www.dynamicpapers.com

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Candidates need to go further than summarising the content of texts in order to give a successful response.
- Successful responses focus on the writing of the texts and how the content is presented to the reader.
- Successful responses use specific references and quotations to support points in essays. This should be particularly remembered for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Stronger responses to **(b)** passage questions examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in great detail.

General comments

Overall, candidates showed that they had knowledge of the content of the texts – they were able to explain the subject matter of poems and were able to give clear accounts of characters' behaviour and the events of the prose texts. Many candidates needed to demonstrate a higher ability to sustain a discussion of the writers' methods in the presentation of those subjects, characters or events, and to consider the effects of that presentation on the reader. Most essays seen by Examiners would have benefited from a clearer focus on the writing of the texts.

Comments on specific questions

1. Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

(a) Candidates who responded to the question on the presentation of human relationships in Frost's poetry chose appropriate poems, with 'Mending Wall', 'The Ax-Helve' and 'Home Burial' featuring most often. Essays commented on the characters and the nature of the relationships, sometimes showing development, especially that between the narrator and Baptiste in 'The Ax-Helve'. In some cases, essays were illustrated with quotation. The essays would have been more successful if the quotations had been selected and used to comment on Frost's methods as a poet, the use of dialogue and voice, the presentation of narrative perspective and the use of physical actions and space, for example.

(b) Some candidates perceptively noted Frost's use of the 'lance' to represent the soldier who lies fallen on the battlefield and most picked up the suggestion of the end of the poem, that the soldier's 'spirit' has been launched beyond the earth. Some of the central lines were not discussed with the same confidence and several essays took the approach of explaining meaning where they would have done better to explore the effects of Frost's choices of language, imagery and structure.

2. Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

(a) There were no responses to this question.

(b) Not all candidates who answered this question were fully confident with the meaning of the poem. More confident work explained the developing meaning and some noted the refrain and others the rhyme scheme. Here there was some interesting suggestion that the hesitancy of the half rhyme in the first and last stanzas was representative of the fragility of love. There was also comment on the mutuality suggested throughout the poem by the repeated use of the plural pronoun 'we', rather

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

than Jennings' more usual 'I'. Other answers would have benefited from this kind of close focus on the writing and Jennings' careful structuring and development of the ideas of the poem.

3. *Songs of Ourselves Volume 2*

(a) Candidates who chose this question referred to such poems as 'On My First Daughter', 'Sons, Departing' and 'Song'. The responses tended to show some confidence with the content of the poems and were able to explain that, sometimes with illustrative quotations, but most needed more focused and sustained discussion of the poets' methods and language choices.

(b) Some candidates noted Wyatt's use of contradictory paired ideas, like 'fear and hope' and 'burn and freeze' and recognised in them a portrayal of a tumultuous, disturbed emotional state. Stronger answers were able to show how this idea is carefully developed through Wyatt's language and imagery, which needed consistent detailed focus on the writing and consideration of the effects. More confident answers would not just note that the poem is a sonnet, but were able to offer suggestions of how the poet had used the form to communicate his ideas.

4. E.M. Forster: *Howards End*

(a) Answers on the presentation of Tibby Schlegel tended to give an account of his character, and would have been stronger if they had engaged more fully with how Forster presents the character or considered his role in the novel. More references were needed to particular moments featuring Tibby in the novel from which to draw conclusions.

(b) In most cases the significance of the passage was understood, though many answers asserted this and retold the events of the selected extract in a narrative fashion. These responses would have been more successful if they had included some analysis of the text. More successful responses considered the reader's gradual realisation of the former relationship between Jacky and Henry Wilcox, picking out the familiar 'Hen', for example, and Forster's indications of Margaret's slower understanding; a few stronger candidates picked out 'innocently' in l.43. There was some careful discussion of both the narrative and the dialogue of the passage.

5. Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

(a) There was some discussion of 'home' in terms of houses, particularly Queenie's house in London, but also consideration of England and Jamaica considered as home countries. In general, such answers were well organised and showed a clear progression of ideas drawn from the novel, supported by reference.

