

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/11  
Paper 11 Poetry and Prose

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

Successful responses:

- demonstrate a detailed knowledge of poems and prose texts studied
- address the question from the start of the answer and throughout
- provide pertinent textual support for points made
- sustain convincing and perceptive analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts studied
- lose focus on the question set, e.g. by including extraneous context material
- make unsupported assertions
- describe or simply identify writer's techniques without further comment or explanation.

## General comments

Examiners reported much evidence of candidates' personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poems and prose texts that had been studied.

## Textual knowledge

The most successful responses offered a commanding knowledge of the text, with candidates able to integrate well-selected textual references to support their ideas and line of argument. The strongest responses selected judiciously from the poems or prose extracts printed on the question paper and avoided attempts to write exhaustively on every aspect of either poem or extract. In the strongest answers to the general prose essay questions, direct, concise quotation and indirect reference was integrated into essays. In less successful answers, where reference to the text was insufficient, responses tended to rely on unsubstantiated assertion and explanation. This was particularly evident in prose general essays, where a lack of detailed knowledge made it difficult for candidates to develop convincing responses to the ways in which writers conveyed and developed their ideas. In some cases, candidates answered the poetry question well but appeared to have little knowledge of the prose text studied. Lack of knowledge of the context of what was happening in passages was clear in some cases.

## Focus on the question

A common feature of more successful responses was the sustained focus on the question. These essays began addressing the terms of the question from the start and maintained a clear focus on the question throughout. Less successful responses often showed an impressive understanding of the character or theme in the question but did not tailor their material to the specific demands of the question. Candidates should take note of the key words in IGCSE Literature questions such as 'memorably', 'vividly' and 'strikingly', as these are used to elicit personal responses to the writing. If these are ignored, there is a danger that candidates produce general overviews or character sketches rather than consider in detail the writer's presentation of ideas and characters. Equally, a better balance in both the use of evidence and in reference to key words in questions would enhance success: some responses to extracts were either line by line run-throughs with little analysis, or demonstrated competent understanding but with limited detail in support;

there were also often two extremes in relation to key words – repetition of the question without convincing evidence to support, and competent responses to the text as a whole, but without explicit reference to key question words.

Focus was lost in some essays by the inclusion of extraneous background material, often in a lengthy opening paragraph. This approach is ineffective as historical, biographical and social context are not included in the band descriptors or assessed in relation to any assessment objectives. The use of lengthy conclusions which merely repeat points made in the body of the essay are also ineffective. Candidates should be made aware that answering the question is more important than following a pre-conceived idea about what constitutes a model essay.

### **Writers' effects**

The most perceptive responses offered a sustained engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects and had a clear appreciation of writers' use of language, structure and form. Candidates who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were also more able to probe closely and convincingly specific effects. Less successful approaches included the logging of devices and explanation rather than analysis. Literary features were sometimes identified but rarely explored meaningfully in terms of the effects created by the writer. Use of the terms 'lexical field' and 'semantic field' often preceded a list of quoted words and phrases followed by general description rather than a probing critical analysis. Some candidates explained the connotations of words they had quoted (e.g. 'red connotes blood or danger') but needed to expand on their comments to analysing how the words are used within the specific context of the poem or extract. Commenting in simple terms on punctuation, structure and versification was often at the expense of exploring ideas. Many candidates began their answers with comments such as 'X makes this poem moving by use of punctuation' without considering the ideas that the poet communicates. A significant number of answers never progressed beyond describing techniques. The listing of features with little or no reference to key word meaning or key ideas is unlikely to achieve highly in this assessment.

### **Personal response**

Strong individual responses were characterised by thoughtful and perceptive comments argued and supported with care. These responses engaged directly with those words in the questions designed to elicit a personal response to the writing. In some responses to poems, there was evidence of candidates adopting an overly assertive style of writing which gave the impression of there being only one 'correct' reading of the poem. Some less confident responses demonstrated empathy with characters by simply suggesting that the 'reader' experiences the same anguish as a particular character or that a particular predicament was 'relatable'; such comments need to be linked to textual detail and expanded upon in terms of how the writer is creating such responses in readers.

There was, generally, some very good work produced this session. Most demonstrated an enjoyment of and engagement with texts. There were very few rubric infringements.

### **Questions on individual texts:**

#### **Section A: Poetry**

#### ***Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5***

#### **Question 1 *Attack***

There were many strong responses to this question which were engaged, enthusiastic and detailed. Candidates seemed to have clearly identified with the feeling of 'anger' and were able to select relevant phrases and ideas to answer the question. Many responses began by referencing the question in the first paragraph, followed by some comment on the poet and/or the contextual backdrop of the First World War. Most were able to make some relevant comments about the nature of the fighting, the soldiers feelings and to consider the question. Nearly all candidates were able to make some response to the dense imagery and writing effects. Better answers included detailed and critical analysis of the writing features and less successful responses were at least able to identify some of these even if they did not fully develop their ideas. The word 'flounders' was frequently misunderstood, and the understanding of some candidates that this was a fish, skewed some of their comments. The word 'barrage' was also not always understood. Most candidates made some comment on the forceful final lines of the poem. Some interpreted this quite literally as a prayer and a few candidates commented on the possibility of the phrase as blasphemy.

### **Question 2** *The Trees are Down*

Again, there were some very strong answers which showed thorough knowledge and understanding as well as evaluative engagement. Most candidates understood the poem overall and many were able to probe some of its deeper implications such as the effect on the speaker of the felling of the trees, and the spring 'unmade' or how nature is 'underappreciated'. Better answers effectively grappled with many of the writing features and were able to explain aspects such as tone of the speaker, the implications about the rat and the auditory images. Although more able candidates placed the poem briefly in context, weaker responses were distracted by this with some addressing the issues of deforestation in great detail. Some took the questions as an opportunity to present their personal view in too much detail, and neglected a deeper response to other aspects of the poem. Some candidates were also drawn off focus by giving long and unnecessary discussions on the tragedies in the poet's life without close analytical reference to the poem. Overall, however, there were some good answers with high quality analysis of language.

### **Question 3** *Last Sonnet*

There were a few very good answers in which candidates responded very effectively and convincingly to the specific effects of the writer's use of language. These answers showed very clear understanding of the poet's wishes to be steadfast and included a relevant response to the sense of 'longing' in the poem. Weaker responses struggled to do this and did not respond with relevance to the question. Some weaker responses asserted that Keats longed to be a star without any supporting evidence for this view. Weaker answers did not always fully explain some of the archaic language and were distracted by long and often irrelevant descriptions of form, structure and the Italian sonnet.

### **Question 4** *The Lost Woman*

This was a popular question with a range of answers. Most answers were able to identify the feelings expressed by Beer in the poem about her mother. Good answers successfully explored these feelings in detail with comments on a mixture of feelings such as regret, guilt, anger. Candidates took the opportunities provided in the poem to respond to writing effects and their answers were well developed and well supported. There was some clear understanding of the deeper implications – the imagined life created by the speaker, the sense of regret and guilt felt by the speaker and role reversal in the last stanza. Quite a large number of candidates described the psychological and emotional stages of grief but in doing so went off at a tangent and lost focus. Weaker scripts tended to comment on a more literal level, sometimes not fully understanding the idea of the 'romance' or the full impact of the last lines. Some of the comments about the 'ghost' and the 'bat voice' in the last stanza indicated some lack of understanding.

### **Question 5** *Neighbours*

Strong responses to this question showed an understanding of the effects of radiation on nature and humans and were able to comment on the unity rising from the common danger. These answers fully explored the experience of Clarke and provided some clear and critical comments on the effectiveness of her writing. Stronger answers selected a wide range of the imagery to comment on. Some of the vivid images such as the crows drinking from the lamb's eye, lamb sipping caesium and the poisoned arrow entering the child were easily identified and elicited some well-developed and evaluative comments. Less successful responses at least made an attempt to respond to the writing effects. Most were able to identify images and provide some commentary. There were some who seemed puzzled by the last lines and either ignored these or offered tentative comments which were sometimes assertive or confused.

### **Question 6** *Buzzard*

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

## **Section B: Prose**

### ***No Longer At Ease***

In general, responses to this question were not well handled. Candidates generally understood the context and were able to identify some relevant points to show the significance of the passage. Most responses showed an awareness of the contrasts in culture and made some comments about this. Many commented on the Union's disappointment in Obi, the descriptions of him and the significance of his name. However, most answers were a general commentary on the activities in the passage and many tended to be narrative. Candidates did not always probe deeply enough into the nuances of the passage and there were very few that understood the deeper implications, for example that Obi's mistake was to be caught. Overall, there was little engagement with the writing effects or comment on the literary features in the passage such as dialogue.

#### **Question 8**

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

### ***Mansfield Park***

#### **Question 9**

Most responses were able to place the events of the passage in context and identified Fanny's sense of being overwhelmed when she arrived at the house. Most candidates understood and commented on Fanny's feelings and her unhappiness and supported their points with some relevant text. They also identified and commented on Edmund's kindness, the details of his care for her such as his provision of paper and his supervision of the letter writing. Some answers included comments on the nature of the relationship between Fanny and Edmund. Most of these responses kept the question in mind and aimed their writing at describing the relationship between Fanny and Edmund. Few described any deeper implications in the passage, for example the effect of the conversation on Fanny, and that, 'From this day Fanny grew more comfortable'. Only a very few candidates referred to the details about Fanny's brother and how Edmund understood her pain in being separated from William. Many scripts lacked engagement with Austen's writing and there was little response to the gentle tone, the descriptive vocabulary, Edmund's direct speech or the impact of the last line.

#### **Question 10**

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

### ***My Ántonia***

#### **Question 11**

This was a popular choice of text. There were many convincing, well developed answers with strong personal response evident. Candidates seemed to identify with Antonia in this scene and enjoy describing their feelings for her. A few candidates used their first paragraph to describe the setting of the novel with some comments on the Bohemian immigration or the American west. Others commented on the context of the tent and the Saturday night dances. Most, however, got straight to the point of writing about their feelings for Antonia and in general produced answers that remained focused on the question throughout. Most answers were well balanced with a range of points chosen from the text to illustrate their views and feelings. Most candidates were very supportive of Antonia and willing to forgive her behaviour. They identified strongly with her actions, and clearly understood her mistakes. Many commented on the apparent change in her personality, her bad temper and her desire for independence. Many expressed concern and worry for Antonia's future. Some responses included a comment about Mrs Harling, and expressed some sympathy for her. Most answers were able to make some response to the writing effects such as the dialogue and the descriptions of Antonia's behaviour. Some stronger answers commented on Jim as narrator in the passage.

## Question 12

Candidates were clearly not as sympathetic towards Jim as those who answered **Question 11** were to Antonia and they appeared to be reserved towards him. Candidates felt he had better opportunities than Antonia, and they did not like how easily he seemed to relinquish her. However, candidates did make an effort to present a balanced argument and generally selected relevant points to support their views. Responses maintained focus on the question, and clearly expressed their personal opinions about Jim. Better answers provided more detailed evaluations of Jim and moved beyond a character sketch to perceptive analysis of some of his actions, such as his move away from the prairie to succeed in life and the failure of his relationship with Lena.

## *Hard Times*

### Question 13

Those who responded to this question provided some excellent answers. The passage provided opportunities for candidates to respond both to the question and to writing effects and most candidates took full advantage of this. Many answers began by referencing the question and remained focused on the idea of 'disturbing' throughout. Good answers then proceeded to select relevant points from the passage and seemed to take great delight in describing the 'disturbing' actions of Harthouse towards Tom, and Tom's ignorance of what was happening. Candidates pinpointed Harthouse's contempt for Bounderby, his casual body language and his persuasive methods of extracting information from Tom. Most commented effectively on 'the whelp'. Many read between the lines and saw the deeper implications with plenty of comments on details such as, 'The Tempter merely lifted his eyebrows, but the whelp was obliged to go on'. Better answers closely analysed the passage and provided some sensitive and very detailed commentary on the dialogue, rich vocabulary, body language and punctuation. However, there were some who did not look closely enough at the language and some who resorted to a narrative explanation of the passage. Overall however, most responses to this question were focused, relevant and engaged with many strong personal responses.

### Question 14

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

## *Spies*

### Question 15

The passage offered opportunities for candidates to explore the idea of 'entertaining'. There were many good answers which were engaged and candidates seemed to easily identify with Stephen. Most responses at least acknowledged some points from the passage which made it entertaining and good points were selected to support this such as the boys theories about Keith's mother, their mistaken interpretations of her actions, Stephen's imaginative ideas about the trains and 'strategic intelligence'. Several responses developed ideas about the tunnel and suggested it might be a metaphor for the journey of the boys into more adult awareness. Most responses made some reference to the relationship between the boys and Keith's assumed dominance. Some stronger responses began to take a closer look at the writing features such as the body language of the boys, the sensory imagery, vocabulary and the dialogue. A few responses commented on the viewpoint of Stephen and the narrative technique. Discussion of the narrative technique was often the discriminator between the good and more limited responses. Weaker answers missed opportunities in the passage and did not provide enough response to writing effects. There were a few responses which misunderstood the facts, asserting that this scene took place in Nazi Germany.

### Question 16

Many candidates answered the question by exploring the extract from **Question 15** so many opportunities from the wider text were missed. Despite this, in some responses there was a sense of engagement and clear personal response. Candidates referred to the question and, apart from the information used from the passage in **Question 15**, considered points such as Stephen's family situation, his relationship with Keith, his relationship with his parents and his courage. Very few responses explored deeper implications or referred to the viewpoint and perceptions of the older Stephen.



### ***The Secret River***

#### **Question 17**

Strong responses found relevant points and drew out significance from the whole passage. There were many good answers which looked closely at the extract, analysed the language in detail and dealt very effectively with 'drama' in the scene. Many candidates referenced the question in their first paragraph and sustained the focus on this throughout. Others used the first paragraph to introduce the scene and place it in context – some of these responses could have been more concise in this. Nearly all candidates were able to select some relevant points to describe the dramatic scene. They acknowledged and commented on Will's fear and confusion, the disinterest of the court, the role of Mr Lucas and Sal's cry in the last paragraph. Most candidates included some response to the language and effects and noted the tense atmosphere, the vivid vocabulary describing the different characters and their actions. Better answers provided some excellent commentary in how the dramatic effects were created.

#### **Question 18**

Most answers to this question gave an overview of Smasher Sullivan's character, showing some understanding of this. Candidates commented on his name, his violent characteristics and his prejudices. Further comments were offered about his appearance and his relationship with Thornhill. Answers included some relevant examples of his aggressive behaviour, for example keeping a slave. Some responses were engaged and expressed a clear dislike for his actions and values. A few candidates provided some comment about his significance in the novel or how he reflects the author's message and concerns. Most responses did not examine the language or emphasise what made him a memorable character.

### ***The English Teacher***

#### **Question 19**

Of those who made this their choice, most were able to select some relevant points from the passage that were 'memorable' such as Krishna and Susila's relationship and the tidying up of the room. Very few, however, explored deeper implications in the passage such as the seriousness of the turn in the conversation or how the changes in the room foreshadowed the changes coming in to Krishna's life. Most candidates commented on the clock, but did not always fully understand its symbolism and there was some confusion about whether it represented British or Indian values. Some candidates commented on the Wordsworth poem, but again there was some misunderstanding around this.

#### **Question 20**

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

### ***Stories of Ourselves***

#### **Question 21**

Responses overall were engaged and many tackled the question with enthusiasm. Candidates noticed and commented on the context, the relationship between Cecile and the narrator, the conditions of life under the Germans, and the details of the crash. Many candidates were struck by the tragedy of the scene and remarked that it was 'the beginning of winter not the end'. Most responses made some response to the writing effects in the passage, and explored some of the imagery, such as the comparison of the officer's black glove to a little black snake's tongue and the descriptive vocabulary. A few candidates misunderstood the word 'Maybach', some thinking it was a German officer, others thinking it was some kind of animal.

#### **Question 22**

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/12  
Paper 12 Poetry and Prose

## Key messages

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Less successful responses:

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- lose focus on the question set, e.g. by including extraneous context material
- make unsupported assertions
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## General comments

Examiners reported much evidence of candidates' personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poems and prose texts that had been studied.

## Textual knowledge

The most successful responses offered a commanding knowledge of the text, with candidates able to integrate well-selected textual references to support their ideas and line of argument. The strongest responses selected judiciously from the poems or prose extracts printed on the question paper and avoided attempts to write exhaustively on every aspect of either poem or extract. In the strongest answers to the general prose essay questions, direct, concise quotation and indirect reference was integrated into essays. In less successful answers, where reference to the text was insufficient, responses tended to rely on unsubstantiated assertion and explanation. This was particularly evident in prose general essays, where a lack of detailed knowledge made it difficult for candidates to develop convincing responses to the ways in which writers conveyed and developed their ideas. In some cases, candidates answered the poetry question well but appeared to have little knowledge of the prose text studied. Lack of knowledge of the context of what was happening in passages was clear in some cases.

