatory *'O, hell-kite!'* and his struggle to comprehend the murders of his wife and children in the rhetorical questions that follow. Some incorrectly stated that we learn in this scene that Macduff is not *'born of woman'* and the line *'make our women fight'* was taken literally as if women were to be made to fight in the army against Macbeth.

Question 10

Fewer candidates chose the discursive question and the word '*vividly*' was generally overlooked in weaker responses. '*Madness*' was interpreted in a range of ways from 'anger' to 'crazy' to Lady Macbeth's actual descent into madness as reflected in her hallucinations, sleepwalking and confessions of the murder of Duncan. Some candidates highlighted her ambition and desire for power as a form of madness. Others worked through the play citing her manipulation of Macbeth as a clear indication of her insanity and quoted her words '*unsex me here*' as additional signs of a mad woman, asserting that only someone who had lost her senses would wish to become manly to commit murder.

Better candidates explored Act 5 with reference to Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and the doctor's observations. Her constant reference to blood and inability to remove the blood from her hands, '*Out, damned spot!*' were well documented, and the irony in her initial words to Macbeth that '*a little water clears us of this deed*' contrasted with '*all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand*'. Her ultimate suicide was considered by some candidates as enough evidence to demonstrate that she was mad.

Weaker candidates narrated events, confusing Macbeth and Lady Macbeth at times, and added that she was 'crazy' at the end of most sentences without exploring how this made her so. There was also evidence of candidates having learned numerous quotations which they used, irrespective of their value in answering the question.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Drama (Open Text) 32

Key messages

- Successful responses included a concise introduction which focused on the set question and the main points being used to answer it.
- The strongest answers commented and analysed but avoided excessive explanation, description, historical background detail and narrative re-telling.
- Strong candidates showed detailed textual knowledge and made specific reference to the text, rather than dealing solely in generalities.
- A personal engagement with the text, ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

General comments

The most successful answers often began with the candidate focussing clearly on the question and citing three or four aspects of the text that they then used to answer it. The least successful either narrated the context at considerable length in answer to passage-based questions or gave historical information which often had no immediate relevance to the question.

Whilst most candidates understood the content of the set passages, some did not go beyond explaining what the characters say and do. This was most evident in the Shakespeare passages but this also applied to more contemporary texts. Many needed to make the leap from decoding the meaning to analysing the author's methods. A few pertinent comments on the stage effects used and on the diction, imagery or interaction between the characters would make a major difference to attainment.

Strong candidates knew the whole play in detail and could draw on a wide range of textual references, usually in the form of exact quotation from the play as a whole. In answer to the passage-based questions, they gave brief contextual information and used a considerable amount of short, pertinent quotation from the passage. It would benefit candidates on the open book Paper 32 to refer back briefly so that they are clear on the context of the passage within the play. As the passage is printed on the paper, there is no reason not to use quotations from it. Candidates should, however, be discouraged from merely using line numbers and expecting the Examiner to find the words to which they are referring.

Effective answers showed precise knowledge of plot and characterisation. There were instances this session of some candidates appearing to have only superficial knowledge of the set texts, sometimes referring to scenes in film versions that do not exist in the play or conversely not knowing scenes in the play which do not appear in a film. This puts them at a disadvantage. There were serious gaps in knowledge in some answers. For example, candidates confused the characters in *Macbeth* and knowledge of the plot was sometimes insecure.

There were some rubric infringements where candidates on 0486 22 answered two passage-based or two discursive questions, and answers were sometimes wrongly numbered. Some candidates do not number their questions at all or, on 2010 22, write the numbers of both questions on their set text on each question. It would be helpful to both candidates and Examiners if the importance of denoting clearly and unambiguously which question they are answering is emphasised. There were some candidates who mistimed their answers on 0486 22, spending too long on the first answer but otherwise there were few brief or imbalanced scripts.

Comments on specific questions

J.LAWRENCE and R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Strong answers to this question understood that the main drama centres on Bert's refusal to 'quit' and the revelation that Rachel has to testify against him. Her vivid speech about her fear of her father was also cited as contributing to the power of the scene. Drummond's gentle handling of the situation and support for Bert was appreciated in sensitive answers.

Less successful responses kept returning to the basic issue of evolution versus fundamentalist Christianity in the play, without properly considering the passage or the question. There was a misconception that Bert thought he was wrong about teaching evolution, rather than his doubting the wisdom of pursuing his beliefs through the court. Most, however, understood that Rachel's love for him was prompting her to prevent his further suffering by urging him to renege.

The power of the language in the scene could have been more fully explored, very few really picked up on the power of phrases such as '*They'll crucify me!*', '*genuinely panicked*' or '*unconscious of his presence or her surroundings*' or '*distraught*'.

Question 2

The majority of responses showed a sound knowledge of Reverend Brown's fundamentalist viewpoint, his relationship with his daughter, his opposition to Bert and his support of Brady. There was intelligent comment on how the unquestioning support he stirs up for Brady creates such drama when Brady falls from grace and perhaps leads Brady to underestimate the opposition. Most candidates knew that he damned his own daughter but his hell-fire preaching at the prayer meeting could have been explored more fully. Strong answers recognised how Brown's treatment of Tommy Stebbins had led Bert to doubt a faith which preached forgiveness but practised the opposite, an issue raised at a crucial moment in the trial. Stronger responses commented on the irony in the fact that those who followed him blindly were often ignorant or illiterate such as Elijah. Rachel's rejection of her father at the end of the play, creating a satisfying ending, was also left unconsidered by most.

A few candidates confused Brown and Brady and some ignored the rubric and used the information in the passage-based question. This rubric was designed to prevent candidates from writing an answer which was too narrow and thus putting themselves at a disadvantage. They should be reminded to take serious note of such instructions.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

There were many very successful answers to this question. Candidates responded to Miller's presentation of Rodolpho as a larger-than-life character with a personality and talents contrasting to both the more taciturn Marco and Eddie's longshoreman machismo. They saw his boasting and exaggeration as strikingly confident and amusing. Better answers went on to explore the striking response of both Catherine and Eddie to Rodolpho, foreshadowing the conflict to come. The underlying motivation for Eddie stopping Rodolpho singing and telling Catherine to remove her high heels was understood. Stage directions such as '*with iron control...his face puffed with trouble*', were well utilised to make the point clear. The symbolism of the Paper Doll lyrics and the exchange about sugar did not go unobserved.

Some candidates went too far in saying that Eddie was already deciding that Rodolpho was effeminate at this early stage and that singing was generally considered a female occupation in the 1950s. Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett and other crooners of Italian heritage might have found that surprising. Similarly, some candidates asserted that Rodolpho was already '*bowing to his passport*' and while an interesting case can be (and was) made for that interpretation, some candidates tended to take Eddie's later view of Rodolpho at face value.

Question 4

Sophisticated responses considered the extent to which Beatrice is totally admirable, rather than writing a rather bland assertion of her kindness and loyalty. Strong candidates balanced her sterling qualities with a

recognition that she is jealous of Catherine, that she promotes her niece's marriage to Rodolpho through some degree of self-interest and, arguably, does not act upon her perception of Eddie's feelings for Catherine until it is too late. Very few noted that she sees herself as partly to blame: '*Whatever happened we all done it*'. Some candidates quoted Catherine's criticism of her to prove that she was not a good wife to Eddie, which reveals more about Catherine's relationship with her uncle than it does a fair perception of her Aunt. Of course total admiration was an acceptable answer and many pointed out her perception and honesty, love for both her niece and her husband and her desperation to save him from himself at the end of the play.

There were misconceptions in less confident responses. Many thought that she attended Catherine and Rodolpho's wedding and that she slept on the floor to accommodate the cousins. Some candidates said she was silent throughout and never challenged Eddie, both palpably not the case. Sophisticated answers showed awareness that despite her perception, she was as powerless as Alfieri in stopping things taking their inevitable course

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Knowledge of the play as a whole played a part in the strongest answers to this question. Whilst commenting on the entertainment factor of the dancing, Dickie and Catherine's banter and jokes, their quick reaction to Arthur's entrance and his sardonic comments on the doctor, candidates noted that main issues of the play are raised throughout the scene. The financial impact of the court case is beginning to bite and take a toll on Arthur Winslow's health. John has postponed the wedding owing to his father's attitude to the scandal; women are more attractive if they suppress their opinions, especially if they are political. The foreshadowing of John's jilting of Catherine was fully explored in the strongest responses.