(b) Some of the responses to this passage were among the most successful presented, as candidates seemed to appreciate the situation and the ways in which Levy portrays and contrasts the characters of Hortense and Gilbert. There was some sound discussion of the effects of Hortense's narrative perspective on reader sympathy, but also ways in which her perspective on Gilbert draws sympathy to him. In several cases there was some thoughtful examination of the dialogue, noting the differences between Hortense's correct grammar and Gilbert's relaxed, ungrammatical Caribbean English. Some related this to his greater ease with his culture and background. A number of answers were also able to contextualise the passage usefully, noting that the episode occurs shortly after Gilbert's arrival in England and that after the clear discord of this passage, the characters are shown eventually to reach an understanding, respect and affection for each other.

6. *Stories of Ourselves*

(a) For this question, candidates used such stories as 'Elephant', 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', 'The Custody of the Pumpkin' and 'The Taste of Watermelon'. In most cases they relied on plot and character summaries, and needed to pay more attention to the question's focus on the presentation of parents.

(b) Many of the responses to the passage from 'Sandpiper' were also hindered by a tendency towards plot narration. These weaker responses often moved beyond the set passage to discuss the narrator's marriage more widely with little relation of this to the text. The text offered opportunities to discuss the structure of the passage, with its interplay of present and past, with the contrast developing the reader's understanding of the changes. The second paragraph, for example, provided fruit for interesting discussion, with its careful description of the sea and tide serving as a

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

metaphor for the unstoppable nature of time and change. It is very important for candidates to engage with the details of the writing with passage-based questions.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42
Drama

Key messages

- Stronger essays pay attention to the exact wording of the question and the methods used by the writer, rather than focussing on plot and general commentary.
- When choosing to respond to **(b)**-type questions, candidates need to engage with the language, structure and tone of the passage presented, rather than adopting a generalised approach more suited to **(a)**-type questions.
- In **(b)**-type questions, a strategic, rather than 'line by line approach', is likely to produce more coherent essays with an overall line of argument.

General comments

There was a clear preference for **(b)** questions this series. It is important with **(b)** questions that candidates think of the passage presented in dramatic terms, showing awareness of how the words and actions on stage are contributing to a scene as a whole. Thus, a question that seems to focus on character is not, in fact, about that character *per se*, but rather about the writer's 'presentation' of this character in the given extract, as the prompt indicates. Candidates needed to focus more on this, rather than on thematic discussion or character study, in order to gain higher marks for these questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Tennessee Williams: *Sweet Bird of Youth*

(a) There were a small number of responses to this question, which was about the 'presentation' of politics and about 'dramatic effects.' In more successful response, candidates focused more on these aspects than on the contexts in which the play was created.

(b) Stronger essays included discussion of the way that Chance behaves in the scene, with his affected concern for his mother and his contempt for Scudder. These responses explored the relevance of stage directions and argued convincingly that Chance's body language at times betrays what he says. Essays on the whole could have been improved with reference to how this moment gives an audience an early impression of Chance's arrogance and insensitivity. Weaker essays could have been improved by exploring Scudder's role in this passage in more depth, and analysing the way Chance is presented through contrast with Scudder. These candidates needed to write more about the specifics of the scene than Chance's character in general.

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*

(a) Better responses paid attention to the 'concealed love' aspect of the question, where weaker ones needed to develop their argument beyond an account of the plot and aspects of the love triangle in the play. Throughout the play there are embarrassed scenes where these various characters are trying to hide their true feelings from others, and the centre of a good answer was to illustrate these difficulties by making close reference to particular moments.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

(b) Better answers focused on the way that Feste acts in a cruel way in order to punish Malvolio, and a number of candidates mused with some success on some of the ways in which this scene comes as a complete surprise because it moves Feste from amused commentator to spiteful revenger, an unexpected twist. The best responses were able to use the detail of the scene to back up the case made. Weaker answers needed to go further than describing the various machinations of the plot that have brought Malvolio to this situation, and focus more on the Clown's treatment of him, as outlined in the question.

Question 3

William Shakespeare: *Henry IV Part 2*

(a) There were a small number of responses to this question. Candidates showed awareness of the issue and were able to illustrate it by talking about Henry's dwindling powers and Hal's preparation for the role he is to inherit.

(b) There were no responses to this question.

Question 4

Brian Friel: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

(a) All candidates were able to successfully give examples of how there is a failure of communication at every level of the play. Better answers were able to explore this idea in dramatic terms, often by reference to moments where Gar and his father are on stage. There was some useful discussion from some candidates on Gar's taciturnity, and the best responses often explored the limitedness of the exchanges, the monosyllabic responses from the pair of them, and the power of the silence between them. The best responses were also able to look at the underlying longing for communication which is so vividly conveyed in some of Private Gar's monologues and in his father's concern and love for Gar, which can only be seen when S.B. talks to Madge.