## Focus on the question

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thoughts with little analysis, or demonstrated competent understanding but with limited detail in support; there were also often two extremes in relation to key words – repetition of the question without convincing evidence to support, and competent responses to the text as a whole, but without explicit reference to key question words.

Focus was lost in some essays by the inclusion of extraneous background material, often in a lengthy opening paragraph. This approach is ineffective as historical, biographical and social context are not included in the band descriptors or assessed in relation to any assessment objectives. The use of lengthy conclusions which merely repeat points made in the body of the essay are also ineffective. Candidates should be made aware that answering the question is more important than following a pre-conceived idea about what constitutes a model essay.

### **Writers' effects**

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### **Personal response**

Strong individual responses were characterised by thoughtful and perceptive comments argued and supported with care. These responses engaged directly with those words in the questions designed to elicit a personal response to the writing. In some responses to poems, there was evidence of candidates adopting an overly assertive style of writing which gave the impression of there being only one 'correct' reading of the poem. Some less confident responses demonstrated empathy with characters by simply suggesting that the 'reader' experiences the same anguish as a particular character or that a particular predicament was 'relatable'; such comments need to be linked to textual detail and expanded upon in terms of how the writer is creating such responses in readers.

There was, generally, some very good work produced this session. Most demonstrated an enjoyment of and engagement with texts. There were very few rubric infringements.

### **Questions on individual texts:**

#### **Section A: Poetry**

#### ***Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: from Part 5***

#### **Question 1     *The Trees***

Candidates were generally able to select appropriate examples of uncertainty in Larkin's language: for example, 'a kind of grief' and 'seem to say'. Most candidates were also able to recognise that Larkin's concerns focussed around life and death. Discussions which centred upon his jealousy of the trees, suggested by the word 'green', proved not to be particularly fruitful. Many responses interpreted 'trick' as a deceit: stronger answers were able to perceive its alternative meaning of 'wonder', referring to its connotations of wizardry and magic. Some less successful answers selected phrases and explained why they suggested uncertainty, without discussing any larger meanings or ideas. The strongest answers engaged with the paradox of the trees' apparent immortality and the way in which it relates to human life and were able to successfully analyse the tone and language.



**Question 2** *Cold in the Earth*

Candidates had obviously been well prepared for this poem. The last three verses tended to be less well handled than the first five; candidates appeared to feel more confident in writing about the more straightforward declarations of suffering and loss than the more abstract ideas of the later stanzas. There were many comments about metre and structure which were not always helpful (e.g. 'the metre is like a heartbeat which is ironic'); where such references are made, there needs to be a clear purpose, explanation and link to the question. There were some excellent comments on the use of time and the wave metaphor, as well as the sun/stars metaphors. Strong responses often included comment on the paradox of being afraid of forgetting but wanting to remember, despite the pain memory brought, focussing on oxymorons such as 'rapturous pain' and 'divinest anguish', identifying the spiritual dimension of the persona's grief. Strong candidates also wrote convincingly about the various stages of grief described in the poem.

**Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1**

**Question 3** *For My Grandmother Knitting*

This was a popular choice among candidates, and many wrote movingly about the grandmother's loss of purpose and the role that knitting played in her old age. Candidates were able to identify the way Lochhead used hands as a symbol throughout the poem and to expand on the dual meaning of 'your grasp of things'. Less successful responses asserted that the relationship between grandmother and grandchildren was hostile or completely broken, missing such clues as the hint of concerned affection in 'gran you do too much'. Some responses contained misreading/misunderstanding as those candidates thought that it was the grandmother herself who was reminiscing rather than the granddaughter and attributed feelings to her that are not supported by the text. Some candidates searched for evidence of malevolence or cruelty on the part of the grandchildren in trying to persuade the grandmother that she need not knit them any more clothes but perceptive responses recognised the connection between a lifetime of providing and the sense of her having lost that role as she ages. Some candidates spent a long time discussing the hardships of the grandmother's early life, often neglecting the importance of knitting and the sadness of her old age. Many successful responses saw the implications of the way the elderly are treated in society but often such discussion could have been more closely focused on textual detail.

**Question 4** *Lion heart*

Many responding to this question gave a stanza-by-stanza explication without focusing on 'powerful changes'. Most answers identified the transition from sea to land and the powerful contribution of Chong's imagery to the overall effect. Some answers were of very good quality, identifying the changes/transition/celebrating the birth of a nation. These often took full advantage of the opportunity to explore the allegorical aspects of the poem in particular. A few appeared to rely on memorised notes or pre-prepared responses which did not allow for full exploration of the question set.

**Gillian Clarke: from Selected Poems**

**Question 5** *Pipistrelle*

*Pipistrelle* was rarely chosen and, often, responses were not altogether successful. Many candidates did not focus fully enough on the question (*Explore how Clarke vividly creates impressions of the bat*), writing instead about the human relationship hinted at in the poem. Better answers were able to explore how Clarke's imagery evoked the delicacy and swiftness of the bat as well as the contrast between the first and third stanzas. Few discussed 'subliminal messenger' or the 'illegible freehand' and many overlooked the closeness of the poet's observations in the latter stanzas of the poem. One strong response noted the subliminal message as one of joy, commenting on the poet's use of 'love' and the idea they sat for so long in the dark.

**Question 6** *Catrin*

Strong personal engagement characterised responses to this question. Understanding was generally strong, though the opening was dealt with less confidently. There were some strong comments on the speaker writing on the walls, though few explored this idea to its fullest extent. Most were able to discuss the rope image with some degree of success; a few were able to explore the nuances of the relationship and the 'struggle'/ 'fighting you off' with real sensitivity. Candidates did endeavour to focus on 'movingly' and did mention it frequently. The strongest responses focused on the central 'tug of war' between parent and child,

offering thoughtful analysis of metaphors. Many missed out reference to key last line, or assumed that the girl had just grown into a rebel in general.

### **Section B: Prose**

#### **No Longer At Ease**

##### **Question 7**

The extract question was more frequently selected than the general essay. There were various points which made this passage a 'revealing moment'. In it we can discern Obi's earnest desire to use his education for the betterment of his country, his wanting to break away from what he sees as outmoded concepts and protocol (preferring to stay with his friend rather than the hotel chosen for him) and his idealism as a schoolboy. Strong answers commented on Obi no longer being 'at ease' with Nigerian culture, in terms of his comment about them 'having a long way to go', and the ultimate irony of this statement. However, we then recognise the ominous symbolism of the De Soto and the sight of Clara. Many candidates identified the significance of the anecdotes about Obi's schooldays and the appearance of Sam Okoli. Stronger answers were able to explore the clash between two cultures represented by the Union's arrangements for Obi's accommodation and his own choice. Some candidates were able to write about the ideas above but without making connections between them on the whole. As always with the extract question, focus on the techniques (use of dialogue, use of narrative voice ect) and language was essential for the higher bands, though only if explored fully and convincingly.

##### **Question 8**

Candidates who chose to answer this question showed secure knowledge of the novel and were able to refer to key scenes involving Obi and Isaac, such as the occasion in the chapter in which Obi is re-united with his father after his stay in England. Less successful responses did not always focus on 'powerful' and simplified the nature of the relationship, without exploring the wider reasons for the tensions between father and son.

#### **Mansfield Park**

##### **Question 9**

Most were familiar with the passage and wrote about it enthusiastically, with many appreciating the symbolism of the locked gate and the flirtatious exchange between Henry and Maria. Austen's dialogue presented opportunities for close engagement with language and tone and the most successful responses were able to take full advantage of this. Candidates were aware, in the main, of the shocking behaviour of the couple in relation to the mores of the time. The symbolism of passing round the gate was generally recognised also but there were few comments about the ironic tone of the narration at the start which is so important in preparing us for what is to come. Almost all candidates who attempted this had some very strong personal views of Maria's and Henry's behaviour and what was considered proper for an engaged woman and a single man within the context of the wider novel. There was evidence of knowledge and understanding of the text and its deeper implications.

##### **Question 10**

Candidates had obviously given some thought to the role of the Bertrams as parents and generally provided strong personal responses; however, assertions needed specific support for a reasonably developed response. Most candidates referenced Lady Bertram's pug and Sir Thomas' return in the middle of a 'Lovers' Vows' rehearsal, but other details were lacking in places. Answers tended to give verdicts about the lack of parenting skills of both characters but only a few saw the rather more nuanced portrayal of their kindness to Fanny and of Sir Thomas's realisation of the way in which he has contributed to the fates of his children. Strong responses were very detailed and engaged with both the text and the question; these tended to support their ideas with an impressive quantity of textual reference.

#### **My Ántonia**

##### **Question 11**

Candidates wrote convincingly about the accumulation of tension as the passage progressed, they were able to respond to body language and dialogue of both the protagonist and antagonist and the violence of the fight, identifying features such as Ambrosch's provocative manner and language and the impact of Antonia's

'No friends any more!' upon Jim. Most managed to go beyond the fight at the heart of the passage to consider the aftermath, in particular the reaction of Antonia and its significance in terms of the novel as a whole. Quite a few gave a line by line explanation without any thread to their argument; there was a tendency to drop into narration, undeveloped comment and generalisation such as: 'the sound of Jake hitting Ambrosch was like the crack of an axe so this was a tense moment'. Stronger answers looked for the contrast between the two families' attitudes and the context of the settlers' hierarchical social background.

#### Question 12

There were fewer answers on this question, but those candidates who chose it displayed confident knowledge of the novel and thoughtful engagement with Cather's portrayal of Jim and Antonia's relationship.

#### Hard Times

#### Question 13

Candidates generally showed understanding of the significance of this scene within the wider context of the novel. Personal engagement was particularly strong in responses to this question and many wrote moving personal responses about the factors which made the scene disturbing, exploring the despairing passivity of Louisa's responses and the inability of her father to understand her. The revulsion felt for Gradgrind's plan to allow his daughter to marry Bounderby and his oblivious reactions to Louisa's distress were present in many cases. The symbolism of the Coketown chimneys, of the fires, and the closing of her hand by Louisa at the end were well understood. The most successful answers were able to link arguments about the relationship to details of dialogue, gesture and image from the passage.

#### Question 14

There were few responses to the question about Tom Gradgrind but these responded thoughtfully to the qualified nature of the question (*Does Dickens make it possible for you ...*) and showed secure knowledge of Tom's character and role within the novel, particularly in relation to Louisa and Stephen Blackpool. There were some good responses commenting on Dickens' contrast between Tom and Louisa, on Tom's consistently being described as a 'whelp' but also on Dickens' partial sympathy because at the end, Tom is 'allowed' to feel remorse.

#### Spies

#### Question 15

This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. Knowledge of the context of the passage within the text was demonstrated and candidates wrote convincingly about Frayn's withholding of the identity of the 'tramp', the narrative voice of the older Stephen and the many implications of Uncle Peter's 'it's over'. Success depended on the sharpness of focus on why it is 'powerful' and appreciation of why this is a turning point in the novel. It was evident where candidates were not prepared or who were unfamiliar with the text. Most candidates recognised the need to comment upon the shifts in narration without having a clear idea of what has been achieved through it and on the use of the Haywards' nicknames by the tramp. Most candidates seemed to identify the range of feelings, focusing on Stephen's 'fear' and the interplay between older/younger Stephen and the tramp/Uncle Peter though the pathos surrounding the adult and the predicaments for both child/adult within the extract were often overlooked. Strongest answers recognised the emotional paralysis that initially overcame Stephen and the way the author tracked his emotions through his rhetorical questions. Some very good answers commented on Stephen's inability to recognise the 'German' as Uncle Peter, with all the attendant understanding of adult relationships, fallen heroes and his own part in Uncle Peter's situation. Most candidates recognised the use of 'It's over then' to the foreshadowing of Uncle Peter's death. They saw the change in Uncle Peter from the glorious RAF pilot and hero to a sick tramp and what this says to us about war.

#### Question 16

Candidates had generally prepared well. General remarks about the dual narration were, however, not always sufficient: more capable responses identified the role of characters such as Barbara Berrill and Mrs Hayward in opening Stephen's eyes to the reality of the adult world. The best answers focused on specific incidents, especially the excruciating (from Stephen's perspective) first conversation with Mrs Hayward in the hide-out and some referred to Stephen's conversations with Barbara in the same place. Although a child herself, she manages to give perspectives about adult behaviour that make Stephen uncomfortable or

confused. Weaker answers were able to identify relevant examples of Stephen's lack of understanding such as the 'x's in Mrs Hayward's diary, but were not able to make very much comment. Some candidates used the extract from Q 15 which was self-limiting.

### ***The Secret River***

#### **Question 17**

This was a popular question and was generally well answered though a few were not sufficiently focused on the extract itself. Most focused well on the question and were able to find evidence to support assertions and analyse at least some of the language features. Successful responses focused on 'mysteriousness' and worked closely with the detail of the passage, exploring images such as 'naked as worms' or 'like the snakes or the spiders'. Strongest answers gave a brief context (before and after the extract) and then explored the Aborigines' closeness to nature. The best responses were those that focused closely on language analysis alongside an acknowledgement of the clashes of culture. They established that the view of the 'mysterious' nature of the aboriginal people was not a fact in itself but a merely a perspective of the newcomers of a different culture; that it is from Thornhill's perspective, as a result of his experiences from his life in London. Good points were made about how the passage presages events that will lead to the massacre at the end. Many candidates were able to discuss the difference between the aboriginal and the European view of land and ownership and its wider significance within the novel.

#### **Question 18**

Responses here showed good understanding of Sal's journey from London to Thornhill's Point. Candidates identified Sal's heroic characteristics and went beyond a character sketch to show understanding of her role in the novel, particularly in relation to Will and her impact on his life from childhood.

### ***The English Teacher***

#### **Question 19**

Answers here were often less successful than for most of the passage-based questions in that many lapsed into narrative or explanation of the situation without focusing on Narayan's ways of making this a powerful moment. The extreme agitation felt by Krishna and the heart-rending sobs of his wife are powerful in the context of the settled, humdrum life that he had led thus far and he is shocked by an intensity of emotion that was alien to him. This is closely connected to the underlying theme of Krishna's personal growth. Better answers produced thoughtful personal responses, exploring Narayan's depiction of Krishna's anger and Susila's distress and were able to place the episode within the wider context of the novel and the characters' developing marriage. Weaker answers paraphrased the extract rather than focusing on the question.

#### **Question 20**

Candidates showed some skill in identifying the roles of the main female characters in this text, from Susila to the Headmaster's wife, and made fairly reasonable evaluation of their roles. A few glossed over the role of women more generally and concentrated on Susila. There was often a lack of the well-selected detail needed to address the task fully.

### ***Stories of Ourselves***

#### **Question 21**

This was a popular question with a wide range of approaches. Some restricted their answer to the search for the Maori, without fully focusing on the question. Some focused on the relationship between the brothers and neglected the last few lines. The strongest responses ranged widely through the passage and showed real understanding of the significance of heritage. Responses were largely able to focus on what constituted a 'satisfying ending' by concentrating on Jim, though few were able to see that for the dead Maori it was satisfying as it was his 'place of happy return'. Many paraphrased the content of the passage and did not focus on it as an ending to a story, or omitted what is arguably the most important part of the extract: the story of the Maoris and the missing man. Understanding of the ending of the story was not always secure and the reason for the narrator's 'sharp pain' not identified. The metaphor of the 'long-distance runner' was a potentially fruitful image to explore. Those that responded well wrote with great sympathy for the Maoris. The powerful last line was often overlooked despite its importance. This was largely because candidates felt a satisfying ending, by necessity, had to be a happy one and this sentence jarred with that notion. Better

responses recognised that Jim, like the old Maori man, had a connection with the land that the narrator did not.

### Question 22

Most candidates were able to identify a sense of place but some were unable to explain what made it strong. Responses were almost equally divided between the two possible stories. In the case of *'To Da-duh'* candidates tended to explain Da-duh's and the narrator's rivalry over the best place to live, without focusing on how a sense of the two places was created by Marshall. Strong answers referring to this text identified the impact of the competition between the two settings and the outcomes these had for the two characters. The world as a place in *'Millennium'* provided plenty of opportunity for candidates to explore the themes of this story and horrors of this dystopian future. Answers often lacked sufficient detail to support their arguments though stronger responses explored the word 'cubicle' and its connotations as a sensible starting-point.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/13  
Paper 13 Poetry and Prose

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

Successful responses:

- demonstrate a detailed knowledge of poems and prose texts studied
- address the question from the start of the answer and throughout
- provide pertinent textual support for points made
- sustain convincing and perceptive analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts studied
- lose focus on the question set, e.g. by including extraneous context material
- make unsupported assertions
- describe or simply identify writer's techniques without further comment or explanation.

