Principal examiner reports for teachers

Principal examiner reports for teachers summarise what candidates did well and what candidates needed to improve for this examination series only.

This report is to be used in conjunction with the question paper and mark scheme.

For guidance on teaching and learning we provide resources for many of our syllabuses.

Resource	Where to find it
Grade descriptions – Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Syllabus and specimen materials
Schemes of work – Schemes of work are designed to support you in your teaching and lesson planning.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Lesson planning – Guidance on how to plan a lesson.	Lesson planning
Resource plus – There may be additional resources such as teaching packs containing lesson plans, resources and worksheets and videos for aspects of your syllabus.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Teaching tools	Teaching Tools
Exemplar candidate responses	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Learner guide – A guide for students to help them understand what the course involves.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Community forums – Do you have a question or something to share? Our online forums are great way to keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community.	Community forum on the school support hub
Access to scripts for this series.	Access to scripts service
Results analysis is available for some syllabuses.	Results analysis
Test maker is available for some subjects.	Test maker

Other services from Cambridge International Education

- **Digital mocks service**
- **Insight assessments**
- **Professional development**
  - Focus on assessment
  - Online marking workshops

© 2026

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

What candidates did well
- Selected relevant material to address the focus of the question.
- Used appropriate textual reference to support their ideas.
- Sustained engagement with writers' use of structure and language.
- Understood the use of distinctive aspects of form in poetry and prose texts.
- Wrote informed personal responses to texts and questions.

What candidates needed to improve
- Tailor their material to address the key words of the question.
- Make careful and specific reference to the text to support their assertions.
- Integrate shorter quotations into their analysis of writers' use of form, structure and language.
- Write personal responses informed by relevant detail from the text rather than give general personal views from their own experiences.
- Avoid lengthy introductions with background information and conclusions that simply repeat the main points in the essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Comprehensive responses
- Focused closely on the speaker's fascination with the snake and explored the mixture of admiration, awe and caution.
- Analysed imagery describing the snake's movement and appearance.
- Made an informed personal response to the physical and emotional effect on the speaker (for example, *'lost breath'* and *'we took a deeper breath of day'*).
- Explored how Wright's use of contrast in conveying the speaker's fascination in the descriptions of the snake's beauty and its more sinister side: 'diamond scale', 'great black snake' and 'Cold, dark and splendid'.

Limited responses
- Worked through the poem making general comments about the snake and/or environmental issues.
- Needed to focus on the key words 'powerfully convey the speaker's fascination'.

Question 2

Comprehensive responses
- Focused on the boy's enjoyment of physical work and his close relationship with the natural world.
- Considered the use of the word 'promising' in the opening stanza to emphasise the boy's mood.
- Explored the playful interaction between the speaker and the sun, showing the boy's youthful imagination and pleasure.
- Commented on the poem's gentle humour, particularly the sun that 'just winks', creating an atmosphere of warmth and contentment.

© 2026

Limited responses
- Described the boy's activities without exploring his feelings.
- Made assertions about the cycle of life without addressing the question or providing relevant supporting detail from the poem.

Question 3

Comprehensive responses
- Analysed how Jennings shows fear and suspicion spreading through the community, taking the place of trust, and sustained a focus on the key word 'disturbing'.
- Commented on the mysterious presentation of the strangers and the ambiguity of some of the language, for example, the vague use of nouns and pronouns ('women', 'men', 'they').
- Explored the ominous atmosphere created by using emotive language such as 'invasion', 'intrusion' and, in the first stanza, 'Entered the city'.
- Made informed personal responses to the poem's deeper implications, that fear and paranoia are the true enemies, with psychological rather than physical harm.

Limited responses
- Pursued overly assertive personal interpretations without convincing support from the poem.
- Made limited attempts to respond to Jennings' use of rhyme (such as 'Frequent full stops highlight fear' and 'The irregular rhyme scheme shows that the women's thoughts are chaotic and dispersed').

Question 4

Comprehensive responses
- Focused on the speaker's mixed feelings about change rather than on progress as either wholly positive or negative.
- Explored in detail the main metaphors – the journey, the river and horizons – in addition to the motif of transport as development but also repression of tradition.
- Analysed closely the imagery of dreams and nightmares to show that the speaker cannot escape his past.
- Supported their informed personal response with well-selected references and analysis of Zimunya's use of repetition, imagery, symbolism and contrast to convey the speaker's feelings about change.

Limited responses
- Overlooked the poem's ambivalence and the speaker's complex feelings about change.
- Narrated the events of the journey and/or Zimbabwe's history of colonialism and freedom without addressing the question.