(b) All candidates were able to effectively discriminate between Private Gar – extrovert, loquacious, ambitious and nervous – and his shyer, less wordy, public self. Better candidates were able to draw attention to the various ways in which the two characters converse with each other in the latter part of the episode, contrasting this with the early part where Public Gar is intentionally, almost perversely, taciturn. There was often attention to the stage directions, and in particular the character notes (lines 10–12). More could have been made of the way that the scene divides into two distinct sections and to the various ways in which the two Gars conspire in order to bolster Gar's confidence that he is doing the right thing.

Question 5

Wole Soyinka: *Death and the King's Horseman*

(a) There were very few responses to this question. Those that there were showed a generally sound knowledge of the play. There was evidence of a limited ability to discuss the issue raised in terms of dramatic presentation, which could have been further developed for higher marks.

(b) There were no responses to this question.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52
Shakespeare and Other Pre-twentieth Century Texts

Key messages

- Candidates should explore the effects of the literary features in their set works.
- Candidates should show how their selected text might be interpreted differently by different readers.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all learners showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few errors made due to misinterpretation of the rubric in this session and also very few responses which showed evidence of mismanagement of time. The quality of expression was at least acceptable in nearly every case. The remaining few candidates needed to demonstrate a higher level of expression in order to avoid interference with communication.

There were responses to only a few of the questions set. Some texts were more popular – *The Winter's Tale* and *Wuthering Heights* – with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Richard II* very much minority choices, though the responses seen indicate engagement with these texts from learners at all ability levels.

There are two specific ways in which candidates could improve their responses in this session:

(a) Learners should be encouraged to consider the effects of the writer's choices, especially when answering an option **(b)** passage question. Recognising literary features such as language choice, imagery and dialogue is a start to analysis. Learners should then explore the effects of and the nuances of meaning afforded by these features.

(b) Learners should be aware that at A Level it is necessary to explore how a text might be interpreted differently by different audiences. This may be based on critical or academic opinions, or different types of readers, such as modern or contemporary.

Question 1

William Shakespeare: *Richard II*

There were very few essays seen on either option.

(a) The essays on **(a)** revealed a good knowledge of the text, with some understanding of the characterisation of Bolingbroke. There was generally agreement with the proposition, with some awareness of the nuances in his actions and his language which suggested other aspects to his character. Points were often supported by apposite quotation, though candidates needed to show more evidence for awareness of other interpretations.

(b) Answers on the **(b)** option were equally rare. There was evidence of secure knowledge of the context for the passage and some understanding of its significance to the play as a whole. More references to the wider text could have been made, and those given needed to be aimed at specific points in the given passage. Answers showed awareness of literary features, though more detailed and focused analysis would have lifted the responses.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

There was an even split between answers tackling options **(a)** and **(b)**.

(a) Option **(a)** answers often revealed a good knowledge of the text and some showed sensitive understanding of relevant concerns. Many were able to discuss the key relationships such as Leontes and his children or Polixenes and his son, often drawing interesting comparisons and contrasts between them. Where this was supported by appropriate reference to the text, with some analysis of the methods, the answers did well. Other relationships that could have been explored in more depth were those between Hermione and her children and the shepherd with his son and his adopted daughter. The better answers often showed understanding of the dramatic effects of Shakespeare's presentation and there was some good analysis of specific features such as language.

(b) Option **(b)** answers all showed at least a sound understanding of the significance of the passage, with better answers discussing the dramatic tension in some detail. There was some reference to the wider text and this was at times integrated relevantly into the discussion of the passage. Good answers explored some of the literary features in detail, showing secure analysis of language, imagery and at times tone. The analysis was in some cases effectively linked to an exploration of Shakespeare's concerns at this point in the play. When such arguments were supported by detailed reference to the passage and appropriate links to the wider text, the answers did very well.

Question 3

Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey*

There were no answers on this text.

Question 4

Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*

This was the more popular choice of the two texts offered in ***Section B***, with nearly all answers tackling option **(b)**.

(a) Answers generally revealed a solid knowledge of the text and candidates were able to choose relevant material to support their arguments. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of Cathy's two relationships, with only limited supporting comments. Better answers pointed out the contrasts between the relationships and often found appropriate textual support. Other constructive arguments explored what these contrasting relationships revealed about Cathy, often to good effect. There was demonstration by some candidates of awareness of the literary methods. Other candidates needed to develop this further and make more explicit sense of alternative interpretations. Essays would be improved by a closer attention to these elements.