## General comments

Examiners reported much evidence of candidates' personal engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poems and prose texts that had been studied.

## Textual knowledge

The most successful responses offered a commanding knowledge of the text, with candidates able to integrate well-selected textual references to support their ideas and line of argument. The strongest responses selected judiciously from the poems or prose extracts printed on the question paper and avoided attempts to write exhaustively on every aspect of either poem or extract. In the strongest answers to the general prose essay questions, direct, concise quotation and indirect reference was integrated into essays. In less successful answers, where reference to the text was insufficient, responses tended to rely on unsubstantiated assertion and explanation. This was particularly evident in prose general essays, where a lack of detailed knowledge made it difficult for candidates to develop convincing responses to the ways in which writers conveyed and developed their ideas. In some cases, candidates answered the poetry question well but appeared to have little knowledge of the prose text studied. Lack of knowledge of the context of what was happening in passages was clear in some cases.

## Focus on the question

A common feature of more successful responses was the sustained focus on the question. These essays began addressing the terms of the question from the start and maintained a clear focus on the question throughout. Less successful responses often showed an impressive understanding of the character or theme in the question but did not tailor their material to the specific demands of the question. Candidates should take note of the key words in IGCSE Literature questions such as 'memorably', 'vividly' and 'strikingly', as these are used to elicit personal responses to the writing. If these are ignored, there is a danger that candidates produce general overviews or character sketches rather than consider in detail the writer's presentation of ideas and characters. Equally, a better balance in both the use of evidence and in reference to key words in questions would enhance success: some responses to extracts were either line by line run-



thoughts with little analysis, or demonstrated competent understanding but with limited detail in support; there were also often two extremes in relation to key words – repetition of the question without convincing evidence to support, and competent responses to the text as a whole, but without explicit reference to key question words.

Focus was lost in some essays by the inclusion of extraneous background material, often in a lengthy opening paragraph. This approach is ineffective as historical, biographical and social context are not included in the band descriptors or assessed in relation to any assessment objectives. The use of lengthy conclusions which merely repeat points made in the body of the essay are also ineffective. Candidates should be made aware that answering the question is more important than following a pre-conceived idea about what constitutes a model essay.

### **Writers' effects**

The most perceptive responses offered a sustained engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects and had a clear appreciation of writers' use of language, structure and form. Candidates who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were also more able to probe closely and convincingly specific effects. Less successful approaches included the logging of devices and explanation rather than analysis. Literary features were sometimes identified but rarely explored meaningfully in terms of the effects created by the writer. Use of the terms 'lexical field' and 'semantic field' often preceded a list of quoted words and phrases followed by general description rather than a probing critical analysis. Some candidates explained the connotations of words they had quoted (e.g. 'red connotes blood or danger') but needed to expand on their comments to analysing how the words are used within the specific context of the poem or extract. Commenting in simple terms on punctuation, structure and versification was often at the expense of exploring ideas. Many candidates began their answers with comments such as 'X makes this poem moving by use of punctuation' without considering the ideas that the poet communicates. A significant number of answers never progressed beyond describing techniques. The listing of features with little or no reference to key word meaning or key ideas is unlikely to achieve highly in this assessment.

### **Personal response**

Strong individual responses were characterised by thoughtful and perceptive comments argued and supported with care. These responses engaged directly with those words in the questions designed to elicit a personal response to the writing. In some responses to poems, there was evidence of candidates adopting an overly assertive style of writing which gave the impression of there being only one 'correct' reading of the poem. Some less confident responses demonstrated empathy with characters by simply suggesting that the 'reader' experiences the same anguish as a particular character or that a particular predicament was 'relatable'; such comments need to be linked to textual detail and expanded upon in terms of how the writer is creating such responses in readers.

There was, generally, some very good work produced this session. Most demonstrated an enjoyment of and engagement with texts. There were very few rubric infringements.

### **Questions on individual texts:**

#### **Section A: Poetry**

##### **Question 1**      *Elegy For My Father's Father*

Accomplished responses focused on the question throughout and engaged perceptively and selectively with some of the key words and phrases in the poem. The nature of the powerful feelings varied from candidate to candidate, ranging from outright dislike to a grudging or even whole-hearted admiration of the man. Candidates who looked closely at the language of the poem were often enabled to arrive at an interpretation of the poem which successfully demonstrated how powerful feelings are conveyed. Most recognised the grandfather's uncommunicativeness. The use of the term 'Father's Father' was generally commented on as conveying a distance between the speaker and the grandfather. Phrases which revealed tensions in the family were frequently recognised and identified. The strength of the grandfather as a young man, and the contrasting weakness of the older man often drew comment, although some candidates appeared to think that the speaker had personally witnessed the grandfather carrying a flowering cherry tree on his shoulder. Confident answers recognised the grandfather's bond with nature, and some commented fruitfully on the ambivalence which seems to pervade the relationship and the poem. There were some recurrent loose readings, notably of the flowering cherry tree and the lion sun, and the use of abbreviated quotation was

much in evidence in some answers which restricted discussions of language. Some candidates directed the powerful feelings they felt towards what they perceived to be a neglectful and ungrateful family.

**Question 2**     *My Parents*

This elicited some strong responses. There was plenty of comment on the implied class division between the speaker and the other children. This was seen by some as ironic, in that 'lower class' boys were picking on a supposedly superior child. There was plenty of useful comment on the imagery used in the poem to describe the actions of the children and its effect on the speaker. Many recognised the envy he seems to feel for their freedom, and some went on to explore the fascination he exhibits with their behaviour and appearance. The ambiguity of 'them' in the final line was commented on in some stronger answers, raising the question of whether the forgiveness was directed towards the boys or the parents. Opinion was largely divided between those who saw his parents as protective and those who saw them as restrictive, the latter often losing focus by discussing snobbishness in general. Less successful answers tended to ignore the phrase 'of the speaker' in the question, writing a more general account of the poem or focusing on their impressions of the boys, sometimes asserting that the speaker hated them without attempting to support this reading.

**Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 1**

**Question 3**     *Love (III)*

Many candidates simply worked through the poem for this question, offering an explanation of what was occurring with a limited focus on the word 'peace' in the question. Those who saw the poem as a conversation between God and an unworthy sinner, in which God eventually wins, were sometimes able to demonstrate that a sense of peace is something that is earned. A few, strong responses dealt with the FINIS, which can be said to demonstrate the achievement of peace. Less successful answers worked through the poem, asserting that peace was evident when the words cited from the poem did not really bear that out. Some became distracted in discussing Christian doctrine which did little to advance their argument or meet the assessment criteria.

**Question 4**     *Heart and Mind*

Examiners reported that many candidates struggled with this poem. Those who focused on the 'regret' of the title generally managed to find a starting point for their answers. Those who attempted to 'explain' or offer a general analytical commentary often struggled, and there was a good deal of confusion and misunderstanding. Stronger responses often looked for details that could be linked with death, the passage of time, the loss of strength; some traced the contrasts between love and lust. Few explored the interplay between past and future, or the significance of the mythological references. In general, candidates found this to be a very difficult poem.

**Gillian Clarke: from Selected Poems**

**Question 5**     *Baby-sitting*

The question was often well handled, and most candidates were able to identify the speaker's concerns about the prospect of baby-sitting for a strange child. However, a significant minority did not appear to appreciate that this apprehension and the child's waking reactions were taking place in the mind of the speaker. There was also some misreading or unsupported assertion which claimed that the speaker 'hated' the baby, and would be prepared to mistreat it. The baby's imagined reactions were not fully understood by many, and the force of the images in the second stanza was rarely explored in detail. Stronger responses saw the contrast between conventional ideas about babies and how they are perceived and the speaker's perception, and some commented on the baby's lack of a name and the reason for the speaker's negative feelings.

**Question 6**     *Still Life*

Opportunities were often missed in response to this question. The significance of the title was not usually considered, and most responses attempted to trace the relationship between the two characters. Some commented on links between 'yellow-gold', 'candlesticks and kettles' and 'heat', but most responses tended to be uneven, making isolated comments on particular details without addressing the key terms of the question.

## **Section B: Prose**

### **No Longer At Ease**

#### **Question 7**

Responses to this question were frequently narrative in structure, and relied on a good deal of quotation, often with little analysis. Obi's advice to Christopher about his relationship with Florence was misunderstood in some cases, and there was some confusion about the story of the Catechist, many thinking that it was Obi's mother who had broken her husband's head. A surprising number suggested that Obi was arguing in favour of bribery, using his position to sleep with the girl. More successful responses contextualised the extract more accurately, treating the moment as a step towards Obi succumbing to bribery later on. Some very successful responses saw that Obi was occupying two worlds, colonial and Nigerian, and used this perception as a basis to explore his confusion at this juncture.

#### **Question 8**

Candidates who chose this option often showed good knowledge of the novel as a whole, and reasonable understanding of Joseph's part in it. His status as a representative of Nigerian culture was identified, and his role as a friend of Obi was explored. His 'holy of holies' was much mentioned, as was the conflict between his perspective and that of Obi. Little was made of the fact that he and Obi were fellow Umuofians living in Lagos, and that, to a certain extent, he takes Obi under his wing; when mentioned, these ideas encouraged detailed exploration.

### **Mansfield Park**

#### **Question 9**

Candidates tended to deal more successfully with one of the key terms of the question than the other. There was no requirement for parity of treatment of the terms, but stronger answers did at least nod towards recognition of both. There was a range of material available to deal with both terms. The opinions of Fanny's cousins concerning her being 'prodigiously stupid' provided a good starting point, and Mrs Norris's behaviour towards the nieces and her comments about Fanny were also rich sources. So too was Lady Bertram's indolence and complacency. Some stronger responses dealt with issues of education, and there were some attempts to evaluate Sir Thomas and his wife as parents. Another hallmark of stronger answers was the way in which the 'How' of the question was dealt with. Some answers explored the use of irony, for example in the ways in which the narrative voice contrasts with the dialogue between the sisters and their aunt, or undercuts the listing of Lady Bertram's preoccupations. Less successful answers often made excess use of quotation with little or no comment.

#### **Question 10**

Candidates who selected this option generally knew the details of Fanny's return to Portsmouth, and the reasons behind it. Stronger answers moved beyond narrative to explore the differences between Portsmouth and Mansfield Park, and Fanny's reactions to her old home. Some became side tracked into narrating what happened to Fanny on her visit to Portsmouth, whilst more successful explorations recognised Portsmouth's inferiority in Fanny's eyes, and her realisation that 'Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield Park was home'. Other candidates offered responses which seemed to be relying on memorised points which had tangential relevance to the question.

### **My Ántonia**

#### **Question 11**

Candidates commented on Lena's appearance, her work with cattle and the contrast between her tough outdoor life and her femininity. Some construed her effect on Ole Benson as a deliberate attempt by her at seduction, and there was some confusion between 'Crazy Mary' and Lena, perhaps caused by their common bare footedness. The references to her knitting were seen by some as linking to her later career. Her freedom and independence were seen as admirable by many, some of whom commented on the difference between her behaviour and the socio-historic norms. Stronger answers often took into consideration the viewpoint of a narrator who is already attracted to Lena.

### Question 12

Responses to this question tended to be heavily reliant on narrative. Candidates recognised that Mr Shimerda was an immigrant. The contrast between his circumstances in Europe and in America was generally recognised, as was his sense of isolation in his new environment. What would have been beneficial in many answers was a sense of how these details were ‘powerfully’ depicted.

### *Hard Times*

### Question 13

Most candidates who attempted this question were able to achieve some success in showing that this is indeed a sad moment, and many were able to explain why. Tom’s perception of himself as a ‘donkey’ and the desperation behind his wish to ‘blow up’ Facts and Figures were well recognised, as was Louisa’s helplessness. The Utilitarian background to this sometimes led candidates away from a close consideration of the extract into a wider discussion of some of the novel’s perceived themes. Those who stayed with the extract were often able to comment effectively on the ways in which Dickens presents the atmosphere of the room, with its darkness and shadows, and the effect of Louisa emerging from and returning to those shadows. The youth of the children, and their contrast with Sissy Jupe, often featured as intensifying the sadness of the moment.

### Question 14

This question was often successfully handled. Candidates responded enthusiastically to the way in which she is presented as almost a pantomime villain. Her treatment of Louisa was commented on by many, together with her designs on Bounderby. Her physical description was often a feature of strongly personal responses, and candidates generally evinced a mixture of dislike and scorn for her.

### *Spies*

### Question 15

This was a popular question, and was often successfully handled. Candidates generally focused on ‘sympathy’ with some success, and maintained that focus throughout their answers. Some pointed contrasts were made with the Mrs Hayward at the start of the novel and the figure presented here. Sympathy arose from her situation, her tears, her feelings of guilt and her apprehensions about her husband. Sympathy for Stephen arose from his assumption that he is being asked to help ‘a German’, from his mistaken feelings of guilt, his embarrassment and the pathos of his last apology. Strong answers often dealt with the narrative voice and the ways in which Stephen responds to Mrs Hayward’s comments about people being ‘picked on’.

### Question 16

Those who attempted this question generally identified two distinct moments, obeying the rubric in avoiding the **Question 15** extract. However, responses were generally narrative, and there was often little exploration of the ways in which suspense is created. The journeys to the Man in the Barns and Stephen’s dealings with Mr Hayward featured prominently.

### *The Secret River*

### Question 17

This question was often well-handled. Most candidates commented effectively on the descriptions in the opening paragraphs. However, there were some recurrent misreadings which tended to undercut some answers. ‘Their mass’ was frequently read to mean the sheer number of prisoners, rather than the mass of the blocks of stone. Some candidates seemed to think that William’s trial had already taken place. A significant number of responses did not get much further than the first few paragraphs, and the force of ‘It was a kind of mercy’ was not always appreciated. Many commented that Sal was his only hope, and dealt well with the ‘kind of wealth’ she provided. This led some to go on to consider subsequent events in

Australia, sometimes at the expense of relevance to the question. Other candidates considered how this scene exemplifies the class system in England at work. The young bacon thief was also mentioned fairly frequently, although candidates were less secure in their treatment of his story and its importance.

### **Question 18**

In response to this question, unselective narrative was not always avoided. There was also evidence of a recurrent tendency to use the extract to answer a general question. There were some responses which drew heavily on the extract to demonstrate the lack of opportunities for the Thornhills in London and this could be self-limiting in demonstrating a lack of wider knowledge. The opportunities identified by candidates were to rise up the social ladder, to own land and property, to employ other people, and to gain wealth. Some stronger responses went on to evaluate the success achieved by the Thornhills, commenting on its hollowness.

### ***The English Teacher***

### **Question 19**

Few strong responses were seen in response to this question. Most observed that the headmaster's visit was at night and unexpected. There were some effective but underdeveloped comments about religion and superstition in India. This was sometimes linked to themes in the novel as a whole. There was some consideration of astrologers and their predictions, and some mention of the headmaster's state of mind. However, the details of the extract needed much closer consideration in many responses. Only the strongest mentioned the headmaster's invitation to Krishnan to take over the running of his school, or his indifference to the fate of his wife and family.

### **Question 20**

Most responses concentrated on Leela. The changes brought about in Krishnan's life by her arrival, and the comfort she gave after Susila's death, were pointed out. The benign spontaneity of the children in the headmaster's school attracted some comment, though this needed further development and textual reference.

### ***Stories of Ourselves***

### **Question 21**

This question was often well handled. Candidates appreciated that Barbados was new to the narrator, and very different from Brooklyn. There was some confusion or conflation of Barbados and Bridgetown so that the journey from old, run-down town to country was not fully appreciated. Most candidates, however, were able to comment on the discomfort of the back of the lorry, and the appearance of the town. The narrator's perception of the threatening sugar cane crop drew much comment. The tension between characters was frequently recognised and stronger answers pointed to the narrator's fear of nature and Da-duh's fear of machines, seeing this as a battle between two different worlds.

### **Question 22**

A considerable amount of narrative was given in response to this question, often with limited focus on the question. Conradin's circumstances, his illness and his disagreeable guardian led to some consideration of his experiences as not by any means a normal childhood. Few candidates saw the dark humour of Saki's writing, and there were many expressions of horror at the boy's heartless consumption of another slice of toast. Generally, more consideration of detail was needed in response to this question irrespective of story selection.



# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/21  
Paper 21 Drama

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

- Good answers addressed the terms of the question and selected the most suitable material from the text in support.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly placed the passage in context and analysed how the content was conveyed through specific dramatic features such as: action on stage, dialogue between characters, significant entrances and exits and likely audience reaction.
- Strong answers to discursive questions made a considered response to the question and used carefully selected, key material from throughout the play to support developed comments.
- Candidates at all levels can improve their response to the writing of the play script by showing an appreciation of how playwrights use dramatic features to convey meaning.
- Candidates' personal response to the text as drama on stage boosted the most successful answers.

## General comments

Many candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set text and were able to make well-considered responses to the questions. Their enjoyment of the text was often clear in a strong personal response to the situations and choices of the characters: thus, there was some delight taken in the ease with which Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband into carrying out her murderous plan in the passage from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and often a fiercely expressed condemnation of Eddie's betrayal of the illegal immigrants in the passage from Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. Many candidates explored how the authors make their writing entertaining, in the jokes in the passage from *Inherit the Wind*, in the humour of Dickie dancing the 'Bunny Hug' and the 'Turkey Trot' in Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*, and in the excitement of their chosen moment from Shakespeare's *Henry V*. In these answers, candidates needed to know the text well to be able to select the best material with which to support their answer.

Careful selection of the most relevant material to the question was key to making a good response to both passage-based and discursive questions. Candidates needed to consider the demands of the question before beginning, to ensure that their answer was well focused. The strongest answers to passage-based questions often placed the passage briefly in context within the play, then focused on their selection of key parts of the passage which best supported an answer to the question. The effects of the writing of these key parts needed to be analysed to achieve highly. As well as evaluating the effect of particular words or phrases, strong responses considered the effect of dramatic features such as: action on stage, dialogue between characters, significant entrances and exits and likely audience response. Less successful responses often focused on narration and omitted direct comment on language and dramatic features. It was sometimes difficult to see that the answer was a response to drama and not to a different genre; such answers sometimes referred to the text as 'the novel', and to its 'reader', rather than to the audience.



The most successful answers to discursive questions selected the most relevant material from throughout the play with which to support their response. Strong answers developed an argument over a range of points, supported by brief and apt textual reference. Answers at all levels needed to explore the writing of the text, and were often boosted by a consideration of staging; for example, examining how emotion is conveyed on stage, or the likely audience response, helped to show the candidate's understanding of the genre. Less successful answers often narrated events from the play, or gave biographical information about the author, or facts about the historical or cultural period of the play. Weaker answers either did not use supporting textual reference, or quoted text without making clear how it supported the answer.

There were few responses this session which infringed the rubric by answering more questions than required. There was a tendency in some less successful answers to produce one answer which was a hybrid of the two questions on their text. This meant that candidates wrote a confused response to both questions at the same time, but based their answer entirely on the passage for the first question. This limited their answer/s. To avoid this error, candidates need to know that in the examination, there are two questions on each set text, from which they need to choose one to answer. The first question is always on a printed passage. The second discursive question needs to be answered with reference to their selection of the most suitable material from throughout the text. For component 21, candidates need to answer one question on a passage, and one discursive question on a different text.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

Most candidates selected some 'serious and entertaining' parts of the passage. Weaker answers labelled the text as either 'serious' or 'entertaining' without further comment. Many candidates selected some of Sillers responses because they are funny. For example, when Drummond asks Sillers if he works hard at religion, he says '*Well, I'm pretty busy down at the feed store.*' Stronger answers analysed Sillers's response to show why it is ridiculous: he would be religious whether he was at the store or not. Perceptive responses placed this in context: that the response is incongruous in the serious formality of the court setting, and that the authors are using its simplicity as a reflection of the community's ignorance or narrow-mindedness on religion. A different approach to the question was often to focus on Drummond's deliberate provocation of Brady, to mock him and make his case ridiculous. Stronger answers analysed his language: for example, the shocking statement '*run the jury through a meat-grinder*' as a reference to religion being used to make everyone think alike and '*the clock-stoppers*' as a pointed reference to those stuck in the past.

##### **Question 2**

Stronger responses provided a range of material in support of answers, such as two or three of the following: the overdone welcome of Brady with the over-abundant feast, the prayer meeting at which Reverend Brown prays for Cates's soul (and Rachel's) to '*writhe in anguish*', the dialogue between children, when Howard tells Melinda '*You was a worm once*', the trial judge's bias towards Brady, or that Cates loses the trial. More successful answers analysed use of language, which is often emotional and extreme, and staging, which uses religious music and banners as a backdrop to accentuate the religious fervour. The effect of this overblown atmosphere is to show the audience how misguided the townsfolk are, and how ridiculous is their unquestioned belief in the religion practised by Reverend Brown. Less successful answers listed examples of religious belief, without showing understanding of their effects or how they supported their answer. Weaker answers severely limited their answer by using only material from the passage given in Question 1.

#### **Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge***

##### **Question 3**

The most successful answers placed the passage firmly in its context: Eddie has just informed the Immigration Bureau on Marco and Rodolpho. Good answers realised that the gripping pace of the passage is driven by the presence of the Lipari relatives (of whose presence Eddie was unaware) and the imminent arrival of the Immigration Officers. Eddie's panic is shown in his language: the harsh insults and combative questions fired at Catherine, delivered '*in a driving fright and panic*'; fear at being found out like Vinnie Bolzano. Stronger answers also commented on the use of dramatic irony here to increase tension: the audience knows that Eddie has 'snitched', but at first, Beatrice and Catherine do not. Eddie's desperation is increased by their casual attitude, and the staging of the officers' entrance increases the audience's

awareness of impending crisis. Perceptive answers responded to the moment Catherine becomes Eddie's bitter enemy as she realises Eddie has 'snitched'. The officers' insistent loud knocking and shouting and then sweeping across the stage form a dramatic backdrop to the heightened emotions in the passage. Candidates with a firm grasp of the context showed a clear understanding of how Miller creates such a 'gripping' moment. Weaker responses often narrated Eddie's misguided love for Catherine and ignored key features such as: the presence of the Liparis, Catherine's realisation of Eddie's betrayal, and the arrival of the officers.

#### Question 4

There were some strong answers which explored Marco's dramatic impact as both a foil to Eddie and as his nemesis. Some traced Marco's development from quiet family man to fierce avenger. Successful answers used a range of supporting material from throughout the play. Some considered similarities between Marco and Eddie, evident at the start: the strong head of the family, the importance of community and strong work ethos. Most candidates explained Marco's presence in Red Hook as an illegal immigrant wanting to earn money to keep his family in Italy; he is initially grateful and respectful towards Eddie and gives brotherly advice to Rodolpho. Most candidates considered Marco's protectiveness of Rodolpho, and explored well the foreshadowing of Marco's show of strength in the dramatic chair-lifting scene. The contrast between them was also pointed out, as Eddie breaks his code of honour for love of his niece, while Marco upholds his code of honour to take revenge on Eddie for his betrayal. Weaker answers focused on the chair-lifting and the killing of Eddie, with little analysis or development to show understanding of 'dramatic impact'.

#### Terence Rattigan: *The Winslow Boy*

#### Question 5

Stronger candidates explored the contrast of tone in the passage between the celebration of Kate and John's engagement and the shock of Ronnie's expulsion. They focused on Arthur's dramatic and drawn-out realisation of Ronnie's expulsion, beginning with Violet's unwitting revelation that he's in his room, and Arthur's reluctance to believe her, followed by his misapprehension that Ronnie is ill, and then the tension created by the family's reluctance – shown in the many pauses – to enlighten Arthur. More successful responses considered the use of dramatic irony, as the audience and most of the family are aware of Ronnie's presence. Its effect is to increase the tension of waiting for Arthur to find out. Arthur's insistence on having the formal letter read out loud also heightens the tension, especially in front of guests. Grace's tears again increase tension. The noise of the dinner gong breaks the tension of the frozen moment. Weaker answers narrated events, or explained why Ronnie was expelled, instead of exploring the language, dialogue and drama.

#### Question 6

Most candidates commented on Dickie's role as providing comic relief in the play, and referred to several comic incidents, such as his dancing the '*Bunny Hop*', and insistence on using the gramophone, to Arthur's comic dismay, or his joking with the press when he claims Ronnie '*doesn't wash*'. His language is peppered with slang expressions disliked by Arthur, such as: '*silly little blighter*', or '*good egg*'. Stronger candidates developed their response further, and expressed the view that his light-hearted approach to life was his way of coping with the hardships he suffers; he is forced to leave Oxford due to his family's lack of money, and he intends to volunteer to fight in the approaching war, typically underplaying it as '*a bit of a scrap*'. Weaker responses remained general and narrative in approach, with little supporting textual detail.

#### William Shakespeare: *Henry V*

#### Question 7

Most answers to this question showed good knowledge and understanding of the text. The context was usually stated, that Henry has now made the decision to invade France. The drama of Henry's ruthless opening lines was well explored, with him prepared either to '*bend*' France to recognise his authority, or to '*break it all to pieces*'. The contrast was highlighted of the serious, ruthless king portrayed here, and the depiction offered by the French Ambassador of Henry as a '*youth*' who can be won by a '*nimble galliard*'. Candidates explored the insults made to Henry and considered the motivating effect of them on a King who has already decided on war. Less successful answers gave a general account of the tennis-ball incident which follows this passage, without exploring the writing in the passage.

### Question 8

Candidates needed to select a moment they know well in order to explore it in enough detail to answer a discursive question. A popular choice was Henry's sentencing of the conspirators. Some weaker answers gave an account of the moment, without saying why they found it 'exciting' and omitting detailed reference to the text and writer's techniques. Answers to this question needed to explore the moment's dramatic elements which create excitement, such as: action, tension, heightened emotion, and dramatic irony. Some reasonable answers considered their moment exciting because it involves the near-assassination of Henry by his closest friends, only for him to trick them into sentencing themselves to death; these answers included textual detail and some quotation. Response to the structure of the text was also made, on the dramatic way the moment is presented to the audience, and with the dramatic irony of the Chorus having alerted the audience previously. Other moments included the tennis-ball incident and Henry's Agincourt speech.

### William Shakespeare: Macbeth

### Question 9

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the task and explored well how easily Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband. Stronger answers commented on Macbeth's firm words stating his decision to '*proceed no further*' with the murder of Duncan, but Lady Macbeth punctures his resolve. Most candidates examined her tactics of insulting and humiliating him; more perceptive candidates understood that she also reassures and encourages him into acceptance of her plan. Thus opinion was divided on the health of the relationship: many thought it 'bad' because Lady Macbeth insults her husband, but others thought it 'strong' because they work together to achieve a goal. Successful answers analysed use of language in detail. For example, they considered the contrast between a loving mother suckling her baby, and the horrifying image when Lady Macbeth says she would rather have '*dash'd the brains out*' of her own baby than gone back on her word; the violence of '*dash'd*' accentuates her cruelty. There was some misunderstanding of the text, most notably: '*Was the hope drunk*', '*Such I account they love*', and '*Bring forth men-children only*'. Some candidates moved away from the passage to consider future events. Weaker answers did not explore use of language in detail.

### Question 10

Most candidates selected suitable material including: the three witches, Lady Macbeth's invocation of evil spirits, Banquo's ghost, and Macbeth's dagger. Candidates needed to know the text well to use details and short quotations to support their points. Few answers addressed dramatic power, as a visual spectacle on stage, or the dramatic portrayal of characters in the grip of extreme emotions, or even the gripping involvement of the audience in working out the truth of the witches' prophecies. Most explored the power of the witches in terms of their ability to influence events: they cannot force people to do things, but can only tempt them, like Macbeth; they have no power over Banquo, who chooses not to engage with them. Most quoted '*Fair is foul and foul is fair*', but not everyone was able to comment on its effect of suggesting the natural order is turned on its head. Most explained the prophecies and verbal trickery, rather than analysing use of language and deeper implications. Candidates explained Banquo's ghost and the dagger as manifestations of Macbeth's guilty conscience, rather than exploring their dramatic power. Weaker candidates tended to narrate the contribution of the witches to the plot. An understanding of power in terms of the drama on stage boosted responses.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/22  
Paper 22 Drama

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

- Successful responses selected the most pertinent and significant material in order to reflect the focus of the question.
- Responses would have been improved by considering the dramatic content of the set passage over the listing of literary features.
- Successful answers explored and analysed, and avoided excessive explanation, description and narrative re-telling.
- Stronger responses refrained from giving excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question and set text.
- A personal engagement with the text, ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

## General comments

Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set texts and engagement with character, genre, structure and ideas. In answer to the passage-based questions, the strongest responses selected the most dramatic, powerful, tense or significant moments in the passage as required, rather than going through it line by line, giving explanations and contextual details that were not relevant to the question. Setting passages briefly within their textual context was often useful, though excessive reference to other parts of the play at the expense of close analysis of the passage did not allow candidates to address the given tasks.

There were some very strong answers to discursive questions. These were characterised by a strong overview of the play and an ability to support points by close textual reference in the form of accurate quotation. Many candidates responded effectively to the question and structured a convincing argument but did not know the play in sufficient detail to support the points made.

A significant number of candidates showed insecure knowledge of technical terms, or used them to substitute genuine analysis. Blank verse and iambic pentameter; simile and metaphor, for example were often confused or misused. The most significant misuse this session was of dramatic irony when the candidate either meant proleptic irony or just irony. Candidates referred to end stop, when they meant an exclamation mark or a full-stop and cited this as dramatic effect even when it simply indicated the end of a sentence. Caesura was confused with a pause in the dialogue and candidates often wrote about the effect of short sentences when the sentences in the text are often long and complex. There was still the tendency to try to answer a question by working through punctuation and literary techniques as a starting point, without showing understanding of the context, ideas and what is actually happening in the text. The initial focus should always be on the events on stage, on the action, characters, ideas and staging, followed by a jargon free analysis of the effects of the techniques used.

Whilst the historical and cultural context of the text is a useful aspect of teaching, candidates tended to display this knowledge in the examination at the expense of a focus on the question, sometimes to the extent of writing several paragraphs of background information. Speculation as to how a contemporary audience

would have reacted to the play, though interesting, is not what is required on this paper. It is the candidate's own personal response which is of paramount importance. Conversely, some contemporary concerns, such as gender equality, are unhelpfully applied to historic texts if discussed at the expense of textual analysis.

Candidates should be dissuaded from using line numbers instead of writing quotations. This is inadequate textual support and prevents high achievement as it is then difficult to consider effective word choices or techniques. It is particularly counter-productive as the candidates have the passage printed on the paper and should select the quotation they wish to use.

There were many sophisticated responses this year which showed a thorough exploration of the complex issues these plays present and the ways in which they provide a powerful impact on an audience.

There were some rubric infringements where candidates on 0486/22 answered two passage-based or two discursive questions and answers were sometimes wrongly numbered. Some candidates do not number their questions at all, especially on typed scripts. It would be helpful to both candidate and Examiners if the importance of this is emphasised. There were few brief or imbalanced scripts.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **J.LAWRENCE AND R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind***

##### **Question 1**

Strong answers to this question understood Brady's desire for celebrity, manipulation of the press, rather blinkered religious faith and dislike of criticism. Other striking aspects of his portrayal were cited by many, such as his love of oratory, his relationship with Drummond and the fact that he calls his wife '*Mother*'. Such responses looked at the language Brady uses, such as the grandiose ideas and oratorical alliteration in: 'fighting the fight of the Faithful throughout the world'. Less successful answers took him at face value, perhaps betraying a lack of secure knowledge, as also exemplified by candidates thinking that he was in Hillsboro with his mother.

##### **Question 2**

There were many engaged and thoughtful responses to this question. Secure responses considered the outcome of the trial; Rachel's 'conversion' to free thinking and the satisfactory conclusion of her romance with Bert; Brady's downfall; Drummond's trouncing of Hornbeck and weighting up of Darwin and the Bible. Less successful answers misunderstood the verdict or made reasonable points but without any textual support.

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge***

##### **Question 3**

Strongest answers demonstrated understanding of the irony and foreshadowing inherent in the passage and hence its significance in the play. They combined comment on this with an analysis of how Miller conveys Eddie's controlling relationship with Beatrice and Catherine through his repetitions, imperatives and interruptions and the underlying significance of his calling Catherine '*baby*' and '*kid*'. The ironic significance of the Vinny Bolzano story, along with what it reveals of the code of the community, was fully appreciated. The power of the language used to convey the brutal treatment Vinny received was explored in some detail. Strong candidates understood that this is not dramatic irony. Although we know from the start that Eddie will die, we do not know how or why. Candidates appreciated that an audience will remember what happened to Vinny as the depiction is so striking and will see how Vinny's fate mirrors Eddie's. The strongest candidates understood that Eddie betraying his most strongly held beliefs later in the play reveals the extent of his obsession with Catherine and inability to alter his fate. Less successful responses were often imbalanced – looking at the drama in the dialogue but not the significance or vice versa. The least successful answers made no mention of the Vinny Bolzano story and its significance or did not refer to the passage in any depth or detail. One relatively common misconception was that Eddie, at this point in the play, disliked the cousins and did not want them to stay, candidates therefore missing his concern for their safety.