Question 5

Comprehensive responses
- Sustained focus on key words 'vividly convey the power of music'.
- Made perceptive, well-supported comments on Chingonyi's presentation of music as a force that shapes identity, community and memory.
- Explored the transformative effect of music: 'machismo lost to the beat –/every roadman is a sweetboy'.
- Analysed the energetic imagery of movement and dance in conveying the powerful physical response to music.

Limited responses
- Made general comments about music bringing people together with limited textual support.
- Listed musical references without exploring their significance and without addressing the question.

Question 6

Comprehensive responses
- Sustained a close focus on how Chingonyi creates an unsettling atmosphere throughout the poem, with a balanced analysis of both stanzas and the links between them.
- Observed the contrast between the traditional image of a fisherman and the disturbing discovery in the water.

© 2026

- Explored ideas about fatherhood with the image of the 'snarling monster' and its juxtaposition with 'lullaby' and 'soothe'.
- Considered the significance of the repeated questions and the poem's ending in reinforcing the fisherman's emotional burdens.

Limited responses
- Focused mainly or exclusively on issues such as environmental pollution and migration rather than exploring the emotional impact on the fisherman and his life at home.
- Made general comments about sadness and suffering with limited reference to the ways in which the poet achieves his effects.

Section B

Question 7

Comprehensive responses
- Explored the extract as a powerful conclusion to the novel, showing clear understanding of the tragic significance of Okonkwo's death.
- Considered the pathos in the description of the setting with the small bush and the little round hole entrance in contrast to the great achievements of Okonkwo.
- Analysed the dramatic impact of Obierika's emotional speech: 'That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself...'
- Noted the irony of the District Commissioner's intention to reduce Okonkwo's life to 'a reasonable paragraph, at any rate' in his proposed book and the deeper implications of the title he has already given the book.

Limited responses
- Retold the events surrounding Okonkwo's death without addressing the question's key words 'such a powerful ending to the novel'.
- Assumed that the District Commissioner's proposed book is a novel.

Question 8

Comprehensive responses
- Explored Nwoye's emotional development and his changing relationship with Okonkwo.
- Considered the lasting influence of Ikemefuna's death and how it shapes Nwoye's rejection of his father's values.
- Observed the contrast between Okonkwo's feelings about his son and those he had for Ezinma, wishing that she had been a boy.
- Explored how Achebe presents Nwoye's attraction to Christianity, as part of his search for belonging.

Limited responses
- Produced straightforward character sketches overly reliant on description and assertion, with limited textual support and minimal focus on key words 'memorably portray'.
- Wrote about Nwoye as a real person rather than analysing how Achebe presents the character.

Question 9

Comprehensive responses
- Focused closely on the significance of the encounter between Elizabeth and Darcy, exploring how this moment in the novel reveals the development of their relationship.
- Analysed Elizabeth's confidence and playful irony alongside Darcy's reserve.
- Paid close attention to detail such as the effect on Darcy when Elizabeth mentions seeing Wickham and when Sir William refers to a 'certain desirable event'.
- Explored Austen's use of dialogue and dramatic irony to make the moment memorable such as Darcy's meaningful italicised comments about Wickham: '*making* friends' and '*retaining* them'.

Limited responses
- Retold the conversation between the characters without explaining why this moment in the novel is so memorable.
- Needed to explore Austen's use of narrative perspective.

© 2026

Question 10

Comprehensive responses
- Explored how the letters selected develop character and relationships effectively, acknowledging the narrative function of the letters in providing a spectrum of voices.
- Understood how letters advance the plot, demonstrating powerful ways in which Austen uses letters effectively at certain points in the plot instead of narration.
- Analysed the contrast in the tone and style of different letters, commenting on Austen's use of irony and humour in presenting her revelations about characters and their attitudes.
- Wrote with insight about the impact of, and reactions to, letters, for example, Elizabeth's transition from prejudice to understanding.

Limited responses
- Commented in general terms on the importance of letters in the novel instead of closely analysing textual detail.
- Used limited textual reference to support ideas and therefore lacked comment on specific ways in which Austen uses letters 'to powerful effect'.

Question 11

Comprehensive responses
- Understood the ways in which Desai contrasts the overwhelming chaos of the past with the peace and solitude of life at Carignano now.
- Analysed Desai's use of the imagery of suffocation and claustrophobia in conveying Nanda Kaul's feelings.
- Explored specific effects of the use of anaphora, repetition and listing to convey Nanda Kaul's personality and feelings, for example, the repeated use of 'too many' to show her emotional exhaustion.
- Commented on her fears about the arrival of Raka and how this contributes to the moving portrayal of the character.