Less effective responses seemed unaware of the context of the passage and of these issues in the play. Some thought Ramsey Macdonald was another of Catherine's suitors.

Question 6

Confident responses to this question effectively used textual support for their views. Comments were made on: the difficulties Violet would face as an uneducated working class woman if she was fired by the Winslows; Miss Barnes managing to enter the male bastion of journalism only to write about curtains; Grace's lack of a voice in her patriarchal household; Catherine being disbarred by class, gender and education from properly paid employment and the political establishment. Though most commented on Catherine having to marry, few looked at her having to seriously consider Desmond's proposal and Sir Robert's attitude to women's suffrage did not feature in many answers.

Some responses showed knowledge of the issues facing women at the time the play is set but did not relate this sufficiently to events in the play itself.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most candidates found the characters' dispute about tactics in the middle of a war situation amusing and commented on the entertainment factor of the different national dialects. The volatility of Macmorris was contrasted with Gower's attempts at peacemaking. Less successful responses thought Macmorris was a Scot and that Jamy was going to get married, a misinterpretation of: 'that sall I, marry'. It was surprising that not more was said about Fluellen, who is a more well-established character in the play.

Question 8

The majority of candidates opted for this question on *Henry V*. Better answers explored the arguably 'ruthless' moments in the play: his response to the tennis balls; the execution of the traitors; the hanging of Bardolph; the speech to the Governor of Harfleur; the abandonment of Falstaff and the killing of the French prisoners. Henry's actions were justified in terms of what a king has to do contrasting with what would be counted as ruthless in a private man or alternatively contrasted with the band of brothers he creates with his men.

In some less successful responses the term 'ruthless' was not understood or the essay was one on leadership in general rather than focussing on the question set. Some candidates did not take into account that the traitors were guilty and that treason is punishable by death even in modern times, whereas the killing of the prisoners is against the code of war. Few mentioned that at the end of the ruthless Harfleur speech to the Governor, Henry says '*show mercy to them all*'. Some thought marrying Princess Catherine was ruthless, perhaps not grasping the political realities of a peace treaty.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 9

There were some high quality responses to this question which recognised Macbeth's state of mind being reflected in his duplicitous dialogue with Banquo. Candidates understood the irony of Macbeth's exhortations for Banquo to attend the feast but knew that the audience is not yet aware of Macbeth's plan to murder him, though their possible suspicions are confirmed in Macbeth's soliloquy. Strong candidates observed his deflection of suspicion from himself to Duncan's sons. Better answers commented not only on what was revealed of his state of mind in the soliloquy but also on the powerful language Shakespeare uses to convey this. Comments on '*stick deep...fruitless...barren...unlineal...seeds*' and the repetition and exclamation demonstrated an understanding of Macbeth's reasons for fearing Banquo and the depth of this fear. Better answers also looked at his comparison between himself and Banquo and that the latter had the wisdom to act in safety, hence threatening his hold on the crown.

There were many common misconceptions. Many candidates did not realise that Macbeth is the king at this point in the play. The reference to Mark Antony and Caesar was referred to as a biblical allusion and many thought that Mark Antony has betrayed Caesar. '*Prophet-like*' was mistakenly seen as referring to Banquo rather than to the witches. Several candidates did not understand the convention of the soliloquy and thought that Macbeth was talking to the servant or that soliloquising was a sign of insanity. Similarly they misinterpreted the '*Who's there?*' at the end of the passage as paranoia, rather than him acknowledging the arrival of the assassins. Less successful answers either narrated events leading up to this passage, or went beyond it to make lengthy comment on Banquo's ghost. Some wrote well on the conversation with Banquo but ignored the soliloquy or vice-versa. In general, although most candidates understood the passage, closer attention to the language would have raised the level of most responses.

Question 10

A secure starting point in response to this question was to know who Malcolm was. A significant number of candidates confused him with Macduff or even Fleance. The next requirement was to know something of what he did in the play. Most candidates knew that he fled after his father's murder and most thought this was a sign of cowardice rather than of astute political acumen, missing the point that the dead guards appeared to be the culprits so there was no murderer to be apprehended. Some answers did not venture much beyond this and a generalised response with little reference to events in the play was a characteristic answer to this question in weaker responses.

The strongest candidates could quote Malcolm's reasons for escaping from Macbeth's castle, '*there's daggers in men's smiles*', explored his reasons for testing Macduff and the way in which he does this, commented on the alliance he had made with the English (not British) king, analysed his manipulation of Macduff to avenge his family, saw his military prowess and the fulfilment of the prophecy in making Birnam Wood move and commented on his humility, as evidenced by his thanking of the captain who saves him in the early scenes, and gracious acceptance of the throne at the end of the play. Better answers also looked at the imagery of medicine, symbolising his purgation of sick Scotland perishing under Macbeth's tyranny.

There were misconceptions in less successful answers that he was not a warrior. A few misunderstood the scene of his testing Macduff, believing that he was all the things that he later admits are lies. Stronger candidates saw this as a sign he would be a better king than his father who only ever saw the good in people.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33
Drama (Open Text) 33

Key messages

- Successful answers showed detailed knowledge of the set text by selecting the most relevant material with which to address the focus of the question.
- Convincing responses developed comments beyond narrative and explanation of surface meaning to show deeper awareness of the ideas and attitudes relevant to the question.
- The best answers analysed the ways the playwrights created dramatic effects in their writing, such as: action on stage, dialogue between characters and likely audience reaction.
- Candidates who communicated their engagement with the text through an informed personal response enlivened answers at all levels.

General comments

There were sound responses to all texts and questions this session, with candidates showing good knowledge of their set texts. Their enjoyment of the plays was often made clear in the way they engaged with the characters. For example, on *Henry V*, candidates explored Henry's softer side in his humorous attempts to woo Princess Katherine. Many candidates strongly expressed their sympathy for Catherine and her life-changing decision to forego marriage in order to 'Let Right be Done' in *The Winslow Boy*, or for Rachel in her agonising dilemma in *Inherit the Wind*, as she finds herself manipulated into testifying against her future husband. Context questions on both *A View from the Bridge* and *Macbeth* asked candidates to consider the protagonist. Stronger candidates felt confident enough to criticise Eddie for trying to break up Catherine and Rodolpho's relationship, or to criticise Macbeth for his lack of compassion to servants, soldiers and his wife, who are all suffering at his hands. Less confident candidates asserted sympathy towards these misguided characters. The best answers analysed the writing to show how authors encouraged a particular response to a character.

There were some excellent answers to both passage-based and discursive questions this session. These often began with the candidate addressing the question directly and giving three or four points which they went on to develop in answer to it. Weaker answers often avoided focusing on the question and opened with a synopsis of the whole play, a general homily on the human condition, or gave general historical or cultural information.

There were some sensitive responses to passage-based questions which developed comments beyond narrative and explanation of the surface meaning of the text to show a deeper awareness of the ideas and attitudes relevant to the question. Briefly stating the context helped to root the answer in the text. Candidates needed to select the most appropriate elements from a passage with which to answer the question asked, rather than going through the passage line by line, sometimes giving a general and irrelevant commentary. In strong answers, comments were supported by many brief quotations from the passage and candidates made clear how the text supported the points made. Most candidates could improve their answers significantly by commenting directly on how the author uses dramatic features such as the interaction between characters, action on stage, dialogue, and likely audience reaction. Dramatic entrances and exits are often worthy of comment, such as John's petulant exit at the end of the passage for **Question 5**, or the way Rachel is helped by her father to exit at the end of the passage for **Question 1**.

There were some convincing answers to discursive questions. These featured a sound overview of the play and a clearly expressed and developed argument supported by close textual reference. The best way to incorporate textual support is to quote accurately. Some candidates could respond to the question but did not know the play well enough to select supporting material, and so their answer was severely limited. Candidates needed to make clear how the textual reference supported the point being made. General

historical or cultural information merely detracted from the focus on the question. Some very weak answers were uncertain of plot details and sometimes mixed up characters.

There were very few rubric infringements.