(b) Many answers showed that candidates were able to put this passage in its context, showing sound knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to summarise the events leading to Lockwood's outburst or to give a detailed account of his relationship with Heathcliff to this point, with consequent loss of focus on the passage itself. Better answers at this level considered what is revealed here about Heathcliff and his relationship with Cathy, often appropriately linking such ideas to the wider text. Good answers tended to focus on Bronte's methods here, exploring the language and tone in detail, with some answers exploring the shifting narrative structure here to good effect. Very good answers linked such arguments to Bronte's concerns in the wider text and, when supporting their points with apposite reference to the text alongside an analysis of the detail of the passage, often did very well.

Question 5

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*

There were no answers on this text.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

Question 6

Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

There were very few answers on this text.

(a) Option **(a)** answers all showed at least a sound knowledge of the text, with some understanding of the significance of ideas about family to the play's meaning and effects. Candidates were able to select relevant material to address the task. Some summarising of the narrative was evident, where time would have been better spent on textual analysis. Better arguments explored the tensions in the d'Urberville family, with some awareness of Hardy's use of this in Tess's characterisation throughout the text. Other arguments that explored the Clare family needed to be more fully developed. As with the other novel on the paper, there was some awareness of literary methods, though essays would be improved by closer attention to these elements and a more explicit sense of other possible interpretations.

(b) Option **(b)** answers often gave a clear context to the passage, demonstrating awareness of its significance in the development of the plot and the relationship between Tess and Angel. Weaker responses tended to either paraphrase some of the passage or to give a detailed summary of the relationship in the wider text. Answers which focused on the detail of the passage, exploring Hardy's use of dialogue and language for example, did better, especially when such points were supported by specific quotations from the passage and links to the wider text.

Question 7

Andrew Marvell: Selected Poems

There were no answers on this text.

Question 8

Percy Bysshe Shelley: Selected Poems

There were no answers on this text.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- As well as understanding the main themes and concerns of a text, candidates must ensure that they relevantly employ quotations to demonstrate sound knowledge of the texts and support arguments.
- Knowledge of plot and characters is a basic requirement but candidates need to go beyond this to achieve a good result. They must show knowledge of themes and understanding of the ways writers shape meaning through language, form and structure.
- It is important to show engagement with the text, though personal response must be supported by detailed evidence from the texts.
- Candidates should strive to express ideas clearly and to organise ideas to avoid repetition.
- Critical opinions should be integrated into the argument and clearly linked to the point being made.
- Though it is valuable to demonstrate knowledge of the context in which a work was written and understood, references to context should be used with discrimination rather than forcing the interpretation of a text to fit known aspects of context such as the Second World War or the details of the writer's biography.

General comments

Candidates showed at least basic knowledge and understanding of the set texts. They mostly used clear expression and showed some pleasing engagement, particularly with the new texts added this year. All candidates attempted two questions and managed their time well, appearing to have no difficulty completing their work on time. Responses were nearly always relevant, though at times general reference to the texts detracted from the argument, where quotations or specific details of the writer's methods would have supported the argument more effectively. Students should focus on developing their argument by moving from point to point, rather than repeating the same idea in the course of an essay.. The use of discourse markers such as 'however' or 'on the other hand' are a good indication of development and balance in an answer, while the use of 'then' usually signifies that the candidate is resorting to a narrative account. Weaker candidates use inappropriately casual language, describing a character as 'rattling on' or being 'a pain in the neck' whereas a more formal register would be appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche: *Americanah*

This continues to be a popular text.

(a) Those who attempted this question demonstrated a good reading of the contrasts in the relationships between Ifemelu and the three men with whom she becomes involved. They connected the development of the three relationships with the way Ifemelu gradually changes and matures, suffering the impact of arrival in America, trying to adjust her personality and outward appearance to the culture of America and finally finding her own identity and reconciling with Obinze. Weaker responses were characterised by a lack of detailed reference to the text to support these ideas. They generalised about how Ifemelu and Obinze share common ground and eventually learn the importance of communicating. More specific reference could have been made to the tennis coach incident which initiates the break in communication between Ifemelu and Obinze. Other relevant aspects of the novel that could have been explored are the political interests of Blaine and the election of Obama, and the obstacle of Obinze's marriage. There was a

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

tendency in weaker essays to discuss the characters as though they were real people rather than literary constructs. Adiche's presentation of these relationships is the key focus of the question. More comment needed to be made on the way the novel is constructed and the effects of language, such as the contrast between the blog posts (the reference to Curt as her 'hot white ex') and other areas of the text where Ifemelu is seen as less upbeat and confident, such as when she feels depressed and breaks off contact with Obinze.