Limited responses
- Listed the problems Nanda Kaul had experienced in the past without focusing on the key words of the question.
- Considered only her past life without referring to the first paragraph or Raka's imminent arrival and what this will mean to her.

Question 12

There were too few responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Comprehensive responses
- Explored the ambiguous ending by considering different interpretations and by addressing the key words 'such a striking ending to the novel'.
- Considered how Desai uses the ending to resolve plotlines.
- Demonstrated a clear, well-supported understanding of the humour and farce.
- Commented on the contrasting personalities and fates of the family members, analysing how these differences create comedy.

Limited responses
- Focused mainly on describing the events of the extract without explaining how they contribute to a striking ending to the novel.
- Made general comments about characters with limited textual evidence or reference to the wider novel.

Question 14

There were too few responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

© 2026

Question 15

Comprehensive responses
- Understood the significance of Scout finally meeting Boo and the discovery of his true character, with detailed comments on Boo's nervousness.
- Made insightful comment on Boo's treatment by his father, the community and, earlier in the novel, by the children.
- Considered Scout's perspective and newfound maturity, linked to Lee's resolution of plotlines and addressing the novel's main themes.
- Commented on the finality and moving aspects of 'I never saw him again' and on Scout's thoughts in the final paragraph.

Limited responses
- Needed more explicit focus on the key word 'moving'.
- Digressed into discussing Maycomb's prejudices at length and included large amounts of extraneous background information.

Question 16

Comprehensive responses
- Explored the different ways Maudie Atkinson is presented as a 'moral beacon' for Jem and Scout and understood how she reflects attitudes Atticus encourages in his children.
- Commented on her admirable resilience when her house burns down: Lee depicts her optimism when Maudie sees the opportunity to have a bigger garden.
- Cited her refusal to have anything to do with the circus around Tom Robinson's trial and her attempts to help the children come to terms with the verdict.
- Referred to Maudie as the genesis of the novel's central metaphor 'Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy'.

Limited responses
- Showed an insecure knowledge of characters, confusing Miss Maudie with other characters such as Aunt Alexandra and Mrs Dubose.
- Had an insufficient grasp of textual detail to consider specific ways in which Lee presents the character as 'admirable'.

Question 17

Comprehensive responses
- Analysed how Hill builds suspense through the extract, particularly through Hooper's persistent taunts leading up to the sudden act of locking Kingshaw in the room.
- Focused on Hooper's insults that serve to belittle and intimidate Kingshaw, for example, 'You're thick, aren't you?' and 'Scaredy-baby, scared of a moth!'
- Commented on the significance of Hooper 'peering cautiously' to convey his determination to glean everything he can from Kingshaw's reaction to become an ever more efficient tormentor.
- Explored Hill's use of language in describing Kingshaw's involuntary physical reaction: 'stiffened' and 'skin prickled'.

Limited responses
- Narrated what is happening in the extract without addressing the key words in the question: 'vividly convey Hooper's cruelty'.
- Showed a lack of close reading evident in attributing dialogue to the wrong character.

Question 18

There were too few responses to this question to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

Comprehensive responses
- Explored the contrast between the peaceful countryside and the approaching Martian threat, and between the soldiers' uncertainty and the narrator's appreciation of the danger.

© 2026

- Analysed the Lieutenant's colloquial language that conveys his lack of awareness of how serious the threat is: 'What's brewing?', 'What the dickens are they like?', 'Get out!'.
- Picked up on the details of the gunners standing 'as if under inspection' and the officers scanning the 'treetops' as providing a sense of calm before the storm.
- Considered the implications of the imagery of 'It's bows and arrows against the lightning'.

Limited responses
- Became somewhat sidetracked by the angle of seeing the aliens as an allegory for British colonialism, losing focus on the question's key words 'vividly convey tension'.
- Showed a limited understanding of the various characters in the extract, for example, by attributing dialogue to the wrong character.

Question 20

Comprehensive responses
- Focused closely on the details of 'exciting' moments such as the first appearance of the Martians on Horsell Common or the death of the curate.
- Explored descriptions of the Martians and the devastating impact of their weaponry and the red weed.
- Analysed Wells's use of a first-person narrator with only a partial perspective of the wider catastrophe.
- Commented on the shift in narrative perspective when the narrator's younger brother relates the pandemonium in London.

Limited responses
- Wrote about pre-learned themes such as religion, colonialism and Darwinian evolution without making their ideas relevant to the question, thereby blunting the focus on key word 'exciting'.
- Confined comments to what happens in the extract in **Question 19** despite the instruction not to.