Comments on specific questions

J Lawrence and R E Lee: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 1

Good answers stated the context, of Rachel giving evidence at Cates's trial; she is being questioned by Brady for the prosecution. Most candidates were able to point out the drama of Rachel's distress at being forced to give evidence against her will which might incriminate her future husband, using her hesitations and broken speech in support. Stronger answers analysed Brady's hectoring style of questioning, with examples from the text. Some candidates referred to Brady's deceit earlier at the banquet when he tricks Rachel into revealing incriminating details about Cates. Sensitive answers moved beyond explaining the action to explore in depth Rachel's complex emotions created by her loyalty to Bert, her reluctance to incriminate him, her own beliefs, and her fear of her father and of public exposure. Good answers also considered the impact of other characters: the scary and biased Judge, Cates's love for Rachel and desire to spare her further trauma, the contrast of Cates with her father's coldness, Drummond's jumping up and down to lodge objections, and his kindness in acceding to Cates's request not to question Rachel. Candidates who looked at staging found drama in the reactions of the people in the courthouse, in Hornbeck's 'guffaws', in Rachel's inability to speak, and in the Reverend Brown's cold actions at the end. Weaker answers tended to explain Rachel's timidity in giving evidence, without much development or support, and tended not to address the drama of the passage explicitly.

Question 2

Most candidates responded well to Hornbeck as a humorous and witty character, and were able to quote instances of his humour, such as when he sees a monkey and calls it 'Grandpa'. Better answers recognised Hornbeck's function as an observer and commentator, and gave examples of his mockery of Hillsboro, such as calling it 'The buckle on the Bible Belt.' Some sophisticated answers focused well on Hornbeck's contribution to dramatic impact, considering such aspects as his dramatic contrast both in appearance as a 'sophisticated city-dweller' to the southerners living in Hillsboro, and in his beliefs which represent the progressive evolutionist ideas held by people from the North. His mockery and harsh criticism dramatically cut through the reverence the Hillsboro people have of Brady, Rev Brown and fundamentalism. A few strong candidates successfully explored the ending, where Hornbeck's cynicism is too much for Drummond, who points out that he is there to defend freedom of thought: 'Brady had the same right as Cates: the right to be wrong!' Some weaker answers were limited by their uncertainty of which side Hornbeck was on, and therefore what he was mocking.

Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Successful answers firmly established the context – that Eddie is visiting Alfieri to seek legal means to stop Catherine's relationship with Rodolpho. These answers also showed understanding that Eddie's unacknowledged desire for Catherine is what makes him dislike Rodolpho and is inflaming Eddie's possessive feelings towards Catherine. Sensitive answers continued with a detailed analysis of how Miller conveys Eddie's desperate state of mind in his speech, and placed this in the context of Eddie's determination to convince Alfieri of Rodolpho's femininity, and thus unsuitability as a partner for Catherine. Many candidates analysed Eddie's uncomfortable body language, his rambling grievances against Rodolpho and his agitated interruptions of Alfieri, all of which convey Eddie's distress. His embarrassed attempts at 'accusing' Rodolpho amount to no more than that he has blond hair, a slight build, enjoys singing, and has dressmaking skills. Eddie's interruptions show he does not want to hear Alfieri's logical dismissals. Eddie's jealousy of Rodolpho arises because Catherine is attracted to him; Eddie is tormented by the thought of Rodolpho 'laying his hands on her'. Perceptive candidates commented on the irony of Eddie's fervent denial that he would inform on Rodolpho as an illegal immigrant, and often sympathised with the intensity of Eddie's feelings of desperation and hopelessness.

A significant number of candidates limited their answer to an analysis of Eddie's speech and movements. A few of these answers became repetitive as they worked through the passage, making the same point on Eddie's distress with different textual support. Some of these answers provided a strong answer to how Miller conveys Eddie's agitation, but to gain high marks candidates also needed to show understanding of the content and context of the passage, by considering why Eddie was there, what he was implying about Rodolpho, why he was doing this, and why he was so distressed.

The weakest answers often contained misapprehensions about Eddie's motives. Some candidates stated that Eddie just wanted a more macho partner than Rodolpho for Catherine; or that Eddie held a latent desire for Rodolpho himself; or that Eddie just wanted to maintain his own masculinity in exerting control over Catherine. These responses were unconvincing and without support from the text.

Question 4

Most answers began with details of the first impressions of each brother: Marco's maturity, strength, desire to work hard, and his responsibility for his family and for Rodolpho, in contrast to Rodolpho's youthful exuberance and desire to enjoy his new life to the full. Weaker answers limited their answers to this description of the brothers, perhaps with apt and accurate quotation in support. Stronger candidates developed their answers to consider the drama created by Eddie's response to each brother according to his sense of masculinity. Thus Eddie accepts Marco because he conforms to his idea of a 'man'; but he increasingly uses fake ammunition against Rodolpho's perceived femininity as his relationship with Catherine develops. The boxing and chair-lifting incidents were often cited; to show a full understanding of their drama, candidates needed to explore these in more detail to consider Eddie's motives for belittling Rodolpho to Catherine, and Marco's menacing warning to Eddie not to harm Rodolpho or he will have to deal with Marco too. The best answers went on to explore the dramatically different ways in which the brothers react to Eddie's treachery at the end: how Rodolpho tries to appease Eddie and avert tragedy in contrast to Marco's implacable desire for revenge.

Terence Rattigan: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Good responses stated the context of the passage: that John has pressured Catherine to agree to marry him and to drop the case. Most answers focused mainly on Catherine and her unenthusiastic response to John as she agrees to the marriage 'slowly' and 'wearily'; candidates tended to attribute this to her lack of love for John rather than her dislike of being pressured into dropping the case. After the phone call raises the possibility of continuing with the case, most candidates recognised the drama of Arthur giving Catherine the choice of what to do, because she is the one who stands to lose most, and the suspense of Catherine having to make the agonising decision. The delivery of her decision in a 'flat voice' and her refusal to look at John were often interpreted as evidence of her lack of feelings for John, rather than an indication of how hard she has found the decision to make because of her love for him. The injustice of his demands on Catherine was often not explored, nor was his petulant exit as he slams the door as he leaves. Stronger answers took an overview of the passage and also considered the power of the suspense created by the drama of the phone call on stage, by the five characters waiting while Sir Robert talks, by our only hearing one side of the conversation, and by waiting for the significance of the call to be explained.

Question 6

A strong response often began with clear points in a succinct introduction, such as that Rattigan shows how Sir Robert is an outstanding lawyer through his intelligence, his passion to let right be done and through the sacrifice he makes for the case. The candidate here was then able to explore how these features of Sir Robert played out in the drama, using close textual reference and quotation in support. Candidates needed to know the text well to select the most relevant material, such as his skilful interrogation of Ronnie, his passion shown by his physical exhaustion, and the sacrifice of refusing the honour of the position of Lord Chief Justice to continue with the case. Weaker answers tended to assert Sir Robert was an outstanding lawyer because he was good at his job and won cases, and was well-dressed, without using relevant details from the text in support.

William Shakespeare: *Henry V*

Question 7

Most answers recognised the entertainment value of the empty and exaggerated bragging of the French lords about their horses, and many grasped some of the sexual banter too. Better answers commented on how the lords' sarcastic remarks directed at the Dauphin revealed their true attitude towards him and undermined his arrogant boastfulness. Some strong answers contrasted the bombast of the French lords with Henry's honest admission of his army's frailty in the previous scene. Weaker answers tended to show an overview without exploring the writing in detail.

Question 8

Most answers recognised the differences in the hesitant and kindly Henry portrayed in the courtship scene, compared with the steely warrior elsewhere. Better answers were able to use detailed supporting text in support; weaker answers remained general and assertive. Stronger answers commented on the fact that Henry requests Katherine's love, suggesting she share a partnership with him, rather than him demanding her hand in marriage as a victorious and powerful king. Indeed, some candidates pointed out Henry's self-deprecation in his depiction of his soldier's inadequacy as a poet, dancer and suitor. His affectionate humour and the romance of the kiss and the tender '*Kate*' were also selected for comment. Perhaps the more cynical candidates pointed out that in reality Katherine has little choice, since the political realities of a peace treaty demanded that she marry Henry; but her lack of choice does not detract from his gentle attempts to woo her consent.

William Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

Question 9

There were some perceptive answers which went beyond a surface reading to show understanding of the deeper implications of Macbeth's thoughts and feelings. Thus, most candidates commented on Macbeth's arrogant fearlessness, using the prophecies to support the idea of his invincibility, while others considered this to be bravado which covered up doubt and fear, and which necessitated frequent repeating of the terms of the prophecies by way of reassurance. Some candidates saw his insulting the servant as evidence of his tyrannical rule, where he mocks those weaker than himself for showing fear and orders that those who talk of fear are killed; perceptive candidates thought this extreme aggression also masked his own underlying fear. These also commented on Macbeth's feelings of loss and that he has '*liv'd long enough*'; they analysed the use of autumnal imagery and his regrets that he cannot experience a homely old age with friends, since he has sacrificed '*honour, love and obedience*'. Most answers recognised that, with the entrance of Seyton, Macbeth's mindset returns to that of an aggressive warrior as he professes he will fight to the death with the suitably gory imagery of '*from my bones my flesh be hack'd*', and with his declaration of bravery (or bravado) to end the passage. Some candidates thought Macbeth simply showed his love for his wife by ordering the doctor to cure her; a more subtle reading explored how Macbeth may also be thinking of himself when he asks the doctor whether he can '*minister to a mind diseas'd*'. A few candidates also explored Macbeth's desperation or perhaps longing in his request of the doctor to cleanse his land of her disease too.

More basic answers commented simply on Macbeth's misplaced confidence in the prophecies, his desire to fight until the death, and his wish for his wife to be cured. Some very weak answers tended to explain the prophecies, both how they arose and how they are fulfilled. Some spent time equating Seyton with Satan, but there is nothing in the text to support this reading.

Question 10

The strongest answers knew the text well and were able to argue a convincing case for Banquo's admirable qualities, sometimes with the exception that he could have acted in some way on his suspicions of Macbeth's foul play. These sound answers were able to draw on the text to show that Banquo fought valiantly as a warrior for Duncan; that despite being favoured with a prophecy of his own, he remains loyal to the king and does nothing to promote his own interests; that he is a close friend of Macbeth and warns him to be cautious of the witches, seeing them as '*instruments of darkness*'; and finally that he has a close and protective relationship with his son, Fleance and tries to ensure his son's survival when he himself is attacked and murdered by Macbeth's henchmen. Some perceptive answers made the point that the initial similarities between Banquo and Macbeth serve to emphasise the differences, so that Banquo's admirable qualities emphasise Macbeth's wickedness.

Weaker answers often suggested unconvincingly that Banquo was admirable because he had been unfairly murdered by Macbeth, or that he was admirable because his ghost showed that Macbeth was guilty. While most candidates knew who Banquo was, that he had his own prophecy from the witches, and that Macbeth ordered him to be murdered, there were some who did not know the play well enough to develop these points, or to support them with detailed reference to the text. These answers sometimes focused more on Macbeth's guilt rather than Banquo's admirable qualities. A few candidates spent a long part of their answer giving details of how the real Banquo was related to James I and how Shakespeare was compelled to present him in a good light to appease the monarch; such material was difficult to credit in a literary response.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41
Unseen 41

Key messages

- All the Assessment Objectives have the same importance in this paper
- Qualities of argument and synthesis would be improved with more practice in planning
- Introductions are more successful when they give an overview of the whole text
- Development of individual points and overall arguments should drive interpretation
- A succinct conclusion should give a concise response to the stem question.

General comments

This is an optional paper and centres and candidates that choose it will prepare for it, ideally by making good use of past papers and past Principal Examiners' reports. Centres with a tradition of entering candidates for this paper are clearly preparing them well, and the standard continues to rise. There was very little very weak work, and many excellent, individual and cogently argued responses in this November session. It was also pleasing to see strong work from some new centres. Many happily realise that this paper is the ultimate test of personal response and interpretation of literary texts at this level, as candidates must think for themselves and draw on all the skills they have acquired during their IGCSE Literature studies.

It is important to emphasise that this paper tests all the Assessment Objectives for Literature in equal measure. It is not simply a test of comprehension: paraphrase with overlong and excessive quotation will not provide analysis of the writer's purpose and methods. Nor is it a test of AO3 alone: some candidates still believe that the mere identification of literary devices will itself attract reward. In fact, even the weakest scripts show identification of metaphors, similes, personification and alliteration. It is the quality of comment on the effect of literary devices which attracts the mark awarded.

Personal response at this level means an attempt to interpret the text in a way which goes beyond the literal, but which is grounded in close observation of the language, meaning and effect of the writing. Meaning is made through the details of the text, which need careful analysis and thoughtful synthesis before coming to conclusions about a figurative interpretation. Nevertheless, texts are chosen for this exam because their meaning goes beyond surface narrative and descriptive detail, so candidates should be looking for the figurative meaning or overall effect of the writing.

Examiners commented on how rarely they saw evidence of planning. Of course, candidates can (and should) annotate the question paper and text extensively before writing, but they would benefit from careful planning. AO1 requires the kind of knowledge of surface detail which requires a careful progress through the text, noting and briefly quoting significant details. AO2, however, expects a deeper understanding of implied meaning and of how parts of the text apply to the whole, so candidates need an overall understanding of the whole text and its range of possible meanings. AO3 expects some appreciation of the text's form and structure as well as commentary on the writer's choice of language and imagery. AO4 requires an overall interpretation, consistently argued, relevant and developed through a planned response.

Another way to demonstrate effective planning is through a focused introduction, which does not merely repeat or paraphrase the words of the question (and the bullet points which given to help candidates plan their answers) but sees how they apply to the meaning of the text and its effect on the reader. Good introductions are concise, relevant and individual, and set up the skills of analysis and evaluation which this paper is aimed to test. They will give an overview, showing overall knowledge and understanding of the text, its writer's purpose and its intended effect on the reader. This will be based on some appreciation of genre and style. The rubric before the stem question gives candidates any information they need to assist with this. The stem question, in bold, should be directly addressed in the introduction and conclusion of the response, as it is designed to test personal response to the subject, style and purpose of the writing.

Examiners sometimes comment that answers could be better developed. This would also be assisted by planning: candidates need to leave enough time for later parts of the text, and need to think about how different parts of the text are sequenced and related to each other. They would then find it easier to write arguments of their own which are consistent, cohesive and convincing.

Conclusions also need some thought, as they are the last impression the candidate makes on the examiner. At this point candidates should look back at the original question and at how they have answered it, and come to a decision about what they have proved through writing their answers. Many strong answers make a good impression at this point by having something original to say, and personal response (AO4) should be the focus of the conclusion.

The quality of Reading in response to these demanding texts continues to impress examiners. More planning and preparation will also help to improve qualities of Writing, which, although not directly assessed, is the means for candidates to express personal response, interpretation and deeper understanding.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

A range of achievement was seen in response to this poem, 'Nocturne' by the poet Eavan Boland, which many candidates found accessible. Many candidates made purposeful use of the bullet points to help them to structure their answers and there were many who picked up on the musical allusion in the title 'Nocturne' (also included in the 'information' for candidates). These candidates often recognised some features of song/music in the poet's choice of poetic structure and in the internal rhythms of the poem.

Some candidates expressed surprise at the persona's enjoyment of the solitude and darkness of the night, where time appeared almost suspended. This did not prevent many candidates from writing successfully about the persona's apparent pleasure in her nightly routine, as she prepared for bed. Good candidates noted the 'domestic' setting and the accretion of references to 'domestic' objects: the teapot, the tray, the clock, the button-backed chair. Some went so far as to note that poetry frequently has 'loftier' contents and concerns and yet defended the validity of a poem that both celebrates the night and luxuriates in the contentment of the persona in her 'house at night'.

Some candidates did not mention any of the inanimate 'companions' that the poet appears to appreciate; instead they focused on the creatures: the cat and the spider. More than a few associated these creatures with witches' 'familiars' which led them on a strange trajectory in which the persona became a witch about to embark on a night of spell-casting. For others, the cat was a symbol of bad luck and the spider was seen as potentially poisonous and life-threatening. These candidates introduced a touch of 'horror' into their reading of the poem which seemed absent to the majority of readers. There was also sometimes a touch of 'Disney' about candidates' interpretations where first the tray and then the chair were 'animated' into cartoon-like characters because of the tray's capacity to 'wait' and the chair's legs which began to engage in a dance of some sort with the 'black ambivalence' that was the cat.

Candidates who had read the poem with appropriate care offered less fantastical suggestions and seemed to appreciate the sinuousness of the cat, at night, and understood the persona's comparison of the spider's web to complexities that could either aid or hinder sleep. These candidates recognised both creatures as being 'part and parcel' of the persona's household, both equally welcome and, more importantly, entitled to be where they are, as the persona traverses her home via a habitual route. Some candidates were unable to follow this journey through the house as they were a little perplexed by the reference to the 'landing light' and for some, this introduction of what they took to be lights on an airport run-way, became a distraction.

