

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/31 Poetry and Prose</p>

Examiners reported that they had seen some strong insightful work this session, with candidates responding particularly well to *Songs of Ourselves*, *Stories of Ourselves* and *Jane Eyre*. It was clear in many cases that it was not just the poems and stories themselves which had captured candidates' imaginations, but a real appreciation of the writing and construction of texts. It is the articulation of such appreciation which Examiners are looking to reward.

It was also true that many candidates showed comprehensive, often detailed knowledge of texts, but did not discuss their language, form or structure at all, limiting the development of essays of literary appreciation. An accurate recall of content alone will never achieve high marks in the examination. Equally, candidates need to be able to make secure references and to quote to support their points; otherwise their argument becomes unsupported assertion.

While slavish accounts of biographical detail are largely a thing of the past, candidates showed a particular tendency to discuss Wordsworth's ideas without any, or only glancing, reference to the poems themselves. While such candidates showed themselves to be well informed about history, philosophy and literary development, they did not show a real and detailed knowledge of Wordsworth's poems themselves.

There was also some evidence of candidates relying on pre-prepared answers, particularly on the poetry and short story anthologies. In some cases, candidates seemed to have made up their minds about appropriate pairings before the examination and forced them to fit the questions on the paper, seldom with real success. It is important that candidates, while prepared, approach the examination with an open mind and respond to the questions they find there.

As has been said before, the selected extract questions always demand a close commentary on the passage – it is essential that candidates look closely at the writing and its effects in answering such questions. It should also be noted that lists of technical terms do not guarantee success either; candidates need to be able to demonstrate how literary devices work and achieve their effects for readers. Candidates who consider different potential effects often construct the strongest essays.

It was pleasing to see that the CIE anthologies were so popular and are providing interesting reading and provoking such thoughtful work. A number of Examiners commented on the extra insight they had gained from marking candidates' work on the texts.

Question Specific Comments 9695/31

Question 1

Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) A very few answers, some of which showed appreciation of the playfulness of the poem while it explores self through relationships and cultural tensions.



Question 2

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) Poems such as 'Hunting Snake', 'The Woodspurge', 'Morse' and 'The Telephone Call' proved suitable choices for this question, with the first two of these in particular allowing candidates to express some perceptive ideas about individuals' encounters with the natural world. Knowledge of the poems was generally good and some candidates demonstrated an impressive understanding of the effects of form, language and structure. Candidates who took particular notice of the instruction to 'compare the effects achieved' were clearly the most successful.
- (b) There were some very strong answers on 'Finding a Small Fly Crushed in a Book'. While many candidates appreciated the central metaphor of the poem – the book of life that can close upon us at any time – the best answers showed a clear understanding of the contrast between the 'fair monument' left by the fly and the fact that human beings may 'leave no lustre'. There was some intelligent awareness of structure here too, with one or two candidates noting that, unusually, the change in tone in this poem comes, not at the end of the octet, but half way through the eighth line.

Question 3

William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Candidates chose appropriate poems to discuss in response to this question, though many answers ignored the word 'ways' and provided narrative accounts of the content of poems such as 'Tintern Abbey' and 'Westminster Bridge' with little or no appreciation of poetic aspects. Stronger answers included developed comment on language and imagery and some candidates were able to compare the longer narrative/reflective poems such as 'Tintern Abbey' and 'The Prelude' with tighter forms such as the sonnet in 'Westminster Bridge'.
- (b) There were few answers to this question, but those candidates who attempted it followed the developing narrative of the poem, often noting the way the different positions of the moon are used in each stanza to prefigure the poem's sudden climax. In considering its characteristic nature, candidates discussed Wordsworth's blending of profound thought with simple language and structure, making quick links with other suitable poems.

Question 4

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Responses to this question usually showed sound or good knowledge of the novel and were able to discuss the unattractive presentation and influences of Gateshead and Lowood, compared with the conflicting experiences of Thornfield and the restorative influences of Moor House. Some candidates chose very specific settings, comparing, for example, the Red Room with Jane's bedroom at Thornfield when visited by Bertha. The strongest answers were sharply focused on 'presentation', looking carefully at Brontë's descriptive language and ways in which influence on character is shown, while weaker answers relied on narrative and description.
- (b) Strong answers here explored the tension of the passage, created by Jane's puzzlement, indicated by her questions throughout the second half of the extract, and the gothic descriptions of the room and Mason's physical state. The language used for Bertha was also commented upon – 'snarling, canine noise', 'creature', 'mocking demon', 'carrion-seeking bird of prey'. Discussion of Bertha led candidates towards useful consideration of 'the importance of this episode in the novel' as they wrote about Rochester's hidden marriage, Bertha as a foil to Jane, and Jane's moral decision after her failed marriage to Rochester when Mason reveals his identity to her.

Question 5

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Though there were not many answers to this central question, candidates recognised the importance of education to the novel, from Tambu selling her mealies to her attendance at the convent school. Perceptive answers explored ways in which Tambu's education is shown to distance her from her relationships with her family and with Nyasha. Candidates considered her early idealistic views of the school, its uniform and teachers and how her adoption of white values risks leading her towards a similar alienation as felt by Nyasha.
- (b) Candidates responded well to the passage describing Maiguru's departure. Most answers appreciated the significance of this 'failed' attempt at independence and were able to comment intelligently on the wider issue of female emancipation in the novel. Strong candidates showed a perceptive awareness of the differing perspectives and reactions of Tambu and Nyasha in the way they deal with their unspoken knowledge that Maiguru will return.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) This question was designed to encourage candidates to consider the literary qualities of the stories and to steer them away from purely narrative responses. A number of candidates, however, still wrote answers dominated by narrative summary, while confident candidates focused on the kind of details that the question was looking for. There was some interesting discussion of 'The Open Boat', for example, with its focus on minute details within the boat and on the symbolic lighthouse. Other examples from candidates' responses were discussions of the details of tyres, mechanics and pothole-filling gravel as a sign of love in 'Tyres', the extensive description of setting in 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and the intriguing details of the fantasy garden in 'The Door in the Wall'.
- (b) There were some sensitive answers which showed a thoughtful understanding of the relationships in this extract, exploring the presentation of the father's distrust, Jim's friendliness and Tom's careful responses to them both. Candidates showed an understanding of Tom's role as a bridge between both cultures and generations and considered the symbolic significance of the greenstones while analysing the exchanges between Tom and Jim. Some answers were informed by a cultural and historical understanding, recognising in the adzes the shift in power and ownership of the land which creates an underlying tension to the depiction of the relationships in the passage.

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Question Specific Comments 9695/32

Question 1

Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.



Question 2

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) Candidates interpreted 'landscape' in a number of different ways, to include both natural and manmade landscapes. In some instances, candidates constructed interesting essays by choosing poems which reflected those different interpretations, comparing 'The Bay' with 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge', for example. Although comparison was not required by the question, candidates who employed a comparative approach often produced well structured answers. A wide range of poems was used in responses, the most popular being 'Where I Come From', 'The Planners', 'City Planners' and those cited above. As always, those who were able to quote and analyse the writing wrote the most successful essays. Candidates who wrote in general terms were largely restricted to the content of the poems and therefore did not score highly.
- (b) Halligan's 'The Cockroach' was a very popular option. Virtually all candidates recognised the poem's parallel between the speaker and the insect and interpreted the poem as an extended metaphor. Those who took this interpretation as a given from the beginning of the poem often missed its gradual development and that the link is only confirmed in the final line. Better essays combined commenting on the cockroach's 'journey' with an analysis of the poem's form, specifically its metrical pattern and rhyme scheme, combined with close attention to the verbs. Several candidates identified the poem as a sonnet and structured their answers around commenting first on the octave and then the sestet. This often proved highly fruitful as candidates were then able to make perceptive comments about Halligan's subversion of the form and comment directly on the poem's development.

Question 3

William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Responses to this question were on the whole rather disappointing, as many candidates wrote generally about Wordsworth and his favoured subject matter without any direct reference to any particular poem. Such answers failed to construct a literary argument and gained very few marks. A considerable number of answers stated without question that Wordsworth's poetry is pessimistic and cited a few references to prove their case. Sometimes these references were taken out of context and a closer examination might have led to a more balanced answer. Better candidates mounted a challenge to the statement, arguing that while Wordsworth's presentation of human life may be pessimistic to an extent, he also provides a solution in the form of a closer connection with nature, 'the nurse, /The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being.' Others noted that characters such as the Leech Gatherer present a resilience and patience to be found and admired in human nature.
- (b) Weaker responses to selected poem or passage questions often tend towards narrative summary – in this case, several candidates had not understood the poem and made errors in their summary. There were suggestions that the figure in the poem is travelling incognito, that he finds the hazel copse already desecrated and that it he finds it populated by sheep. Examiners gained the impression that some candidates were reading the poem for the first time, and it should be emphasised that candidates are unwise to tackle a selected poem with which they are unfamiliar. Stronger answers looked carefully at the structure of the poem, from its optimistic opening, the delight in the discovery, the shame at the 'ravage' and the concluding three lines of meditation. This led to careful consideration of the changing nature of the language in those sections, the key to the 'tone' and the 'mood'. Many candidates considered the sexual implications of some of the language, which was handled well in many cases to suggest the extremity of the shame felt by the speaker of the poem. Those arguments which depended on a detailed biological exploration were less convincing.

Question 4

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Many candidates responded enthusiastically to this question, and the most successful integrated their discussions of Jane's and Rochester's developments, noting how they are, to a large degree, interdependent. Such answers often focused on the idea that Brontë uses Rochester as a catalyst for Jane Eyre's own development and that the ensuing struggle between the two characters drives the plot forwards, influencing the structure of the novel. The very best essays explored financial, social, spiritual and moral development, including brief but useful references to Victorian or patriarchal society and even some feminist criticism. Nearly all answers showed detailed knowledge of the text, but at the lower end of the mark range there was less discrimination and direction to the question, as candidates relied on narrative summary rather than argument in response to the question.
- (b) A surprising number of candidates mistook Helen Burns for Miss Temple in this passage, particularly in discussing the fifth paragraph of the extract, which misdirected answers. Many candidates understood the nature of Miss Temple and wrote about her generosity and the contrast she makes with Brocklehurst, but unless these comments were supported with detailed reference to the passage, they could gain little reward. This was a question where many candidates did not note the instruction to discuss the passage 'in detail'. Stronger answers noted the significance of language: 'nectar and ambrosia'; on the link between Miss Temple's name and the awe she inspires; 'kindled' and 'glowed' in relation to the fire which represents the physical and emotional warmth the girls are denied at Lowood. As one candidate remarked, Miss Temple is presented as 'loving, educated, independent' and as such, a role model for Jane herself in the later development of the novel.

Question 5

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) In response to the question on Babamukuru, most candidates demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the novel and at least a competent knowledge of the complexities of this character. Several fully developed answers considered the demands placed on him in his various roles and, after carefully considering his strengths and weaknesses, conveyed a genuine personal response by making an evaluation of the title statement. Such answers were most successful when supported by close reference to particular episodes within the novel, and the best were also supported by key quotations. Several candidates approached the question by identifying important aspects of Babamukuru's influence on the events in the novel (e.g.: education, gender roles) and discussed his role in relation to them. This often led to the organisation of ideas into an argument rather than a series of observations, which was a successful approach.
- (b) Many candidates showed very good understanding of the significance of this passage in the novel as a whole, with many candidates commenting on it as the beginning of Tambu's emancipation, as well as the exploration of the conflicts caused by colonialism and the freedom of Doris to ignore her husband, unlike the African wives in the novel. Some candidates also discussed the portrayal of an economic divide along with the racial one. Alert candidates noted that Tambu herself, just before the selected extract, comments on the unpleasant smell coming from Doris and George and 'papery-skinned Doris and her sallow, brown-spotted husband'. Many candidates would have been more successful with closer attention to the writing of the passage, noting, for example, Mr Matimba's calculated grovelling and the whites talk about 'munts' as well as Doris' patronising 'plucky little piccanin'.



Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) 'The People Before', 'Sandpiper', 'To Da-Duh in Memoriam', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'Journey' and 'The Door in the Wall' were frequent choices in response to this question. Candidates who used 'A Horse and Two Goats' were able to point out that a clash of ideals can be presented humorously, though in many answers candidates struggled to move beyond a description of what the ideals are and how they conflict. There was less awareness of the need to engage with the writers' presentation. Candidates require detailed knowledge and confidence with the text to explore literary methods as well as plot and character in whole text questions.
- (b) More candidates answered the passage based question and such answers were advantaged by a knowledge of the whole story. Some candidates admitted in their answers that they were reading the extract for the first time, which is not an appropriate way to tackle the exam. Better prepared candidates dealt more effectively with the narrative method of Wallace telling the story to the narrator and the narrator's role in gently drawing out the story without challenging it. Successful answers also commented on the contrast between the garden and the language at the close of the story, the woman and the living pages of the book.



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Question Specific Comments 9695/33

Question 1

Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Difficult experiences were interpreted quite widely, with candidates using '3 November 1984', 'Walking Across Brooklyn Bridge', 'The Writer', 'Wine from Bordeaux' and 'The Need to Recall the Journey' appropriately to answer this question. Strong candidates focused closely on Bhatt's poetic methods – the language, imagery and form of the poems. Those who restricted themselves to accounts of the subject matter did not adequately answer the question set.

- (b) There were a small number of remarkably sensitive and thoughtful readings of 'Rooms by the Sea' which were a delight to read. Most candidates who wrote about it recognised the particular intimate personal nature of the memory, indicated by the subtitle and continued through the poem's detail and the suggestions of its language. A few candidates used Edward Hopper's painting of the same name as their starting point and were able to use details from the painting, like the open door, as a way into personal memory. There was some interesting discussion of the presentation of intimacy from a female perspective and the poem's different evocations of different types of heat.

Question 2

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) Candidates used such poems as 'Summer Farm', 'Where I Come From', 'The Cockroach' and 'The Bay' among others in response to this question. Candidates who either chose poems which could be closely connected or else strikingly contrasted tended to construct arguments with more drive and purpose. The most successful answers were those which focused closely on the 'ways' ideas are presented and issues explored, looking at the language and construction of the chosen poems.
- (b) This was an immensely popular question and in the main, candidates responded to Adcock's poem with real enthusiasm and a lot of understanding. Several candidates conveyed a sense of involvement with this poem through imagining themselves on the receiving end of the call, sometimes suggesting that the name of the company implies universality and suggests that anybody could fall victim to such a call. There were critical comments on materialism and greed. Many candidates showed understanding of the shifts in tone – joy, disbelief, suspicion, disillusionment – but the best answers noted the more subtle aspects of the poem such as the abrupt start with 'They' giving an anonymous sinister tone, and the caller's cynical manipulation of the narrator's emotions. Some showed a sharp appreciation of techniques such as rhetorical questions and ellipsis to convey the casual, conversational mood of the poem, which is abruptly halted by the final words.

Question 3

William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) It was hoped that this question might prompt candidates to consider Wordsworth outside the confines of the traditional 'nature poet' limitations, but many candidates immediately dismissed the 'interest in humanity' and wrote about nature anyway. It is important for candidates to take on the full question, and those who avoided the issue in this way did not produce strong answers. Stronger answers pointed out that a number of the poems have important human characters – the narrative voice, Lucy, solitary reapers, leech gatherers and so on. The most successful answers, though, explored the relationship between nature and humankind and argued that Wordsworth's interest in the natural world is seldom for its own sake, but for the guidance and restoration of the human spirit, and thus came to agree with the question's premise. There were a large number of weak answers which discussed Wordsworth's ideas and philosophies at some length, but without any direct reference to any poems. All answers on a literature paper must be based on close and detailed knowledge of the texts, clearly referenced in the essays.
- (b) Several candidates were able to use Nature's words when discussing the relationship between Lucy and Nature, commenting on the use of antithesis: 'sun and shower', 'earth and heaven', which some interpreted as the opposing forces in Nature: 'storm and calm', 'kindle and restrain'. Lucy as a part of Nature was occasionally linked with 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course/With rocks and stones and trees', but more often with 'Lucy Gray/Solitude' in which Lucy is absorbed into Nature. A few were able to link the sadness in the closing stanza with 'She Dwelt'. Few candidates really focused on ways form, structure and rhyme shape meanings in the poems.

Question 4

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) This proved to be a very fruitful question; the most successful candidates were able to pick out specific incidents to illustrate a developing dynamic in the novel as passion and judgement come into balance. There were some neat comparisons between the wild child in the Red Room, for instance, and the calm and restrained governess. Confident answers moved the discussion beyond Jane's development, with important consideration of Brontë's use of other characters to develop the ideas. Rochester and St John Rivers were central to such discussions, and there was some very sharp analysis of the characterisation of Bertha as an unbridled passionate parallel to Jane. The best answers were able to conceptualise the issue and demonstrate how the novel as a whole is structured to achieve reconciliation between passion and judgement, while less confident, selective answers tended to rely on narrative summary.
- (b) Close commentary on the extract from Chapter 14 was often intelligent and well focused. Candidates frequently wrote perceptively about the imperative tone of Rochester's dialogue, the grandeur of the surroundings and its link with Rochester's social position. They considered what the exchange between Rochester and Jane reveals about their characterisation and relationship. This last point was taken up in detail in strong answers, which identified and commented on the playful nature of the exchange and how it foreshadows the romantic involvement of the characters. Less confident answers tended to read the surface meaning of the dialogue and interpret Rochester as merely vain or pompous, missing the ways in which Brontë shows him create a family-like atmosphere between people who are actually his employees and dependents.

Question 5

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) On the whole, candidates sympathised with Nyasha, though many saw that to be the question and did not sufficiently focus in Dangarembga's characterisation of her. The fact that the reader's perception of Nyasha is governed by Tambu's narration was seldom considered. There was recognition of Nyasha's stormy relationship with her father, her isolation and cultural confusion after her time in England and her desire to rebel against Shona attitudes to women, made worse by her eating disorders. Candidates often wrote about these aspects with thought and sensitivity. Many answers, though, did not consider aspects of Nyasha's characterisation which are less likely to evoke sympathy, leading to imbalanced answers. She was, however, condemned by a number of candidates for smoking.
- (b) This passage proved unexpectedly challenging, as comparatively few candidates who attempted the question explored the ironic distance between Tambu's mature narration and her earlier childhood veneration of white people which she describes; only a few picked up her use of sarcasm and irony. The extract is rich in little clues, such as the 'self-satisfied dignity', 'brotherly love' and the 'lightening of diverse darkneses'. Candidates who read the extract very closely were able to show how the passage demonstrates the divisions in both Shona and white society in Rhodesia and that the 'debates' inherent in this extract are fundamental to the novel and Tambu's own development.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) In response to this question, candidates' favourite choices were 'The Door in the Wall' (where the cue quotation originates) and 'The Fall of the House of Usher'. Answers usually developed direct contrasts between the two, both of which have extreme versions of 'a fantastic dream'. Perceptive candidates argued that both stories use a dependable, prosaic narrator whose reliability helps to persuade the reader of the veracity of what they describe. Other favoured stories were 'The Open Boat', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'Sandpiper' and 'Tyres', discussed with varying degrees of success. Success often depended on candidates' ability to construct an argument about how the writers presented events, rather than describe the unusual events themselves.