Question 21

Comprehensive responses
- Used clues about Mrs Burridge's physical and emotional isolation as a way of building up a claustrophobic picture of the ways in which she is trapped: geographically, emotionally, and psychologically.
- Picked up on the implied end of law and order as illustrated by the panic Mr Burridge shows when searching for his shotgun.
- Explored the casual tone with which Mrs Burridge accepts with certainty that she will never see her husband again, and the implications of 'she has been saying goodbye to him silently for years'.
- Analysed the premonition of her jars of preserves being smashed on the floor as an eerie foreshadowing of possible bloodshed to come.

Limited responses
- Worked through the extract without awareness of the apocalyptic context of the wider story.
- Needed to focus on the question's key words 'strikingly build tension'.

Question 22

Comprehensive responses
- Showed a nuanced understanding of how the relationship is presented across the short story.
- Commented on the symbolism of the second flag and what it suggests about the relationship between the son and his mother.
- Explored the contrast between what the beginning and ending of the story reveal about the relationship.
- Analysed Gardam's use of indirect interior monologue that conveys Philip's perspective of the relationship with his mother.

Limited responses
- Presented a simplistic understanding of the relationship.
- Needed to use more specific textual detail to support ideas and explore the use of language.

© 2026

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13
Poetry and Prose

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

CAMBRIDGE
International Education

© 2026

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/22
Drama

Key messages

What candidates did well
- Explicitly addressed the key terms of the question in their introduction and remained focused throughout.
- Demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the texts.
- Established the dramatic context for the characters and the audience.
- Wrote a brief, focused introduction to start their answer.
- Selected and integrated brief, relevant quotations to support their arguments.
- Explored the dramatic features of their texts analysing the precise effects created by the playwright's use of particular words and dramatic techniques.
- Structured their arguments coherently.
- Expressed their ideas concisely.
- Avoided repeating points.
- Appreciated the Drama text as a script for performance and themselves as members of an audience – not just as 'readers'.
- Gave an informed personal response, firmly rooted in the text, and relevant to the task.

What candidates needed to improve
- Demonstrate awareness of the Drama text as a script for onstage performance.
- Focus on the key terms of the question.
- Write a brief introductory paragraph linked to the question without retelling the plot before focusing on the passage or before addressing the discursive question.
- Make points clearly, supported by specific textual detail.
- Use brief quotations and comment on specific words.
- Explore the playwright's use of language and ways effects are achieved, going beyond listing techniques.
- Explore the effects of the writers' choices.
- Avoid extraneous information on the writers' lives and works, and extensively detailed socio-historical or cultural background to the text(s).

Comments on specific questions

PEARL CLEAGE: *Blues for an Alabama Sky*

Question 1

(a) Comprehensive responses
- Engaged fully with the task and text, maintaining a sharp focus on how Cleage constructs the scene to be dramatic and entertaining throughout the response.
- Briefly established the context of the scene within the play as a whole, and its concerns.
- Demonstrated an appreciation of 'entertaining' in a broad sense – humour, anticipation, revelation of endearing friendships.
- Analysed the comedic value of the basic situation, evaluating how Angel's over-exaggerated hangover suffering (groans, extreme demands for aspirin) creates humour.
- Explored plot mechanics, identifying how the comedic tension over the typing course and the mystery surrounding the '*Southern gentleman*' builds narrative anticipation.
- Explored the contrasting personalities; Delia's practical attempts to assist Angel's self-sufficiency; Angel's sarcasm and resistance to change; and Guy's acceptance and support.

© 2026

- Analysed Cleage's use of language and lively banter, tone and quick dialogue; how Guy exaggerates Angel's state saying she is only just '*alive*', and the comedic tension created when Delia struggles to reply both truthfully and politely to Angel's question, '*How do I look?*'
- Demonstrated critical understanding of the dramatic methods.
- Gave informed personal responses exploring the effects on the audience, for example, why Angel's hangover is funny rather than tragic.
- Supported ideas with brief, integrated textual reference and quotation which was fully analysed.

Limited responses
- Narrated what was happening in the extract and what Guy, Angel and Delia say without analysing why or how the scene is entertaining.
- Showed a basic understanding of the characters and their relationships as friends but showed little understanding of the context of their relationships in the extract and play.
- Overlooked dramatic techniques, such as stage directions, contrast, or audience response.
- Where techniques were identified, points were undeveloped. For example, 'there is sarcasm', followed by 'this is funny' without developing or explaining their effect further.
- Gave brief, repetitive explanations.
- Focused solely on Angel being drunk, losing her job and Delia getting her an aspirin, rather than focusing on how the specific scene is entertaining.
- Offered very little textual reference.
- Missed the comedic subtext or the ironies within the characters' reactions, treating the dialogue as simple, straightforward exposition.