#### Question 4

Sophisticated responses considered the extent to which Eddie was responsible for his death by looking at the role of fate and/or the culpability of the other characters as well as giving a rigorous account of Eddie's fatal flaw/s. Some strong answers concentrated purely on Eddie but the strongest made an evaluation of the extent to which he was aware of or understood his feelings for his niece. Other strong answers looked at the codes of masculinity, honour and revenge which also play a part in the tragedy.

Less confident responses tended to narrate events quite accurately but without sufficient comment and evaluation. There were few neutral answers. The play engaged most candidates and strong opinions and feelings were fully expressed.

#### TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

#### Question 5

Knowledge of the play as a whole played a part in the strongest answers. Successful responses showed awareness that Catherine, a suffragette, was prejudiced against Sir Robert for his reactionary views on Trade Unions, understood that she thought he was taking the case for selfish reasons and knew that this prejudice is overcome during the course of the play. They could consequently understand her irritation with his desire to escape to Devonshire House, his unwillingness to discuss the case with her and her provocative smoking. Most candidates grasped the striking description of Sir Robert's elegance and superciliousness, the awkward pauses, his apparent rudeness and Catherine nearly losing her temper. Less successful answers either did not look closely at the dialogue and Rattigan's effects in sufficient detail or were unaware of the context.

#### Question 6

Most candidates who answered this question were firmly in support of Arthur Winslow. His championing of Ronnie's innocence at great personal cost, his determination and his principled stance were all applauded. Stronger responses were clear on the principle at stake and the concept of letting right be done. The strongest answers combined the above with an evaluation of the cost to Grace, Dickie, Catherine and to Arthur himself. Few candidates considered that there were less admirable aspects to Arthur's fight, though many noted that Catherine supported him even though it cost her the marriage to John. Some answers made relevant general points but could not support these by close reference to the play.

#### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

#### Question 7

Most candidates maintained a secure focus on the question but were less successful at looking at the vividness of Shakespeare's effects in the passage. Candidates did not always explore the rhetoric of this well-known speech. Most recognised that Henry's oratorical powers played a major part in his leadership but seemed less able to explore these powers. The strongest answers were aware of the immediate context. They knew that this is prior to the battle of Agincourt, the English are tired, demoralised, ill and outnumbered. Henry has discovered what his troops think by visiting them in disguise and uses what he learns in the speech. Comment included the repetition, alliteration and augmentation in '*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers*', skilfully dealing with egalitarianism and the fearful odds in one phrase. The motivational force of '*All things are ready if our minds be so,*' was often noted. His ability to change Westmoreland's viewpoint was cited, as well as how he offered the men everlasting fame. Few, however, explored the vivid projection Henry makes into the men's future and the visualisation of St Crispin's days to come. Weaker answers thought that the day was named after the battle and that this was the post battle celebration.

#### Question 8

Although the majority of candidates understood what the question was asking and made valid points about dramatic impact, fewer could support his with detailed knowledge. Many wrote at some length but rather generally about Henry's past, his transformation on becoming King and his rejection of Falstaff but concentrated less on the events of the play. Most mentioned the hanging of Bardolph, though often not knowing his name, and that Henry's rejection of his boasting, lying, thieving and cowardly former companions reflected his new role. Some mentioned both comic relief and that the antics of Pistol and company showed a darker undercurrent in the play. References to their behaviour at Harfleur, Pistol's comic encounters with M. Le Fer and Fluellen and the fates of Nym and the boy were rarely employed, though successful responses often ranged across these points.



**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth***

**Question 9**

There were many high quality responses which considered the sound and movement on stage; Macduff's desire for vengeance; the imagery of evil; Macbeth's surprising show of guilt and avoidance of causing Macduff further harm; his mistaken belief that he is invincible; the dramatic reversal of this following Macduff's revelation; Macbeth's response to the witches' equivocation and his restoration of some honour and audience sympathy in his refusal to yield. The best answers explored the balance of sympathies; concisely contrasted Macbeth here to the man at the beginning of the play; commented on the restoration of his honourable warrior qualities and his 'release' from the evil charm that has held him spellbound and discussed the differences in Macduff 'haunted' by his family's death and Macbeth's haunting by Banquo. The power of the language was fully analysed in the best answers, for example the connotations and thematic significance of *'tyrant'*, *'hell-hound'*, *'bloodier villain'*, *'juggling'*, *'haunt'* and *'untimely ripp'd'*.

In less successful and in some strong answers, there were common misconceptions. *'Beest'* in *'If thou beest slain and with no stroke of mine'* was often read as 'beast', leading candidates astray. *'My soul is too much charg'd with blood of thine already'* was misinterpreted as Macbeth taunting Macduff, with *'charg'd'* seen to mean *'fired up'* rather than laden with guilt. This interpretation makes little sense in the context of the speech. *'I bear a charmed life'* was taken not in the sense that he had been under the witches' protective spell but that he had been having a great time. Some candidates thought that the audience already knew that Macduff was not of woman born and many were confused by the concept. Some otherwise sound answers spent too much time on the context or on Macbeth's history in the play at the expense of looking at the crucial drama in the second half of the passage.

**Question 10**

Perceptive candidates homed in straight away on the contrast between the characters and reactions of Macbeth and Banquo and the compelling reversal of their friendship. They commented fully on Banquo as a foil. He sees the evil trickery in the witches, he is not without ambition but will not play foully for it. He remains loyal to both Duncan and (out of fear and wise caution) to Macbeth, whilst suspecting his friend of regicide. Their initial closeness was explored with apt textual reference and comment on the language. Macbeth's suspicion and subsequent murder of Banquo by hired assassins was seen as evidence of his moral deterioration and his estrangement from his wife. The dramatic impact and psychological and symbolic significance of the ghost's appearance was fully explored. Macbeth's reasons for killing Banquo could have been more fully documented as compelling insights into his fear, emptiness and paranoia.

Less successful candidates did not fully grasp the significance to Macbeth of Banquo's children carrying on the royal line. Many did not select the fact that Macbeth murders his best friend, then publically exposes his own guilt by seeing that friend's ghost at a state banquet, as a significantly compelling aspect of their relationship.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/23  
Paper 23 Drama

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

- Successful responses selected the most pertinent and significant material in order to reflect the focus of the question.
- Responses would have been improved by considering the dramatic content of the set passage over the listing of literary features.
- Successful answers explored and analysed, and avoided excessive explanation, description and narrative re-telling.
- Stronger responses refrained from giving excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question and set text.
- A personal engagement with the text, ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

## General comments

Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set texts and showed engagement with the characters, themes and emotional impact. Candidates need to be reminded that to show understanding of the text as performance, the dramatic impact of stage directions, dialogue and characters' actions and behaviour should be explored without them assuming the director's role. Some candidates had been taught to conclude responses with extended explanations of what the play means to them personally. For example, what they learned about excessive ambition in *Macbeth* and the pitfalls to be avoided in life or, in *The Winslow Boy*, how important it is to maintain a good relationship with one's father; that a close family should always support each and make sacrifices. Whilst these are worthy lessons, they took up valuable time, when more pertinent points in answer to the question and in response to the text could have been made.

There is a tendency to try to answer a question by working through punctuation and literary techniques without showing understanding of the textual context and what is actually happening, particularly in passage-based questions. For example, 'end stop', rather than exclamation marks or full-stops, was frequently cited as creating a dramatic effect when it may simply indicate the end of a sentence. Similarly, a range of unrelated technical terminology was used that did little to develop or support the argument being made.

Candidates were often drawn into discussion of manliness (especially in *A View from the Bridge*, *The Winslow Boy* and *Macbeth*), with much to say about gender. There was also considerable comment on the subservient role of women; women in America in the 1950's were repressed, their roles being to pander to husbands/uncles and being unable to work outside the home. These comments, though apt if connected to the question, often detracted from questions that were unrelated to gender issues and were generally sweeping generalisations, rarely rooted in the text. In such cases, valuable time was wasted developing this line of argument which could have been spent in answering specific questions more closely.

Most candidates managed their time well and there were few very brief answers. There were, however, some responses where there was little knowledge of the text and which appeared to have been done as unseen responses. These did not achieve highly.

Most candidates divided their time successfully on Paper 23 and there were very few rubric infringements where candidates need to be aware that they cannot answer two passage-based or two discursive questions. However, some rubric infringements occurred on both Paper 23 and Paper 33, in **Question 10** of *Macbeth*, where candidates failed to adhere to the rider to the question: this stated clearly, '**Do not use the passage in Question \*9 in answering this question**'. By using the limited relevant detail to the characters in the passage it was difficult for candidates to achieve marks in the higher Bands.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **J.LAWRENCE AND R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind***

##### **Question 1**

To answer this question fully, candidates needed to focus on the 'powerful' aspects of the scene and to show understanding of how this was conveyed by the writers. This was at a key point in the trial where Drummond's scientific witnesses have been disallowed and he is examining Brady. Weaker responses worked through the passage, narrating events at a literal level with little consideration of the question or scene. They attempted to summarise what Drummond said with limited success. Stronger responses immediately acknowledged that this was a turning point in the play where Brady loses the support of the crowd and were able to trace this from the '*few snickers*' to the metaphorical '*slap(ped) in the face*' for Brady. They explored Drummond's ability in turning an impossible situation to his advantage and were able to follow closely the intricacies of his argument, noting the authors', and Drummond's, facility with language. His control over his cross-examining of Brady compared to his initial '*fiery*' tone were explored in depth. The idea of knowledge and progress versus blind faith, at the heart of the drama, was clearly understood.

##### **Question 2**

The most popular choice of admirable character was Drummond. Some chose Cates or Rachel and even Hornbeck and there was much to consider in relation to all of them. The few candidates who chose Brady appeared to acknowledge that he was slightly more difficult to admire, or defend, once they started to write. Most candidates showed good knowledge of the text and character giving clear well-supported reasons for the choices made.

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge***

##### **Question 3**

To answer this question well, focus was required on 'revealing and unsettling' and the best responses were able to explore both what Eddie said about Rodolpho and what the passage revealed about Eddie's and Beatrice's relationship. Some responses were unbalanced with too much time spent working through Eddie's 'excuses' for disliking Rodolpho without analysing the deeper implications and real reasons for his dislike. Most were able to comment in some detail on Miller's writing and Eddie's dislike on the grounds of his effeminacy or homosexuality. Some candidates suggested that Eddie himself was revealing his own latent homosexuality; a claim difficult to substantiate. The most successful responses probed at Eddie's undeclared reasons for his dislike, his own feelings for Catherine and the threat Rodolpho posed to them. They responded thoroughly to the drama on stage, analysing Miller's writing to show explicitly what was revealed of Eddie's feelings. His determination was explored as the '*campaign solidified*' and the war-like language identified and carefully linked to his '*retreat*' once Beatrice raised her 'other worries' and went on the attack. Most candidates understood Beatrice's upset and feelings of neglect in her question, 'When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?' and were able to follow through with close analysis of the implications and consequences of this statement.

##### **Question 4**

Candidates responding to this question often did not pay attention to what was 'striking' about Catherine's portrayal. As such, material was not well-selected and character profiles were often written, explaining all about Catherine and the plot. Most focused on the early scenes and wrote of her naiveté and desire to gain Eddie's approval, often noting that she undergoes a change as the play progresses, but simply stating she calls him 'a rat' without showing knowledge or understanding of the causes of this change. The most successful responses were able to explore the change from the child-like girl to the young woman in love with Rodolpho, seeking to be her own person. They were able to explore the second half of the play and the

factors that led her to denounce him as 'a rat', closely analysing the kissing and the betrayal of the cousins to the Immigration Bureau.

**TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy***

**Question 5**

There were few responses to this question and they were generally narrative in approach. Candidates often worked through the passage explaining what it was about, though there was a lack of understanding of the textual context. Others retold the plot with little focus on the passage. Successful responses were able to analyse what was moving, showed understanding of the sacrifices which had been made and the moving empathy and unity between father and daughter.

**Question 6**

Weaker answers wrote two separate character studies with little focus on 'relationship' or 'dramatic impact'. More successful answers developed understanding of Catherine's initial dislike of Sir Robert Morton in their first encounter and their friendly banter and hint of 'romance' at the end of the play. Few, however, addressed her changed opinion of him and the underlying impact of their unifying stance in the face of different political views.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V***

**Question 7**

Most candidates were able to comment on some 'entertaining' aspects of the passage though those who failed to understand that Henry was in disguise were less successful. The most successful answers understood the context and the comic interlude, the night before Agincourt. They focused on Pistol's attempt to speak French and lack of understanding of 'Harry Le Roy'. They identified the way in which an old friend did not recognise his visitor. His praise and his parting insult were commented on as was Pistol's declaration that he was 'as good a gentleman as the Emperor' though not all understood how or why this is entertaining. Weaker responses did not go beyond commenting on Pistol. More successful responses explored Pistol's anger towards Fluellen before addressing the entertaining aspects of the conversation with Gower. The entertaining aspect and irony of Fluellen's admonishment of Gower to 'speak fewer' whilst he proceeded to speak a lot about the ancient wars was clearly enjoyed by some candidates. They also commented on his language, comic repetition and colloquialisms in 'tiddle taddle, pebble pabble'. Most candidates were able to convey some understanding and enjoyment of the moment.

**Question 8**

There were some very successful responses to this question, focusing on Henry's reasons for going to war against France and himself as a noble King. Most had the requisite knowledge and supported ideas with relevant references to the text and were aware of the ambivalent attitude to war. Weaker responses omitted the 'invasion of France' from the question and focused solely on Henry as a character to admire or not. Successful responses referred to Henry's rightful claim to the throne and the Salic law whilst showing full awareness of the bishops' ulterior motives in proposing this justification for the invasion. The Dauphin's taunting of Henry's youth and former life style and Henry's response, with his verbally skilful reply to the insult of the 'tennis balls', was also explored in detail. The best responses were able to weigh up the legitimacy of the invasion against the horrors and brutality of the war, supported by close analysis of Henry's speech both to his men before battle and to the governor of Harfleur.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth***

**Question 9**

There was a strong sense of the drama and tension conveyed in many good and varied responses. The most successful responses explored the dramatic irony, the tension before the discovery of the murder, the interference with the Chain of Being and the disruption to the natural order. The act of innocence by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and the sense of chaos in the exclamations, the alarum-bell ringing and the rapid entrances and exits were also features of these responses. Close attention was paid to the vivid imagery of Macduff's speech conveying the horror of what he had seen and emphasising the enormity of the crime. Weaker responses spent too much time explaining the previous scene and Duncan's murder. Others limited

their response to a linear analysis of Lennox's speech noting parallels between previous events – the witches' prophecies and the 'prophesying'; the witches and the lamentings; the obscure bird and the owl and the strange screams of death, supposedly paralleling Duncan's screams as he died. For higher reward these responses needed consideration of the whole passage and linking to details from the given passage.

#### **Question 10**

The discursive question was less successfully handled. There was an imbalance in the treatment of the two men with Macduff coming off worse as candidates clearly felt more comfortable and knew far more about Macbeth. Weaker responses focused on one character (usually Macbeth first) then the other with very little on Macduff with a few straightforward links drawn between them. Others retold the plot with scant reference to the question. The most successful answers looked at their loyalty to the King and to Scotland; their similarities in rank and skills as warriors, as well as Macbeth's driving ambition and Macduff's suspicion of him. Their differing responses to the loss of loved ones was a feature of the very best responses with well-supported comments on Macbeth's indifference to Lady Macbeth's demise and Macduff's emotional outburst and devastation at the death of his family.



# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/31  
Paper 31 Drama (Open Text)

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

- Good answers addressed the terms of the question and selected the most suitable material from the text in support.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly placed the passage in context and analysed how the content was conveyed through specific dramatic features such as: action on stage, dialogue between characters, significant entrances and exits and likely audience reaction.
- Strong answers to discursive questions made a considered response to the question and used carefully selected, key material from throughout the play to support developed comments.
- Candidates at all levels can improve their response to the writing of the play script by showing an appreciation of how playwrights use dramatic features to convey meaning.
- Candidates' personal response to the text as drama on stage boosted the most successful answers.