(b) Competent responses contrasted the situation of Aunty Uju here with her previous life as mistress of the General in Nigeria. The parallel structures of recounting Uju's progress as an immigrant and her relationships with men alongside Ifemelu's experiences (though events relating to Uju are narrated in chronological order unlike Ifemelu's) make an interesting contrast. Candidates interestingly identified the wider concerns of the novel presented in the passage as male/female relationships and, in the blog, racism. Strong responses made astute comment that, though presented in a comically exaggerated way, it is a notably realistic feature that many relationships reach breaking point through the accumulation of minor issues. The comic elements in the first part of the passage were effectively linked with some comic features in the blog where Ifemelu's thoughts on racism and the problems of being a black immigrant in Africa are discussed in a way which engages the reader by directly asking questions and addressing them. Ifemelu's comic phrasing such as 'the black nod' was linked to other blogs and phrases like 'the hot white ex'.

Question 2

This text had not been studied by many candidates but there is an increasing awareness of the text as a construct and of the writer's intentions.

Eleanor Catton: *The Rehearsal*

(a) Few candidates attempted this question. There was some understanding of the significance of the novel's title. Candidates could have developed their discussion of this beyond the blurring of lines between acting and 'real' events and the tendency of people to pretend to feelings they do not possess, such as sympathy for Victoria. There was some focus on the characters of Stanley and Isolde but, surprisingly, not Julia. Answers were assertive, mainly concerned with describing the selected characters with some personal response, such as the claim that Stanley's relationship with Isolde is motivated by his need to 'create' a character for himself. These arguments would have been made stronger if supported by closer reference to evidence from the text. Candidates would have done well to use the opportunity to discuss the way Catton presents scenes as though they were being staged, with lighting effects and self-conscious posing by those involved, watching the effects their words and actions have on others. The saxophone teacher was mentioned but more exploration was needed of her role in facilitating and manipulating the acting of her pupils. Candidates could also have taken the opportunity to mention the activities of the drama school and the ways in which students are encouraged to act, or how the Head of Acting discusses the problem of 'acting' responses to real life events such as the death of a close relative.

(b) Some stronger answers questioned how far Isolde is reporting the words of her father and how far she is indulging in fantasy over her sister's affair. The presentation of Victoria is far from that of a victim and some candidates related this interestingly to the reactions of her classmates who view her as a willing participant in the affair with Mr Saladin. The ways adults attempt to shield adolescents from sexual knowledge, demonstrated by the awkwardness and 'scared expression' of Victoria's father, was linked insightfully to the behaviour of the counsellors. The complicity of the saxophone teacher in encouraging Isolde's story was also noted. There was some competent analysis of the effects of writing in the passage. To improve this, candidates needed to then consider how characteristic the writing of the passage is in relation to Catton's methods and concerns elsewhere in the novel. Detailed reference to other areas of the text was required to construct a good response.

Question 3

The candidates who had studied this text showed some knowledge of the whole work and of Eliot's philosophical and religious concerns. Weaker responses tended to explain the meaning of the poem, rather than analysing Eliot's methods.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

T.S. Eliot: *Four Quartets*

(a) No responses

(b) There was evidence of engaged responses to this question. Some candidates were able to produce a coherent reading of the passage, making connections to other areas of **Burnt Norton** and the other **Quartets** where Eliot expresses his concern with form and language, especially in constructing a work of art. Interpretation of the images of chaos and destruction at the end of the first paragraph as references to War led candidates into discussion of supposed context, where a stronger response needed to stay closer to analysis of the passage. Better answers went on to consider the religious implications at the end of the passage, again relating to Eliot's religious concerns in the wider text. The passage was linked by some to the overarching theme of Time and the difficulties of engaging with such philosophical concepts, reflected in the 'periphrastic' language. The struggle with expression Eliot describes in lines 9–13 is cleverly linked to the attacks on The Word (in the religious sense) which then develops into the more positive affirmation of religious experience at the end of the passage. Weaker responses needed to develop beyond paraphrase and asserting forced links with context.