(b) **Comprehensive responses**
- Engaged critically with the character, offering an insightful evaluation of what constitutes Delia's 'strength' across the play as a vehicle for the political and moral consciousness.
- Maintained a personal, evaluative focus on the phrase 'To what extent', offering a balanced, nuanced argument by acknowledging her initial social naivety, inexperience, and the areas where she relies on others, like Sam, to broaden her perspective.
- Commented effectively on Cleage's use of language and its impact in presenting Delia as a strong and resilient woman.
- Demonstrated a sound understanding of Delia's relationship with Sam as a serious, mature connection of equals and her way of coping with grief after his death.
- Explored Delia in the context of the family planning clinic and social progress in her desire to improve life for families in the local area.
- Supported insights with well-selected references, tracing her trajectory from a 25-year-old social worker to a determined advocate facing severe threats.
- Sustained a personal and evaluative response to Cleage's ideas, analysing how Delia transforms hardships – such as the clinic attack – into a drive to push forward.
- Showed reflective personal engagement, probing the ways in which Cleage presents the thoughtful steadiness of Delia's character and how this compares to Angel, who seemed to be trapped in a cycle of dependence on others.
- Responded to how Delia suppressed her own desires, often using the example of the dress to illustrate how Delia puts other people's needs and wants before her own.

Limited responses
- Were narrative in approach, recounting or describing Delia's actions chronologically.
- Summarised her career as a social worker instead of evaluating the extent of her strength or exploring her significance.
- Described Delia as 'kind' or 'strong' with little explanation of how Cleage presents these qualities and how they show strength.
- Only focused on what made Delia strong in a physical sense rather than discussing her emotional strength.
- Did not discuss her vulnerabilities or weaknesses.
- Provided minimal textual evidence, without looking closely at her dialogue or crucial turning points, such as Sam's death, the lease cancellation, or the move to Paris.

© 2026

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 2

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Demonstrated understanding of the characters and play's concerns beyond the extract, for example, the source of Jo's unhappiness, mistrust and abandonment.
- Briefly contextualised the scene in the dramatic structure and social context.
- Analysed Delaney's dramatic methods and language effectively to show how Delaney presents the relationship between Jo and Boy through their dialogue, actions, and interactions.
- Explored in depth the caring nature of Boy and Jo's seemingly grudging acceptance.
- Understood the flirty banter, sarcastic tone and the harmonious greeting.
- Explored the nuance of Boy's humour and Jo's childlike tone.
- Articulated how the relationship between Jo and Boy was unconventional for the time, and explored how Delaney challenged conventions through their representation, whilst keeping a close focus on the task.
- Explored the contrast in the characters' outlook, although from similar backgrounds.
- Supported ideas with well-selected textual references and quotations.
- Understood the hints of the fleeting nature of this 'taste of honey' and the implications of Jo's pregnancy in the context of 1950s Britain.
- Offered informed personal responses to the characters and their situation.

Limited responses

- Demonstrated understanding at a surface level, often misreading their relationship, seeing it as either exploitative or wholly optimistic.
- Used the term 'kitchen sink' drama without further exploration or link to the question, often as part of a prepared introduction.
- Made straightforward comments, such as 'Jo is lonely' or 'Boy is kind' without further development.
- Focused primarily on Jo, with limited discussion of Boy or basic observations of how he cares for her.
- Narrated events in the passage rather than analysing Delaney's methods.
- Looked at the broader social and racial aspects of the text instead of the relationship and passage.
- Included few detailed references to language or dramatic effects.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Addressed the wording of the question 'In what ways'.
- Produced balanced responses by acknowledging Peter's confidence, charm and comic appeal, while arguing that these qualities ultimately reinforce his manipulative and dislikeable nature.
- Went beyond a character study to identify Peter's behaviour, language, background and treatment of other characters.
- Responded perceptively to Delaney's uses of stagecraft, including Peter's entrances and exits and his drunken behaviour.
- Demonstrated secure knowledge of the text by referring to Peter's role throughout the drama, from pursuing Helen at the beginning to abandoning her and returning later.
- Explored the 'Smith' being representative of many men in his position at the time and the power they held over women and how his behaviour reflects wider social attitudes.
- Explored how Peter's treatment of women, racism and homophobia contributed to the play's central concerns.
- Commented on how Delaney used dramatic methods such as stage directions, dialogue, social context of the play and expectations of masculinity and their effects.
- Supported their argument with well-selected reference and quotation from across the text.
- Demonstrated critical understanding of Delaney's language, its effects, and how Peter is arrogant, dismissive and abusive.
- Offered an informed personal response firmly rooted in the text.