Most candidates noted the form of the poem, divided into seven stanzas, but relatively few looked more closely at the way the poem evolves. Some candidates noted the use of medial pauses and end-stopped lines in the first few stanzas and they noted the way in which the poet all but abandoned punctuation, after the run-on line between stanzas four and five. Of these, only better answers contained an attempt to explain what effect the verse form had in helping a reader interpret the text.

The title of the poem was frequently ignored, despite being explained for the candidates' benefit. When candidates did reflect upon the significance of the title, they often made useful suggestions about the poet's ability to listen to the music of the night. Most candidates responded to the prompt in the bullet points to consider the senses and they frequently made much of the sounds. All good answers referred to the sounds made by 'a tick, a purr, a drop'.

Good answers also explored the poet's use of time in the poem, the general reference to night-time, 'night' and 'evening' and the specific striking of 'one-o'clock'. They considered the time implication in the tray's 'waiting', the present tense of 'The clock strikes', the future, anticipated in the persona's expectation of sleep, 'once the doors are bolted', the instantaneousness of 'architecture' comprised of light.

Recognition of the tone of the poem - and its subtle shifts - often differentiated between candidates. Those who thought the poet was scared of intruders, scared of the spider and fearful of the black cat, were unable to appreciate the persona's pleasure in her nightly routine. Despite 'I like the feel of it' at the beginning of the poem, many candidates asserted that the persona was lonely or jittery, as she tests the keys and puts on the kitchen light to check if there is anyone lurking in the garden besides the closed daisies.

Good candidates were sensitive to the poet's exploitation of contrasts: darkness and light, silence and sound, movement and stillness. Some wrote about the sense of the geography of the house that was created in the poem with references to the landing, the dining room, the kitchen and the garden. Good candidates also noticed that the poet was experiencing a state of acute attentiveness with references to both sights and sounds and also to the way in which the night and darkness play tricks on the persona's perceptions. These candidates were likely to comment also on the very short final line of the poem; the abrupt ending and the word 'improbable'; almost insisting, as one candidate wrote, that we read the poem again, and at once, to see how we got to this 'improbable' state.

Some candidates seemed unprepared for the challenges of an unseen poem and they were unable to do more than write in very general terms about a woman who liked pottering about her house at night. Well-prepared candidates knew that they should be alert to certain features of poetry: to rhyme, rhythm, personification, sibilance, assonance, alliteration. Only the better of these candidates were able to explain the effects created by the use of these devices.

Many candidates worked their way through the poem in a methodical, slightly mechanical way, but better candidates did not start to write before they had worked out at least something of the purpose and tone of the poem, and an awareness of the poet's appreciation of the transformative powers of night-time and darkness.

Question 2

This passage from *Mr Pip* by Lloyd Jones was a popular choice of question. Good candidates managed to deal with each of the areas included in the bullet points and gave roughly equal attention to each one. In weaker answers, many of which were very brief, candidates omitted references to the narrator, or to the narrator's mother, to the rambos, and, in some extreme instances, to Mr Watts himself.

This was a relatively short extract which consisted entirely of narrative. Weaker responses focused solely on the narrative, with almost no intervention whatsoever as commentator. Sometimes, candidates offered a paraphrased version of the passage; others simply used the writer's own words linked together with fairly flimsy 'bridging material'; sometimes, candidates incorporated lines of text as citations, but only after having already echoed the words, as in: 'Mr Watts' story was so interesting even the trees listened "even the trees listened"'.

In weaker answers, candidates tended to use the bullet points in a mechanical fashion, and while the majority of candidates discussed the presence of the rambos, a considerable number of candidates failed to identify the material that refers to the 'magic' of the storytelling.

The basic 'story' of the passage, which was focused on the enthralling nature of Mr Watts' story-telling, was relatively straightforward; describing as it did, a nightly routine in which the villagers assembled to listen to Mr Watts as his story-telling techniques captivated young and old. Where candidates merely replicated aspects of the passage, they were unable to access the higher bands. Only those candidates who approached the extract as a literary construct, and one that invited some deconstruction, were able to do so.

Good answers appreciated the context of Mr Watts' nightly 'performance'. The physical setting of the nightly entertainment is located in a village, situated in a 'distant' war zone, where a 'foreign' invasion is being resisted. It is presented as a place where children are exploited and forced to become mercenaries/warriors, to protect the local inhabitants by repelling the invaders. Good answers showed that it is presented as a place where, despite its 'idyllic' island setting and star-lit skies, normal life is difficult, and not only for the rambos. The passage describes an island village location where there was once a mission and a meeting house, where villagers assembled for prayer under the guidance of a pastor, but is now under military threat.

Stronger responses commented on the way the writer handles time and creates a sense of the past and the present. They noted the makeshift nature of the assembly, where once there had been a roof 'to sit under'. They noted the past lives of the rambos, so recently in the classroom, but now setting traps and bearing weapons; having spent 'three years' in the jungle. Stronger answers noted that once Mr Watts had had a living wife, Grace, but that now she is dead. They noticed that the story-telling was a nightly event and how this in itself marked the passage of time as the rambos were drawn in to become the audience over three successive nights.

Stronger responses also commented on the narrative voice, a figure from the 'present' looking back at her past life and using the past tense through the first five paragraphs, before surprising the reader with a 'contemporary' thought about the rambos: 'Nowadays I've come to think of them as no more than children in torn clothes bearing weapons from another war'. These candidates paid careful attention to the tone of the narrator; to the use of short sentences that help to draw the reader/listener in to the tale, just as Mr Watts has spoken with care, 'not to leave anyone behind'. They included references to the narrator's attitude towards her self-important mother, to the almost mesmerising power of Mr Watts as he closes his eyes, trance-like, as he reaches 'for faraway words'. They noticed the reverence with which the narrator presents Mr Watts, a man able to silence nature with his story-telling as well as to inspire a level of respect normally reserved for priests or other intermediaries with God. Some drew comparisons between the power wielded by the rambos, armed with weapons and with the ability 'to ask questions', and that of Mr Watts, armed only with a compelling voice and a fund of stories from 'the white world'.

Treatment of the 'magic' of Mr Watts' storytelling was variable. Where most picked up the two key words of 'trick' and 'disappear', in the final sentence, better answers traced the magic of the story-telling back to the very beginning of the passage. They commented on the hint of Mr Watts' magical powers in the opening paragraph where the villagers appeared to be almost compelled to attend the nightly sessions. They considered Mr Watts sinking 'into himself', quelling the disturbance of 'the creatures' and 'the trees', enthralling the rambos and seducing them with his skills, acting almost like a magnet to the children, of whom the narrator is one, as they 'wriggled to get closer'. These answers concluded with the disappearance of Mr Watts as the culmination of his magical skill of story-telling traced from the first line to the last.

Some candidates adopted an approach that they may have felt comfortable with, but which was rarely effective. This is the approach of looking for literary devices to comment upon in the (often misguided) belief that these will unlock the meaning of the writing, without having to do any further work. For example, many candidates seized upon the simile of the 'shy fish' in the opening paragraph but did not unravel the meaning that compares the 'shy fish' to the stars, rather than to the villagers. Others referred to the personification of the 'listening' trees, without commenting on what it contributed to the impression of Mr Watts' power as a story-teller. Other candidates wrote enthusiastically about 'powerful imagery' without citing any examples at all or without explaining the source of the power when they did identify an example.

More highly rewarded responses focused on the thrust of the question, 'How does the writing convey the listeners' interest in Mr Watts' story-telling?' and illustrated their answers with a focus on the narrative methods, as indicated above and, where 'literary features' were identified as part of the investigation of method, they were always explored in terms of their contribution to meaning and to the overall impact of the writing.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42
Unseen 42

Key messages

- All the Assessment Objectives have the same importance in this paper
- Qualities of argument and synthesis would be improved with more practice in planning
- Introductions are more successful when they give an overview of the whole text
- Development of individual points and overall arguments should drive interpretation
- A succinct conclusion should give a concise response to the stem question.

General Comments

This is an optional paper and centres and candidates that choose it will prepare for it, ideally by making good use of past papers and past Principal Examiners' reports. Centres with a tradition of entering candidates for this paper are clearly preparing them well, and the standard continues to rise. There was very little very weak work, and many excellent, individual and cogently argued responses in this November session. It was also pleasing to see strong work from some new centres. Many happily realise that this paper is the ultimate test of personal response and interpretation of literary texts at this level, as candidates must think for themselves and draw on all the skills they have acquired during their IGCSE Literature studies.