- (b) There were many very successful answers on the extract from 'White Hairs and Cricket'. On the whole, candidates showed a perceptive awareness of the significance of the narrator's discovery, firstly by contrasting the narrative clues to his rather immature, thoughtless behaviour with the presentation of the more serious Viraf; secondly by showing how the seriousness of Viraf's father's illness gradually dawns on the narrator; thirdly by focusing on the detailed description of the sick-room with the symbolic significance of the 'long needle' and the 'towering metal stand'; and finally by relating this discovery to the narrator's own situation and the story's concern with ageing and death.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

General comments

The vast majority of candidates answered on *Twelfth Night* and *A View from the Bridge*. Candidates seemed to manage their time well for the most part, with most achieving balance of marks across the two questions. There were few rubric errors. In general, candidates preferred **(b)** to **(a)** questions, though some answers suggested that they did not quite understand the difference between the two. With **(b)** questions particular skills and methods are needed to deal with close focus, passage based analysis.

As always, Centres perhaps need to be reminded of the importance of treating the texts on this paper as works of drama. Clues are often given in **(a)** questions about 'presentation,' 'Dramatic effects' or 'the effect on an audience' are often clearly signalled in **(b)** questions. In either case, candidates are well advised to see them as clear instruction as to what is required.

Whilst 'knowledge' and 'understanding' are clear terms in the mark scheme, 'Personal Response' is perhaps harder for Centres to get hold of. Candidates tend to do well here because of the quality of support that they produce for their arguments. Most often this comes through when candidates choose slightly unusual examples or have a particular (relevant) insight into the text that allows them to shape an argument that is developed in order to show individual insight into a writer's techniques and concerns. Even quirky arguments, well supported, can be highly rewarded here. What it is NOT is an instruction to candidates to enthuse irrelevantly about how wonderful a writer is or to tell the Examiner how much they have enjoyed the play or to talk about how the text has become personally significant because of resonances within the candidate's own life.

As might be expected, answers ranged widely in quality. At the top end there were responses that showed real literary appreciation, with close, relevant argument and a clear sense of the conventions of the genre combined with a warmth of personal appreciation of the texts. Elsewhere, candidates were less confident in their views, or perhaps knew the plays less well. Nonetheless, they were able to answer the questions relevantly, showing knowledge and understanding along the way. Towards the bottom candidates often relied on paraphrase or summary as a means of making points; often these answers did not really begin to construct an argument, though individual points were perhaps valid. Very few candidates were unable to demonstrate at least a basic knowledge of what was going on in the texts chosen.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Peter Shaffer *Equus*

- (a)** Candidates saw that Alan is very much the victim of pressures placed upon him, either by society in general or by his parents. Some were keen to argue that he should be self-determining, and that shrugging off Alan's guilt as a matter of nurture, not nature, is too easy a way out. Most candidates were able to give clear examples from the text to back up their views, though some relied too much on paraphrase and plot summary, rather than argument, to make their points.
- (b)** Stage directions were often used to show how Shaffer creates atmosphere here. Dysart's monologue was often discussed in detail, with clear awareness of how the drama is being set up, both in terms of action and psychological tension. Some candidates talked about how the monologue has immediacy through its use of the present tense. Candidates warmed quickly to the idea of Dysart as a filter, a commentator on the action of the play as well as a presence in his own right

Question 2 William Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*

- (a) On a plot level, candidates were soon able to see that the confusion caused by having Viola dressed up as a boy, followed by the appearance of her identical twin, is one of the drivers of the central plot. Less obvious, perhaps, was the idea that many of the characters are confused about their own identity, with Orsino trying on the guise of the romantic lover, Olivia pretending to spurn love and cutting herself off from the world, and with Malvolio plainly trying on a whole new identity with his yellow stockings. The question asks about the 'impact' of the confusion on the play, and it is clear that the issue raised here goes much deeper than simply being one of plot and stage business.
- (b) Responses tended to focus on Malvolio here and not really on the contrasts. Having seen an opportunity to talk about him, some candidates diverted themselves into a discussion about his role in the play as whole. Those who used detail from the passage were able to write interestingly about Malvolio's humourless, pompous language and contrast it with the much more free and easy atmosphere created by those around him.

Question 3 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) No responses
- (b) No responses

Question 4 Tom Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

- (a) No responses
- (b) No responses

Question 5 Arthur Miller *A View from the Bridge*

- (a) Different types of law were securely seen, with contrasts made between American law and the more personal, Italian law that Eddie comes to espouse. Many answers focused on Alfieri as the embodiment of the two aspects of law; others saw that the true dramatic tension is located in Eddie himself when he chooses American law for very Italian reasons.
- (b) There were a small number of responses here. Candidates were able to see clearly what is going on. In terms of Rodolpho's increasing appeal for Catherine and Eddie's gradually dawning awareness ('striving to laugh') that the situation is slipping away from him. Better candidates were able to track the way in which an audience's thoughts and feelings might be pulled in a variety of different ways as the scene develops. Very few candidates commented on Alfieri's last speech, despite its obvious significance as a pointer for audience reaction.

Question 6 Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- (a) Candidates were often keen to talk about Lady Bracknell, so the focus moved too far (and too quickly) away from Gwendolen. Terrified of being like her mother (and we see how similar she is in a number of scenes, including the tea party), Gwendolen longs for romantic love in her attempt to avoid her destiny. At times candidates were able to offer relevant comparison between the Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell, particularly in terms of Gwendolen's ill-concealed and rather bossy manipulation of others to her own will, a trait plainly passed on from mother to daughter.
- (b) Candidates were often able to see comic moments in the scene. Comic 'effects' were less well addressed. For example, few commented on Miss Prism's ludicrous happiness at having her bag restored to her, with no immediate thought for the baby. Some candidates responded well to Jack's high-flown language towards the end ('Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly?'), his confusion, and his absurd attempts to embrace Miss Prism.



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Drama

General comments

There were answers on all of the texts, with a slight preference for *Twelfth Night* and *A View from the Bridge*. Fewer candidates than in previous sessions tackled *The Importance of Being Earnest*. There were relatively few rubric errors. Most candidates used their time well. There were a few examples of candidates who spent so long creating essay plans that their final pieces were very limited.

As always, Centres perhaps need to be reminded of the importance of treating the texts on this paper as works of drama. Clues are often given in **(a)** questions about 'presentation,' 'Dramatic effects' or 'the effect on an audience' are often clearly signalled in **(b)** questions. In either case, candidates are well advised to see them as clear instruction as to what is required.

To do well on this Paper candidates need to show knowledge and understanding and also 'Personal Response'. It might be helpful to define this a little more. Personal response may be shown when candidates have a particular (relevant) insight into the text which they support with their own well chosen examples, and shape an argument that is developed in order to show individual insight into a writer's techniques and concerns. Even unusual arguments, well supported, can be highly rewarded here. What it is NOT is an instruction to candidate to enthuse irrelevantly about how wonderful a writer is or to tell the Examiner how much they have enjoyed the play or to talk about how the text has become personally significant because of resonances within the candidate's own life.

At the top end there were responses that showed real literary appreciation, with close, relevant argument and a clear sense of the conventions of the genre combined with a warmth of personal appreciation of the texts. Elsewhere, candidates were less confident in their views, or perhaps knew the plays less well. Nonetheless, they were able to answer the questions relevantly, showing knowledge and understanding along the way. Towards the bottom candidates often relied on paraphrase or summary as a means of making points; often these answers did not really begin to construct an argument, though individual points were perhaps valid. Very few candidates were unable to demonstrate at least a basic knowledge of what was going on in the texts chosen.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Peter Shaffer *Equus*

- (a)** Candidates usually focused – for obvious reasons – on the Strangs. There were careful analyses on the tensions that Frank and Dora create within Alan. Some broadened out the discussion to include the Dysart marriage (the question did, after all, ask them to talk about 'marriages'), and that allowed comparison and contrast, with both seen as equally stultifying, though in different ways. Answers that focused on marital relations rather than characters as individuals did well and avoided the focus on parenthood as an explicit theme. Weaker answers tended to provide character studies or commented too much on Alan's problems with his parents.
- (b)** Good answers here used the extract intelligently to comment on dramatic effects, on the scene as a re-lived experience that reveals Alan's immediate motivation for the blinding of the horses. Weaker answers either paraphrased the extract or narrated the action up to this point. Some candidates asserted that Frank was genuinely at the cinema for reasons other than seeing the film, a misreading that distorted the view of the whole. Some answers pointed out rightly that the 'Rock music' perhaps suggests youth, that at the very least it gets people's attention. Better responses picked up on more subtle ideas, that the 'groping' for seats might signal exploration, that the words 'church' and 'congregation' might have parallels with Alan's worship of *Equus*, that we are both in the cinema and simultaneously in the consulting room.

Question 2 William Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*

- (a) Good answers to this question considered men and women in love, rather than providing a study of individual characters. When they looked at characters, it was for points of comparison and contrast with other characters of the same gender in order to analyse their different approaches to matters of love. The best responses showed an ability to handle multiple comparisons clearly and with support from the text. Some candidates felt (but usually could not substantiate) that Orsino is genuinely in love with Olivia. Many were able to see that Viola's position as having an insight into both sorts of love could provide an overall structuring device, though more could have been made of the revealing moments where she talks to Orsino or Olivia in coded terms that reveal her true feelings. The best candidates were able to see that there was more common ground between the sexes than might at first appear, and some interesting arguments were put forward about Orsino and Olivia perhaps having more in common than either realises. A common weakness was for candidates to list characters and their relationships, without then going on to construct a coherent argument in response to the specifics of the question.
- (b) There were many strong responses that saw that the question required more than a view of what Malvolio says and does in the scene. Careful commentary on the interjections of Fabian and Sir Toby often illuminated the issues presented. Those who talked in more narrow terms were often able to make good use of detail and to locate Malvolio's self-obsession, his stupidity. Surprisingly, many candidates thought of his puzzling over the letter and coming up with a solution that happens to act in his favour as being a sign of his intelligence. It is not: Maria's letter is nothing if not obvious. Good answers were able to see clearly that the letter panders to Malvolio's weaknesses, with him twisting its content to serve his own ambition. Less good answers paraphrased or saw the question as an opportunity to discuss the significance of Malvolio in the play as a whole. Some candidates dismissed Malvolio simply as being foolish or stupid, a simplistic view of what is going on.

Question 3 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) Candidates were often able to present a complex view of this question, looking at Hal and his father as a main focus, but then moving on to Hotspur and Northumberland. Very good responses often looked at the Hal/ Falstaff relationship as illuminating the issue too, with some candidates examining the Act 2, Scene 4 parody in detail. At a lower level, discussions were often restricted to the obvious Hal/ Henry IV relationship, and there was some difficulty in moving the argument beyond a feeling that Henry is disappointed in his son.
- (b) Strong answers here dealt fully with detail. Comments were made about Hotspur's monologue with its blustering conversation with the writer of the letter, some even proposed – rightly – that the bluster comes from fear, not bravery; the perspective provided by Lady Percy was also fully explored, with issues about Hotspur's view of women frankly rehearsed. Discussions of Hotspur's perverse sense of honour were often firmly grounded in passage detail. Hotspur's sense of being a rebel with an almost religious cause was occasionally picked out through analysis of 'pagan' and 'infidel.' Weaker answers often paraphrased the extract or focused too much on the first half.

Question 4 Tom Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

- (a) Despite the obvious discussions that the characters have about the pros and cons of being on a boat, many candidates found it quite hard to locate the specific thematic or dramatic effects created here. Top level responses were able to respond fully to the idea that once again Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are capable of action, but only within bounds dictated by circumstance. Some candidates suggested that the scene provides relief from the claustrophobia of Denmark; others saw it as simply exchanging one set of restraints for another. Many responded to the ludicrousness of the situation on board ('Pirates could happen to anyone'), the dislocation of time with the umbrella and the cigar, the unlikely presence of the Players, and the dislocation of reality with the barrels. Less good answers often relapsed into narrative

- (b) Answers often approached the passage with confidence, exploring a range of aspects relating to the presentation of the characters, both in terms of what they say and what they do. The absurdity of their discussions ('That can not be south, can it?') was often well handled. The two characters were often well discriminated between, with Guildenstern's brittle certainties contrasted to Rosencrantz's desire to ignore what is going on and hope for the best. Discussions about absurdity and existentialism were usually well handled, with the issues emerging from the detail of the text rather than being pushed onto it.

Question 5 Arthur Miller *A View from the Bridge*

- (a) The best answers here probed a variety of possibilities. There was discussion of the bridge itself as overshadowing Red Hook, or of the bridge as symbolic of hopes and dreams. A popular view was that Alfieri is like the bridge in that he links two cultures. The idea of 'a' view from the bridge sometimes opened up discussion about perspectives and limitations of point of view. Less secure answers often had some sense that the bridge might represent characters or themes, but the evidence adduced was slightly thin. Some described what Alfieri did or saw, thus simply relating the plot even if initially the idea of Alfieri as a bridge had been suggested.
- (b) Effective answers paid close attention to audience feelings and thoughts, and made good use of references to pauses, hesitations and stage directions as a means of conveying the complexity of what is going on here. One common misconception amongst weaker candidates was that the audience does not know that Eddie has called the immigration services before the extract begins. Discussions of this irony formed a major part of discussions from better candidates. Sometimes candidates sometimes failed to see that Eddie's newly found desire to compromise comes out of this. Only the best were able to discuss the ambiguity of Eddie's response here, picking up on the fact that his panic is not about Marco and Rodolfo, but rather his growing awareness that if the other immigrants are picked up, he will have placed himself in the same position as Vinny Bolzano in the local community. Most candidates were able to see how Catherine has changed and become self-assured by this point in the play

Question 6 Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- (a) Some candidates had plainly only considered 'the lower orders' as incidental to the play, two-dimensional characters that are simply stereotypes. This meant that there was a temptation simply to outline what they do in the play. Better answers were able to pick up on Lane's collusion with Algernon over the sandwiches, with some also looking at the dry humour, the shared conspiracy and the equality between the two in terms of banter when they are alone together. Similarly, candidates were also able to comment on the restraints placed on Cecily and Gwendolen when Merriman is present. Miss Prism was sometimes simply mentioned for her part in the unravelling of the plot. The best answers noted that the question provided a tag, a clue about how to pull all these characters together through the topsy-turvy, ironic observation from Algernon that the lower orders should set an example. The lower orders here are as feckless and self-interested as their superiors, with Miss Prism, for example, showing no sense of guilt or interest in relation to the destiny of the baby, but a great concern for the destiny of her handbag. Weaker answers simply provided three character studies.
- (b) There were a small number of purely narrative commentaries here which could not score high marks. Most candidates were able to make reference to Jack's double life and, ironically, the awe in which he is held by Cecily and Miss Prism; this was usually linked to the subsequent irony of the conversation in the garden. Much was made of Cecily's attempts to avoid learning German and of Wilde's satirical treatment of education. Miss Prism's weakness for distraction (making her ironically similar to Cecily) was also pointed up, as was her ridiculous sententiousness. More mundane answers often mentioned the inappropriateness of Cecily watering flowers, seeing this as far more symbolic than what it obviously is, an avoidance tactic. Candidates often found it hard to locate the humour precisely, through inversion, repartee, aphorism and irony, for example.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

General comments

All six texts were addressed by candidates, though there was a marked preference for questions on *Twelfth Night* and *A View from the Bridge*. There were relatively few rubric errors. Most candidates managed their time well and produced essays of similar length. Candidates who wrote lengthy essay plans (for which no direct credit is available) sometimes found that they then left themselves short of time for finishing their actual answers. It is best to keep any plan fairly brief.

As always, Centres perhaps need to be reminded of the importance of treating the texts on this paper as works of drama. Clues are often given in **(a)** questions about 'presentation,' 'Dramatic effects' or 'the effect on an audience' are often clearly signalled in **(b)** questions. In either case, candidates are well advised to see them as clear instruction as to what is required. There was a slight preference for **(b)** over **(a)** questions.

To do well on this Paper candidates need to show knowledge and understanding and also 'Personal Response'. It might be helpful to define this a little more. Personal response may be shown when candidates have a particular (relevant) insight into the text which they support with their own well chosen examples, and shape an argument that is developed in order to show individual insight into a writer's techniques and concerns. Even unusual arguments, well supported, can be highly rewarded here.

What it is NOT is an instruction to candidate to enthuse irrelevantly about how wonderful a writer is, to tell the Examiner how much they have enjoyed the play, or to talk about how the text has become personally significant because of resonances within the candidate's own life.

At the top end there were responses that showed real literary appreciation, with close, relevant argument and a clear sense of the conventions of the genre combined with a warmth of personal appreciation of the texts. Elsewhere, candidates were less confident in their views, or perhaps knew the plays less well. Nonetheless, they were able to answer the questions relevantly, showing knowledge and understanding along the way. Weaker responses lacked an assured approach to addressing dramatic effects and invariably offered narrow, more superficial readings of the characters and action. Towards the bottom candidates often relied on paraphrase or summary as a means of making points; often these answers did not really begin to construct an argument, though individual points were perhaps valid. Very few candidates were unable to demonstrate at least a basic knowledge of what was going on in the texts chosen.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Peter Shaffer *Equus*

- (a)** Candidates showed an ability to deal in a straightforward way with the issue raised. Many discussed the differing views of the Strang parents on Alan's development. Better answers were also able to deal with Dysart and the complex view that he holds of religion and religious experience, which sees it as encompassing more than Christianity and as having the capacity to be a force for life. The key issue was 'attitudes towards...' so it was not enough to simply give an account of the various manifestations of religion in the play. Many candidates took the view that the question was about formal religion and thus did not see that there was an opportunity to talk about Alan's attitudes (perverse though they may be) as inspired by religious yearning.

- (b) Candidates dealt ably with what is going on here. The large number of stage directions allowed them to move speedily into matters of drama, the nub of the question. There was able discussion of the scene as a re-lived experience that takes place both in the barn and in a consulting room simultaneously. Sound effects were often well discussed, and it was plain that many candidates could visualise what was going on as they were writing. Candidates were often able to locate and discuss the driving energy of the scene as it leads up to the most traumatic moment in the play.

Question 2 William Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*

- (a) Candidates were able to see clear differences between Olivia's household and Orsino's court. Some focused on atmosphere, pointing out both differences and similarities in terms of attitudes and values. Candidates often noted that both places share a level of self-indulgence, though manifested in different ways. Useful points were often made about Viola and Feste who stand between the two. There were responses that looked clearly at the various strata of Olivia's household, often with the aim of locating the comedy of the play here whilst seeing Orsino's court as more melancholy, more caught up in an untenable view of life. Less convincing answers were able to assert differences or similarities between the two without being able to see how they contribute to the shaping of the play's overall effect.
- (b) Candidates were often able to see how Malvolio is being deceived by others here. Better answers focused on the way that Malvolio is plainly self-deceived here (as the question suggests) and on how his self-indulgence and self-righteousness contribute to his comic foolishness at this point in the play. A number of candidates saw the question as an opportunity to outline the play's sub-plot. It was not. Comments on language tended to be rather limited, despite the richness of the passage presented. Many candidates were keen to point out how an audience may react ambivalently to Malvolio at this point. It is, after all, Malvolio's supreme moment of self-delusion, but one where the cracks are already starting to appear and our sympathy is perhaps beginning to move in his favour because of the cringe-worthy embarrassment presented here, obvious to all except Malvolio himself.