Limited responses

- Narrated sections of the text where Peter is present without exploring his behaviour and role in the play.
- Concentrated on events rather than stage directions and language.

© 2026

- Made general comments describing Peter as 'rude' or 'selfish' with little textual support.
- Made unsupported assertions about Peter's personality.
- Needed to support their argument with specific textual detail.
- Showed some understanding of Peter's treatment of Helen and Jo.
- Drifted into social commentary about class divisions and poverty, misogyny and homophobia in post-war Britain, losing specific focus on Peter.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Engaged fully with the question showing awareness of the context of the scene within the play as a whole.
- Explored the scene in detail, analysing the language, writer's techniques, stage directions and their dramatic impact.
- Used well-selected textual reference and quotation.
- Knew the significance and allusion of Elysian Fields and of Blanche's expectation as opposed to the reality of the setting.
- Analysed Blanche's discomfort and her attempts to maintain superiority and secrecy, avoiding discussing Belle Reve when it is mentioned by Eunice.
- Explored Eunice's attempts at friendliness and helpfulness, and reactions to Blanche's words, mannerisms and rude dismissal of her.
- Demonstrated awareness of the culture clash between the Old South and the New South and the contrast between Belle Reve and Stella's apartment.
- Explored the stage directions and how the detailed description of the accommodation gave an impression of Stella's living situation and how this would become Blanche's for the foreseeable future, contrasting this to the description of Belle Reve, '*A great big place with white columns*.'
- Understood the fragmentation in Blanche's speech – her shock and disbelief, '*They mustn't have – understood – what number I wanted…*', reflecting her disgust at seeing the interior of Stella's home.
- Made implicit and explicit references to Blanche and Stella's childhood home and the understanding that they came from wealth.
- Included personal responses which were sustained and convincing, firmly rooted in the text.

Limited responses

- Gave lengthy, general introductions.
- Re-told the events of Blanche's arrival with little focus on the passage or analysis.
- Made general comments about Blanche being shocked and surprised at the apartment.
- Wrote about aspects of the text that the audience have no knowledge of at this point of the play.
- Showed little or no awareness of the text as drama, sometimes referring to it as a novel.
- Needed to support ideas with relevant, specific textual detail.
- Lost focus on the extract and wrote about slavery, Williams' life and family, plastic theatre, Stanley and Stella's relationship, Blanche's past.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Constructed a balanced argument addressing the 'How far' of the question.
- Explored Mitch's positive attributes, later cruelty in the play and his grief when Blanche is led away.
- Demonstrated awareness that the comment is made by Blanche and this impacts on the audience's viewpoint of Mitch.
- Explored how Williams continuously shifts audience sympathy rather than inviting straightforward moral judgement.
- Answers that fully agreed with the statement were also able to provide clear evidence from the text supported by relevant textual reference.
- Most argued strongly for Mitch being a '*natural gentleman*' because he is strongly contrasted with Stanley and Steve, who are vulgar, loud and sometimes violent – more like animals than human beings.
- Considered his care for his mother and how this affected his actions and the audience's view of him.
- Used well-selected textual evidence from across the play as a whole.

© 2026

- Explored language features he is associated with, for example, the motif of light, the description of him as a bear, the use of music.
- Showed awareness of his early courtesy towards Blanche, his kindness and politeness, his shyness and his awkwardness around her, for instance in his request to kiss her.
- Explored his attempt to rape Blanche and cruelty in calling her '*unclean*'.
- Some argued that Williams manipulates the audience to feel great empathy with Mitch at the end, because he cries openly and has lost hope of having a relationship; he will feel guilty for the part he has played in what happens to Blanche, and remember the poignancy of his asking, '*Could it be – you and me, Blanche?*'.