It is important to emphasise that this paper tests all the Assessment Objectives for Literature in equal measure. It is not simply a test of comprehension: paraphrase with overlong and excessive quotation will not provide analysis of the writer's purpose and methods. Nor is it a test of AO3 alone: some candidates still believe that the mere identification of literary devices will itself attract reward. In fact, even the weakest scripts show identification of metaphors, similes, personification and alliteration. It is the quality of comment on the effect of literary devices which attracts the mark awarded.

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Examiners commented on how rarely they saw evidence of planning. Of course, candidates can (and should) annotate the question paper and text extensively before writing, but they would benefit from careful planning. AO1 requires the kind of knowledge of surface detail which requires a careful progress through the text, noting and briefly quoting significant details. AO2, however, expects a deeper understanding of implied meaning and of how parts of the text apply to the whole, so candidates need an overall understanding of the whole text and its range of possible meanings. AO3 expects some appreciation of the text's form and structure as well as commentary on the writer's choice of language and imagery. AO4 requires an overall interpretation, consistently argued, relevant and developed through a planned response.

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Examiners sometimes comment that answers could be better developed. This would also be assisted by planning: candidates need to leave enough time for later parts of the text, and need to think about how different parts of the text are sequenced and related to each other. They would then find it easier to write arguments of their own which are consistent, cohesive and convincing.

Conclusions also need some thought, as they are the last impression the candidate makes on the examiner. At this point candidates should look back at the original question and at how they have answered it, and come to a decision about what they have proved through writing their answers. Many strong answers make a good impression at this point by having something original to say, and personal response (AO4) should be the focus of the conclusion.

The quality of Reading in response to these demanding texts continues to impress examiners. More planning and preparation will also help to improve qualities of Writing, which, although not directly assessed, is the means for candidates to express personal response, interpretation and deeper understanding.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates who chose to write in response to Christina Rossetti's 'The Queen of Hearts' had little difficulty in identifying the dynamics of the card game and exploring the surface narrative of this poem, despite its nineteenth-century diction. Many were also able to identify feelings of envy, jealousy or frustration with a friend's luck, with some drawing on personal experience. Answers which looked in more depth at the subtext of charisma and rivalry were rarer and fewer still made the identification of the possession of the Queen of Hearts with luck in love, as well as cards. Some achieved this by exploring what the 'natural affinity' between Flora's character and that of the card might be. Candidates missed opportunities by not being alert to allegory, and to readings which open out the several layers of meaning behind an apparently straightforward surface drama.

Stronger responses were sensitive to tone and poetic voice. They noticed the colloquial nature of the opening question in which the speaker (or 'poet') appears to address and challenge Flora directly with the question 'How comes it?' Those sensitive to the plosive sounds of 'play', 'pack' and 'parts' were also able to pick up the sense of frustration or irritation at the friend's invariable luck. Others also noticed the regular rhythms, rhymes and stanza form and were able to comment critically on how this represented the unchanging pattern of fate which determined Flora's good luck – and the poet's failures. Concluding couplets seem to frustrate each of her attempts to change her destiny. The feminine nature of the rivalry might have received more attention, especially if candidates had asked themselves why the 'Queen' is the card both wishes to possess. Some linked the dominance over hearts to popularity, which certainly chimed with young candidates' own rivalries and concerns, and a few were explicit in linking hearts to love and romance.

Those answers with a stronger emphasis on underlying emotions of rivalry and frustration picked up the hissing sibilance in the second stanza and possibly spiteful alliteration of 'scanned you with a scrutinizing gaze' and 'secret ways' which the speaker 'sifts' but which remain 'secret still'. Most made much of the repetitive cutting and shuffling of the pack as a signal of growing irritation and desperation, while the repeated 'vain' was often seen as a comment on the speaker's fruitless endeavours to change her luck. As one candidate wrote: 'the repetition becomes unbearably significant and symbolises Flora's triumphs'.

Some commented on the personification of 'that Queen still falls to you' seeing this as an early example of how the card is dramatized and given a personality, or a metaphor for victory in battle, or in love. Certainly those who saw the card game as proxy warfare, or the poet's attempts to emulate her friend's winning ways, showed skill in bringing the poem to life. Most commented on the way both this card and the others in the pack, not least the Queen of Clubs, are treated as if they are people, and active participants in the game. Some realised this is a game of fate, as well as luck or skill, while most were alert to the accusatory tone of the speaker and her conviction that her friend is probably cheating. There was plenty of understanding that Flora herself speaks at this point, and shows her confidence and the 'instinct' which binds her to the Queen of Hearts with what the poet eventually concludes is 'natural affinity'.

Most candidates were able to address the poet's own feelings and how they emerge through her actions and her tone, as the stem question required. There were plenty of developed responses to the first two bullet points, asking for a detailed and supported interpretation of each stage of the drama, as the poet tries to catch her friend out, and characterises the cards almost as if they are cartoon characters. In the fifth and

sixth stanzas they seem to be active players in the game, deceiving the speaker when she tries to cheat, or attempts to mark the cards by making a 'private notch' in the Queen's back. They seem to get their revenge by allowing her to confuse her notch with the 'imitative dint' on the Queen of Clubs. Only a few candidates commented on the implicit savagery of the poet's 'lynx-eyed' watch, but the implications of her disastrous attempt to change her fate, and nature, by resorting to deception were often fully understood. Candidates realised that the 'ruin' of the poet is her utter defeat in this game of cards, and the failure of her attempt to cheat fate.

Some commented on the irony of the poet, so upset by Flora's apparent cheating earlier in the poem, being now reduced to cheating herself. Others, perhaps rightly, felt that the Queen of Clubs had its own affinity to the speaker, and was a card of ill omen, or a comment on the clumsiness of her attempts to thwart the inevitable workings of fate. These kinds of allegorical reading were rarer, but they showed a genuine attempt to get to grips with the deeper implication of the text alluded to in the third bullet point.

Those alert to shifts of tone in the poem realised that the penultimate stanza shows the poet's lowest moment of defeat: she has been 'misled' not just by Flora's luck and the cards themselves, but also by her own mistaken attempt to cheat. The final stanza has a tone of resignation or acceptance: the poet is still puzzled and baffled, while the polysyndetic list 'skill, or craft, or luck' might suggest continuing exasperation, but in recognising 'natural affinity', she is also acknowledging the innate qualities of her friend. The short final line suggests there is no more to say, than to acknowledge what cannot be cheated or finessed, but seems a law of nature that likenesses attract.

The strongest responses were those that considered the poet's purpose in writing the poem, and were sensitive to its dramatic twists and turns, its humour and its ultimate acceptance of the ineluctable nature of fate. There is a rueful acceptance that you cannot change your nature, and that some are more able to win hearts than others. Very few commented on the title of the poem, or wrote that it applies as much to Flora herself as the card which the poet chases in vain.

Question 2

It was very pleasing to see many more answers to the prose task in this session. Indeed, slightly more than half chose to write about this extract from Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*. Candidates clearly enjoyed the disturbing seediness of the characterisation of the corrupt lawyer, Mr Prewitt, and the provocative amorality of the Boy, and were usually quick to see and condemn Prewitt's willingness to 'manage' anything the Boy wanted, given enough time and money. Several expressed deep sympathy for the absent 'girl' and horror at the deceptive nature of the arranged marriage. Most were able to see how the reader's responses are determined by the unpleasantness of the descriptive language in the first part of the passage, and the implications which lie behind the rather stilted dialogue between the two characters in the second half. Surprisingly, most candidates were more comfortable with the dramatic element of the dialogue, and teachers preparing candidates for prose passages might encourage them to look at how much details of description determine the reader's response to a passage, and show the writer's manipulation of atmosphere and characterisation.

Strong candidates engaged with the narrative viewpoint at the start of this passage. Do we see Mr Prewitt as the Boy sees him? Or are we buttonholed by an omniscient narrator who tells us 'You were certain of that at the first sight of him'? Either reading is valid as an approach to this extract. Some thought that 'Mr Prewitt knew' was an acknowledgement by the Boy that he could not hide his guilt and past 'misdemeanours' from the lawyer. Others read it as an ironic commentary on the apparent omniscience of this venal solicitor who chooses to turn a blind eye to what he knows as long as he is paid enough.