Question 3 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) Although the question asked unambiguously about Glendower, a number of candidates simply used it as a starting point for a more general discussion about values in the play, often by moving sideways to Hotspur. There was quite a strong tendency by candidates to simply outline what Glendower does, rather than discussing his 'presentation and significance.' Focus on particular moments would have helped at times. Candidates often hinted at Glendower as having a thematic significance in the play; few drew attention to his role as the embodiment of foolhardy self-belief, an aspect that is explored more fully through the character of Hotspur.
- (b) Candidates were quick to see the importance of Hal playing out some of the tensions between himself and his father here. There was often a lot of paraphrase or plot-telling, and many candidates got sidetracked onto discussions of *Henry IV, Part 2* in order to fill out their discussions of Falstaff and his ultimate relationship with the prince. There was plenty to talk about in the passage, and candidates who focused on the language were able to see in miniature many of the tensions of the play as a whole. Some candidates offered useful focus on the irony of Falstaff's remarks, and saw him as something more than an obese wastrel. There was often sound awareness of comic effects and of seriousness beneath the comic banter.

Question 4 Tom Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

Centres may be interested to know that although this text is apparently rather testing, it also produces a very high proportion of strong responses from candidates.

- (a) Many candidates engaged in a lively way with the issue, pointing out how ideas about actors and acting infuse the play from start to finish. Some wanted to focus on the Players; others on the way that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are helpless victims in someone else's drama. Useful discussion often centred round Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's discomfort about the fakery of acting, in particular the ways in which the Actors present death ('No...no, not for *us*, not like that. Dying is not romantic...') although, of course, there is the irony for the audience that this is exactly what is happening to these characters. There were a number of answers that paraphrased the action of the play without really attempting to come to terms with the question.

- (b) The passage proved a rich hunting ground for many. Candidates were able to contrast the attitudes of the two characters and to characterise their growing despair and their mixture of a desire for security (the return to the coin game) with the desire to make something happen by raising the fire alarm. Candidates often responded well to the fragmentary nature of the dialogue, and to the melancholy of Guildenstern's longing for certainty displayed in his recollection of the 'two-fold security' of the Chinese philosopher.

Question 5 Arthur Miller *A View from the Bridge*

- (a) Some very good answers here were confident about ideas of tragic heroes and were able to locate Eddie's 'flaw'. Most candidates were aware of Miller's modern take on the traditional role of the tragic hero in Greek tragedy. They agreed that he is indeed a tragic hero as he falls from grace, moving from being caring, loving and protective (in varying degrees) to being a flawed, obsessive, aggressive, irrational figure. Some candidates dismissed the idea of tragedy too quickly, seeing Eddie as entirely guilty and thus not warranting sympathy. Others simply responded to the idea of tragedy as meaning a sad series of events, backing up ideas through clear reference to text. The question did not, however, ask for the character study of Eddie that some candidates produced.
- (b) There was sometimes misunderstanding of the precise relationship between Eddie and Catherine in the play. Candidates who understood Eddie's jealousy were able to get close to the tension of the scene, to the ways in which Eddie disguises self-interest as concern. The best candidates noted the shifting perspectives of both characters, as Eddie's initial position of being over-protective and slightly obsessive, shifts to one of insecurity and vulnerability ('his smile goes, he looks at her like a lost boy') whilst Catherine's frustration with him ('with a blush, holding her ground') reflects her new-found confidence and self-awareness. Some candidates broadened the discussion to cover the whole of Eddie and Catherine's relationship as presented in the play, which led them too far from the actual question. One or two candidates made Catherine and Rodolpho the central focus. Balanced answers took on board the fact that Catherine changes too. Virtually all candidates grasped the fact that this is a turning point in the relationship.

Question 6 Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- (a) Candidates were sometimes uncertain about the term 'hypocrisy,' though the business of saying one thing and doing another is absolutely central to the play. Many produced interesting examples, ranging from the creation of Bunbury as a cover for louche behaviour to Cecily's bad manners at the tea table. Double lives, lies, pretence, dishonesty, contradiction and deceit were variously – and relevantly – adduced in order to focus response. More could perhaps have been made of the ways in which Wilde exposes hypocrisy, such as the moment when Lady Bracknell demands to look once again at Cecily when she realises that she has money in the funds. Few made use of the quotation in the question as a means of gaining focus on what hypocrisy might actually involve.
- (b) Candidates sometimes saw this as a gift question, a long awaited opportunity to discuss Lady Bracknell's significance in the play as a whole. Sadly, these responses often failed to look closely enough at what is presented in the passage. It is rich in things to talk about in itself, and candidates who were able to draw attention to Lady Bracknell's pompous epigrams and her general lack of tolerance for anything she does not approve of did well. Some weaker answers did not see the nature of caricature presented here, and thus saw Lady Bracknell as a realistically presented representative of upper class women of the period. This meant that much of the humour of the scene went unnoticed. 'Presentation' was the key word, so an account of the scene was not enough.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

General Comments

The general standard of candidates this session was once again satisfactory with some candidates achieving very good marks on nearly every text on the paper. Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems.

Candidates who spend some time considering the question and making a brief plan tend to do better than those who do not. Careful thought about the direction of the intended essay and a rigorous appraisal of the relevance of the textual material the candidate intends to focus on are key stages in the planning of the candidate's response. By understanding this candidates will avoid the general, often only partly relevant, narrative summary of large parts of the text which can weaken otherwise acceptable answers.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

This was the most popular text on the paper, with the majority of candidates choosing the Option (a) Claudius essay. Relatively few candidates seemed to recognize the background to the supporting quotation (Hamlet in his soliloquy after first meeting the Players) and the majority of responses treated each of the adjectives in turn in relation to Claudius's role and characterisation in the play; the general view agreeing with Hamlet's assessment. This often provided essays with a basic but workable structure and a framework to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the text, though 'Kindless' was often ignored or misunderstood. Some candidates were able to develop this approach in terms of the task ('How far do you agree...') by identifying areas, often more balancing positive aspects, which Hamlet ignored – statesmanship, political acumen, genuine (for some candidates at least) love for Gertrude and a guilty conscience. An alternative, often more successful approach, identified Claudius's role in Shakespeare's construct, as Hamlet's 'mighty opposite', with the characterisation largely a result of the demands of the plot and the structure of the play. For those who saw Hamlet's 'delay' or the 'revenge' genre, for example, as the focus of Shakespeare's construct, Claudius's part in the whole was not then defined by Hamlet's 'view' (which as some candidates pointed out shifted and developed as well), but by the needs of the dramatist.

Option (b) was a popular, if minority choice and there were many excellent responses. Most candidates were able to give a detailed context and some candidates succumbed to the temptation to tell the 'sad story' of Ophelia. This inevitably limited the amount of time candidates were able to focus on the passage itself. Many answers though did engage with the task and offered engaged and often well argued personal responses. Some responses were able to use 'an audience' to explore alternative readings and a few remembered that as Hamlet and Laertes wrestle over Ophelia's corpse, not only is there an audience in the theatre but also different watchers – the royal court, Horatio and even the grave digger – on stage. Good answers focused on the language and the dramatic action as well as what was said and done by all the characters – for example, nearly every answer focused on Hamlet's declaration of love for Ophelia (as one candidate pointed out 'typically too late and to the wrong person') but very few answers noticed Claudius's 'He is mad, Laertes' and explored why he might say that at this point in the play.

The Tempest

Option **(a)** was the majority choice, with most candidates offering at least a detailed survey of the various family relationships, with many arguing that Prospero's relationships with Ariel and Caliban were at least as important as the more obvious ones with Antonio and Miranda. Those who focused on 'Shakespeare's presentation' often did well, with many candidates developing responses showing how the relationships revealed and explored some key dualities in the play such as treachery and loyalty, nature and nurture, as well as more immediate issues of love, forgiveness and ambition. Weaker essays were too reliant on narrative summaries, which needed to be relevantly selected and shaped to the task to be successful. Better essays used the language and imagery of the text to underpin arguments about the nature of the presentations and how Shakespeare manipulates and controls the audience responses.

2(b): This option was less popular, with few candidates able to give a precise context and some unaware of who had created the strange drowsiness or that Ariel was in the immediate vicinity. Most essays showed some understanding of the passage and could comment effectively on Antonio's temptation of Sebastian and how that developed the audience's response to their roles and characterisation. Better essays explored the tone to good effect noticing how Sebastian at first misunderstands the seriousness of what Antonio is proposing. Those who concentrated on the action as well as the language found much to comment on, while weaker answers tended to tell the full history of the shipwreck and Antonio's previous treachery in too much detail.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was popular and most answers were able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text, with more limited essays concentrating on what happened at each of the settings, some only discussing Portsmouth and Mansfield Park itself. Better answers saw how the settings reflected and were instrumental in shaping the development of the characters, with the best answers connecting these points to Austen's concerns, such as nurture and education, marriage and the importance of status and wealth. Unsurprisingly, those who recognized the quotation as reflecting Fanny's view of matters did concentrate on the heroine and found much relevant material, with many pointing out that it was Edmund and not the setting that was of most significance to her. There were some excellent, rather ambivalent explorations of Henry's visit to Portsmouth – as one candidate put it: 'If it was what he saw in Portsmouth that caused him to run off with Mrs Rushworth this would be very ironic considering why Sir Thomas had sent Fanny there in the first place'.

3(b) There were fewer answers on this option, with most able to give quite a detailed and precise context to the passage. Many candidates focused on the characters and the various relationships, though only the better ones were able to analyse the literary features with confidence and an even smaller number had the necessary skills to really explore Austen's narrative techniques. The subtlety of the shifting of the narrative focus, the use of indirect speech and the carefully crafted prose style, for example, were all considered by some candidates; those who also were able to interpret details such as Julia's italicized 'I' and the effect of Rushworth's 'delighted haste' often did very well. Weaker answers offered a summary of the passage, often with some more general narrative context.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular, if minority choice in this session with the minority of candidates offering the option **(a)** essay, nearly all of which had some detailed knowledge of the text and were able to identify the 'digressions'. However few essays were able to evaluate the contribution these digressions made, though most understood at least partly how the development of the plot and the characterisation of the hen and the cock might be effected. Better answers were also able to see the humour and tone of the text and to explore Chaucer's poetic techniques in detail.

Option **(b)** was more popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's presentation of the two birds, here and in the rest of the text. Most candidates knew the extract well enough to explore the relationship and how it was developing in this extract, but only a few essays offered some detailed appreciation of the mock heroic techniques and Chaucer's language. These candidates often did very well.

Hard Times

This was a minority choice this session. Option **(a)** answers often revealed a good knowledge of the text, with detailed reference to the narratives of Rachel and Mrs Sparsit and some awareness of ways in which they might contrast or act as a foil to each other. Fewer essays were able to consider 'significance' in detail or with confidence and disappointingly few candidates seemed to be aware of the construct of Dickens as the writer, focusing instead on the 'stories' of the two ladies and how they might be compared.

Most answers could place the option **(b)** passage near the end of the text, though there was some uncertainty as to the precise narrative details that had led to this point. Nearly every candidate however was able to understand and explore the irony of Gradgrind's position in trying to touch the heart of his own great educational triumph's heart. Some candidates remembered Bitzer's earlier definition of a horse, unpicking layers of narrative irony from the setting and audience for this exchange. Weaker answers demonstrated these points less effectively through narrative summaries of Gradgrind's, Bitzer's and the 'whelp's' previous histories.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

This was once again very popular in this session with candidates split evenly between the options. Option **(a)** answers often showed a detailed knowledge of the various twists and turns in the relationship of Elizabeth and Donald, some remembering that her comment came early on in the narrative before she had a better knowledge of him. More successful answers focused on the evidence for their supposed 'tragical' views, often reaching the conclusion that in fact Elizabeth had far more emotional depth and genuine understanding of life than Donald, who was often seen as a superficial and fickle – his connection with Lucetta the usual evidence for this. Other approaches contrasted how they related to each other with their individual relationships with Henchard and less securely Lucetta.

Most option **(b)** candidates convincingly knew the context of the extract, weaker ones spending too long in sketching out Susan's sad history previous to the passage. Most essays also pointed out the significance of this passage and the irony (or 'malign fatefulness' for one candidate) of Henchard's revelation here with his imminent discovery of Susan's confessional letter. Nearly all candidates were able to discuss the various twists and turn of the father/daughter relationship with the most successful answers exploring the language and the dialogue in detail – Elizabeth's stillness, Henchard's loneliness and his reasons for holding back the 'full truth'.

Marvell Selection

This was a less popular choice of text in this session. Option **(a)** produced most answers with most candidates agreeing with the proposition and able to find a variety of topics on which he was successfully persuasive. A few answers were able to consider in detail his poetic methods of persuasion, exploring his language, imagery and tone effectively.

Option **(b)** was not a popular choice, and only a very few candidates were able to refer to the rest of the poem confidently, with only a passing awareness of the poetic conventions of the 'heroic'. Most answers though were able to say something about the presentation of Cromwell and his various 'qualities' as well as Marvell's strategies for revealing them.

The Rape of the Lock

This was a minority choice with an even split between Option **(a)** and Option **(b)**. Weaker candidates focused on the many ways in which the poem is 'not a love poem', often showing detailed knowledge and critical understanding of the poem. Other answers could explore the proposition in the context of Pope's satiric intentions, referring to the various poetic conventions he uses in detail.

Option **(b)** was more popular. Most answers showed a sound knowledge of the context of the extract, referring to the sylphs and the 'machinery' in detail and many candidates could explore the 'religious vocabulary' of Pope's presentation of Belinda's toilet, with a few answers linking the passage to Pope's wider concerns such as women and society. The most successful answers also saw the humour and for some gentleness of Pope's criticisms.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and very few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally did agree with the view offered and were able to refer to relevant poems, though a very few answers did challenge the idea of Hopkins's 'simplicity' of faith.

Option **(b)** was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. Those who did focus on the language and imagery and how Hopkins glorifies God and Christ in the poem did better.

The Duchess of Malfi

This was a more popular choice this session. Very few attempted option **(a)** but most thought the proposition was not entirely true, with the characters of the Duchess and Bosola living in the memory long after the detail of the language and imagery had faded. Knowledge of the play was generally secure and good answers were able to draw on a wealth of detail to support their language/imagery points.

10**(b)** was a popular choice with nearly every candidate able to explore how the action of this passage fitted into the wider text, though there was confusion about where in the torture of the Duchess this in fact fitted. The best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, picking up the ironies of action and language and relating them to the wider text. Some answers saw this development of the relationship between Ferdinand and the Duchess as melodramatic rather than convincing, though others saw this 'mental' torture as the key to Bosola's later 'conversion'.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

General Comments

The general standard of candidates this session was once again satisfactory with some candidates achieving very good marks on nearly every text on the paper. Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems.

Candidates who spend some time considering the question and making a brief plan tend to do better than those who do not. Careful thought about the direction of the intended essay and a rigorous appraisal of the relevance of the textual material the candidate intends to focus on are key stages in the planning of the candidate's response. By understanding this candidates will avoid the general, often only partly relevant, narrative summary of large parts of the text which can weaken otherwise acceptable answers.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

This was the most popular text on the paper, with the majority of candidates choosing the Option (a) Claudius essay. Relatively few candidates seemed to recognize the background to the supporting quotation (Hamlet in his soliloquy after first meeting the Players) and the majority of responses treated each of the adjectives in turn in relation to Claudius's role and characterisation in the play; the general view agreeing with Hamlet's assessment. This often provided essays with a basic but workable structure and a framework to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the text, though 'Kindless' was often ignored or misunderstood. Some candidates were able to develop this approach in terms of the task ('How far do you agree...') by identifying areas, often more balancing positive aspects, which Hamlet ignored – statesmanship, political acumen, genuine (for some candidates at least) love for Gertrude and a guilty conscience. An alternative, often more successful approach, identified Claudius's role in Shakespeare's construct, as Hamlet's 'mighty opposite', with the characterisation largely a result of the demands of the plot and the structure of the play. For those who saw Hamlet's 'delay' or the 'revenge' genre, for example, as the focus of Shakespeare's construct, Claudius's part in the whole was not then defined by Hamlet's 'view' (which as some candidates pointed out shifted and developed as well), but by the needs of the dramatist.

Option (b) was a popular, if minority choice and there were many excellent responses. Most candidates were able to give a detailed context and some candidates succumbed to the temptation to tell the 'sad story' of Ophelia. This inevitably limited the amount of time candidates were able to focus on the passage itself. Many answers though did engage with the task and offered engaged and often well argued personal responses. Some responses were able to use 'an audience' to explore alternative readings and a few remembered that as Hamlet and Laertes wrestle over Ophelia's corpse, not only is there an audience in the theatre but also different watchers – the royal court, Horatio and even the grave digger – on stage. Good answers focused on the language and the dramatic action as well as what was said and done by all the characters – for example, nearly every answer focused on Hamlet's declaration of love for Ophelia (as one candidate pointed out 'typically too late and to the wrong person') but very few answers noticed Claudius's 'He is mad, Laertes' and explored why he might say that at this point in the play.

The Tempest

Option **(a)** was the majority choice, with most candidates offering at least a detailed survey of the various family relationships, with many arguing that Prospero's relationships with Ariel and Caliban were at least as important as the more obvious ones with Antonio and Miranda. Those who focused on 'Shakespeare's presentation' often did well, with many candidates developing responses showing how the relationships revealed and explored some key dualities in the play such as treachery and loyalty, nature and nurture, as well as more immediate issues of love, forgiveness and ambition. Weaker essays were too reliant on narrative summaries, which needed to be relevantly selected and shaped to the task to be successful. Better essays used the language and imagery of the text to underpin arguments about the nature of the presentations and how Shakespeare manipulates and controls the audience responses.

2(b): This option was less popular, with few candidates able to give a precise context and some unaware of who had created the strange drowsiness or that Ariel was in the immediate vicinity. Most essays showed some understanding of the passage and could comment effectively on Antonio's temptation of Sebastian and how that developed the audience's response to their roles and characterisation. Better essays explored the tone to good effect noticing how Sebastian at first misunderstands the seriousness of what Antonio is proposing. Those who concentrated on the action as well as the language found much to comment on, while weaker answers tended to tell the full history of the shipwreck and Antonio's previous treachery in too much detail.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was popular and most answers were able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text, with more limited essays concentrating on what happened at each of the settings, some only discussing Portsmouth and Mansfield Park itself. Better answers saw how the settings reflected and were instrumental in shaping the development of the characters, with the best answers connecting these points to Austen's concerns, such as nurture and education, marriage and the importance of status and wealth. Unsurprisingly, those who recognized the quotation as reflecting Fanny's view of matters did concentrate on the heroine and found much relevant material, with many pointing out that it was Edmund and not the setting that was of most significance to her. There were some excellent, rather ambivalent explorations of Henry's visit to Portsmouth – as one candidate put it: 'If it was what he saw in Portsmouth that caused him to run off with Mrs Rushworth this would be very ironic considering why Sir Thomas had sent Fanny there in the first place'.