Limited responses

- Provided a more one-sided view of Mitch as a gentleman without fully exploring his change in behaviour in later scenes.
- Only focused on one or two aspects of Mitch's actions, for example, his care for Blanche and his mother.
- Stated that he could be seen as a gentleman because of his contrast with Stanley and then wrote extensively about Stanley, losing focus on Mitch.
- Wrote extensively about sexist and macho attitudes of the time.
- Were narrative in approach with little textual detail or support.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 4

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Understood the context and the situation Lysander and Hermia were in, what had led them to being in the woods together, and the dramatic impact of the scene.
- Recognised the setting and its impact and the contrast between the order of Athens and the disorder, chaos and magic of the woods.
- Engaged with the dramatic nature of events and the relationship between Lysander and Hermia, demonstrated through their dialogue.
- Commented on the language and imagery used and its effects, noting repetitions of '*one*' and '*heart*', '*two bosoms and a single troth*', and the imagery of '*my heart unto yours is knit*' all confirming Lysander's complete devotion.
- Some argued that his declarations are hyperbolic and insincere: he is just trying to manipulate Hermia into sleeping with him, though when she challenges him, he backs down.
- Commended Hermia for her strength of character and modesty, linking this to her previous strength with her father.
- Recognised her as a female prepared to go against societal expectations but it was ironic that even though she had run away from the constraints of society, she was not prepared to give up her 'maidenhead' at this point.
- Explored Hermia's gentle chiding of Lysander and the humour, though candidates tended to focus more on Lysander's words.
- Understood Puck's role in the extract and the stagecraft in the moment when he sees Lysander and Hermia.
- Analysed Puck's language, '*Night and silence*', '*dank and dirty ground*', '*lack love*', '*churl*' and '*throw*' and how he interpreted what he saw before him in the light of what Oberon had instructed him to do; how he sympathised with Helena and was critical of Lysander.
- Drew a contrast between the verse used by the lovers and that used by Puck and the shift between the iambic pentameter used by the lovers and the spell-like trochaic tetrameter used by Puck.
- Those who understood what '*Weeds of Athens*' meant, were able to see how the mix-up occurred.
- Most remarked on the dramatic irony created by the audience knowing that Puck has chosen to enchant the wrong Athenian, and that this represents a turning point in the play, moving into the chaos of the mixed-up lovers and the fighting and arguing that ensues.
- Very few commented on the fact that Puck thought he had done the right thing.
- Understood that Puck's actions initiated chaos shortly afterwards with the relationship of Lysander and Hermia.

© 2026

Limited responses

- Were narrative in approach, providing an account of what happens in the scene with little focus on how these events were memorable.
- Were unclear about the relationship between Lysander and Hermia – some stating that it was unrequited love and that Hermia hated Lysander and that she was no longer interested in him.
- Referred to Puck as being '*mischievous*' and thought that he had deliberately put the juice into the wrong character's eyes out of spite or delight.
- Misunderstood '*Weeds of Athens*', thinking it referred to flowers and plants indicative of Puck's contempt for mortals in general.
- Saw Puck as a malevolent and evil character intentionally setting the scene for the future chaos.
- Provided some simple feature spotting, for example, the use of iambic pentameter or rhyming couplets but without textual support or understanding of effects achieved.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Identified two clearly defined moments in their opening paragraph they were going to explore.
- Selected the most appropriate moments, commonly when Egeus takes Hermia to Theseus, when the four lovers quarrel in the forest, and the argument between Oberon and Titania over the changeling boy.
- Contrasted Oberon and Titania's fight as one of the conflicts, with one of the other human conflicts, allowing insightful discussion of the way in which the fairies' fighting caused the humans' chaos.
- Those who commented on the conflict between Titania and Oberon were aware of their entrances on stage and the visual impact of the stagecraft used by the playwright.
- Explored the relevance of these scenes within the play as a whole.
- Showed detailed knowledge of these scenes and how the conflict they dealt with was dramatically depicted.
- Looked closely at the language of the chosen scenes, for example, the use of insults when the lovers quarrel or the language of ownership or patriarchy in the early scene.
- Were aware of how these moments of conflict arose and of how they were later resolved.
- Showed understanding of the conflicts as played on stage and awareness of the scenes as drama.
- Demonstrated understanding of how an Elizabethan audience may respond to the chosen scenes, how they reflected the patriarchal society and how a modern audience might see the conflicts.
- Developed an informed personal response with thoughtful consideration of the women in these disputes, expressing admiration for the strength and independence they showed or sympathy at the harsh treatment they received from the male characters.
- Supported their chosen moments with well-selected references and direct quotations, analysing them fully.