## General comments

Many candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set text and were able to make well-considered responses to the questions. Their enjoyment of the text was often clear in a strong personal response to the situations and choices of the characters: thus, there was some delight taken in the ease with which Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband into carrying out her murderous plan in the passage from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and often a fiercely expressed condemnation of Eddie's betrayal of the illegal immigrants in the passage from Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. Many candidates explored how the authors make their writing entertaining, in the jokes in the passage from *Inherit the Wind*, in the humour of Dickie dancing the 'Bunny Hug' and the 'Turkey Trot' in Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*, and in the excitement of their chosen moment from Shakespeare's *Henry V*. In these answers, candidates needed to know the text well to be able to select the best material with which to support their answer.

Careful selection of the most relevant material to the question was key to making a good response to both passage-based and discursive questions. Candidates needed to consider the demands of the question before beginning, to ensure that their answer was well focused. The strongest answers to passage-based questions often placed the passage briefly in context within the play, then focused on their selection of key parts of the passage which best supported an answer to the question. The effects of the writing of these key parts needed to be analysed to achieve highly. As well as evaluating the effect of particular words or phrases, strong responses considered the effect of dramatic features such as: action on stage, dialogue between characters, significant entrances and exits and likely audience response. Less successful responses often focused on narration and omitted direct comment on language and dramatic features. It was sometimes difficult to see that the answer was a response to drama and not to a different genre; such answers sometimes referred to the text as 'the novel', and to its 'reader', rather than to the audience.

The most successful answers to discursive questions selected the most relevant material from throughout the play with which to support their response. Strong answers developed an argument over a range of points, supported by brief and apt textual reference. Answers at all levels needed to explore the writing of the text, and were often boosted by a consideration of staging; for example, examining how emotion is conveyed on stage, or the likely audience response, helped to show the candidate's understanding of the genre. Less successful answers often narrated events from the play, or gave biographical information about the author, or facts about the historical or cultural period of the play. Weaker answers either did not use supporting textual reference, or quoted text without making clear how it supported the answer.

There were few responses this session which infringed the rubric by answering more questions than required. There was a tendency in some less successful answers to produce one answer which was a hybrid of the two questions on their text. This meant that candidates wrote a confused response to both questions at the same time, but based their answer entirely on the passage for the first question. This limited their answer/s. To avoid this error, candidates need to know that in the examination, there are two questions on each set text, from which they need to choose one to answer. The first question is always on a printed passage. The second discursive question needs to be answered with reference to their selection of the most suitable material from throughout the text.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

##### **Question 1**

Most candidates selected some 'serious and entertaining' parts of the passage. Weaker answers labelled the text as either 'serious' or 'entertaining' without further comment. Many candidates selected some of Sillers responses because they are funny. For example, when Drummond asks Sillers if he works hard at religion, he says '*Well, I'm pretty busy down at the feed store.*' Stronger answers analysed Sillers's response to show why it is ridiculous: he would be religious whether he was at the store or not. Perceptive responses placed this in context: that the response is incongruous in the serious formality of the court setting, and that the authors are using its simplicity as a reflection of the community's ignorance or narrow-mindedness on religion. A different approach to the question was often to focus on Drummond's deliberate provocation of Brady, to mock him and make his case ridiculous. Stronger answers analysed his language: for example, the shocking statement '*run the jury through a meat-grinder*' as a reference to religion being used to make everyone think alike and '*the clock-stoppers*' as a pointed reference to those stuck in the past.

##### **Question 2**

Stronger responses provided a range of material in support of answers, such as two or three of the following: the overdone welcome of Brady with the over-abundant feast, the prayer meeting at which Reverend Brown prays for Cates's soul (and Rachel's) to '*writhe in anguish*', the dialogue between children, when Howard tells Melinda '*You was a worm once*', the trial judge's bias towards Brady, or that Cates loses the trial. More successful answers analysed use of language, which is often emotional and extreme, and staging, which uses religious music and banners as a backdrop to accentuate the religious fervour. The effect of this overblown atmosphere is to show the audience how misguided the townsfolk are, and how ridiculous is their unquestioned belief in the religion practised by Reverend Brown. Less successful answers listed examples of religious belief, without showing understanding of their effects or how they supported their answer. Weaker answers severely limited their answer by using only material from the passage given in Question 1.

#### **Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge***

##### **Question 3**

The most successful answers placed the passage firmly in its context: Eddie has just informed the Immigration Bureau on Marco and Rodolpho. Good answers realised that the gripping pace of the passage is driven by the presence of the Lipari relatives (of whose presence Eddie was unaware) and the imminent arrival of the Immigration Officers. Eddie's panic is shown in his language: the harsh insults and combative questions fired at Catherine, delivered '*in a driving fright and panic*'; fear at being found out like Vinnie Bolzano. Stronger answers also commented on the use of dramatic irony here to increase tension: the audience knows that Eddie has 'snitched', but at first, Beatrice and Catherine do not. Eddie's desperation is increased by their casual attitude, and the staging of the officers' entrance increases the audience's awareness of impending crisis. Perceptive answers responded to the moment Catherine becomes Eddie's

bitter enemy as she realises Eddie has 'snitched'. The officers' insistent loud knocking and shouting and then sweeping across the stage form a dramatic backdrop to the heightened emotions in the passage. Candidates with a firm grasp of the context showed a clear understanding of how Miller creates such a 'gripping' moment. Weaker responses often narrated Eddie's misguided love for Catherine and ignored key features such as: the presence of the Liparis, Catherine's realisation of Eddie's betrayal, and the arrival of the officers.

#### Question 4

There were some strong answers which explored Marco's dramatic impact as both a foil to Eddie and as his nemesis. Some traced Marco's development from quiet family man to fierce avenger. Successful answers used a range of supporting material from throughout the play. Some considered similarities between Marco and Eddie, evident at the start: the strong head of the family, the importance of community and strong work ethos. Most candidates explained Marco's presence in Red Hook as an illegal immigrant wanting to earn money to keep his family in Italy; he is initially grateful and respectful towards Eddie and gives brotherly advice to Rodolpho. Most candidates considered Marco's protectiveness of Rodolpho, and explored well the foreshadowing of Marco's show of strength in the dramatic chair-lifting scene. The contrast between them was also pointed out, as Eddie breaks his code of honour for love of his niece, while Marco upholds his code of honour to take revenge on Eddie for his betrayal. Weaker answers focused on the chair-lifting and the killing of Eddie, with little analysis or development to show understanding of 'dramatic impact'.

#### Terence Rattigan: *The Winslow Boy*

#### Question 5

Stronger candidates explored the contrast of tone in the passage between the celebration of Kate and John's engagement and the shock of Ronnie's expulsion. They focused on Arthur's dramatic and drawn-out realisation of Ronnie's expulsion, beginning with Violet's unwitting revelation that he's in his room, and Arthur's reluctance to believe her, followed by his misapprehension that Ronnie is ill, and then the tension created by the family's reluctance – shown in the many pauses – to enlighten Arthur. More successful responses considered the use of dramatic irony, as the audience and most of the family are aware of Ronnie's presence. Its effect is to increase the tension of waiting for Arthur to find out. Arthur's insistence on having the formal letter read out loud also heightens the tension, especially in front of guests. Grace's tears again increase tension. The noise of the dinner gong breaks the tension of the frozen moment. Weaker answers narrated events, or explained why Ronnie was expelled, instead of exploring the language, dialogue and drama.

#### Question 6

Most candidates commented on Dickie's role as providing comic relief in the play, and referred to several comic incidents, such as his dancing the '*Bunny Hop*', and insistence on using the gramophone, to Arthur's comic dismay, or his joking with the press when he claims Ronnie '*doesn't wash*'. His language is peppered with slang expressions disliked by Arthur, such as: '*silly little blighter*', or '*good egg*'. Stronger candidates developed their response further, and expressed the view that his light-hearted approach to life was his way of coping with the hardships he suffers; he is forced to leave Oxford due to his family's lack of money, and he intends to volunteer to fight in the approaching war, typically underplaying it as '*a bit of a scrap*'. Weaker responses remained general and narrative in approach, with little supporting textual detail.

#### William Shakespeare: *Henry V*

#### Question 7

Most answers to this question showed good knowledge and understanding of the text. The context was usually stated, that Henry has now made the decision to invade France. The drama of Henry's ruthless opening lines was well explored, with him prepared either to '*bend*' France to recognise his authority, or to '*break it all to pieces*'. The contrast was highlighted of the serious, ruthless king portrayed here, and the depiction offered by the French Ambassador of Henry as a '*youth*' who can be won by a '*nimble galliard*'. Candidates explored the insults made to Henry and considered the motivating effect of them on a King who has already decided on war. Less successful answers gave a general account of the tennis-ball incident which follows this passage, without exploring the writing in the passage.

### Question 8

Candidates needed to select a moment they know well in order to explore it in enough detail to answer a discursive question. A popular choice was Henry's sentencing of the conspirators. Some weaker answers gave an account of the moment, without saying why they found it 'exciting' and omitting detailed reference to the text and writer's techniques. Answers to this question needed to explore the moment's dramatic elements which create excitement, such as: action, tension, heightened emotion, and dramatic irony. Some reasonable answers considered their moment exciting because it involves the near-assassination of Henry by his closest friends, only for him to trick them into sentencing themselves to death; these answers included textual detail and some quotation. Response to the structure of the text was also made, on the dramatic way the moment is presented to the audience, and with the dramatic irony of the Chorus having alerted the audience previously. Other moments included the tennis-ball incident and Henry's Agincourt speech.

### William Shakespeare: Macbeth

### Question 9

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the task and explored well how easily Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband. Stronger answers commented on Macbeth's firm words stating his decision to '*proceed no further*' with the murder of Duncan, but Lady Macbeth punctures his resolve. Most candidates examined her tactics of insulting and humiliating him; more perceptive candidates understood that she also reassures and encourages him into acceptance of her plan. Thus opinion was divided on the health of the relationship: many thought it 'bad' because Lady Macbeth insults her husband, but others thought it 'strong' because they work together to achieve a goal. Successful answers analysed use of language in detail. For example, they considered the contrast between a loving mother suckling her baby, and the horrifying image when Lady Macbeth says she would rather have '*dash'd the brains out*' of her own baby than gone back on her word; the violence of '*dash'd*' accentuates her cruelty. There was some misunderstanding of the text, most notably: '*Was the hope drunk*', '*Such I account they love*', and '*Bring forth men-children only*'. Some candidates moved away from the passage to consider future events. Weaker answers did not explore use of language in detail.

### Question 10

Most candidates selected suitable material including: the three witches, Lady Macbeth's invocation of evil spirits, Banquo's ghost, and Macbeth's dagger. Candidates needed to know the text well to use details and short quotations to support their points. Few answers addressed dramatic power, as a visual spectacle on stage, or the dramatic portrayal of characters in the grip of extreme emotions, or even the gripping involvement of the audience in working out the truth of the witches' prophecies. Most explored the power of the witches in terms of their ability to influence events: they cannot force people to do things, but can only tempt them, like Macbeth; they have no power over Banquo, who chooses not to engage with them. Most quoted '*Fair is foul and foul is fair*', but not everyone was able to comment on its effect of suggesting the natural order is turned on its head. Most explained the prophecies and verbal trickery, rather than analysing use of language and deeper implications. Candidates explained Banquo's ghost and the dagger as manifestations of Macbeth's guilty conscience, rather than exploring their dramatic power. Weaker candidates tended to narrate the contribution of the witches to the plot. An understanding of power in terms of the drama on stage boosted responses.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/32  
Paper 32 Drama (Open Text)

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

- Successful responses selected the most pertinent and significant material in order to reflect the focus of the question.
- Responses would have been improved by considering the dramatic content of the set passage over the listing of literary features.
- Successful answers explored and analysed, and avoided excessive explanation, description and narrative re-telling.
- Stronger responses refrained from giving excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question and set text.
- A personal engagement with the text, ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

## General comments

Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set texts and engagement with character, genre, structure and ideas. In answer to the passage-based questions, the strongest responses selected the most dramatic, powerful, tense or significant moments in the passage as required, rather than going through it line by line, giving explanations and contextual details that were not relevant to the question. Setting passages briefly within their textual context was often useful, though excessive reference to other parts of the play at the expense of close analysis of the passage did not allow candidates to address the given tasks.

There were some very strong answers to discursive questions. These were characterised by a strong overview of the play and an ability to support points by close textual reference in the form of accurate quotation. Many candidates responded effectively to the question and structured a convincing argument but did not know the play in sufficient detail to support the points made.

A significant number of candidates showed insecure knowledge of technical terms, or used them to substitute genuine analysis. Blank verse and iambic pentameter; simile and metaphor, for example were often confused or misused. The most significant misuse this session was of dramatic irony when the candidate either meant proleptic irony or just irony. Candidates referred to end stop, when they meant an exclamation mark or a full-stop and cited this as dramatic effect even when it simply indicated the end of a sentence. Caesura was confused with a pause in the dialogue and candidates often wrote about the effect of short sentences when the sentences in the text are often long and complex. There was still the tendency to try to answer a question by working through punctuation and literary techniques as a starting point, without showing understanding of the context, ideas and what is actually happening in the text. The initial focus should always be on the events on stage, on the action, characters, ideas and staging, followed by a jargon free analysis of the effects of the techniques used.

Whilst the historical and cultural context of the text is a useful aspect of teaching, candidates tended to display this knowledge in the examination at the expense of a focus on the question, sometimes to the extent of writing several paragraphs of background information. Speculation as to how a contemporary audience



would have reacted to the play, though interesting, is not what is required on this paper. It is the candidate's own personal response which is of paramount importance. Conversely, some contemporary concerns, such as gender equality, are unhelpfully applied to historic texts if discussed at the expense of textual analysis.

Candidates should be dissuaded from using line numbers instead of writing quotations. This is inadequate textual support and prevents high achievement as it is then difficult to consider effective word choices or techniques. It is particularly counter-productive as the candidates have the passage printed on the paper and should select the quotation they wish to use.

There were many sophisticated responses this year which showed a thorough exploration of the complex issues these plays present and the ways in which they provide a powerful impact on an audience.

There were some instances where candidates wrongly numbered questions. Some candidates do not number their questions at all, especially on typed scripts. It would be helpful to both candidate and Examiners if the importance of this is emphasised. There were few brief or imbalanced scripts.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **J.LAWRENCE AND R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind***

##### **Question 1**

Strong answers to this question understood Brady's desire for celebrity, manipulation of the press, rather blinkered religious faith and dislike of criticism. Other striking aspects of his portrayal were cited by many, such as his love of oratory, his relationship with Drummond and the fact that he calls his wife 'Mother'. Such responses looked at the language Brady uses, such as the grandiose ideas and oratorical alliteration in: 'fighting the fight of the Faithful throughout the world'. Less successful answers took him at face value, perhaps betraying a lack of secure knowledge, as also exemplified by candidates thinking that he was in Hillsboro with his mother.

##### **Question 2**

There were many engaged and thoughtful responses to this question. Secure responses considered the outcome of the trial; Rachel's 'conversion' to free thinking and the satisfactory conclusion of her romance with Bert; Brady's downfall; Drummond's trouncing of Hornbeck and weighting up of Darwin and the Bible. Less successful answers misunderstood the verdict or made reasonable points but without any textual support.

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge***

##### **Question 3**

Strongest answers demonstrated understanding of the irony and foreshadowing inherent in the passage and hence its significance in the play. They combined comment on this with an analysis of how Miller conveys Eddie's controlling relationship with Beatrice and Catherine through his repetitions, imperatives and interruptions and the underlying significance of his calling Catherine 'baby' and 'kid'. The ironic significance of the Vinny Bolzano story, along with what it reveals of the code of the community, was fully appreciated. The power of the language used to convey the brutal treatment Vinny received was explored in some detail. Strong candidates understood that this is not dramatic irony. Although we know from the start that Eddie will die, we do not know how or why. Candidates appreciated that an audience will remember what happened to Vinny as the depiction is so striking and will see how Vinny's fate mirrors Eddie's. The strongest candidates understood that Eddie betraying his most strongly held beliefs later in the play reveals the extent of his obsession with Catherine and inability to alter his fate. Less successful responses were often imbalanced – looking at the drama in the dialogue but not the significance or vice versa. The least successful answers made no mention of the Vinny Bolzano story and its significance or did not refer to the passage in any depth or detail. One relatively common misconception was that Eddie, at this point in the play, disliked the cousins and did not want them to stay, candidates therefore missing his concern for their safety.