3(b) There were fewer answers on this option, with most able to give quite a detailed and precise context to the passage. Many candidates focused on the characters and the various relationships, though only the better ones were able to analyse the literary features with confidence and an even smaller number had the necessary skills to really explore Austen's narrative techniques. The subtlety of the shifting of the narrative focus, the use of indirect speech and the carefully crafted prose style, for example, were all considered by some candidates; those who also were able to interpret details such as Julia's italicized 'I' and the effect of Rushworth's 'delighted haste' often did very well. Weaker answers offered a summary of the passage, often with some more general narrative context.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular, if minority choice in this session with the minority of candidates offering the option **(a)** essay, nearly all of which had some detailed knowledge of the text and were able to identify the 'digressions'. However few essays were able to evaluate the contribution these digressions made, though most understood at least partly how the development of the plot and the characterisation of the hen and the cock might be effected. Better answers were also able to see the humour and tone of the text and to explore Chaucer's poetic techniques in detail.

Option **(b)** was more popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's presentation of the two birds, here and in the rest of the text. Most candidates knew the extract well enough to explore the relationship and how it was developing in this extract, but only a few essays offered some detailed appreciation of the mock heroic techniques and Chaucer's language. These candidates often did very well.

Hard Times

This was a minority choice this session. Option **(a)** answers often revealed a good knowledge of the text, with detailed reference to the narratives of Rachel and Mrs Sparsit and some awareness of ways in which they might contrast or act as a foil to each other. Fewer essays were able to consider 'significance' in detail or with confidence and disappointingly few candidates seemed to be aware of the construct of Dickens as the writer, focusing instead on the 'stories' of the two ladies and how they might be compared.

Most answers could place the option **(b)** passage near the end of the text, though there was some uncertainty as to the precise narrative details that had led to this point. Nearly every candidate however was able to understand and explore the irony of Gradgrind's position in trying to touch the heart of his own great educational triumph's heart. Some candidates remembered Bitzer's earlier definition of a horse, unpicking layers of narrative irony from the setting and audience for this exchange. Weaker answers demonstrated these points less effectively through narrative summaries of Gradgrind's, Bitzer's and the 'whelp's' previous histories.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

This was once again very popular in this session with candidates split evenly between the options. Option **(a)** answers often showed a detailed knowledge of the various twists and turns in the relationship of Elizabeth and Donald, some remembering that her comment came early on in the narrative before she had a better knowledge of him. More successful answers focused on the evidence for their supposed 'tragical' views, often reaching the conclusion that in fact Elizabeth had far more emotional depth and genuine understanding of life than Donald, who was often seen as a superficial and fickle – his connection with Lucetta the usual evidence for this. Other approaches contrasted how they related to each other with their individual relationships with Henchard and less securely Lucetta.

Most option **(b)** candidates convincingly knew the context of the extract, weaker ones spending too long in sketching out Susan's sad history previous to the passage. Most essays also pointed out the significance of this passage and the irony (or 'malign fatefulness' for one candidate) of Henchard's revelation here with his imminent discovery of Susan's confessional letter. Nearly all candidates were able to discuss the various twists and turn of the father/daughter relationship with the most successful answers exploring the language and the dialogue in detail – Elizabeth's stillness, Henchard's loneliness and his reasons for holding back the 'full truth'.

Marvell Selection

This was a less popular choice of text in this session. Option **(a)** produced most answers with most candidates agreeing with the proposition and able to find a variety of topics on which he was successfully persuasive. A few answers were able to consider in detail his poetic methods of persuasion, exploring his language, imagery and tone effectively.

Option **(b)** was not a popular choice, and only a very few candidates were able to refer to the rest of the poem confidently, with only a passing awareness of the poetic conventions of the 'heroic'. Most answers though were able to say something about the presentation of Cromwell and his various 'qualities' as well as Marvell's strategies for revealing them.

The Rape of the Lock

This was a minority choice with an even split between Option **(a)** and Option **(b)**. Weaker candidates focused on the many ways in which the poem is 'not a love poem', often showing detailed knowledge and critical understanding of the poem. Other answers could explore the proposition in the context of Pope's satiric intentions, referring to the various poetic conventions he uses in detail.

Option **(b)** was more popular. Most answers showed a sound knowledge of the context of the extract, referring to the sylphs and the 'machinery' in detail and many candidates could explore the 'religious vocabulary' of Pope's presentation of Belinda's toilet, with a few answers linking the passage to Pope's wider concerns such as women and society. The most successful answers also saw the humour and for some gentleness of Pope's criticisms.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and very few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally did agree with the view offered and were able to refer to relevant poems, though a very few answers did challenge the idea of Hopkins's 'simplicity' of faith.

Option **(b)** was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. Those who did focus on the language and imagery and how Hopkins glorifies God and Christ in the poem did better.

The Duchess of Malfi

This was a more popular choice this session. Very few attempted option **(a)** but most thought the proposition was not entirely true, with the characters of the Duchess and Bosola living in the memory long after the detail of the language and imagery had faded. Knowledge of the play was generally secure and good answers were able to draw on a wealth of detail to support their language/imagery points.

10**(b)** was a popular choice with nearly every candidate able to explore how the action of this passage fitted into the wider text, though there was confusion about where in the torture of the Duchess this in fact fitted. The best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, picking up the ironies of action and language and relating them to the wider text. Some answers saw this development of the relationship between Ferdinand and the Duchess as melodramatic rather than convincing, though others saw this 'mental' torture as the key to Bosola's later 'conversion'.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

General Comments

The general standard of candidates this session was once again satisfactory with some candidates achieving very good marks on nearly every text on the paper. Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems.

Candidates who spend some time considering the question and making a brief plan do better than those who do not.

Careful thought about the direction of the intended essay and a rigorous appraisal of the relevance of the textual material the candidate intends to focus on are key stages in the planning of the candidate's response. By understanding this candidates will avoid the general, often only partly relevant, narrative summary of large parts of the text which weakens so many otherwise acceptable answers.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

This was the most popular text on the paper, with about an even split between the two options. Nearly every essay attempting option (a) found relevant examples of 'spying and watching' to discuss, weaker responses focusing on presenting detailed summaries of the various points in the play at which this took place. Better answers distinguished between the two elements, often seeing spying as an integral part of the world Elsinore, a 'poison emanating from Claudius and infecting every relationship in the court' as one candidate expressed it. 'Watching' took some answers into considering issues such as 'metadrama', often using the scenes with the Ghost or the Mousetrap, as well as the more obvious moments such as Hamlet's confrontations with his mother and Ophelia. Those essays which developed a more figurative interpretation of these issues alongside the plot and characterisation points often did very well.

Option (b) was a popular choice and there were many excellent responses. Most candidates were able to give a detailed context but some spent too long "telling the story" of, for example, the 'sad story' of Ophelia and Hamlet or the Claudius/Gertrude/Old Hamlet background to the Mousetrap. These interesting but distracting narratives inevitably limited the amount of time candidates were able to focus on the passage itself. Many answers though did engage with the task and offered engaged and often well argued personal responses. Some responses were able to use 'an audience' to explore alternative readings, from within the play as well as from the audience – 'How', one candidate wondered 'was the rest of the Court responding to the exchanges between Ophelia and Hamlet? And what did the Players make of it all?' Similar questions were posed and addressed about reactions to the dumb show for Gertrude and of course Claudius. Many recalled Horatio and Hamlet's preceding conversation and imagined how Horatio was reacting. Those who concentrated on the language often did very well – most candidates could explore some of the darker interpretations of Hamlet's crude comments to his former lover (and many explored the ramifications of that word too, but there was perhaps more divergence in considering Ophelia's response – how far was she 'frightened and nervously embarrassed' and how far she 'was enjoying the attention of her ex' was often discussed. Nearly every answer had strong views and was able to express with some supporting references.

The Tempest

Option **(a)** was the minority choice, with most candidates offering at least a detailed summary of the subplot and the various points at which it intersects with the main events. Humour, comic relief and light relief were common approaches but also its role in echoing (undermining, for some) the main plot. Better answers also considered the tensions within the relationships of the three conspirators and how that reflected the 'revenge' theme elsewhere in the text. Those candidates who also used the language and imagery of the text to underpin arguments about the nature of the subplot and compared it to the main plot often did very well.

2(b): This option was popular, with most candidates able to give a precise context and some were aware of the 'strange drowsiness' that meant there were a number of sleeping figures on stage. Those who concentrated on the action as well as the language found much to comment on, while weaker answers tended to tell the full history of the shipwreck and Antonio's previous treachery in too much detail. The main concerns of treachery/loyalty and Prospero's control were often discussed, but few candidates saw the comedy in Gonzalo's support for the 'din' though one did wonder how Ariel felt in hearing his singing called 'a humming And that a strange one!' Better answers commented on the importance of music and song to the play as a whole and others also saw how cleverly Shakespeare keeps different strands of the play in focus – Ferdinand, Prospero's plans and Gonzalo's good nature.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was popular and most answers were able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text, with more limited essays concentrating on recounting the 'story' of Fanny and Henry's relationship. Better answers saw how the quotation reflected Fanny's self-deprecation as well as, for some, her lack of understanding of human emotions. Those who explored the relationship in the light of Henry's flirtation with Maria and Julia often concluded this was at least evidence that there was more potential for moral and genuine feeling in him. Others concentrated on how this relationship echoed and contrasted with Edmund and Mary. Better answers also considered the narrative structure and how this relationship is seen mainly through Fanny's eyes, exploring thoughtfully the effects of these narrative choices. Those who considered 'Austen's presentation' found much relevant and interesting material to discuss.

3(b) There were many good answers on this option, with most essays able to give quite a detailed and precise explanation of how this opening passage shaped the course of the novel. Many candidates focused on the characters and the various relationships, though only the better ones were able to analyse the literary features with confidence and an even smaller number had the necessary skills to really explore Austen's narrative techniques for presenting characters. The subtlety of the humour of and the importance of these early signs of Mrs Norris's true character, for example, were rarely identified and analysed. Some candidates were able to consider the use of indirect speech and the carefully crafted prose style, including the narrative voice. Weaker answers offered a summary of the passage, often with some more general narrative context and generalised opinions on status and wealth and of course marriage. More successful answers could take the presentation of these concerns here and use it to explore the development of them in the wider text.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

This was a minority choice in this session with few candidates offering either option. Option **(a)** essays nearly all had some detailed knowledge of the text and were able to identify examples of murder and violence. However few essays were able to evaluate their presentation with any confidence. Better answers were able to explore the language and imagery and link the presentation into Chaucer's mock heroic style more widely and the presentation of Chauntecleer as the hero and Reynard as the villain.

Option **(b)** answers ranged from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's presentation of the 'col-fox' here and in the rest of the text. Most candidates knew the extract well enough to offer a summary, but only a few essays offered some detailed appreciation of the mock heroic techniques and Chaucer's language. These candidates often did very well, as did those who explored the Nun's Priest's tone and self-deprecation.

Hard Times

This was a minority choice this session. Option **(a)** answers often revealed a good knowledge of the text, with detailed reference to Bounderby's narrative as well as in some cases his role and characterisation. Few candidates agreed with the proposition and some better answers explored the effect of his hypocrisy as well as his role as a foil to Gradgrind. Better answers also saw his role in terms of the presentation of Coketown and the industrial world of the novel. He was also seen in terms of his relationship with Blackpool and Bitzer. Most though concentrated on his relationship with Louisa and Gradgrind in which there was plenty of relevant material.

Most answers could place the option **(b)** passage generally, though there was some uncertainty as to the precise narrative details that had led to this point. Weaker answers concentrated on the narrative, summarizing the Louisa/Harthouse story and Mrs Sparsit's relationship with Bounderby and 'hatred' of Louisa. Those who focused on the detail of the passage did very well, exploring Dickens's style and use of literary techniques to great effect, commenting for example on the extraordinary depth and range of the descriptions of Mrs Sparsit and the effect of the pathetic fallacies he employed, as well as the methods used to build suspense and of course mystery. Those who remembered how the novel would appear in instalments commented on the masterly way in which the reader is left wondering about Louisa's fate: 'Where indeed had she gone?' as one candidate asked.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

This was once again very popular in this session with answers split evenly between the options. Option **(a)** answers often showed a detailed knowledge of the text, with most concentrating on Henchard himself as an example either for or against the proposition. Some more limited answers dealt with each of the main characters in turn, but some essays were able to develop a more structured argument, often concluding that patience and fortitude as shown by Elizabeth and to a lesser extent Susan were in the end more likely to lead to happiness than the rashness of a Henchard and Lucetta. Some answers also compared the cool calculation of Donald who 'always learned from experience how to get the best for himself' with the emotional outbursts of Henchard, with the consensus view being that though Donald might be more successful Henchard in the end was the more sympathetic personality.

Most option **(b)** candidates convincingly knew the context of the extract, weaker ones spending too long in sketching out Susan's sad future and where this all led to for Henchard. Those who focused on the detail of the passage found much to explore in Hardy's style – the use of dialogue, the building of tension and the development of character. Some candidates considered the language – the description of the auctioneer for example – whereas others concentrated more on the effect of the dialogue on the reader, especially in leaving a lasting impression of Henchard.

Marvell Selection

This was a less popular choice of text in this session. Option **(a)** produced most answers with most candidates agreeing with the proposition and able to find a number of poems which supported this. Better answers were able to draw on a wide range of apposite quotations to demonstrate the range and variety of Marvell's presentation of either earthly pleasure or heaven. Less successful answers tended to simply summarise poems more or less relevant to the task.

Option **(b)** was not a popular choice, and only a very few candidates were able to refer to the rest of the poem confidently, with only a passing awareness of the poetic conventions of the 'pastoral' traditions. Most answers though were able to say something about the presentation of nymph's distress and some of the poetic 'qualities' and methods Marvell employs.

The Rape of the Lock

This was very much a minority choice in this session with an even split between Option **(a)** and Option **(b)**. Candidates were focused on the many issues discussed by Pope which still have relevance – attitudes to woman, relationships, society and morals for example – but few answers could explore the proposition in the context of Pope's satiric intentions or make a case for him as a poet.

Option **(b)** was generally not well done. Answers showed limited knowledge of the context of the extract, with only a few answers linking the passage successfully to Pope's wider concerns such as women and society. Few answers were able to explore the style or the mock heroic conventions with any confidence. Those that did often did very well.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and very few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally agreed with the view offered and were able to refer to some relevant poems, though very few answers had much understanding of the 'sonnet' form or conventions on which Hopkins's was building his own poetry.

Option **(b)** was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. Those who did focus on the language and imagery and how Hopkins glories in the relationship and the love between the two brothers and what it reveals of 'nature' and Hopkins.

The Duchess of Malfi

This was a more popular choice this session. Relatively few attempted option **(a)** but most thought the proposition was not entirely true, with the characters and ends of the Duchess and Bosola suggesting that integrity did not always bring a happy outcome. Knowledge of the play was generally secure and good answers were able to draw on a wealth of detail to support their arguments.

10**(b)** was a popular choice with nearly every candidate able to explore how the action of this passage fitted into the wider text, though there was confusion about the appropriateness of the outcome for some of the characters – many thinking that the Cardinal for example gets away lightly. The best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, picking up the ironies of action and language and relating them to the wider text. Some answers saw the realization of guilt from Ferdinand and the Cardinal as too little to late: some even thought Bosola's 'gainst mine own good nature' not very convincing. Many though did explore the action and the dramatic qualities of this extract to good effect and could see Webster's sense of theatre coming through as the play reaches its expected and bloody conclusion.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
20th Century Texts

General comments.

All the questions were highly accessible and those using a leading quotation offered an opportunity to adopt a critical stance. Candidates who did not refer to the quotation were not penalised, but obviously those who did, tended to produce more considered, complex answers. Given that so many candidates opt for the **(b)** questions it is important that they understand the phrase *critical appreciation*. This session, many thought that it meant they had to criticise the writer, usually Pinter and Narayan for lack of realism, or that to appreciate meant to express general approval. Candidates need to be reminded that the phrase refers to one of the key assessment objectives: that they demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings and that the **(b)** questions, whether they use this phrase or alternatives like *the effects of the writing or methods and concerns* are specifically designed to give them this opportunity. Some of the **(b)** questions this session specifically did not ask candidates to link the passage to the wider text. This was to encourage them to focus on the extracts and avoid long narrative accounts. The most successful candidates looked in detail at the narrative, dramatic and poetic methods within the extracts using the context and a reading of the whole text to inform their discussion of the significance of particular ideas and details. Typically, weaker scripts depended on paraphrased approaches, which at best suggested some limited understanding of the content, or offered narrative accounts to explain the context of the extracts. Slightly stronger scripts used the extract as a springboard for general discussion, usually of theme or character. Scripts ranging from the competent to the expert showed a good working knowledge of such literary terminology as *irony, symbolism, overlapping dialogue, stream of consciousness* and *narrative point of view* and were able to explore the effects of these within the passages, together with some perceptive comments on imagery, the choice of language for tone and occasionally sentence structure for rhythm and impact. Candidates are expected to show skill in the selection and use of quotations. The best scripts showed an ability to weave pertinent quotations from the extracts, the wider texts and critical material, seamlessly into discussions, to provide examples for sustained analytical commentary and to develop ideas. Modest scripts tended to use fewer quotations or references to support an opinion about character or theme, but tended not to comment much on language. Weaker scripts using a running commentary approach, tended to preface each paragraph with a quotation and tried to explain the meaning. Candidates who showed themselves to be capable of writing relevant coherent arguments in response to both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, sometimes limited their achievement by either not having enough specific textual detail available or by referring so generally to other scenes 'earlier' or 'later' in the text that they could only be credited with a general basic knowledge and some awareness of structure. Drama responses, particularly, sometimes lack an assured approach to addressing dramatic effects and tend to offer narrow, narrative summary accounts or general descriptions of character. Candidates find it challenging to balance the close study of the passage in relation to wider textual issues, either from within the text in terms of the significance of particular details or aspects of theme or from the wider context of social, historical, cultural or theatrical. To avoid pedestrian, linear approaches candidates should be encouraged to develop personal responses based on close readings of the text and the skills to analyse narrative, dramatic and poetic methods independently.

Overall the standard of expressive English was sound: in some cases it was highly fluent, clear and maturely articulated; in other cases, responses were clearly restricted by sustained imprecision in expression, but at all levels, the majority of the candidates showed a genuine engagement with the texts and had clearly enjoyed studying them. Generally, candidates appeared to be consistently and competently aware of the need to structure their answers. Most showed clear paragraphing, offering discrete relevant points supported in many cases by relevant textual references and pertinent quotations and followed up with more detailed commentary. In addition, well chosen connectives such as *furthermore, moreover* and *conversely* offered a clear direction to the discussion. Introductions are becoming more focused with more candidates beginning to use the terms of the questions to structure their answers and to sharpen their responses by critically analysing key terms such as *effects/effectiveness* and showing how various methods are used to present the writer's concerns. *How far* should always encourage an independent, personal opinion. In the better scripts, the final paragraphs offered a considered reflection, a substantial conclusion to the question.