Question 4

Athol Fugard: *Township Plays*

No responses.

Question 5

Kazuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

This has proved to be a popular new text on the paper. Candidates responded to both questions with considerable engagement, correctly identifying it as a dystopian novel. There is room for this to be built on by considering some of the characteristics of dystopian fiction featured in the text.

(a) Many strong candidates viewed the narrative perspective of Kathy as a key aspect of memories; her recollections of Hailsham and of the friends she made there form a large portion of the narrative through which the fate of the clones is gradually revealed. More attention could have been paid to the slow revelation of the plight of the clones so that the reader might initially be misled into thinking this novel falls into the genre of school stories. The narrative voice claims that the purpose of writing is to set the memories in order and there are realistic references to the difficulty of remembering accurately, while at other times minute details are clearly recalled. Candidates noted how the memories of Hailsham bring comfort not only to the central characters but to others who have never been there and who try to adopt the memories for themselves. The fear of the outside world instilled into the pupils, the role of the guardians and the belief in Norfolk as a place where lost things could be retrieved were discussed, as was the poignancy of the song on the lost tape and its applicability to the central characters. Answers could have been improved by more detailed support from the text.

(b) Most candidates attempted this question. They explored the relationships between the three friends, though claims that Ruth had been tough and dominant while at Hailsham or that Tommy had acted in a difficult way at times needed to be more fully supported. Candidates identified the euphemism of 'completing' and the sinister allusions to 'they'. Some viewed the acceptance of their fate as donors as evidence of brainwashing. The gulf between carers and donors was discussed, with some candidates viewing Ruth as revealing fear of the future, especially when she speaks of a fellow donor 'trying to cling on to life'. The melancholy tone of the passage was seen, particularly towards the end when it becomes clear that they will probably never have this experience again. The lack of a possible future for the friends was discussed, revealed in lost opportunities to learn to drive and Tommy's air of resignation at the end of the passage. The chilliness of the wind was seen as ominous too, though further discussion of the significance of the boat and their failure to reach it would have made for a stronger response. There were attempts to link the passage with the wider text, especially through themes and concerns. This would have been improved with support from detailed reference to the text, rather than general comment. .

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

Question 6

Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems*

No responses.

Question 7

Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

This is currently the most popular text, having been studied by nearly all candidates.

(a) The most successful candidates considered the text as a piece of drama, taking into account lighting, music and stage effects such as the transparent fourth wall and the legends appearing on the screen. They commented on the lack of realism, identifying the play as plastic theatre. Tom was viewed as an unreliable narrator who is making a kind of confession, fuelled by his guilt at abandoning his family. Amanda's memories were taken into account and viewed as a form of escapism with her tendency to romanticise and exaggerate. Laura's memories were also regarded as important, symbolised by her preoccupation with the Victrola, reminding her of her father, and the glass animals, particularly the unicorn, which was interpreted as symbolic in various ways. Less competent answers saw the play as a reflection of events in Williams' life rather than as a construct, and these needed to go further than regarding Tom as an embodiment of the writer. Strong candidates quoted critical opinions appropriately to support or give an alternative view to the point being made. Weaker ones used critical opinions more randomly, needing more development or explicit relevance to the argument. Another feature of weaker responses was narrating the events of the play with some description of characters, needing more textual analysis and reference to the writer's methods.

(b) Both weak and strong candidates recognised the need to work through the passage in detail. Stronger candidates commented on the histrionic behaviour of Amanda, which some found comic. They discussed how her sobbing is quickly replaced by 'great enthusiasm', suggesting a lack of sincerity in her feelings, and her hyperbolic reference to 'Spartan endurance' which alongside her constant nagging of Tom seems inconsistent with the pride she claims to have in her children. They noted the contrast between Tom's short, gentle responses and Amanda's lengthy speeches. The context of the scene was noted appropriately, showing understanding that Tom has been influenced by Laura to make amends to his mother after their quarrel. Connections were successfully made between this scene and other areas of the play where Tom and his mother argue or Tom is made to feel guilty about his sister. The theme of guilt and Tom's dissatisfaction with his home and career was enlarged upon. Weaker candidates needed to avoid a tendency to go through the scene in a narrative, descriptive way and comment more on effects of language. In these answers, references to the wider text needed further development beyond descriptions of all three characters.

© 2019