##### **Question 4**

Sophisticated responses considered the extent to which Eddie was responsible for his death by looking at the role of fate and/or the culpability of the other characters as well as giving a rigorous account of Eddie's fatal flaw/s. Some strong answers concentrated purely on Eddie but the strongest made an evaluation of the extent to which he was aware of or understood his feelings for his niece. Other strong answers looked at the codes of masculinity, honour and revenge which also play a part in the tragedy. Less confident responses tended to narrate events quite accurately but without sufficient comment and evaluation. There were few neutral answers. The play engaged most candidates and strong opinions and feelings were fully expressed.

### **TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy***

#### **Question 5**

Knowledge of the play as a whole played a part in the strongest answers. Successful responses showed awareness that Catherine, a suffragette, was prejudiced against Sir Robert for his reactionary views on Trade Unions, understood that she thought he was taking the case for selfish reasons and knew that this prejudice is overcome during the course of the play. They could consequently understand her irritation with his desire to escape to Devonshire House, his unwillingness to discuss the case with her and her provocative smoking. Most candidates grasped the striking description of Sir Robert's elegance and superciliousness, the awkward pauses, his apparent rudeness and Catherine nearly losing her temper. Less successful answers either did not look closely at the dialogue and Rattigan's effects in sufficient detail or were unaware of the context.

#### **Question 6**

Most candidates who answered this question were firmly in support of Arthur Winslow. His championing of Ronnie's innocence at great personal cost, his determination and his principled stance were all applauded. Stronger responses were clear on the principle at stake and the concept of letting right be done. The strongest answers combined the above with an evaluation of the cost to Grace, Dickie, Catherine and to Arthur himself. Few candidates considered that there were less admirable aspects to Arthur's fight, though many noted that Catherine supported him even though it cost her the marriage to John. Some answers made relevant general points but could not support these by close reference to the play.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V***

#### **Question 7**

Most candidates maintained a secure focus on the question but were less successful at looking at the vividness of Shakespeare's effects in the passage. Candidates did not always explore the rhetoric of this well-known speech. Most recognised that Henry's oratorical powers played a major part in his leadership but seemed less able to explore these powers. The strongest answers were aware of the immediate context. They knew that this is prior to the battle of Agincourt, the English are tired, demoralised, ill and outnumbered. Henry has discovered what his troops think by visiting them in disguise and uses what he learns in the speech. Comment included the repetition, alliteration and augmentation in '*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers*', skilfully dealing with egalitarianism and the fearful odds in one phrase. The motivational force of '*All things are ready if our minds be so,*' was often noted. His ability to change Westmoreland's viewpoint was cited, as well as how he offered the men everlasting fame. Few, however, explored the vivid projection Henry makes into the men's future and the visualisation of St Crispin's days to come. Weaker answers thought that the day was named after the battle and that this was the post battle celebration.

#### **Question 8**

Although the majority of candidates understood what the question was asking and made valid points about dramatic impact, fewer could support his with detailed knowledge. Many wrote at some length but rather generally about Henry's past, his transformation on becoming King and his rejection of Falstaff but concentrated less on the events of the play. Most mentioned the hanging of Bardolph, though often not knowing his name, and that Henry's rejection of his boasting, lying, thieving and cowardly former companions reflected his new role. Some mentioned both comic relief and that the antics of Pistol and company showed a darker undercurrent in the play. References to their behaviour at Harfleur, Pistol's comic encounters with M. Le Fer and Fluellen and the fates of Nym and the boy were rarely employed, though successful responses often ranged across these points.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth***

**Question 9**

There were many high quality responses which considered the sound and movement on stage; Macduff's desire for vengeance; the imagery of evil; Macbeth's surprising show of guilt and avoidance of causing Macduff further harm; his mistaken belief that he is invincible; the dramatic reversal of this following Macduff's revelation; Macbeth's response to the witches' equivocation and his restoration of some honour and audience sympathy in his refusal to yield. The best answers explored the balance of sympathies; concisely contrasted Macbeth here to the man at the beginning of the play; commented on the restoration of his honourable warrior qualities and his 'release' from the evil charm that has held him spellbound and discussed the differences in Macduff 'haunted' by his family's death and Macbeth's haunting by Banquo. The power of the language was fully analysed in the best answers, for example the connotations and thematic significance of *'tyrant'*, *'hell-hound'*, *'bloodier villain'*, *'juggling'*, *'haunt'* and *'untimely ripp'd'*.

In less successful and in some strong answers, there were common misconceptions. *'Beest'* in *'If thou beest slain and with no stroke of mine'* was often read as 'beast', leading candidates astray. *'My soul is too much charg'd with blood of thine already'* was misinterpreted as Macbeth taunting Macduff, with *'charg'd'* seen to mean *'fired up'* rather than laden with guilt. This interpretation makes little sense in the context of the speech. *'I bear a charmed life'* was taken not in the sense that he had been under the witches' protective spell but that he had been having a great time. Some candidates thought that the audience already knew that Macduff was not of woman born and many were confused by the concept. Some otherwise sound answers spent too much time on the context or on Macbeth's history in the play at the expense of looking at the crucial drama in the second half of the passage.

**Question 10**

Perceptive candidates homed in straight away on the contrast between the characters and reactions of Macbeth and Banquo and the compelling reversal of their friendship. They commented fully on Banquo as a foil. He sees the evil trickery in the witches, he is not without ambition but will not play foully for it. He remains loyal to both Duncan and (out of fear and wise caution) to Macbeth, whilst suspecting his friend of regicide. Their initial closeness was explored with apt textual reference and comment on the language. Macbeth's suspicion and subsequent murder of Banquo by hired assassins was seen as evidence of his moral deterioration and his estrangement from his wife. The dramatic impact and psychological and symbolic significance of the ghost's appearance was fully explored. Macbeth's reasons for killing Banquo could have been more fully documented as compelling insights into his fear, emptiness and paranoia.

Less successful candidates did not fully grasp the significance to Macbeth of Banquo's children carrying on the royal line. Many did not select the fact that Macbeth murders his best friend, then publically exposes his own guilt by seeing that friend's ghost at a state banquet, as a significantly compelling aspect of their relationship.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/33  
Paper 33 Drama (Open-Text)

## Key messages

It is essential to read the whole syllabus before planning a teaching programme. Teachers are reminded that they **must select from the set text lists for the year in which their candidates will take the examination.**

- Successful responses selected the most pertinent and significant material in order to reflect the focus of the question.
- Responses would have been improved by considering the dramatic content of the set passage over the listing of literary features.
- Successful answers explored and analysed, and avoided excessive explanation, description and narrative re-telling.
- Stronger responses refrained from giving excessive historical/cultural/contextual information at the expense of a sharp focus on the question and set text.
- A personal engagement with the text, ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

## General comments

Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of their set texts and showed engagement with the characters, themes and emotional impact. Candidates need to be reminded that to show understanding of the text as performance, the dramatic impact of stage directions, dialogue and characters' actions and behaviour should be explored without them assuming the director's role. Some candidates had been taught to conclude responses with extended explanations of what the play means to them personally. For example, what they learned about excessive ambition in *Macbeth* and the pitfalls to be avoided in life or, in *The Winslow Boy*, how important it is to maintain a good relationship with one's father; that a close family should always support each and make sacrifices. Whilst these are worthy lessons, they took up valuable time, when more pertinent points in answer to the question and in response to the text could have been made.

There is a tendency to try to answer a question by working through punctuation and literary techniques without showing understanding of the textual context and what is actually happening, particularly in passage-based questions. For example, 'end stop', rather than exclamation marks or full-stops, was frequently cited as creating a dramatic effect when it may simply indicate the end of a sentence. Similarly, a range of unrelated technical terminology was used that did little to develop or support the argument being made.

Candidates were often drawn into discussion of manliness (especially in *A View from the Bridge*, *The Winslow Boy* and *Macbeth*), with much to say about gender. There was also considerable comment on the subservient role of women; women in America in the 1950's were repressed, their roles being to pander to husbands/uncles and being unable to work outside the home. These comments, though apt if connected to the question, often detracted from questions that were unrelated to gender issues and were generally sweeping generalisations, rarely rooted in the text. In such cases, valuable time was wasted developing this line of argument which could have been spent in answering specific questions more closely.

Most candidates managed their time well and there were few very brief answers. There were, however, some responses where there was little knowledge of the text and which appeared to have been done as unseen responses. These did not achieve highly.

Some rubric infringements occurred in **Question 10** of *Macbeth*, where candidates failed to adhere to the rider to the question: this stated clearly, '**Do not use the passage in Question 9 in answering this question**'. By using the limited relevant detail to the characters in the passage it was difficult for candidates to achieve marks in the higher Bands.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **J.LAWRENCE AND R.E.LEE: *Inherit the Wind***

##### **Question 1**

To answer this question fully, candidates needed to focus on the 'powerful' aspects of the scene and to show understanding of how this was conveyed by the writers. This was at a key point in the trial where Drummond's scientific witnesses have been disallowed and he is examining Brady. Weaker responses worked through the passage, narrating events at a literal level with little consideration of the question or scene. They attempted to summarise what Drummond said with limited success. Stronger responses immediately acknowledged that this was a turning point in the play where Brady loses the support of the crowd and were able to trace this from the '*few snickers*' to the metaphorical '*slap(ped) in the face*' for Brady. They explored Drummond's ability in turning an impossible situation to his advantage and were able to follow closely the intricacies of his argument, noting the authors', and Drummond's, facility with language. His control over his cross-examining of Brady compared to his initial '*fiery*' tone were explored in depth. The idea of knowledge and progress versus blind faith, at the heart of the drama, was clearly understood.

##### **Question 2**

The most popular choice of admirable character was Drummond. Some chose Cates or Rachel and even Hornbeck and there was much to consider in relation to all of them. The few candidates who chose Brady appeared to acknowledge that he was slightly more difficult to admire, or defend, once they started to write. Most candidates showed good knowledge of the text and character giving clear well-supported reasons for the choices made.

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge***

##### **Question 3**

To answer this question well, focus was required on 'revealing and unsettling' and the best responses were able to explore both what Eddie said about Rodolpho and what the passage revealed about Eddie's and Beatrice's relationship. Some responses were unbalanced with too much time spent working through Eddie's 'excuses' for disliking Rodolpho without analysing the deeper implications and real reasons for his dislike. Most were able to comment in some detail on Miller's writing and Eddie's dislike on the grounds of his effeminacy or homosexuality. Some candidates suggested that Eddie himself was revealing his own latent homosexuality; a claim difficult to substantiate. The most successful responses probed at Eddie's undeclared reasons for his dislike, his own feelings for Catherine and the threat Rodolpho posed to them. They responded thoroughly to the drama on stage, analysing Miller's writing to show explicitly what was revealed of Eddie's feelings. His determination was explored as the '*campaign solidified*' and the war-like language identified and carefully linked to his '*retreat*' once Beatrice raised her 'other worries' and went on the attack. Most candidates understood Beatrice's upset and feelings of neglect in her question, 'When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?' and were able to follow through with close analysis of the implications and consequences of this statement.

##### **Question 4**

Candidates responding to this question often did not pay attention to what was 'striking' about Catherine's portrayal. As such, material was not well-selected and character profiles were often written, explaining all about Catherine and the plot. Most focused on the early scenes and wrote of her naiveté and desire to gain Eddie's approval, often noting that she undergoes a change as the play progresses, but simply stating she calls him 'a rat' without showing knowledge or understanding of the causes of this change. The most successful responses were able to explore the change from the child-like girl to the young woman in love with Rodolpho, seeking to be her own person. They were able to explore the second half of the play and the factors that led her to denounce him as 'a rat', closely analysing the kissing and the betrayal of the cousins to the Immigration Bureau.



**TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy***

**Question 5**

There were few responses to this question and they were generally narrative in approach. Candidates often worked through the passage explaining what it was about, though there was a lack of understanding of the textual context. Others retold the plot with little focus on the passage. Successful responses were able to analyse what was moving, showed understanding of the sacrifices which had been made and the moving empathy and unity between father and daughter.

**Question 6**

Weaker answers wrote two separate character studies with little focus on 'relationship' or 'dramatic impact'. More successful answers developed understanding of Catherine's initial dislike of Sir Robert Morton in their first encounter and their friendly banter and hint of 'romance' at the end of the play. Few, however, addressed her changed opinion of him and the underlying impact of their unifying stance in the face of different political views.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V***

**Question 7**

Most candidates were able to comment on some 'entertaining' aspects of the passage though those who failed to understand that Henry was in disguise were less successful. The most successful answers understood the context and the comic interlude, the night before Agincourt. They focused on Pistol's attempt to speak French and lack of understanding of 'Harry Le Roy'. They identified the way in which an old friend did not recognise his visitor. His praise and his parting insult were commented on as was Pistol's declaration that he was 'as good a gentleman as the Emperor' though not all understood how or why this is entertaining. Weaker responses did not go beyond commenting on Pistol. More successful responses explored Pistol's anger towards Fluellen before addressing the entertaining aspects of the conversation with Gower. The entertaining aspect and irony of Fluellen's admonishment of Gower to 'speak fewer' whilst he proceeded to speak a lot about the ancient wars was clearly enjoyed by some candidates. They also commented on his language, comic repetition and colloquialisms in 'tiddle taddle, pebble pabble'. Most candidates were able to convey some understanding and enjoyment of the moment.

**Question 8**

There were some very successful responses to this question, focusing on Henry's reasons for going to war against France and himself as a noble King. Most had the requisite knowledge and supported ideas with relevant references to the text and were aware of the ambivalent attitude to war. Weaker responses omitted the 'invasion of France' from the question and focused solely on Henry as a character to admire or not. Successful responses referred to Henry's rightful claim to the throne and the Salic law whilst showing full awareness of the bishops' ulterior motives in proposing this justification for the invasion. The Dauphin's taunting of Henry's youth and former life style and Henry's response, with his verbally skilful reply to the insult of the 'tennis balls', was also explored in detail. The best responses were able to weigh up the legitimacy of the invasion against the horrors and brutality of the war, supported by close analysis of Henry's speech both to his men before battle and to the governor of Harfleur.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth***

**Question 9**

There was a strong sense of the drama and tension conveyed in many good and varied responses. The most successful responses explored the dramatic irony, the tension before the discovery of the murder, the interference with the Chain of Being and the disruption to the natural order. The act of innocence by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and the sense of chaos in the exclamations, the alarum-bell ringing and the rapid entrances and exits were also features of these responses. Close attention was paid to the vivid imagery of Macduff's speech conveying the horror of what he had seen and emphasising the enormity of the crime. Weaker responses spent too much time explaining the previous scene and Duncan's murder. Others limited their response to a linear analysis of Lennox's speech noting parallels between previous events – the witches' prophecies and the 'prophesying'; the witches and the lamentings; the obscure bird and the owl and

the strange screams of death, supposedly paralleling Duncan's screams as he died. For higher reward these responses needed consideration of the whole passage and linking to details from the given passage.

### **Question 10**

The discursive question was less successfully handled. There was an imbalance in the treatment of the two men with Macduff coming off worse as candidates clearly felt more comfortable and knew far more about Macbeth. Weaker responses focused on one character (usually Macbeth first) then the other with very little on Macduff with a few straightforward links drawn between them. Others retold the plot with scant reference to the question. The most successful answers looked at their loyalty to the King and to Scotland; their similarities in rank and skills as warriors, as well as Macbeth's driving ambition and Macduff's suspicion of him. Their differing responses to the loss of loved ones was a feature of the very best responses with well-supported comments on Macbeth's indifference to Lady Macbeth's demise and Macduff's emotional outburst and devastation at the death of his family.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/41  
Paper 41 Unseen

## **Key messages**

- Careful reading of the introductory rubric will help to avoid confusion.
- Brief introductions which give an overview of the whole text, and concise conclusions which evaluate its overall effect on the reader provide strong essay structure.
- The bullet points assist candidates in addressing both the question and the Assessment Objectives in the mark scheme.
- Candidates should practise Prose passages as well as Poetry so that they are well-prepared for either question.
- Key discriminators for good responses are clarity of understanding and a developed response to the writers' effects.

## **General comments**

Candidates are generally very well-prepared for this paper and show good reading skills. Some struggle to move beyond a literal reading of the text, sometimes with a great deal of paraphrase or over-long quotation. However, most show some degree of comprehension through understanding of surface meaning. More common are responses which make some attempt to write about language and imagery, but lack a clear overall understanding of the text. These show some understanding but their interpretations are inconsistent and often involve inventing a back story for the text which is not supported by the evidence in front of them. Responses placed in Band 4 or Band 5 often make some interesting individual observations, and a credible attempt at critical reading of the writers' effects and impact on the reader. However, greater cohesion and purpose is needed for Band 6 and above.