In a small minority of scripts some miscalculation of time resulted in uneven answers; there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 MARGARET ATWOOD : Cat's Eye

Atwood remained a fairly popular choice for a few Centres with the **(b)** question proving to be the preferred option.

- (a)** Many candidates were able to make some valid points about Stephen's role and significance. The strongest, most literary answers, had pertinent quotations available to illustrate Stephen's ideas about time and linked them to the structure of the novel and the gradual emergence of Elaine's memories. Elaine's paintings in memory of her brother were also used to explain her development. A few mentioned the quotation in the question and either used it as a springboard for a comparison of the two characters, or less productively as a discussion of the significance of the Cat's Eye marble and forgot about Stephen. More modest answers tended to offer a character sketch based on material about Elaine's early childhood and used this to explain her 'preference' for the company of men rather than girls.
- (b)** A significant number of candidates found this extract difficult to place contextually. Better candidates recognised that this came from a time when Elaine's memories are beginning to float to the surface after the birth of her daughter. As evidence they cited the 'sinister men who lurk in ravines' and the feelings of 'standing outside a closed door while decisions....disapproving judgements" were made about her. This led modest candidates into other more obvious episodes in the novel and a character sketch of Elaine explaining her preference for male company in reaction to her abuse by her friends. Good candidates were able to explore Elaine's ambivalence towards the meeting, focusing on the ironies of the first line, men's refusal 'to confront their own emotions' and her explanation that sisterhood was difficult for her because she 'never had a sister'. These candidates showed a sensitive awareness to tone, picking up on the negative judgemental quality of some of the diction, the repetition and modification from the general of 'you've paid your dues; to the personal 'I haven't paid my dues' and the dismissiveness of 'a few gasps and wheezes'. They showed less inclination to comment on sentence structure but there were obvious things to say about the strategic use of short sentences for example. Weaker candidates confused the voice of the meeting with Elaine's voice, ignored the last paragraph and argued that Elaine was anti-men. Some candidates made simplistic assertions about Atwood's own feminist views or offered personal reflections on gender politics.

Question 2 R.K.NARAYAN: The English Teacher

This was the most popular text with the **(b)** question again proving to be the preferred option. The main discriminator for both questions was the extent to which candidates could focus on methods and effects. While both questions produced a range of achievement, more candidates performed better on the **(b)** question than the **(a)**.

- (a)** This was an accessible topic. Almost any location in the novel could have been used: the houses, the Schools, the station, the riverbank and the funeral place or the medium's beautiful garden. Few candidates had the confidence to depart from prepared answers or passage commentary to attempt this question, but the most accomplished responses rose to the challenge of giving an independent evaluation of 'the effects of Narayan's presentation'. They had pertinent quotations available, ably integrating detailed textual knowledge and an appreciation of Narayan's narrative technique within a well-developed argument of how the narrator's perception of place, like the station for example, revealed aspects of his feelings and character development. One candidate commented on the use of Krishna's memories of his childhood, prompted by his father's letter to give a portrait of traditional rural Indian life and contrasted this with the ambivalent attitude to modern developments in Malgudi, the restaurant, the housing-estates. More modest responses were fashioned out of an understanding of some of the novel's concerns, comparing the description of the two Schools for example, or showing how the rapture over the new house set up the tragedy of Susilla's death and the whole discussion on predictability and unpredictability, but few were able to discuss the effects of Narayan's language beyond the mention of the significant Jasmine motif. Weaker answers showed a tendency to generalised praise for Narayan, an over-dependence on biographical material and a lack of specific textual knowledge.

- (b)** Almost all candidates attempted to respond to the question about its effectiveness as an ending. Answers were often prefaced with apposite contextual allusions reflecting clear understanding of the textual and cultural context. Many candidates used knowledge of Hindu stages of life effectively to convey understanding of Krishna's journey through life, of the mysticism and inner detachment that enable Krishna to achieve this extraordinary moment of integration. Better candidates could comment on the content and explain why he should feel 'grateful to Life and Death' with some seeing it as the conclusion of the East versus West debate, a return to his roots. Many raised the question of whether an 'educated, modern' or 'non-Indian' reader could accept the ending, with the more accomplished candidates basing their conclusions on the understanding that it was the quality of the writing which enabled 'a willing suspension of disbelief'. Some focused on the energy in the diction of words like 'quickened...vigour...surcharged.... forces', the implications of 'noble intoxication' and 'hypnotic melody', the impact of the 'extraordinary smile', the use of light in the description of Susilla here and elsewhere in the novel and the romantic personification of the dawn. More modest answers focused on the relationship between Susilla and Krishna, tracked Krishna's feelings through the extract, clearly understood the significance of the jasmine and thought Narayan was showing how love conquers death. They considered the issue of appropriateness as an ending in terms of credibility, but autobiographical details tended to encourage many to argue that readers should accept this as a realistic experience because Hindus believed in reincarnation. Weaker responses tended towards a simplistic narrative approach summarising the content rather than exploring the effects of the writing; in some cases answers were unbalanced with excessive reference to the wider text. Others offered a paraphrase of the extract, copying significant passages showing limited understanding of the whole text or question. Some criticised Narayan for being unrealistic in asking the reader to believe in life after death or suggested that Krishna was mad, dreaming or had died and gone to Heaven.

Question 3 LES MURRAY: from Selected Poems

Very few candidates offered this text. Though the **(a)** question was very accessible, no one chose to do it. A small number of candidates chose the **(b)** question and showed some understanding of its theme but no discussion of its poetic methods and effects.

Question 4 CARYL CHURCHILL: Top Girls

This was a popular text and candidates have obviously enjoyed studying it. Both questions generated a lot of engagement with the **(a)** question attracting as many candidates as the **(b)** question. On the whole, the best of the essays on the **(a)** question were better than those on the extract, though both questions required exploration of the writer's methods and concerns.

- (a)** The best answers ably discussed character, setting and theatricality in Act One within the context of the whole play. They addressed methods: the inclusion of historical and fictional characters; the doubling of the parts and links with characters in the rest of the play to show how Churchill universalises her concerns about the position of women and their experiences in various sorts of society, in the work place and at home. There was detailed discussion of the contribution made by the characters to the themes of motherhood, education, submission and rebellion against the patriarchy and to the development of Marlene in the play, with some questioning of the cost of 'success' for these top girls. Good candidates focused on Act One in detail but ranged confidently around the whole text, supporting and developing the discussion with pertinent quotations and specific references to characters and scenes in the rest of the play. More modest answers showed a sound understanding of some aspects of the themes but tended to restrict the discussion to the first act and see the characters as successful. They commented on the significance of the setting, the women's behaviour and treatment of the silent waitress but references to dramatic methods tended to be generalised assertions on the use of overlapping dialogue and bad language. Weaker responses adopted a narrative approach to the question by naming and narrating qualities about each historical character, sometimes without making links with either Marlene's character or the rest of the play. They often showed insecure knowledge about the characters, little understanding of their role and no consideration of the text as drama.
- (b)** The extract stimulated some quite close analysis of the presentation of the two characters with secure knowledge of the context and engagement with the development of the relationship. The best responses tracked the fluctuating emotions within the scene, referring closely to language, to style, changing tone of voice and the dramatic effect of the role of Angie in the setting up of the meeting. They were able to explain the significance of this exchange within the context of the play

as a whole, the price for Marlene's success, class issues, the effect of the manipulation of the chronology on the audience and how this makes them reassess Marlene. In more modest answers, there was a sound understanding of the relationship but the discussion of dramatic methods and effects was more partial. Candidates understood what the characters were arguing about and were able to identify some sarcasm but they were not able to detect the shifts in tone and nuance. Reference was sometimes made to 'overlapping dialogue' without pointing out exactly where this occurs and what it signifies. In weaker responses, understanding was entirely limited to treating the characters as real people expressed within a narrative commentary of the extract. For example: 'the women were obviously not close because Joyce did not even prepare a proper meal for her and they did not know each other's habits'. Candidates need to be encouraged to look more closely at dialogue writing, the way one character picks up the words of the previous speaker for example, and how the writer shapes the audience's response to the characters.

Question 5 HAROLD PINTER: The Homecoming.

This was a popular choice of texts with many candidates showing a good level of personal engagement, though in order to do well on either question, they had to get beyond the moral outrage and enjoy the dark humour in the way Pinter challenges an audience's assumptions about family life and exploits our uncertainties and discomfort for dramatic purposes. Candidates sometimes use the word 'absurd' in relation to the text without really showing what it means, and to assert that the characters do not communicate, that their interactions are unrealistic and the writer wishes to point out the meaningless of human existence. This is not a productive line to take.

- (a) There were many good answers to this question. Many candidates made good use of the distinction offered in the question comment, opting sometimes for 'humiliation' over 'escape' or the opposite, or even better, looking at the issue from the various angles that allow for a rounded response. It could be argued that Teddy was weak and overawed by his family and had made a terrible mistake in taking his wife home or that he was a Machiavelli who was taking his revenge on the whole pack of them. Both these positions were pursued very vigorously with the best candidates supporting their arguments by detailed exploration of specific scenes and pertinent quotations. The finest, most assured answers recognised that Pinter prompts questions rather than offering answers and that Teddy, his appearance and departure, remain enigmatic. More modest answers responded well to the question, but argued in general terms without detailed support from the text or offered more pedestrian character studies. Some of them switched the focus of the question to Ruth and her role in Teddy's humiliation. Weaker responses tended to treat the characters as real and attempted to explain their behaviour, often speculating on the reasons for Teddy's departure in the first place, his family's feeling towards his profession, their jealousy of his having a wife and criticised Teddy for failure to control his wife.
- (b) This was a popular question with most candidates noting the overt physical and verbal violence in the scene and the covert tensions between the characters. The best responses focused on the interactions between the characters, the choice of language, the use of pauses and the stage directions though very few saw these in terms of slapstick comedy. Some however did debate alternative ways of playing the ending as either total humiliation for Teddy, or the characters squaring up for a fight with Teddy's repeated 'Come on then' read as a challenge. The most successful scripts effectively seized opportunities to analyse the complexities of the relationships between the scene in relation to events elsewhere, Max's relationships with his sons, his bullying of Sam, the truth about Jesse, and the way Joey's collapse at Ruth's feet nicely anticipates the final tableau of the play. More modest answers tended to rely on character sketches, making some useful links to the rest of the play and commenting on the obvious aspects of the scene. Some weaker responses adopted a narrative approach and told the story, others attempted to paraphrase or relied almost entirely on the extract as textual evidence to support their views which limited the range of discussion. They tended to discuss the characters as though they were real and criticised Pinter for writing unrealistic interactions.

Question 6 T.S.ELIOT: Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men

This was not a popular choice of text; the (b) question was the more popular option.

- (a) There were very few attempts at this question, with candidates choosing to look at the descriptive treatment of scenes from 'The Waste Land' and 'Prufrock'. At best these showed an ability to use relevant knowledge to address the question with some clear understanding of some aspects of Eliot's concerns, but discussion on poetic method and effect tended to be partial.
- (b) Many of the candidates who attempted this question did quite well, drawing out its sordid atmosphere and the strangely projected persona of the moon. The best scripts showed an ability to explore aspects of poetic method, covering the structure of the piece, the sensuous appeal of the imagery and the assonance, repetition and rhymes suggesting obsessive fantasy. There was some insight into the presentation of ideas, paying particular attention to the impact of the final lines with useful connections being made to 'Preludes', the female figure of 'Portrait of a Lady' and the mechanical half-life of 'Prufrock'. More modest answers tended to be less coherent, a running commentary attempting to come to terms with the meaning and some partial discussion of the effects.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: Death and the King's Horseman

This is gradually becoming a more popular text with candidates tending to display a sound awareness of the concerns but little recognition of the dramatic methods and effects. The (a) and (b) questions proved to be equally popular though the achievement level tended to be higher on the (a) question.

- (a) Candidates made good use of the question, distinguishing between and exploring both 'honour' and 'duty' and showing an understanding of the relationship between the two for various characters. The most assured answers effectively discussed and illustrated the obvious aspects of the play and broadened the discussion to question the centrality of these ideas, showing a good understanding of the complexity of Soyinka's concern and presentation. Most good answers were able to focus on specific moments of confrontation and had pertinent quotations to support their discussion, making use of Elesin's manipulation of the market women, the roles of Iyalaja and the Praise Singer, the impact of the Not-I speech and a discussion of how far Pilkings was to blame for Elesin's failure in performing his duty. There was some insight into the presentation of Pilkings as a man who fulfils his duty, but lacks honour and the significance of Olunde's decision to take his father's place in the light of his experience of both Yuroban and British culture and education. More modest answers listed examples of duty and the ways these were or were not fulfilled, presenting a sound but limited discussion of character and events but lacking much sense of the dramatic methods and effects. Weaker answers offered basic narrative, sometimes insecure responses.
- (b) There was a general ability to place the extract in context and to discuss the significance of the passage in relation to plot development and revelation of character. Almost all the candidates commented on the way both characters fail to understand the Yoruban traditions, the misunderstandings of Amusa's note and Pilkings' role in the tragedy. There was some recognition the presentation of Jane as being more sympathetic, while at the same time exposing her limitations and this was supported with evidence from the extract and her scene with Olunde. Comment on the way language and tone shaped an audience's response to the British was usually apt and supported by quotation but few saw the comic naivety of the British and the impact of this in the design of the play. Comments on dramatic effect focused on the significance of the drums. Weaker responses relied on a narrative approach, to explain the significance of the scene or attempted to paraphrase.

Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

This was a moderately popular text with slightly more candidates preferring the (b) option though achievement was probably higher on the (a) question.

- (a) Candidates at all levels did reasonably well on this question. Most had studied the significance of the lighthouse itself and even weaker answers were able to discuss what this meant to different characters. The best answers ranged confidently around the text, selecting apt quotations and references to explore the symbolism of light. They were able to unite the goal of the lighthouse, finally reached and bringing resolution, with Lily's painting, itself a manipulation of light and shade;

the light that Mrs Ramsey brought to human situations and the illumination sought by the philosophers. There were some very good explorations of the way light is used in the house itself, for example in the dinner party scene, but the shadow part of life, though temporarily hidden as a ram's skull might be covered by a shawl, had to be faced just as death and war intervened in the progress of the novel and the darkness reasserted itself between flashes from the lighthouse. More modest answers recognised and understood the quotation as referring to 'fame' and 'ambition' and applied this to various characters.

- (b)** The passage produced a wider range of answers. Those who clearly knew the context and the significance of the quotation from Tennyson were able to comment on Mr Ramsey quite successfully and made some thoughtful observations about Mrs Ramsey's attitude towards her husband, choosing phrases like 'domesticity triumphed' for explanation. They attempted to track the stream of consciousness, and some of the better answers were able to discuss its effect from examples in the extract, but generally candidates there was much more scope for detailed analysis of the diction and effect of the sentence structure. No one remarked on the impact of the repetition with reversal of 'quivered' and 'shivered' framing the paragraph from lines 9 to 13 for example. Many candidates did not recognise the significance of the poem or indeed that it was a poem at all and thought that there was some problem of communication, that Mrs Ramsey did not understand her husband. The terms 'short-sighted' and 'long-sighted' were discussed as ways of differentiating between husband and wife and this was not always well understood. A significant number drifted into a general discussion of the relationship in the novel as a whole, tending to rely on generalised character sketches.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
20th Century Texts

General comments.

All the questions were highly accessible and those using a leading quotation offered an opportunity to adopt a critical stance. Candidates who did not refer to the quotation were not penalised, but obviously those who did, tended to produce more considered, complex answers. Given that so many candidates opt for the **(b)** questions it is important that they understand the phrase *critical appreciation*. This session, many thought that it meant they had to criticise the writer, usually Pinter and Narayan for lack of realism, or that to appreciate meant to express general approval. Candidates need to be reminded that the phrase refers to one of the key assessment objectives: that they demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings and that the **(b)** questions, whether they use this phrase or alternatives like *the effects of the writing or methods and concerns* are specifically designed to give them this opportunity. Some of the **(b)** questions this session specifically did not ask candidates to link the passage to the wider text. This was to encourage them to focus on the extracts and avoid long narrative accounts. The most successful candidates looked in detail at the narrative, dramatic and poetic methods within the extracts using the context and a reading of the whole text to inform their discussion of the significance of particular ideas and details. Typically, weaker scripts depended on paraphrased approaches, which at best suggested some limited understanding of the content, or offered narrative accounts to explain the context of the extracts. Slightly stronger scripts used the extract as a springboard for general discussion, usually of theme or character. Scripts ranging from the competent to the expert showed a good working knowledge of such literary terminology as *irony, symbolism, overlapping dialogue, stream of consciousness* and *narrative point of view* and were able to explore the effects of these within the passages, together with some perceptive comments on imagery, the choice of language for tone and occasionally sentence structure for rhythm and impact. Candidates are expected to show skill in the selection and use of quotations. The best scripts showed an ability to weave pertinent quotations from the extracts, the wider texts and critical material, seamlessly into discussions, to provide examples for sustained analytical commentary and to develop ideas. Modest scripts tended to use fewer quotations or references to support an opinion about character or theme, but tended not to comment much on language. Weaker scripts using a running commentary approach, tended to preface each paragraph with a quotation and tried to explain the meaning. Candidates who showed themselves to be capable of writing relevant coherent arguments in response to both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, sometimes limited their achievement by either not having enough specific textual detail available or by referring so generally to other scenes 'earlier' or 'later' in the text that they could only be credited with a general basic knowledge and some awareness of structure. Drama responses, particularly, sometimes lack an assured approach to addressing dramatic effects and tend to offer narrow, narrative summary accounts or general descriptions of character. Candidates find it challenging to balance the close study of the passage in relation to wider textual issues, either from within the text in terms of the significance of particular details or aspects of theme or from the wider context of social, historical, cultural or theatrical. To avoid pedestrian, linear approaches candidates should be encouraged to develop personal responses based on close readings of the text and the skills to analyse narrative, dramatic and poetic methods independently.

Overall the standard of expressive English was sound: in some cases it was highly fluent, clear and maturely articulated; in other cases, responses were clearly restricted by sustained imprecision in expression, but at all levels, the majority of the candidates showed a genuine engagement with the texts and had clearly enjoyed studying them. Generally, candidates appeared to be consistently and competently aware of the need to structure their answers. Most showed clear paragraphing, offering discrete relevant points supported in many cases by relevant textual references and pertinent quotations and followed up with more detailed commentary. In addition, well chosen connectives such as *furthermore, moreover* and *conversely* offered a clear direction to the discussion. Introductions are becoming more focused with more candidates beginning to use the terms of the questions to structure their answers and to sharpen their responses by critically analysing key terms such as *effects/effectiveness* and showing how various methods are used to present the writer's concerns. *How far* should always encourage an independent, personal opinion. In the better scripts, the final paragraphs offered a considered reflection, a substantial conclusion to the question.

In a small minority of scripts some miscalculation of time resulted in uneven answers; there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 MARGARET ATWOOD : Cat's Eye

Atwood remained a fairly popular choice for a few Centres with the **(b)** question proving to be the preferred option.