Weaker responses thought Mr Prewitt was unpleasant simply because he was old, or a lawyer. Good responses were alert to the relationship between his appearance and the later revelation of his corruptibility. These answers showed detailed awareness of the mismatch between his polished shoes, 'hollow joviality' and new striped trousers, and his yellow, deep-lined face and 'tartar-coated teeth'. More observant candidates focused on 'innumerable rebukes from the bench' and realised that Mr Prewitt's victories in court were more damaging than defeats because they were in pursuit of bad causes. Good answers attempted to explain his 'dockside manner' and rightly linked this to fake sympathy, and dishonest 'breeziness'. There were detailed comments on the simile comparing his sympathy to 'an auction ticket from an ancient flint instrument' although very few picked up the hints that his emotions are for hire, or how hard he is beneath that surface joviality. Many more were alert to description of him as 'tough as leather' beneath a thin veneer of charm or paternalism. Like leather, he is battered but impermeable. One candidate noted that he has 'no personality other than his profession.' Appearance is certainly deceptive in this case.

Good candidates saw a link between ‘stranger to no wangle...’ and the deception which the Boy wants Mr Prewitt’s help for. As explained in the rubric, the marriage is not a ‘real marriage’ but a deception to prevent the gullible girl from taking the witness stand. Most candidates were alert to the conversational gambits and power play between the two men, some noticing that Mr Prewitt speaks ‘as if he were calling a hand in cards’. Many were intrigued by the way the older man defers to the Boy, and quickly realised that this is a lawyer responding to a client with money, however ill-gotten. Some also realised that the Boy might be dangerous. Most noted his clipped and authoritative way of speaking, and the evasive nature of Mr Prewitt’s replies (‘I’m not suggesting it, mind you’). There was good understanding of why he does not want to compromise himself too directly. Some wondered how an under-age boy could have gained such power and rightly saw this as a ‘disturbing’ element in the dialogue, noting how he does not get off his bed to talk to the lawyer. Others commented on how this is an odd time and place for this legal consultation to be happening.

Many candidates enjoyed the verbal sparring between the two characters, noticing the boy’s urgency and the lawyer’s initial reluctance. Most noticed that Mr Prewitt changes his tune at the repeated mention of ‘I’ll pay’ while keen to exert a fatherly authority over the Boy. Some noticed how he enumerates ‘other difficulties’ in order to increase his price. Several expressed surprise at the irony of the Boy’s objections to a fake marriage in church when he appears to have no guilt about murder or fraud. These noticed the sarcasm of Mr Prewitt’s response: ‘your religious feelings do you credit’. Some felt there was genuinely something poignant about the Boy’s isolation, but many saw through the manipulation of his situation by Mr Prewitt in the interests of a hasty wedding. A few noticed his shifty manner as his eyes move ‘from bedball to bedball’. Most realised that his assurance that ‘anything can be managed’ would come at both a financial and moral cost, and saw the irony in his ‘fatherly’ smile.

Many candidates showed their own engagement with the characterisation and the general air of seediness and corruption, often in shocked tones. Some were horrified that a representative of the law could behave in such a way. Most appreciated the dark humour of the narrative and the details of the description, and enjoyed the way in which the true evil of the situation emerges from beneath the surface politeness. Most were aware of the moral as well as financial implications of corruption, despite the writer’s own apparent abstention from any intrusive judgement. Sensitive readings noted the corruption of things that should be pure, such as marriage and the youth of the characters, one or two noticing that the girl is herself only sixteen and the Boy not much older.

Candidates are now much more confident in tackling prose passages, aware that the introductory rubric sets the scene and that the bullet points guide them to aspects of language and towards an evaluation of the overall effect of the writing. Plenty of answers showed engagement and moments of insight into the effect of details on the reader’s response.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43
Unseen 43

Key messages

- All the Assessment Objectives have the same importance in this paper
- Qualities of argument and synthesis would be improved with more practice in planning
- Introductions are more successful when they give an overview of the whole text
- Development of individual points and overall arguments should drive interpretation
- A succinct conclusion should give a concise response to the stem question.

General comments

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Examiners commented on how rarely they saw evidence of planning. Of course, candidates can (and should) annotate the question paper and text extensively before writing, but they would benefit from careful planning. AO1 requires the kind of knowledge of surface detail which requires a careful progress through the text, noting and briefly quoting significant details. AO2, however, expects a deeper understanding of implied meaning and of how parts of the text apply to the whole, so candidates need an overall understanding of the whole text and its range of possible meanings. AO3 expects some appreciation of the text's form and structure as well as commentary on the writer's choice of language and imagery. AO4 requires an overall interpretation, consistently argued, relevant and developed through a planned response.

Another way to demonstrate effective planning is through a focused introduction, which does not merely repeat or paraphrase the words of the question (and the bullet points which given to help candidates plan their answers) but sees how they apply to the meaning of the text and its effect on the reader. Good introductions are concise, relevant and individual, and set up the skills of analysis and evaluation which this paper is aimed to test. They will give an overview, showing overall knowledge and understanding of the text, its writer's purpose and its intended effect on the reader. This will be based on some appreciation of genre and style. The rubric before the stem question gives candidates any information they need to assist with this. The stem question, in bold, should be directly addressed in the introduction and conclusion of the response, as it is designed to test personal response to the subject, style and purpose of the writing.

Examiners sometimes comment that answers could be better developed. This would also be assisted by planning: candidates need to leave enough time for later parts of the text, and need to think about how different parts of the text are sequenced and related to each other. They would then find it easier to write arguments of their own which are consistent, cohesive and convincing.

Conclusions also need some thought, as they are the last impression the candidate makes on the examiner. At this point candidates should look back at the original question and at how they have answered it, and come to a decision about what they have proved through writing their answers. Many strong answers make a good impression at this point by having something original to say, and personal response (AO4) should be the focus of the conclusion.

The quality of Reading in response to these demanding texts continues to impress examiners. More planning and preparation will also help to improve qualities of Writing, which, although not directly assessed, is the means for candidates to express personal response, interpretation and deeper understanding.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem, 'Household Gods' by Anne Stevenson, was published in 1985 but proved to interest twenty-first century candidates in its deeper allegorical significance, many seeing it as opposing contemporary concerns about the pervasiveness and addictiveness of social media (the 'screen') with the more real presence of nature and the domestication of elemental forces represented by the fire.

Some very able candidates were perhaps too keen to read the poem figuratively and placed too much emphasis on the final three lines, choosing to focus on theological or eschatological theories about the place of God in the modern world rather than writing directly about the surfaces of the text. It is important to recognise that a poem can allude to all kinds of deeper values while nevertheless at the same time be describing two household objects, as described in the rubric, a fire (in a grate) and a television set. Examiners are happy to reward any interpretation which is grounded in the reading of details in the text, but candidates should not completely abandon the obvious reading. Some candidates were perhaps confused by the domestic and controlled nature of the fire here, or the idea that fires might be found in heaven as much as in hell. In the fourth stanza, the poet may well be simply describing holding hands up to a fire for warmth, rather than an act of prayer or surrender, while the reference to the behaviour of domestic pets in the sixth stanza can be interpreted relatively literally too. Some read the second bullet point as an invitation to consider the poem as an allegory of different types of relationship, with God, with nature or with each other, rather than to explore how the speaker and the pets relate to the presence of the fire or the screen in a room.

Nevertheless it was exciting to read such adventurous and individual answers, and examiners appreciated the freshness of each response to the poem, often finding that the quality of commentary on the final three lines helped to distinguish between the large number of strong answers focused on the continuing juxtaposition of fire and screen. The strongest candidates commented on the structure of the poem as well as its language, some detecting the poet's own bias in putting the fire first, and most alert to the continuing contrast between the kindly and discreet qualities of the fire with the brash and even aggressive authority of 'the man' in the screen. The heavy end stopping contributes to the poem's tone of authority, while anaphora and verbal patterns emphasise the repetitive and binary structure of the text.

Many candidates contrasted the natural behaviour of the controlled and contained fire, its elemental power harnessed for domesticity, with the artificial speed and volatility of the 'particles' of light and sound which make up the images on the screen. The fire exerts a natural attraction 'like a magnet' while the pull of the screen is more sinister as it 'intercepts your escape', denying you an alternative viewpoint. Candidates who focused on particular sensory effects, with successive appeals to sound, touch, movement and sight in each pair of contrasting descriptions were especially successful at identifying significant details and differences in the earlier stanzas.