Limited responses

- Were narrative in approach, missing specific textual detail of the chosen scenes.
- Wrote about several moments of conflict or wrote about conflict in a generalised way rather than focusing more precisely on two moments.
- Did not focus on how the chosen moments were 'dramatically depicted'.
- Demonstrated insecure understanding of the moments with limited recall of textual detail.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

(a) Comprehensive responses

- Briefly contextualised the passage: Antony has just died in Cleopatra's arms and she has been captured by Caesar, who intends to humiliate her by parading her in Rome as a victory trophy.
- Identified a range of moving aspects in the passage, then sensitively analysed how Shakespeare makes them moving.
- Recognised that this scene shows Cleopatra at her best – brave and dignified, and without the volatility and manipulation of before.
- Engaged with her efforts to die honourably, and as befitting her status as queen of a great country, emphasised by her dressing in regalia.

© 2026

- Sustained a critical understanding of the text by exploring Cleopatra's reasons for committing suicide to die with honour, to foil Caesar, and to demonstrate the strength of her desire to reunite with Antony.
- Used the text consistently to support points: the way she refers to Antony as '*husband*', calls on him, and the way she welcomes the asp to speed up their reunion.
- Explored the contributions of Iras and Charmian, particularly to address their love for her and the fond way she treats them.
- Focused on language and engaged with the impact of the writer's choice of words, including Cleopatra's imperious voice in her first speech, her comparison of the asp to a babe-in-arms, the effect of the sibilance in her last words, and the effect of Charmian's valedictory address.
- Included comments on Cleopatra's worry that Iras might see Antony before she does.
- Effectively compared this noble death with Antony's mismanaged efforts to end his life.
- Explored how Shakespeare conflates Cleopatra and Egypt, adding a further weight and dimension to the tragedy.
- Considered the dramatic impact of the scene, including the presence and reactions of Charmian and Iras; how Cleopatra presents death as pleasurable, dying dramatically mid-sentence, emphasising a young life cut short.
- Sustained an informed personal response to the emotional impact of the extract while maintaining close focus on Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

Limited responses

- Relied on narrative framework and the wider plot rather than focusing on how the passage is particularly 'moving'.
- Used very little reference to the passage to support comments.
- Explained literary devices without considering their effect on the audience.
- Produced general assertions about themes of love or death without closely analysing Shakespeare's language.
- Commented solely on Cleopatra, rather than considering the interactions with Iras and Charmian.
- Focused almost entirely on Cleopatra's love for Antony, without considering her political dignity, fear of public humiliation, queenly identity, or resistance to Caesar.
- Confused which lines were spoken by which character, or thought that Cleopatra had a real baby.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Gave a brief overview of key differences between the characters in the introduction, suggesting ways in which Shakespeare made the contrast vivid.
- Maintained clear focus on both characters, avoiding rehearsed material about plot and Cleopatra.
- Demonstrated a secure overview of both characters across the play rather than focusing on isolated moments.
- Recognised that Shakespeare contrasts Antony and Caesar not only as individuals but also as representatives of different worlds and values.
- Explored Shakespeare's consistent contrasts between Antony's emotional, impulsive nature and Caesar's calculated, disciplined approach at various points across the play.
- Demonstrated critical understanding of the nuance of these characters – both flawed and driven by ego – rather than seeing them as either passionate or disciplined.
- Explored Antony's internal conflict between love and duty, contrasting this with Caesar's political control and ambition, strategic thinking, discipline, and cold public authority.
- Developed a balanced argument, acknowledging Antony's weaknesses alongside his charisma, and Caesar's strengths alongside his emotional limitations.
- Considered both men's treatment of friends and enemies in determining character, including Enobarbus and Octavia.
- Considered the wider symbolic contrast between Rome and Egypt: Rome as duty, order and political calculation; Egypt as pleasure, emotion, sensuality and instability.
- Supported ideas with well-selected references and precise quotation from across the text.
- Sustained evaluative personal responses with consistent and perceptive analysis of relevant textual detail and dramatic impact.

Limited responses

- Relied on narrative summary instead of analysing dramatic methods.
- Focused mainly on Antony with limited attention to Caesar.
- Needed specific supporting detail.

© 2026

- Produced straightforward character profiles with little direct comparison.
- Selected evidence that was not directly relevant to the comparison.
- Were repetitive, with insecure recall of events or gave lists of adjectives in relation to each character, for example, candidates wrote that Antony is undisciplined, unprepared, impulsive, inconsistent, without offering the precise evidence of each or any of these qualities.
- Some responses mentioned useful events, such as Actium or the political marriage to Octavia, but did not develop their significance in relation to the contrast between the two men.
- Language analysis was limited. Candidates identified ideas such as power, duty, love or honour, but did not closely examine Shakespeare's use of imagery, dialogue or dramatic structure.

© 2026

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/23
Drama

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

CAMBRIDGE
International Education

© 2026