- (a)** Many candidates were able to make some valid points about Stephen's role and significance. The strongest, most literary answers, had pertinent quotations available to illustrate Stephen's ideas about time and linked them to the structure of the novel and the gradual emergence of Elaine's memories. Elaine's paintings in memory of her brother were also used to explain her development. A few mentioned the quotation in the question and either used it as a springboard for a comparison of the two characters, or less productively as a discussion of the significance of the Cat's Eye marble and forgot about Stephen. More modest answers tended to offer a character sketch based on material about Elaine's early childhood and used this to explain her 'preference' for the company of men rather than girls.
- (b)** A significant number of candidates found this extract difficult to place contextually. Better candidates recognised that this came from a time when Elaine's memories are beginning to float to the surface after the birth of her daughter. As evidence they cited the 'sinister men who lurk in ravines' and the feelings of 'standing outside a closed door while decisions....disapproving judgements" were made about her. This led modest candidates into other more obvious episodes in the novel and a character sketch of Elaine explaining her preference for male company in reaction to her abuse by her friends. Good candidates were able to explore Elaine's ambivalence towards the meeting, focusing on the ironies of the first line, men's refusal 'to confront their own emotions' and her explanation that sisterhood was difficult for her because she 'never had a sister'. These candidates showed a sensitive awareness to tone, picking up on the negative judgemental quality of some of the diction, the repetition and modification from the general of 'you've paid your dues; to the personal 'I haven't paid my dues' and the dismissiveness of 'a few gasps and wheezes'. They showed less inclination to comment on sentence structure but there were obvious things to say about the strategic use of short sentences for example. Weaker candidates confused the voice of the meeting with Elaine's voice, ignored the last paragraph and argued that Elaine was anti-men. Some candidates made simplistic assertions about Atwood's own feminist views or offered personal reflections on gender politics.

Question 2 R.K.NARAYAN: The English Teacher

This was the most popular text with the **(b)** question again proving to be the preferred option. The main discriminator for both questions was the extent to which candidates could focus on methods and effects. While both questions produced a range of achievement, more candidates performed better on the **(b)** question than the **(a)**.

- (a)** This was an accessible topic. Almost any location in the novel could have been used: the houses, the Schools, the station, the riverbank and the funeral place or the medium's beautiful garden. Few candidates had the confidence to depart from prepared answers or passage commentary to attempt this question, but the most accomplished responses rose to the challenge of giving an independent evaluation of 'the effects of Narayan's presentation'. They had pertinent quotations available, ably integrating detailed textual knowledge and an appreciation of Narayan's narrative technique within a well-developed argument of how the narrator's perception of place, like the station for example, revealed aspects of his feelings and character development. One candidate commented on the use of Krishna's memories of his childhood, prompted by his father's letter to give a portrait of traditional rural Indian life and contrasted this with the ambivalent attitude to modern developments in Malgudi, the restaurant, the housing-estates. More modest responses were fashioned out of an understanding of some of the novel's concerns, comparing the description of the two Schools for example, or showing how the rapture over the new house set up the tragedy of Susilla's death and the whole discussion on predictability and unpredictability, but few were able to discuss the effects of Narayan's language beyond the mention of the significant Jasmine motif. Weaker answers showed a tendency to generalised praise for Narayan, an over-dependence on biographical material and a lack of specific textual knowledge.

- (b)** Almost all candidates attempted to respond to the question about its effectiveness as an ending. Answers were often prefaced with apposite contextual allusions reflecting clear understanding of the textual and cultural context. Many candidates used knowledge of Hindu stages of life effectively to convey understanding of Krishna's journey through life, of the mysticism and inner detachment that enable Krishna to achieve this extraordinary moment of integration. Better candidates could comment on the content and explain why he should feel 'grateful to Life and Death' with some seeing it as the conclusion of the East versus West debate, a return to his roots. Many raised the question of whether an 'educated, modern' or 'non-Indian' reader could accept the ending, with the more accomplished candidates basing their conclusions on the understanding that it was the quality of the writing which enabled 'a willing suspension of disbelief'. Some focused on the energy in the diction of words like 'quickened...vigour...surcharged.... forces', the implications of 'noble intoxication' and 'hypnotic melody', the impact of the 'extraordinary smile', the use of light in the description of Susilla here and elsewhere in the novel and the romantic personification of the dawn. More modest answers focused on the relationship between Susilla and Krishna, tracked Krishna's feelings through the extract, clearly understood the significance of the jasmine and thought Narayan was showing how love conquers death. They considered the issue of appropriateness as an ending in terms of credibility, but autobiographical details tended to encourage many to argue that readers should accept this as a realistic experience because Hindus believed in reincarnation. Weaker responses tended towards a simplistic narrative approach summarising the content rather than exploring the effects of the writing; in some cases answers were unbalanced with excessive reference to the wider text. Others offered a paraphrase of the extract, copying significant passages showing limited understanding of the whole text or question. Some criticised Narayan for being unrealistic in asking the reader to believe in life after death or suggested that Krishna was mad, dreaming or had died and gone to Heaven.

Question 3 LES MURRAY: from Selected Poems

Very few candidates offered this text. Though the **(a)** question was very accessible, no one chose to do it. A small number of candidates chose the **(b)** question and showed some understanding of its theme but no discussion of its poetic methods and effects.

Question 4 CARYL CHURCHILL: Top Girls

This was a popular text and candidates have obviously enjoyed studying it. Both questions generated a lot of engagement with the **(a)** question attracting as many candidates as the **(b)** question. On the whole, the best of the essays on the **(a)** question were better than those on the extract, though both questions required exploration of the writer's methods and concerns.

- (a)** The best answers ably discussed character, setting and theatricality in Act One within the context of the whole play. They addressed methods: the inclusion of historical and fictional characters; the doubling of the parts and links with characters in the rest of the play to show how Churchill universalises her concerns about the position of women and their experiences in various sorts of society, in the work place and at home. There was detailed discussion of the contribution made by the characters to the themes of motherhood, education, submission and rebellion against the patriarchy and to the development of Marlene in the play, with some questioning of the cost of 'success' for these top girls. Good candidates focused on Act One in detail but ranged confidently around the whole text, supporting and developing the discussion with pertinent quotations and specific references to characters and scenes in the rest of the play. More modest answers showed a sound understanding of some aspects of the themes but tended to restrict the discussion to the first act and see the characters as successful. They commented on the significance of the setting, the women's behaviour and treatment of the silent waitress but references to dramatic methods tended to be generalised assertions on the use of overlapping dialogue and bad language. Weaker responses adopted a narrative approach to the question by naming and narrating qualities about each historical character, sometimes without making links with either Marlene's character or the rest of the play. They often showed insecure knowledge about the characters, little understanding of their role and no consideration of the text as drama.

- (b) The extract stimulated some quite close analysis of the presentation of the two characters with secure knowledge of the context and engagement with the development of the relationship. The best responses tracked the fluctuating emotions within the scene, referring closely to language, to style, changing tone of voice and the dramatic effect of the role of Angie in the setting up of the meeting. They were able to explain the significance of this exchange within the context of the play as a whole, the price for Marlene's success, class issues, the effect of the manipulation of the chronology on the audience and how this makes them reassess Marlene. In more modest answers, there was a sound understanding of the relationship but the discussion of dramatic methods and effects was more partial. Candidates understood what the characters were arguing about and were able to identify some sarcasm but they were not able to detect the shifts in tone and nuance. Reference was sometimes made to 'overlapping dialogue' without pointing out exactly where this occurs and what it signifies. In weaker responses, understanding was entirely limited to treating the characters as real people expressed within a narrative commentary of the extract. For example: 'the women were obviously not close because Joyce did not even prepare a proper meal for her and they did not know each other's habits'. Candidates need to be encouraged to look more closely at dialogue writing, the way one character picks up the words of the previous speaker for example, and how the writer shapes the audience's response to the characters.

Question 5 HAROLD PINTER: The Homecoming.

This was a popular choice of texts with many candidates showing a good level of personal engagement, though in order to do well on either question, they had to get beyond the moral outrage and enjoy the dark humour in the way Pinter challenges an audience's assumptions about family life and exploits our uncertainties and discomfort for dramatic purposes. Candidates sometimes use the word 'absurd' in relation to the text without really showing what it means, and to assert that the characters do not communicate, that their interactions are unrealistic and the writer wishes to point out the meaningless of human existence. This is not a productive line to take.

- (a) There were many good answers to this question. Many candidates made good use of the distinction offered in the question comment, opting sometimes for 'humiliation' over 'escape' or the opposite, or even better, looking at the issue from the various angles that allow for a rounded response. It could be argued that Teddy was weak and overawed by his family and had made a terrible mistake in taking his wife home or that he was a Machiavelli who was taking his revenge on the whole pack of them. Both these positions were pursued very vigorously with the best candidates supporting their arguments by detailed exploration of specific scenes and pertinent quotations. The finest, most assured answers recognised that Pinter prompts questions rather than offering answers and that Teddy, his appearance and departure, remain enigmatic. More modest answers responded well to the question, but argued in general terms without detailed support from the text or offered more pedestrian character studies. Some of them switched the focus of the question to Ruth and her role in Teddy's humiliation. Weaker responses tended to treat the characters as real and attempted to explain their behaviour, often speculating on the reasons for Teddy's departure in the first place, his family's feeling towards his profession, their jealousy of his having a wife and criticised Teddy for failure to control his wife.
- (b) This was a popular question with most candidates noting the overt physical and verbal violence in the scene and the covert tensions between the characters. The best responses focused on the interactions between the characters, the choice of language, the use of pauses and the stage directions though very few saw these in terms of slapstick comedy. Some however did debate alternative ways of playing the ending as either total humiliation for Teddy, or the characters squaring up for a fight with Teddy's repeated 'Come on then' read as a challenge. The most successful scripts effectively seized opportunities to analyse the complexities of the relationships between the scene in relation to events elsewhere, Max's relationships with his sons, his bullying of Sam, the truth about Jesse, and the way Joey's collapse at Ruth's feet nicely anticipates the final tableau of the play. More modest answers tended to rely on character sketches, making some useful links to the rest of the play and commenting on the obvious aspects of the scene. Some weaker responses adopted a narrative approach and told the story, others attempted to paraphrase or relied almost entirely on the extract as textual evidence to support their views which limited the range of discussion. They tended to discuss the characters as though they were real and criticised Pinter for writing unrealistic interactions.

Question 6 T.S.ELIOT: Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men

This was not a popular choice of text; the (b) question was the more popular option.

- (a) There were very few attempts at this question, with candidates choosing to look at the descriptive treatment of scenes from 'The Waste Land' and 'Prufrock'. At best these showed an ability to use relevant knowledge to address the question with some clear understanding of some aspects of Eliot's concerns, but discussion on poetic method and effect tended to be partial.
- (b) Many of the candidates who attempted this question did quite well, drawing out its sordid atmosphere and the strangely projected persona of the moon. The best scripts showed an ability to explore aspects of poetic method, covering the structure of the piece, the sensuous appeal of the imagery and the assonance, repetition and rhymes suggesting obsessive fantasy. There was some insight into the presentation of ideas, paying particular attention to the impact of the final lines with useful connections being made to 'Preludes', the female figure of 'Portrait of a Lady' and the mechanical half-life of 'Prufrock'. More modest answers tended to be less coherent, a running commentary attempting to come to terms with the meaning and some partial discussion of the effects.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: Death and the King's Horseman

This is gradually becoming a more popular text with candidates tending to display a sound awareness of the concerns but little recognition of the dramatic methods and effects. The (a) and (b) questions proved to be equally popular though the achievement level tended to be higher on the (a) question.

- (a) Candidates made good use of the question, distinguishing between and exploring both 'honour' and 'duty' and showing an understanding of the relationship between the two for various characters. The most assured answers effectively discussed and illustrated the obvious aspects of the play and broadened the discussion to question the centrality of these ideas, showing a good understanding of the complexity of Soyinka's concern and presentation. Most good answers were able to focus on specific moments of confrontation and had pertinent quotations to support their discussion, making use of Elesin's manipulation of the market women, the roles of Iyalaja and the Praise Singer, the impact of the Not-I speech and a discussion of how far Pilkings was to blame for Elesin's failure in performing his duty. There was some insight into the presentation of Pilkings as a man who fulfils his duty, but lacks honour and the significance of Olunde's decision to take his father's place in the light of his experience of both Yuroban and British culture and education. More modest answers listed examples of duty and the ways these were or were not fulfilled, presenting a sound but limited discussion of character and events but lacking much sense of the dramatic methods and effects. Weaker answers offered basic narrative, sometimes insecure responses.
- (b) There was a general ability to place the extract in context and to discuss the significance of the passage in relation to plot development and revelation of character. Almost all the candidates commented on the way both characters fail to understand the Yoruban traditions, the misunderstandings of Amusa's note and Pilkings' role in the tragedy. There was some recognition the presentation of Jane as being more sympathetic, while at the same time exposing her limitations and this was supported with evidence from the extract and her scene with Olunde. Comment on the way language and tone shaped an audience's response to the British was usually apt and supported by quotation but few saw the comic naivety of the British and the impact of this in the design of the play. Comments on dramatic effect focused on the significance of the drums. Weaker responses relied on a narrative approach, to explain the significance of the scene or attempted to paraphrase.

Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

This was a moderately popular text with slightly more candidates preferring the (b) option though achievement was probably higher on the (a) question.

- (a) Candidates at all levels did reasonably well on this question. Most had studied the significance of the lighthouse itself and even weaker answers were able to discuss what this meant to different characters. The best answers ranged confidently around the text, selecting apt quotations and references to explore the symbolism of light. They were able to unite the goal of the lighthouse, finally reached and bringing resolution, with Lily's painting, itself a manipulation of light and shade;

the light that Mrs Ramsey brought to human situations and the illumination sought by the philosophers. There were some very good explorations of the way light is used in the house itself, for example in the dinner party scene, but the shadow part of life, though temporarily hidden as a ram's skull might be covered by a shawl, had to be faced just as death and war intervened in the progress of the novel and the darkness reasserted itself between flashes from the lighthouse. More modest answers recognised and understood the quotation as referring to 'fame' and 'ambition' and applied this to various characters.

- (b)** The passage produced a wider range of answers. Those who clearly knew the context and the significance of the quotation from Tennyson were able to comment on Mr Ramsey quite successfully and made some thoughtful observations about Mrs Ramsey's attitude towards her husband, choosing phrases like 'domesticity triumphed' for explanation. They attempted to track the stream of consciousness, and some of the better answers were able to discuss its effect from examples in the extract, but generally candidates there was much more scope for detailed analysis of the diction and effect of the sentence structure. No one remarked on the impact of the repetition with reversal of 'quivered' and 'shivered' framing the paragraph from lines 9 to 13 for example. Many candidates did not recognise the significance of the poem or indeed that it was a poem at all and thought that there was some problem of communication, that Mrs Ramsey did not understand her husband. The terms 'short-sighted' and 'long-sighted' were discussed as ways of differentiating between husband and wife and this was not always well understood. A significant number drifted into a general discussion of the relationship in the novel as a whole, tending to rely on generalised character sketches.

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20th Century Texts

General comment

All the questions were highly accessible, though the **(a)** questions generally proved to be more popular. This could be because candidates prefer to rely on their often impressive knowledge of content, rather than the independent use of their critical skills which are required in the **(b)** questions. However, one of the key assessment objectives at A Level, is that candidates should demonstrate an understanding of the 'ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meaning'. More able candidates took notice of the phrases in the **(a)** questions such as 'Discuss the ways...', 'By what means...' and 'presentation', and were able to balance their detailed knowledge of the content, shaped to the task, with some appreciation of how writers create their effects and shape an audience's response. This is why they were successful. Weaker candidates on both the **(a)** and **(b)** questions depended on narrative summary or paraphrased approaches which often deviated from the main thrust of the question. On this paper, the **(b)** questions on which candidates performed best were the poetry and the drama questions, where candidates used their knowledge of the context and a reading of the whole text **to inform** their discussion of the significance of particular ideas and details. In all but the most assured scripts, however, there is still scope for including more detailed analysis of the effects of the language. Responses to the **(b)** questions on the novels were disappointing. Perhaps candidates need to be reminded that the phrase 'narrative methods' encompasses much more than first person narrative or stream of consciousness. It can include the means by which the writer presents aspects of theme, reveals character and manipulates the tone and colour of the language, the rhythm of the sentence structure to manipulate the reader. Typically, weaker scripts offered narrative accounts to explain the context of the extracts or depended on paraphrased approaches, which at best suggested some limited understanding of the content. Slightly better scripts used the extract as a springboard for general discussion, usually of theme or character. There were however many interesting scripts ranging from the competent to the expert, which showed a good working knowledge of such literary terminology as: *narrative point of view*, *stream of consciousness*, *irony*, *tone*, *imagery*, *symbolism*, *alliteration* and *assonance* and many candidates were able to explore the effects of these within the passages.

One area of skills that needs improving in responses to both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, is the selection and use of quotation. The best scripts showed an ability to weave pertinent quotations from the texts and critical material, seamlessly into discussions, to provide examples for sustained, analytical commentary and to develop ideas. More modest candidates however, seem to have fewer specific references and quotations available and do not exploit those that they have effectively. Candidates should be encouraged to follow up each quotation with comments like: *the key word here is...the choice of xxx is significant because it suggests/conveys/ evokes...etc.* Weaker candidates, particularly on the **(b)** questions tend to copy overlong quotations from the extracts and attempt to show *understanding* by paraphrasing which does not make for an adequate response to the effects of the writing. Not displaying enough specific textual detail is not always a question of lack of knowledge but sometimes one of writing style. There were some intelligent, coherent, well argued responses to the questions this session which could only have been constructed by candidates with good textual knowledge and understanding but the marks were depressed because so much of the response was presented as assertion and references to the texts were so generalised that they could only be credited with a general basic knowledge and some awareness of structure

Overall the standard of expressive English was very good: in some cases it was highly fluent, clear and maturely articulated; in other cases, responses were slightly restricted by some imprecision in expression, but at all levels, the majority of the candidates showed a genuine engagement with the texts and had clearly enjoyed studying them. Generally, candidates appeared to be consistently and competently aware of the need to structure their answers. Introductions are becoming more focused with more candidates beginning to use the terms of the questions to structure their answers and to sharpen their responses by critically analysing key terms such as *effects/effectiveness* and showing how various methods are used to present the writer's concerns. Most showed clear paragraphing, offering discrete relevant points supported in many cases by relevant textual references and pertinent quotations and followed up with more detailed commentary. In addition, well chosen connectives such as *furthermore*, *moreover* and *conversely* offered a clear direction to the discussion. In the better scripts, the final paragraphs offered a considered reflection, a

substantial conclusion to the question. In a small minority of scripts some miscalculation of time resulted in uneven answers; there were very few rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 MARGARET ATWOOD: *Cat's Eye*

This was not such a popular text as in previous years. Most candidates opted for the **(a)** question.