Most then moved on to look at the difference between worshipping the warmth of the fire and being presided over by the 'lash' of the screaming screen, intruding on domestic peace and disturbing the dog. Many wrote effectively about the fire as an almost ideal friend or listener, patient and prepared to wait for 'your thoughts' with nothing to tell you, but giving you a chance to articulate your own needs. The screen was seen as informative but impersonal. Some noticed the element of compulsion in 'the screen has to tell you everything

except what you are' and compared this with the intrusiveness of rolling news or the notifications on social media. A few commented on how the media constructs a fake identity based on 'the premises of illusion' whereas the warmth of the fire is real, tangible and passed on to your hands which also become fires.

Candidates keen to read the poem allegorically paid especial attention to the final three lines, in which the fire and the screen become instruments of heaven and hell, and some were eager to extend this contrast of good and evil to the entire poem, arguing that the poet sees the television or media as the work of the devil, and the fire as a metaphor for God or for the natural world. Some were familiar with the idea of a heavenly refining fire, while others found an allusion to the cremation of the body and the release of the spirit 'into freedom'. Many explored the connection between the fire of freedom in the penultimate stanza with the restrictions and constraints imposed by the illusions transmitted by the 'square screen'. The choice of the verb 'consumed' intrigued a few candidates, who contrasted this heavenly consumption with the exhortations of a materialistic consumer society. Many found the idea of a repeated tape of your own 'dead' life an interesting metaphor for the tortures of hell, some comparing this to the horrors of a digital footprint which cannot be erased, as a permanent record of the faults and mistakes of your life. Others commented that such a life would be 'dead' even before reaching the afterlife, as it had never involved escaping the imprisonment of the media.

Some candidates commented on the isolation of the final line, one or two suggesting it was a sinister suggestion of the screen's ultimate triumph. Many were engaged by the idea that everything you have done will be watched, and a number commented on the impact of the double negative, although fewer also noticed the unusual word order of 'nothing you have done will be not watched' to add emphasis to the poet's final admonition.

Question 2

Most candidates were struck by the apparent acceptance of young Hurtle Duffield of his adoption, and all understood that the passage was set in the past, at a time of huge social divisions, and that being taken up by the Courtneys would be an enormous opportunity for the bright and attractive boy. The passage is set at the turn of the twentieth century, and the extract is from Patrick White's novel *The Vivisector*, published in 1970. While the rubric was especially helpful in pointing out just how poor and desperate the Duffield family is, stronger candidates also noted that Hurtle is the narrator here, and the interest of the narrative comes from the indirect way in which his own thoughts and feelings are communicated to us through what he sees, hears and remembers. We are told that Hurtle is 'some sort of genius' so he has an acute eye for detail, but much more limited capacity for imaginative empathy. Many commented on the detachment with which he treats his own family and situation: 'well he would swallow down what he had heard'.

Candidates proved better at appreciating the ambiguities of attitude by both Hurtle and his mother once they moved on to the third bullet point, and looked in detail at how her body language reveals that she is far less comfortable with the idea of giving him away than her language suggests on the surface. Many noticed the hesitation and repetition when she talks to her husband about giving Hurtle up. Closer attention in response to the first two bullet points would have brought out greater complexity in Hurtle's own reaction (is his heart 'bumping' in excitement or anxiety?), which is contradictory, and brought out more profound differences in education and opportunities, as well as wealth, between the two families. Some contrasted the dialect used by Hurtle's parents with the refinement of the Courtneys' diction as well as their dress sense. Many contrasted the different footwear of Mr Courtney and Hurtle (who has no footwear at all in the first section, and is taught to hide a broken sole in the second). A few confused who was who, and some were too quick to condemn Hurtle's mother without full appreciation of the description of the grinding poverty in which her children grow up, or of the feckless and hypocritical concern of the idle and irresponsible father.

Good candidates were aware of Hurtle's own imagination at work in describing the 'little, sharp scratchy pebbles' of the yard and his sick brother 'flopping around in the bed like a paralysed fowl' and commented very effectively on these indications of his more deeply buried senses and emotions. It is the extremity of his situation, and the question of survival ('it was between you and Death or something') which accounts for Hurtle's statement that 'mothers and fathers, whoever they were, really didn't matter'.

Many noticed how Hurtle tries to imagine his mother dressed like Mrs Duffield, but the reality of her shabby dress, unruly hair and sallow skin obtrude and make this impossible. Many noticed her 'cracked' hand as a sign of how hard she has to work, and there were many sensitive comments on the implications of gesture and description in this final section. Candidates who read the last part of the text carefully before beginning their answers avoided concluding too quickly that Hurtle does not care about his parents, and that Mumma gives him away easily.

Some candidates struggled to separate what is described as real and what Hurtle is imagining or recalling. Some thought their arrival at the 'Tradesmen's Entrance' was proof that he would simply be a servant, rather than be adopted, while others thought he was already walking 'holding hands with Mrs Courtney' and that the maid, whom some mistakenly thought to be another employee of the Courtneys, is genuinely treating him differently, instead of this being a fancy of the imaginative young boy. Stronger answers showed awareness that Hurtle's imaginativeness is part of his precocious intelligence, and he is already contemplating a brighter future, while aware of an element of betrayal in thinking this way. Equally the twitch in a corner of Mrs Duffield's mouth and her tightening grip in the final paragraph are signs that she is far less insouciant than she pretended to her husband, and that she agrees with Mrs Courtney about the value of the child she is giving away.

It was encouraging to see how candidates were not only engaged with the powerful emotions communicated in this passage, but also with its unusual form of narration and the ways in which it portrays the imagination and thoughts of an intelligent young child. A few wondered whether Hurtle would really be happier in the artificial world of the Courtneys and their London suits and footwear, contrasting this with the more authentic relationships of the Duffields. The focus of the question was especially on what is striking about the writing and the way it communicates the unusual nature of the main character, which is the writer's purpose here. It was encouraging to see the detail with which candidates explored the way Hurtle sees the world around him, and how he explains its contradictions to himself without perhaps fully understanding them. Good answers brought out the physical details of the Duffields' yard, the way characters look and are dressed, and the steep descent to the 'Tradesmen's Entrance' in the final paragraph, with the flopping reminder of Hurtle's destitution a final contrast with Mr Courtney's boots and his 'own last' in the London shop – an indication of the world open to Hurtle after his adoption.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/05
Coursework

Key messages

Set tasks which direct candidates to engage with the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Support the moderation process with the use of focused ticking and purposeful annotation.

Check that all teachers have read the 0486 Coursework Training Handbook.

General comments

The observations in this general report should be read alongside the individual report to the centre.

A wide variety of texts was seen in the work submitted, and there was much evidence of personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the topics chosen for study. Overwhelmingly candidates opted to write critical rather than empathic responses to texts.

The strongest critical essays had been worded so that candidates were explicitly directed to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects. These essays convincingly analysed relevant aspects of form, showing an appreciation of the poet, novelist or playwright 'at work'. Less confident essays showed understanding of texts, including some deeper implications, but relied too heavily on explanation and unsupported assertion rather than a close critical probing of the text. As indicated in previous reports, stronger essays combined apt succinct quotation and critical comments whereas weaker essays used lengthy inert quotation, used perhaps to illustrate a point but not to contribute to a critical analysis of the text.

There were instances of candidates submitting overly long assignments in which they trawled through the text exhaustively, often losing focus on the task that had been set. There was often a clear understanding of the text but at the expense of developing a convincingly-argued response to the question. Better responses selected material judiciously, in a way that directly addresses the question.

In view of the importance of setting tasks that enable candidates to address the assessment criteria, best practice is where departments agree the suitability of tasks early on in the course so avoiding problems later in the course.

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

Each assignment starts with a clear indication of the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment is clearly stated. This is important since it allows the moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has addressed the task. Teacher annotation comprises the focused ticking of valid and thoughtful points, and concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the band descriptors. Where marks are changed during internal moderation, a brief explanation is provided. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it allows a centre to justify its award of particular marks.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (e.g. of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality; labelling of Assessment Objectives as 'AO'. Simply putting the supposed relevant AOs in the margin is of very little benefit to the moderator, as it does not reveal the extent to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed; instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant band descriptors.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently. The cover sheet (or individual record card) was secured by treasury tag or staple which allowed easy access to candidate work. In these centres care had been taken to:

- include all candidates on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form
- transcribe totals accurately, including the internally moderated mark to the Mark Sheet (the MS1 or its electronic equivalent).

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