- (a)** The key discriminator in this question was the extent to which candidates paid attention to Atwood's narrative method and discussed how our view of Cordelia was filtered through Elaine's narration of her experiences and feelings. Those who examined the terms of the question and picked up on the phrase 'shifting views' did very well. Good candidates ranged confidently around the novel, and demonstrated a perceptive understanding of how the first person narrative technique and staggered chronology of the novel eventually lead the reader to the conclusion that 'views' of Cordelia become projections of Elaine's fantasy and need. Within this some of the most assured candidates noted that the young Cordelia was sometimes presented through dramatic recreation of particular scenes and given a characteristic 'voice' and 'tone'. They contrasted these with passages of personal reflection from the adult Elaine, tracking the emotional response through fear and anxiety, self-assertion and guilt, loss and acceptance to relief. Competent answers gave detailed portraits of Cordelia at different times in the novel, explained her behaviour in terms of the incidental revelations of her relationships with her sisters and her father and noted the reader's changing response to her particularly in the period of mental illness. More modest candidates tended to have some detailed knowledge available of the childhood events but were limited in their references to the rest of the novel and the adult Elaine's reflections. They tended to rely on a narrative approach.
- (b)** This extract was chosen because it offered a lot of scope for detailed analysis of Atwood's narrative technique, in particular the recreation of events through dramatic scenes with dialogue, the revelation of Elaine's character and feelings and the way the passage communicates a sense of Elaine as the child and the adult narrator. Few candidates attempted this question. The best answers focused on Elaine's feelings of being an outsider and her wish to identify with and support men. This led some off into the wider novel to explain why. There was also some attempt to explore the issue of registers, though this did not include sentence structure which was a pity because there were useful things to say about the simplicity of the sentence structure at the beginning and the manipulation of tone in the more varied structures in the last paragraph. Generally speaking, weaker candidates tended to provide over-long narrative accounts in an attempt to explain the context and significance of the passage or attempted to do a running commentary which relied on paraphrase.

Question 2 CARYL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

This was a popular text and at all levels candidates tended to do well because most had detailed knowledge of the text to support personal responses to aspects of the themes and concerns. The key discriminator was the degree to which candidates could shape their knowledge to fit the task and bring out a sense of the text as drama, showing the way the writing shapes an audience's response. Both questions were quite popular, with good candidates performing better on the **(a)** rather than the **(b)** question

- (a)** Most candidates showed a sound understanding of the idea that success comes at a price and that being 'top' in the play entailed some sacrifice and denial of femininity, motherhood and emotional well-being. The best scripts showed how the characters in Act One were used to universalise the issues and then focused on the wider text to show how the scenes at the agency and within the family suggested the ongoing nature of the debate. This tended to be a question answered by explication of theme rather than by focusing on dramatic effects, but by showing how the characters in Act One linked to those in the rest of the play, or focusing on the various confrontations, particularly those involving Marlene, many candidates were able to bring out the shifting audience response to the character. For example most candidates were absolutely outraged by Mrs Kidd's suggestion that Marlene should step down in favour of her husband, but had less sympathy with her abandonment of Angie. Many candidates attempted to place the play in its historical and social context but there continues to be some confusion over the reference to Margaret Thatcher in the last scene. She has never been known as a feminist or as a politician who sought to improve the lot of women. Marlene approves of her because she championed the

individual. The best candidates were fully aware of the way Churchill's treatment of the issues in the play does not seem to offer answers to the problems. More modest answers tended to focus on characters to illustrate aspects of the theme with weaker ones showing more partial understanding of the issues and often limiting discussion to Act One.

- (b) Most candidates were able to place the scene in context, with the best answers using the manipulation of the chronological structure of the play to bring out the dramatic significance and impact of Angie's presence at the agency and her role in the play. They examined how Churchill exposed Angie's innocent naivety by looking at the simplicity of her questions and responses and contrasted this with Win's knowing, experienced and egocentric monologue. The brittle and lonely independence of the 'top girls' was appreciated by most candidates, as was the inevitable sense of failure surrounding Angie. The key discriminator here was the attention to the language. Few candidates commented on the heavy humour of the Win's opening lines with their reference to Goldilocks and the Three Bears, though better candidates had some sense of the inappropriateness of Win's register and looked at how Churchill used language in the monologue to shape the audience's response to her character.

Question 3 T.S. ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

Many candidates had an impressive breadth of knowledge about the allusions in these poems. The key discriminator was the ability to shape the material to the task and to maintain an effective balance between a display of knowledge and understanding of the significance of these references with a personal response to the poetic effects.

- (a) The best scripts wrote coherent well-developed essays showing how the references contributed to the meaning of the poems. For example, one candidate developed a detailed interpretation of *Prufrock* out of a direct comment on the quotation from Dante that prefaces the poem. Most offered some comment on the effects and suggested that the historical, cultural, geographical connections helped to universalise Eliot's message, though there was scope for more exploration of how Eliot's structure and choice of images generated an emotional effect. More modest scripts presented quite detailed knowledge about the allusions but often spent too much time on exposition and lost sight of the poems. Weaker answers lacked detailed reference to the texts.
- (b) This question produced some superb responses; it was astonishing how much ground could be covered within the parameters of exam conditions. The best responses drew upon their knowledge of the whole text and were impressive in their use of close referencing. Some showed an intelligent understanding of the contribution made by the allusions within the extract, commenting particularly on the significance and effect of the variety of references from line 29 onwards. They also explored demonstrate perceptive personal response to the poetic method by exploring the effects of the imagery. Modest scripts showed a more mechanical approach using a running commentary. They attempted to explain the references with some partial understanding of the position of the Fisher King, but showed, surprisingly, less awareness of the Sanskrit and the thunder's message. Weaker scripts displayed insecure knowledge and limited understanding. They attempted to paraphrase or were very sketchy in their treatment of the extract.

Question 4 LES MURRAY: *from Selected Poems*

Murray continues to be a text offered by few Centres, but gradually over the sessions, the quality of the responses is improving. The (b) question proved to be the more popular of the two options and some candidates performed very well on it.

- (a) This was an accessible question but done by very few candidates. The majority looked at 'An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow' in some detail and then considered 'Future' or 'Easter 1984', but tended to drift off into more general discussions about Murray's interest in Australian culture and tradition.
- (b) This was usually answered quite efficiently. The best answers impressed by their overview of the text and their ability to place the poem within a sense of Murray's concerns and poetic methods. They offered a close reading of the poem, moving from some appreciation of the dramatic description of the event to a consideration of the reactions of the bystanders and the significance of the religious imagery at the end. Most candidates knew about and made adequate use of the idea of 'defamiliarisation', but the most successful responses came from candidates who had the confidence to examine the way Murray created rhythm and movement in the first and fourth



stanzas, and the energy in the diction and sentence structure in the second. A few effectively deconstructed the complex effects of 'canopy-frame a cage/torn by gorillas of flame'. Modest scripts showed some clear understanding of Murray's characteristics and made sensible comments about some of the poetic effects but they felt the need to 'explain' the meaning of the poem and tended to over-interpret. Weaker scripts tended to attempt a paraphrase or adopted a very general approach, with sketchy attention to the detail of the poem.

Question 5 R.K. NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

This was a very popular text with **Question (a)** proving to be the most frequently answered question on the paper. Those who chose it tended to do much better than those opting for **(b)** which reflects how many candidates lack confidence in demonstrating an independent, personal response to the writing, yet this was a rich passage offering a range of issues for analysis and appreciation.

- (a)** The fundamental contrast between the Albert Mission College and the 'leave alone' school of the Headmaster gave a clear argumentative focus for even the weakest candidates. Routine rote learning and cramming were contrasted with the creativity of little children left to express themselves naturally. There was much concern over the post-colonial imposition of Western culture, with some apt quotation from Krishna's initial letter of resignation, the one he decided not to send to Brown, though not everyone picked that up. The cultural contexts were, of course, important here and often brought out very well but it is more complex than a simple East-West divide, as Wordsworth's notions of the 'child trailing clouds of glory' suggest. The better scripts recognised that there were different methods of education, placed this discussion within the central structural issue of the development of Krishna into a Hindu frame of mind and being, and also considered the role of Susilla in leading her husband to reconnect with his cultural roots. The most assured scripts also showed some consideration of the 'presentation' of the theme and embedded comments on the use of contrast or satire and the effects of the language within their discussions. More modest scripts tended to limit the discussion to obvious areas of the text, while weaker scripts tended to over-concentrate on the issue of colonisation and failed to demonstrate the contribution of the theme to the novel as a whole.
- (b)** Candidate's attempts at writing on the passage were less successful. Most could identify the context but there was a temptation to spend too long giving a narrative account leading up to the situation. Some noted the use of the first person narrative method but could not expand on that here. Some did comment that Susilla seemed to have gained more authority, but few could develop this into an exploration of the transcendental nature of the discussion and language. Weaker candidates tended to fall back on paraphrase. The key issue here was the presentation of a conversation with someone who was dead and candidates could have considered how Narayan does this to enable the reader to maintain some belief in the reality of this experience. The use of the senses here is fundamental to Narayan's descriptive method and should have reminded candidates of the ending of the novel.

Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*.

This was a popular choice of text with many candidates showing a good level of personal engagement. More candidates chose to do the **(b)** than the **(a)** question but both stimulated some very able responses. Answers to both questions demonstrated that better candidates were coming to terms with the way Pinter challenges an audience's assumptions about family life and exploits our uncertainties and discomfort for dramatic purposes and some were beginning to appreciate the blackness of the humour. Some candidates still tend to use the word 'absurd' in relation to the text and to assert that the characters do not communicate, without really explaining the point. Other critical positions such as the Freudian Oedipal complex or the 'mother/whore dichotomy' also tended to get in the way of a real response to the drama.

- (a)** This stimulating question on 'fantasy' attracted some original, interesting discussions. Able responses showed how fantasy was used in the power struggle between the characters to assert and intimidate others and showed good awareness of the dramatic effects in their presentation of the material. Candidates were able to produce effectively detailed explorations of the fantasies that individual characters project: Max's nostalgic indulgence in the fantasy of himself as the alpha male who had a perfect family life; Lenny's stories of violence and vicious attacks on women; Teddy's images of a perfect campus life in America; all liable to be punctured by a question from Ruth. They also considered the central animating fantasy of setting up Ruth as a live-in prostitute and suggested that Joey and Lenny had their fantasies fulfilled in different ways but that Max did not. More modest responses offered quite thoughtful psychological interpretations of the 'mother-



where' fantasy though some candidates spent too much time on the Freudian theory at the expense of textual detail. There were straightforward discussions of Ruth as a figure of fantasy and of the way characters used fantasy to boost their own image and self-esteem. Weaker candidates seemed to struggle to define fantasy. One candidate used the term to suggest that the play itself was a fantasy of Pinter's warped imagination and spent the entire essay disparaging it.

- (b) More candidates chose to examine the opening of the play and at all levels candidates were able to show some awareness of dramatic method and effects. Better candidates discussed the Theatre of the Absurd as a context to the play and those who were able to show the way this extract adheres to some of its principles, did well. Many good scripts analysed the disturbing effects of the stage directions and how the pauses and Lenny's silences build up tension, but few were prepared to link this with the language to explore the comedy of menace. Most commented on the shocking effect of the language and the way the plot is foreshadowed both by the mention of Jesse and MacGregor and the way the power struggle is evident from the start. Modest scripts tended to have a more linear approach, commenting on the presentation of character and some of the dramatic effects as they appeared. Weaker responses were characterised by simple but vigorous disapproval of the way a son talks to his father, over- concentration on the Freudian Oedipal complex or relied on paraphrase.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

This is gradually becoming a more popular text. There were no responses to the (a) question. A few candidates opted for the (b) question and did quite well. The connection between Amusa's name and the extent to which he becomes an object of amusement was effectively brought out with some comment on his language and the stage business. They defined Amusa's uneasy role as a go-between, ineffectively connecting with both cultures and referred to appropriate scenes to show his treatment by the British.

Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

This was a less popular text this session. Most of the few candidates who offered it chose the (a) question.

- (a) A few very good answers explored the extraordinary contrast between the passage of time in that middle section of ten years and the intense and packed richness of apprehension in the single days that precede and follow it. The profound sense of loss and the presence of death in the ten years of 'Time Passes' were set against the lived resolution and fulfilment possible in the minute-by-minute experience of the first and third sections of the novel. Candidates showed a good understanding of the narrative method and had enough specific references and details to demonstrate a perceptive appreciation of its effects.
- (b) Few candidates had the confidence to think about what the key concerns of the novel were. At a simple level, there were obvious things to say here about Lily and her painting and her discussion with Mr Bankes. Attempts at summarising the passage produced very weak responses.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

General comments

As has generally been the case in recent examination sessions, most candidates seemed confident about how they should approach this Paper, and while there were certainly too many answers that did not approach the set passages with the tightest possible critical focus there were also fewer which were simple and undiscussed narrative or paraphrase. Most candidates were clearly aware that they should do much more than just demonstrate that they had read and understood each passage, and that some detailed critical exploration was required for even a low mark.

There were almost no rubric infringements – just two candidates attempted all three questions – and almost all answers were reasonably well balanced in length; several candidates had obviously mis-timed their work, so that their second answer was a little rushed towards the end, in some cases with a sequence of notes instead of fully worked-out concluding paragraphs, but on the whole this was not a concern. One weakness was the quite high number of answers on **Question 2** (George Herbert's poem 'Virtue') where candidates appeared to have little or even no understanding of what various technical poetic terms mean – more of this below. In some cases candidates developed their personal responses to what they read well beyond what was actually written; sometimes this became purely speculative about what the writer might have meant, or what the characters might have intended, but occasionally too it became simply individual political or religious creed or even invective, with little or no reference to the texts themselves or to what the question actually asked. It is very important for candidates to remember to focus on the texts as literature, because this Paper is designed to test understanding, critical skills and insights rather than personal views about whatever topic happens to be raised by a set passage.

All three questions were addressed in more or less equal numbers, with **Question 2** marginally the most popular, and **Question 3** marginally the least popular. All three, however, led to some interesting, thoughtful and sometimes quite perceptive and critically sensitive responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates saw how Doris Lessing quickly establishes the enormous heat which affects Mary so badly, with plenty of good comment on the simplicity but also power of the passage's opening sentence; less good answers, however, devoted time to explaining what an "obsession" is, whereas better answers stressed how its use here emphasises the way in which Mary just cannot stop thinking about it. Her treatment of the dogs was noted by most candidates, too, as evidence not just of the animals' discomfort but more importantly of Mary's irritation and hatred of the constant heat. Many candidates expressed not just surprise at this – as does Dick, her husband – but also a strong animosity towards her, frequently in ways that Lessing does not even hint at in the passage set: Mary was, for instance, regarded as "snobbish", as "a city slicker", as "shallow and materialistic", none of which criticisms is anywhere explicit in the writing.

Mary is, too, well able to see something of the beauty around her: Lessing's descriptions of the "great massed white clouds" and of the oxen bringing water are surely to be read as if part of Mary's own thoughts. She is clearly not to be seen as entirely insensitive and self-absorbed as much of the rest of the passage implies, though her deep distaste for the bath and the bathroom is most certainly evidence of an inability, and possibly unwillingness too, to adapt to the way of life which Dick seems to have fully accepted.

Several candidates saw the heat, together with the filthy state of the bath, as metaphors for the state of Dick and Mary's marriage; there is no clear evidence in the writing that this is the case, but when it was argued carefully and thoughtfully, with appropriate quotation, it certainly added an interesting and justifiable new angle to the writing. The drought, for example, was cited as reflecting the "dryness" of their relationship, though lines 54-55 perhaps suggest otherwise. More convincing, however, was the idea that in trying her



best – admittedly by means of “the boy” – to scrub the bath back to its original dazzling quality Mary is trying also to return the marriage to its earlier sparkle.

What were much less helpful were those answers which lost sight of the passage itself and wrote – sometimes quite lengthily – about the political situation of the time the novel is set, and about how modern Zimbabwe has changed. Personal responses were often, and understandably, very heartfelt, but when they moved away from what the passage actually says, and what the question itself actually asks, then they lost focus and relevance.

Question 2

As noted above, this was by a small margin the most popular question, and although ‘Virtue’ is a short and in some ways very simple poem it led to some long, perceptive and often critically sensitive understanding. Some readings lacked any support from the text itself. For example, there is of course much imagery in the poem, and in some ways every image could be interpreted as “standing for” something else, but there is no support anywhere for the view that this is a poem about the poet’s own funeral, or a lament for his dead wife, or an encouragement to respect Mother Nature, or that it is a hymn in praise of patience, or in praise of rain – all ideas that were proposed, along with others even less well founded, for example that (completely ignoring the date of the poem) this is about global warming and the likely consequences when “the whole world turn to coal”, sometimes interpreted as meaning the advance of industrialisation.

The basic ideas of the poem are very simple: each new day is beautiful, but will die; a rose is magnificent, but will die; spring, a combination of new days and roses, will die; the only thing that will survive the ending of the world, and will not physically die, is “a sweet and virtuous soul”. This is at least on one level a very simple and easy thesis, though certainly a much more complex one philosophically and theologically.

Most candidates made at least some comment on the simplicity of the poem’s structure, and the best answers made the point that this was the case because the *ideas* that it contains are simple; one candidate used a fascinating phrase when discussing the structure, referring to its “urgent conciseness”. Most too noted the several repetitions – of, for example, the words “so” and “sweet”, the latter appearing in every stanza, with varying degrees of emphasis each time. Most noted the structure of each stanza – the three eight-syllable lines followed by the sudden abruptness of the fourth four-syllable line, with its curt and hard reality on three occasions, but then a triumphant declaration at the very end, where the repeated word “die” suddenly becomes “lives”, with all the implications that this entails here. Many too noted the simple rhyme scheme, though very few in fact saw it correctly, many saying for example that it was “ABAB” throughout. In fact it is rather more sophisticated – “ABAB CBCB DBDB EFEF” – with the repeated “B” rhyme emphasising “die” three times, then changing triumphantly in the final stanza. It is certainly a simple rhyme pattern, but not as naïve as some suggested – it certainly is not just a nursery-rhyme pattern as several candidates said. Some candidates asserted with apparent confidence that the poem is a sonnet, or that it is written in free verse (in more than one case candidates said that it was a free verse sonnet), or that Herbert uses rhyming couplets. What matters even more than identifying forms, though, is to identify *the effects that are created* by the use of such structures or devices. Comment was frequently made on what candidates called “archaic words”, often without showing any apparent awareness that as noted in the question Herbert wrote the poem in the early seventeenth century; where they added the idea that these words (“thou” and “thy”) gave the poem a biblical ring then a valid point was being attempted, but where they were simply called archaic or Shakespearean no value or reward could be offered.

Where there was clear misreading many candidates did also manage to argue well and to some extent convincingly; credit will always be given to answers which support and argue their interpretations, even where these are clearly incorrect, and certainly where they are possible. It is the ability to construct and argue an interpretation that is one assessment criterion in this Paper, with appropriate support from the text itself, and with comment on the various poetic devices and techniques that are used.

Question 3

This question produced some of the best responses; unlike the other two, there were relatively few simple narratives or character sketches, and most answers saw at least some of the quite subtle nuances in Mew’s writing, together with its curious mingling of quite light, almost Wildean, humour and serious emotion. The ironies in the passage were well noted by the best answers – that, for example, a presumably experienced military officer is totally dominated throughout by an ‘obdurate’, ‘frail’, ‘little’ lady, and the comic impact in the clash between the romantic approaches of the Captain and the ironic detachment of the Lady was often seen; most answers, too, commented on the strangely moving pose that Lady Hopedene adopts at the end

of the passage, suggestive perhaps of a much deeper concern and even affection than she has otherwise allowed herself to show.

A surprisingly large number of answers appeared to misread the background situation, assuming in a few cases that Captain Henley and Lady Hopedene are already married, or that they have been living together for several months or even years and are only now considering marriage because of the war, or that Lady Hopedene has by the end of the passage agreed that she will marry Captain Henley. More than one candidate misread lines 2-3, and assumed that the whole conversation was overseen and overheard by a third person, 'the obdurate little lady on the sofa', a phrase which in fact is of course descriptive of Lady Hopedene herself; and a few mistook Lady Hopedene's metaphorical use of the legal word 'bar' in line 65 to mean that the whole conversation was taking place in an inn.

The contrast between the two characters was well seen and described by most candidates: Captain Henley, young and determinedly romantic, to the point of being apparently entirely blind to the possibility that Lady Hopedene does have no feeling for him at all; she on the other hand is cool and outwardly even cruel, but acts like this in order to try her best to convince the young man to wait a few years before committing himself. She has already had an unhappy marriage – there is no indication that this ended in divorce, but it was certainly 'loveless' – and does not want to repeat the experience, or indeed to allow Henley to find himself in the same position; she was, incidentally, not forced into this marriage as several candidates believed – line 28 clearly denies this.

Most of the passage, as noted by most candidates, is devoted to Lady Hopedene, with Captain Henley at times almost acting as a kind of foil to Mew's presentation of her emotions; and although she is undeniably cool and ironic in much of what she says she is in fact portrayed as showing considerably more warmth and depth of emotion than is at first apparent: she watches him in line 3 with 'quizzical kindness', she takes note of his distress 'and paused' in line 16, her comments in lines 21-23 'left her lips a little labouredly', her remarks in lines 37-42 are said only as she 'mused for a moment', and finally of course her reaction to his departure at the end of the passage is surely indicative of something much more than she has revealed to him; she may, as several candidates suggested, simply be showing how bored she has been throughout, but this seems unlikely, given that she 'tastes' his departure. Captain Henley, by contrast, is a much more one-dimensional character, frustrated almost to the point of desperation by her refusal to answer his proposal, though again his use of '*au revoir*' at the end, and his action of kissing Lady Hopedene's fingers, are perhaps suggestive of just a little more maturity and experience than he has shown before; his knowledge of the French phrase is not just evidence of his education, but of what the phrase implies, in contrast to Lady Hopedene's more brusque and final 'Good-bye'. Many candidates saw and commented on at least some of these points, and as said at the start of this section there was a good deal of evidence that candidates understood how Mew portrays the two characters; assertions were in almost all cases supported by at least some quotation, and personal responses were much more firmly based on the text itself than was the case in **Questions 1 and 2**.

The word 'portrays' has been used above, and it is perhaps worth stressing how important it is that candidates make very clear that they are aware that the characters in an extract from a story or a novel are not in any way real people, but fictional artefacts, created and developed by a writer. Most candidates did in fact refer to Lessing and to Mew once or twice, but even when doing so there was not always an absolutely secure sense that they understood fully that these two writers are entirely responsible for everything in each passage. There was also some quite frequent confusion between first and third person narrative, occasionally making it quite hard to appreciate exactly what point was being made; and second person narrative, a quite unusual technique indeed, is certainly not employed in either of the two prose passages here.

To do well on this paper candidates need to bear in mind: this is the 'Comment and Appreciation' Paper, and the emphasis in assessment will always be upon the extent to which an answer shows not just *knowledge* of what a poem or passage is saying, but upon *how* it is said; *comment* on what is set, and a detailed and critically focused appreciation of its writing, are what matter above all else. Quotations are imperative – preferably brief rather than lengthy – but even these are not enough on their own; what candidates must do is to look closely at the words and phrases within their quotations and try to explore and explain why in their view the writer has used them, and the effects and impacts that they create; they should not – as more than one answer does in every session – suggest other words which a writer *might* have used, but they should do their best to go beyond just illustration and explanation, and undertake some exploration of the images, the similes, the metaphors, the rhymes and so on.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation

General comments

As has generally been the case in recent examination sessions, most candidates seemed confident about how they should approach this Paper, and while there were certainly too many answers that did not approach the set passages with the tightest possible critical focus there were also fewer which were simple and undiscussed narrative or paraphrase. Most candidates were clearly aware that they should do much more than just demonstrate that they had read and understood each passage, and that some detailed critical exploration was required for even a low mark.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

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What were much less helpful were those answers which lost sight of the passage itself and wrote – sometimes quite lengthily – about the political situation of the time the novel is set, and about how modern Zimbabwe has changed. Personal responses were often, and understandably, very heartfelt, but when they moved away from what the passage actually says, and what the question itself actually asks, then they lost focus and relevance.

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As noted above, this was by a small margin the most popular question, and although ‘Virtue’ is a short and in some ways very simple poem it led to some long, perceptive and often critically sensitive understanding. Some readings lacked any support from the text itself. For example, there is of course much imagery in the poem, and in some ways every image could be interpreted as “standing for” something else, but there is no support anywhere for the view that this is a poem about the poet’s own funeral, or a lament for his dead wife, or an encouragement to respect Mother Nature, or that it is a hymn in praise of patience, or in praise of rain – all ideas that were proposed, along with others even less well founded, for example that (completely ignoring the date of the poem) this is about global warming and the likely consequences when “the whole world turn to coal”, sometimes interpreted as meaning the advance of industrialisation.

The basic ideas of the poem are very simple: each new day is beautiful, but will die; a rose is magnificent, but will die; spring, a combination of new days and roses, will die; the only thing that will survive the ending of the world, and will not physically die, is “a sweet and virtuous soul”. This is at least on one level a very simple and easy thesis, though certainly a much more complex one philosophically and theologically.

Most candidates made at least some comment on the simplicity of the poem’s structure, and the best answers made the point that this was the case because the *ideas* that it contains are simple; one candidate used a fascinating phrase when discussing the structure, referring to its “urgent conciseness”. Most too noted the several repetitions – of, for example, the words “so” and “sweet”, the latter appearing in every stanza, with varying degrees of emphasis each time. Most noted the structure of each stanza – the three eight-syllable lines followed by the sudden abruptness of the fourth four-syllable line, with its curt and hard reality on three occasions, but then a triumphant declaration at the very end, where the repeated word “die” suddenly becomes “lives”, with all the implications that this entails here. Many too noted the simple rhyme scheme, though very few in fact saw it correctly, many saying for example that it was “ABAB” throughout. In fact it is rather more sophisticated – “ABAB CBCB DBDB EFEF” – with the repeated “B” rhyme emphasising “die” three times, then changing triumphantly in the final stanza. It is certainly a simple rhyme pattern, but not as naïve as some suggested – it certainly is not just a nursery-rhyme pattern as several candidates said.

Some candidates asserted with apparent confidence that the poem is a sonnet, or that it is written in free verse (in more than one case candidates said that it was a free verse sonnet), or that Herbert uses rhyming couplets. What matters even more than identifying forms, though, is to identify *the effects that are created* by the use of such structures or devices. Comment was frequently made on what candidates called “archaic words”, often without showing any apparent awareness that as noted in the question Herbert wrote the poem in the early seventeenth century; where they added the idea that these words (“thou” and “thy”) gave the poem a biblical ring then a valid point was being attempted, but where they were simply called archaic or Shakespearean no value or reward could be offered.

Where there was clear misreading many candidates did also manage to argue well and to some extent convincingly; credit will always be given to answers which support and argue their interpretations, even where these are clearly incorrect, and certainly where they are possible. It is the ability to construct and argue an interpretation that is one assessment criterion in this Paper, with appropriate support from the text itself, and with comment on the various poetic devices and techniques that are used.

Question 3

This question produced some of the best responses; unlike the other two, there were relatively few simple narratives or character sketches, and most answers saw at least some of the quite subtle nuances in Mew’s writing, together with its curious mingling of quite light, almost Wildean, humour and serious emotion. The ironies in the passage were well noted by the best answers – that, for example, a presumably experienced military officer is totally dominated throughout by an ‘obdurate’, ‘frail’, ‘litttle’ lady, and the comic impact in the clash between the romantic approaches of the Captain and the ironic detachment of the Lady was often

seen; most answers, too, commented on the strangely moving pose that Lady Hopedene adopts at the end of the passage, suggestive perhaps of a much deeper concern and even affection than she has otherwise allowed herself to show.

A surprisingly large number of answers appeared to misread the background situation, assuming in a few cases that Captain Henley and Lady Hopedene are already married, or that they have been living together for several months or even years and are only now considering marriage because of the war, or that Lady Hopedene has by the end of the passage agreed that she will marry Captain Henley. More than one candidate misread lines 2-3, and assumed that the whole conversation was overseen and overheard by a third person, 'the obdurate little lady on the sofa', a phrase which in fact is of course descriptive of Lady Hopedene herself; and a few mistook Lady Hopedene's metaphorical use of the legal word 'bar' in line 65 to mean that the whole conversation was taking place in an inn.

The contrast between the two characters was well seen and described by most candidates: Captain Henley, young and determinedly romantic, to the point of being apparently entirely blind to the possibility that Lady Hopedene does have no feeling for him at all; she on the other hand is cool and outwardly even cruel, but acts like this in order to try her best to convince the young man to wait a few years before committing himself. She has already had an unhappy marriage – there is no indication that this ended in divorce, but it was certainly 'loveless' – and does not want to repeat the experience, or indeed to allow Henley to find himself in the same position; she was, incidentally, not forced into this marriage as several candidates believed – line 28 clearly denies this.

Most of the passage, as noted by most candidates, is devoted to Lady Hopedene, with Captain Henley at times almost acting as a kind of foil to Mew's presentation of her emotions; and although she is undeniably cool and ironic in much of what she says she is in fact portrayed as showing considerably more warmth and depth of emotion than is at first apparent: she watches him in line 3 with 'quizzical kindness', she takes note of his distress 'and paused' in line 16, her comments in lines 21-23 'left her lips a little labouredly', her remarks in lines 37-42 are said only as she 'mused for a moment', and finally of course her reaction to his departure at the end of the passage is surely indicative of something much more than she has revealed to him; she may, as several candidates suggested, simply be showing how bored she has been throughout, but this seems unlikely, given that she 'tastes' his departure. Captain Henley, by contrast, is a much more one-dimensional character, frustrated almost to the point of desperation by her refusal to answer his proposal, though again his use of '*au revoir*' at the end, and his action of kissing Lady Hopedene's fingers, are perhaps suggestive of just a little more maturity and experience than he has shown before; his knowledge of the French phrase is not just evidence of his education, but of what the phrase implies, in contrast to Lady Hopedene's more brusque and final 'Good-bye'. Many candidates saw and commented on at least some of these points, and as said at the start of this section there was a good deal of evidence that candidates understood how Mew portrays the two characters; assertions were in almost all cases supported by at least some quotation, and personal responses were much more firmly based on the text itself than was the case in **Questions 1 and 2**.

The word 'portrays' has been used above, and it is perhaps worth stressing how important it is that candidates make very clear that they are aware that the characters in an extract from a story or a novel are not in any way real people, but fictional artefacts, created and developed by a writer. Most candidates did in fact refer to Lessing and to Mew once or twice, but even when doing so there was not always an absolutely secure sense that they understood fully that these two writers are entirely responsible for everything in each passage. There was also some quite frequent confusion between first and third person narrative, occasionally making it quite hard to appreciate exactly what point was being made; and second person narrative, a quite unusual technique indeed, is certainly not employed in either of the two prose passages here.

To do well on this paper candidates need to bear in mind: this is the 'Comment and Appreciation' Paper, and the emphasis in assessment will always be upon the extent to which an answer shows not just *knowledge* of what a poem or passage is saying, but upon *how* it is said; *comment* on what is set, and a detailed and critically focused appreciation of its writing, are what matter above all else. Quotations are imperative – preferably brief rather than lengthy – but even these are not enough on their own; what candidates must do is to look closely at the words and phrases within their quotations and try to explore and explain why in their view the writer has used them, and the effects and impacts that they create; they should not – as more than one answer does in every session – suggest other words which a writer *might* have used, but they should do their best to go beyond just illustration and explanation, and undertake some exploration of the images, the similes, the metaphors, the rhymes and so on.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

General comments

As has generally been the case in recent examination sessions, most candidates seemed confident about how they should approach this Paper, and while there were certainly too many answers that did not approach the set passages with the tightest possible critical focus there were also fewer which were simple and undiscussed narrative or paraphrase. Most candidates were clearly aware that they should do much more than just demonstrate that they had read and understood each passage, and that some detailed critical exploration was required for even a low mark.

There were almost no rubric infringements – just two candidates attempted all three questions – and almost all answers were reasonably well balanced in length; several candidates had obviously mis-timed their work, so that their second answer was a little rushed towards the end, in some cases with a sequence of notes instead of fully worked-out concluding paragraphs, but on the whole this was not a concern. One weakness was the quite high number of answers on **Question 2** (George Herbert's poem 'Virtue') where candidates appeared to have little or even no understanding of what various technical poetic terms mean – more of this below. In some cases candidates developed their personal responses to what they read well beyond what was actually written; sometimes this became purely speculative about what the writer might have meant, or what the characters might have intended, but occasionally too it became simply individual political or religious creed or even invective, with little or no reference to the texts themselves or to what the question actually asked. It is very important for candidates to remember to focus on the texts as literature, because this Paper is designed to test understanding, critical skills and insights rather than personal views about whatever topic happens to be raised by a set passage.

All three questions were addressed in more or less equal numbers, with **Question 2** marginally the most popular, and **Question 3** marginally the least popular. All three, however, led to some interesting, thoughtful and sometimes quite perceptive and critically sensitive responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates saw how Doris Lessing quickly establishes the enormous heat which affects Mary so badly, with plenty of good comment on the simplicity but also power of the passage's opening sentence; less good answers, however, devoted time to explaining what an "obsession" is, whereas better answers stressed how its use here emphasises the way in which Mary just cannot stop thinking about it. Her treatment of the dogs was noted by most candidates, too, as evidence not just of the animals' discomfort but more importantly of Mary's irritation and hatred of the constant heat. Many candidates expressed not just surprise at this – as does Dick, her husband – but also a strong animosity towards her, frequently in ways that Lessing does not even hint at in the passage set: Mary was, for instance, regarded as "snobbish", as "a city slicker", as "shallow and materialistic", none of which criticisms is anywhere explicit in the writing.

Mary is, too, well able to see something of the beauty around her: Lessing's descriptions of the "great massed white clouds" and of the oxen bringing water are surely to be read as if part of Mary's own thoughts. She is clearly not to be seen as entirely insensitive and self-absorbed as much of the rest of the passage implies, though her deep distaste for the bath and the bathroom is most certainly evidence of an inability, and possibly unwillingness too, to adapt to the way of life which Dick seems to have fully accepted.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

As in November 2009, this session saw some very good work indeed, with continuing evidence that candidates were carefully and professionally prepared for their coursework submission, and that in almost every case they were very fully aware of what is required of them; this is not to say that work was in any sense mechanistic or written to order – far from it, as there was a lot of fresh personal response – but that Centres and candidates alike have developed a real confidence in how best to approach both teaching and writing for this Paper.

Again as last year there was some sense of Centres “playing safe” with their texts and tasks; as will be seen there is none that could be described as in any real sense adventurous or unusual. This is not a criticism, of course – simply a fact – and while there was inevitably some occasional overlapping of ideas and material within Centres, there was never any sense that candidates’ work had been over-taught, and there was on the contrary a widespread sense that what was written was often completely individual. This kind of fresh personality in response, combined of course with plenty of textual support and clear, confident argument, will almost always attract high marks. It is, however, perhaps worth suggesting here that where a text has been used in previous sessions then this individuality is very unlikely to appear. Where centres do use the same texts, they should ensure that titles are changed, to ensure a fresh approach.

Poetry tasks centred exclusively upon two poets this session – Philip Larkin and Eileen Duggan – and it is very pleasing to report a continuing confidence in how candidates handle a good number of poems within one relatively short piece of writing. Previous reports have noted a tendency to treat each poem in isolation, without always seeing how it relates to others by the same writer, a tendency that was much less evident this year, when most candidates showed considerably more confidence in drawing them together, and showing how similarities of theme, language, form or poetic style could be identified and discussed. The other weakness that has been noted in the past – a preference for paraphrase rather than a critical exploration – was again less evident, and candidates in general tried very hard to look closely at how each of their poems was written; the most confident moved freely and easily between them in this way, looking at similarities of style and/or theme across several poems, while returning in their argument to the same three or four on a number of occasions, so that all the poems under discussion were as it were kept in the air for most of the responses. More candidates than usual also looked at more than just a small handful of poems, showing a good appreciation of a whole collection of, say, six to eight poems, rather than just three or four.

Prose texts were also relatively few, the most widely used being Graham Greene’s novel *Brighton Rock*, a thriller which has many layers and levels of interest and meaning; essays on good and evil, or on the characters’ religious beliefs – or lack of them – were often very interesting and thoughtful indeed. It is not so easy to explore a novelist’s language in quite the same close detail as a poet’s, but some candidates began to show a wish to do this rather than focus just upon character and theme. Quoting is similarly rather less easy to manage, but brief references to events and speeches, rather than lengthy and often slightly directionless quotation, were well managed by many this session. Other novels studied, though by only a handful of candidates this session, were Iris Murdoch’s *The Bell* and William Satchell’s New Zealand novel *The Greenstone Door*.

One Centre had studied Tom Stoppard’s entertaining and fascinating play *The Real Inspector Hound*, and in doing so had clearly not merely thought hard about the ideas which this presents its audience, but also saw it very clearly as a piece of theatre, with some excellent discussion of the playwright’s dramatic effects and the ways in which these are not merely clever or amusing – though they most certainly are both – but more importantly the ways in which Stoppard conveys his ideas in a particularly theatrical piece of writing. Such an approach to drama is not often managed by candidates in this coursework syllabus, and when it is then the results can be, as here, very well and convincingly managed. Seeing a live production of a play is of course not always possible, but when there are DVD or television adaptations it almost invariably helps candidates to see beyond what they simply read, and if they can then make use of what they have seen in their writing then the outcome will invariably be strengthened.



A number of candidates made use of secondary critical material, quoting and discussing what they had read about their chosen texts. It is helpful for candidates to consider how some relevant and thoughtful critical writing relates to their own developing ideas and arguments, and can produce a stronger piece of writing. Other people's ideas should not become the priority – as said at the start of this Report it is individual and personal responses that matter – but provided they take only a secondary role then they can, as with some brief and relevant contextual ideas and material, become relevant and helpful.

Overall, then, a very good session; coursework is most certainly an alive and flourishing part of the syllabus!