Sometimes candidates appear to think that looking 'beyond surface meaning' (AO2) involves the discovery of a hidden meaning and they will speculate about a 'back story' or alternative narrative which is different from the words of the text in front of them. Text choices are not intended to trick candidates in any way. Any context required is provided in the brief introductory rubric, which introduces characters, their relationships and the situation, if relevant. The introductory rubric also clarifies the gender of characters and narrators where applicable, so this should not be misunderstood. No other knowledge is expected or necessary beyond what is provided in the text, rubric and glosses. The inferences which candidates need to make should come out of their response to the words, the tone, the situation, and the relationships revealed in the texts themselves and how they develop.

Examiners often commented that answers could be improved by better planning and more effective introductions. Fewer candidates now begin their essays with a disconnected list of technical devices which may or may not be present in the text. Nevertheless, many believe that 'addressing the question and bullet points' means copying them out or writing a very close paraphrase to which it was difficult for Examiners to give any reward. Likewise, many responses lack a conclusion, while others repeat the term 'finally' many times, or repeat points made earlier and already credited.

A good introduction is possible when a candidate has read the whole text carefully two or three times, considered its overall meaning and the kind of writing it represents, and begun to consider how the writing makes an impact on the thoughts and feelings of the reader. It is helpful to mark up key words and images in the passage and to divide it into sections, and very helpful to sketch out a brief plan in the answer booklet before beginning to write. This demonstrates that a candidate's personal response is a critical and analytical essay, based on evidence and observations. Candidates should then think about how they can sum up the overall impact of the text, and the purpose of the writer, in just two or three sentences, before exploring the textual evidence in more detail.

Conclusions should be brief. A good conclusion moves the essay beyond the skills of analysis towards higher order skills of review and evaluation. It is a chance for the candidate to show what they have found. If the focus of an introduction should be the writer's overall purpose, the focus of the conclusion should be the overall effect on the reader, evaluating the mood of the whole piece and how successfully it has been created.

Candidates are provided with bullet points to assist with planning, and these usually help them both to work their way through the passage and to ensure they address the Assessment Objectives. They draw attention to notable aspects of style and structure, and to the way the passage or poem develops and changes, often signalling a shift in perspective or change of tone. Effective planning should involve awareness of such structural features of the writing. Candidates often spend too long on earlier parts of poems or passages, and not long enough on shifts, developments and revelations later in the text. The last bullet point usually assists the process of evaluation, either of the final lines, or of the text as a whole, or both of these. The question remains the stem question, in bold at the top of the page.

This year saw fewer answers to **Question 2**. Some candidates may be better suited to writing about texts with a clear narrative structure – indeed some attempted to impose such narratives on the poems when they opted for **Question 1**. It is not the expectation that candidates will write line-by-line analysis of prose, and practising commentary on prose will help learners with skills of planning, selection, analysis and evaluation, and with concise but pertinent and well-integrated quotation and comment, which are useful for all Literature components. We recommend that learners are given plenty of practice in both kinds of question, using past papers supported by past Examiners' Reports, in order to develop their skills, and to ensure that, as candidates, they have a choice of questions.

Close study of key terms in the mark scheme should help teachers to apply the Cambridge standard and to see what examiners are looking for in good responses. Key differences between Band 5 and Band 6 are the clarity of understanding both of each part of the text and the text as a whole, and the development of response to language. The writer's techniques should not be merely identified but their effect on the reader described. The term 'developed' implies that the candidate should be able to move fluently from one observation to the next, linking them and seeing connections across the whole text. Critical observations in prose might be linked to the viewpoint of the narrator, with awareness that their perspective can bias what they see. Good candidates are able to relate the part to the whole, and to show a confident overall grasp from the beginning of their answer, or to work their way towards greater insight as they connect and evaluate their observations.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

'Hands on: 1937' by Edwin Morgan, recalls the poet's encounter with a snake that he was invited to hold during a lecture that he attended as a child. This poetry option attracted the full range of achievement. As always, the key discriminator was in the candidates' ability to explore the writer's use of language and structure and to go beyond simple paraphrase to offer a more developed interpretation of text.

Most candidates noted the form of the poem, a single stanza, written in free verse and with lines of unequal length. Better answers developed these comments into fuller exploration of the structure which some candidates compared to the coil of the snake.

Some recognised that, although the poem is presented as one 'block' of text, there are three distinct sections to the poem; John S Clarke's address to the children, recollected in the past tense; the poet's reaction to the experience as a child and the poet's reflection upon the relationship between men and other creatures, written in the present tense and communicating the poet's mature conclusions about the interrelationship between 'species'.

Many candidates responded to John S Clarke's appeal to the girls, through the reference to the beauty and glitter of the snakes' jewel-like eyes, and his appeal to the boys through his use of a challenge, the 'bet' that they have never handled a creature like it.

The question asked candidates to focus on the methods used by the poet to convey his fascination with the experience of encountering the snake. Many candidates noted the title of the poem in this regard and suggested that the fact that the poet was writing so vividly about an event that occurred in 1937 was a testament to its memorability and contributed as evidence of his fascination. Candidates who responded to the title noted that 'Hands on' referred to the immediacy of the encounter with some perceptive candidates

linking the 'hands' mentioned in the title to the 'body parts' listed in the poem's final line, 'scale, sole, palm, tail, brow'. These were highly perceptive insights into ways in which the poet suggested a relationship between snakes and humans. Other perceptive answers considered the fluidity of time created by the poet who looks back on his experience in an objective way, recalling the words of the lecturer and his strange appearance 'festooned with snakes', then switching seamlessly into his childlike self, admiring the 'strange bonus' that was his physical contact with the snake. The poet's statement that it is 'all one life' is issued in the present.

Most candidates recognised the poet's use of repetition, 'come on', 'come down', 'Come on lads' as part of the way in which he suggested a physical distance between Clarke, festooned in snakes at 'the front' of the lecture hall, and the children, presumably in rows, at some distance away. Most candidates noted Clarke's insistent desire for the children to get 'hands on'. Perceptive candidates referred to the contrast that was created here, between the confines of the lecture-hall, referred to again, explicitly, as one of the 'unnatural' habitats of the snake and their natural habitats, 'fronds', 'rivers', 'grass' and 'reedland'.

Repetitions that attracted most attention included the repeated personal pronoun, 'I' which was used first, for Clarke, then for the persona and finally (twice) for the personified snake itself. Some candidates remarked on how this created the effect of a shared entity of 'beings' that is echoed in the final line. The other significant repetition noted was the snake's voice declaring 'I am living' and 'oh how I am living' which most candidates interpreted as contributing to the affirmative tone of the poem which develops from being a record of a simple childhood experience into a veritable celebration of life in all its forms.

Candidates also noted the impact of the reiterated sensation of the 'otherness' of the poet's experience, expressed as 'unforeseen', 'an unknown world' and 'strange bonus' which appear as a list, within one line of text, creating a sense of complete amazement on the part of the child/persona.

Some candidates discussed the simplicity of the diction used in the first section of the poem, for the benefit of the children and they contrasted this with the more complex imagery of the 'Inca walls' and the use of the phrase 'unfathomable power' which acted as a stop and created a moment of reflection on the part of the reader. There were some brief and purposeful, and some more lengthy and less useful, excursions into the history of the Inca civilization; but most candidates who explored the image of 'Inca walls' did so sensibly; considering the 'ancient', and enduring qualities of the Inca 'ruins' and how the poet used the analogy to emphasise the majesty and longevity of snakes as a species.

Most candidates responded personally to the poet's description of his experience of holding the snake; they noted the differences in pressure implied through the use of the phrases 'faint tickling' and 'very crawling of the flesh' and they saw the implicit challenge, from the snake, in the phrase, 'began to test my arm'.

Some candidates shied away from the final segment of the poem, perhaps unsure of the identity of the speaker of 'I am living'. The majority of candidates recognised this statement as being the poet's interpretation of what the snake would say, if it had the power of speech. Many suggested that 'the ripples' made by the snake were communicating this strong message, and some ascribed the phrase to the child, suddenly made aware of his own identity as he held the snake. Those who recognised the phrase as constituting a form of epiphany usually managed the last section of the poem where the poet imagines the snake and the whole of his 'species' living in the world.

Most candidates appreciated the range of locations where one might encounter snakes; better candidates recognised those locations which were shared by snakes and humans and noted how the two species were linked in each having 'business' to attend to. The descent into the darkness was noted by some candidates and Examiners noted several answers where connections were made between the snake and the serpent from the Garden of Eden.

The poet's use of lists becomes more prominent in the final six lines of the poem and many candidates noted the effects created by this method. Only the most persistent commented purposefully on the apparent mingling of human and reptilian qualities in the final line; 'scale, sole, palm, tail, brow, roving, brushing, touching' suggesting a similarity of experience across the species – 'all one life'.



## Question 2

The extract was taken from a short story, *Mr Sumarsono*, by American writer, Roxana Robinson. Candidates are told in the rubric that Mr Sumarsono is a diplomat visiting the narrator's family for the weekend and that, at the end of the visit, he takes photographs of the ten-year old narrator, her sister Kate and her mother. The question asked candidates to explore the ways in which the writer vividly conveys the impact of this experience on the narrator. The bullet points encouraged candidates to focus on the portrayal of the narrator's response to Mr Sumarsono, how the writer conveys the narrator's thoughts and feelings about her mother, as well as how the writer conveys the narrator's reactions to the photographs.

Not all candidates who tackled this question appeared to have read the question and the associated information/bullets with sufficient care and many answers did not make adequate use of the guidance offered. Some assumed that Mr Sumarsono was a professional photographer; others assumed that the narrator was a boy. Although complete paraphrases were rare, many answers were seen which simply narrated the 'contents' of each succeeding paragraph. Such answers attract little credit against the band descriptors.

There were some very impressive answers where candidates appeared fully engaged with the ability of Mr Sumarsono to transform the narrator's perception of her mother, and some who recognised his ability to transform the mother herself. Most candidates recognised the device of the use of an immature narrator whose perceptions were offered unfiltered by the restraint that an older observer might employ, and they recognised the humour that was generated by the young narrator's opinions both of Mr Sumarsono and of her mother.

Sensitive readings included reference to the 'strange mechanical mask' which covered Mr Sumarsono's face, making him appear almost robotic and they linked it with the adjective 'unyielding' which described his brand of 'courtesy', as well as with the 'decisive tone' that he used, to infer that the writer wished to make the character intimidating to the ten-year-old. Mr Sumarsono's 'hideous smile' was variously interpreted as being offered sincerely and/or sarcastically, in imitation of the narrator's own 'taut and artificial smile'.

As the passage is written in the first person, many candidates commented upon the frequent iteration of the personal pronoun. However, most appreciated that this was less a feature of egotism and more a functional necessity in telling a story that revolved around the photographing of her and her family. The narrator's self-deprecation and explanation of her own humiliation, under Mr Sumarsono's instruction, was not missed by perceptive candidates.

Many candidates made sensitive comments about the young narrator's attitude towards her mother and the fact that she could not see beyond the maternal exterior to appreciate the woman within. The narrator's relief that her mother did not 'mortify' her and her sister was recognised as a comical inversion of roles.

Strong answers looked closely at the narrator's analysis of the photographs that Mr Sumarsono brought for the family to see on his next visit. Many candidates commented on the irony of the narrator appearing 'as though I am in a foreign country' when, in fact, it was Mr Sumarsono who was in that position.

The description of the narrator's mother as she appeared in the photographs attracted much perceptive comment. Candidates, almost without exception, picked up on the simile of her looking 'like a queen'; some went as far as to suggest that in sitting for Mr Sumarsono 'as though they were old friends' the mother was in fact at ease because she was attracted to Mr Sumarsono and that he, in turn, was able to reveal her inner beauty because that attraction was mutual. Some candidates supported this suggestion by referring to the return visit to the family as 'the next time he came out for the weekend' which made his visits appear more frequent than is at first conveyed.

Although there were some instances of very short answers that lacked sufficient detail, there were many detailed explorations of the writer's methods to be seen.

Good answers remarked on the form of the passage and on the writer's use of short sentences, some of which constituted whole paragraphs, alternating with more syntactically complex and longer ones. Some observed that the diction used was frequently more complex than would be expected from a ten-year-old, such as 'peremptorily' and 'ethereal'.

The narrator's increased respect for Mr Sumarsono was also commented upon and linked to both his ability to control the situation and the photograph and his ability to confer a new perspective on the world that the



narrator had previously felt at home in. The narrator's sense of dislocation was generally appreciated and clearly explained in stronger answers.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/42  
Paper 42 Unseen

## Key messages

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- Brief introductions which give an overview of the whole text, and concise conclusions which evaluate its overall effect on the reader provide strong essay structure.
- The bullet points assist candidates in addressing both the question and the Assessment Objectives in the mark scheme.
- Candidates should practise Prose passages as well as Poetry so that they are well-prepared for either question.
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## General comments

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### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

George Barker's sonnet 'To My Mother' conveys her boisterous, indomitable character, especially during the Second World War when Baker was in the United States. It is humorous, affectionate and ultimately shows his devotion to her, and the power of her influence on him. Most candidates picked up the tone of praise and admiration and some realised from the title that the poem could be seen as an ode, while others thought it was a letter addressed to her from afar. Many realised that the poem was a sonnet and that this has implications for its structure, as it is divided into octave and sestet, and that we can expect a change of tone or direction after the eighth line. Indeed, this is the moment when the wartime air raid referenced in the bullet points takes place, and gives the mother an opportunity to demonstrate her defiant approach to life. The final lines, prefaced by the exclamation 'and so I send/O all my faith' are a kind of prayer and hint at a melancholy behind the mother's exuberance.

Most candidates were able to write well about the octave, and the ways in which the mother is presented as a larger-than-life figure. The poet's extensive similes and metaphors allowed most to address the intensifier 'strikingly' in the question, and interpret what is unusual and memorable about the expression here. Fewer were successful in writing about the sestet, where there were some difficulties of interpretation and a tendency to read in narratives to justify the mother's attitude, and sensitive response to the final lines also tended to be the mark of a strong response.

The octave and sestet are indeed single sentences, and good answers saw the links and connections between the poem's structure and images. Most responded personally to the superlatives of the first line, in which the poet affirms his devotions, while many puzzled at the paradox of 'most near' so close to 'most far'. Candidates were not sure if she was physically present but emotionally distant, or emotionally present and physically distant. The second line of enquiry tended to be more productive; everything else in the octave suggests that she is overpoweringly emotionally present. Stronger answers often included an observation

about tenses: the poem begins in the past tense but quickly moves into the present before finally transitioning to the future, though such comments needed to be pertinent to the question to achieve highly. 'The window' under which she often sat was often subject to slightly stretched interpretation, rather like the 'mahogany table' in the sestet, and sometimes candidates need to prioritise some details over others when interpreting their texts: the enjambment in this line suggests it is one to move over quickly, as it simply provides a habitual visual setting. More striking is the imagery in the third line: 'huge as Asia' and 'seismic with laughter'. Good responses saw the writer's hyperbole as conveying the scale of the mother's enthusiasms, for 'gin and chicken', for humour and for company. Others, often thinking of the poet as a small child, saw him as overwhelmed, or concerned about her alcohol dependency. However, if she is a 'procession no one can follow after' she is certainly not isolated or lonely. Many noticed contradictions in her character to support the idea that she was 'near' and 'far' at the same time: while the gin and chicken are 'helpless' in her hand, she is also 'most tender for/ The lame dogs and hurt birds'. This certainly suggests that she is all-encompassing and complex, and some successful candidates thought the dogs and birds were metaphors for the human company she kept, some more speculatively wondering if the lame dogs were as a result of the war. Undoubtedly, the poet may have felt it hard to keep up with her, and quite a few thought he was himself 'like a little dog following a brass band'. A number struggled with this last phrase, thinking it referred to the mother, as they took it out of context. Seen as an explanation of how she was a hard act to follow worked much better: several commented on how the metaphorical brass band makes her loud and impossible to ignore.

The wartime setting is only explicit relevant to the sestet. This did cause some problems to candidates who did not understand the mother's defiance and refusal to change her life. Those who saw the mother as depressed, emotionally withdrawn or 'drinking away her pain' would sometimes argue that she did not want to live, or was deliberately acting with suicidal intent, ignoring her pleading son. Such readings do not reflect the tone of the text, and show an inability to see the poem as a whole. Sometimes these depended on misreadings of 'condescend' or 'scuttle', and not realising that this is precisely what the mother refuses to do. She does not give the bomber even a second glance because she will not be intimidated or change her life for anyone. Those who picked up the similarity of the image of her leaning 'like a mountain' on the table, to the picture in the octave of her 'sitting huge as Asia' under the window appreciated that she does not want to move or alter her celebratory way of living. Many realised that mountains are immovable objects, and a few picked up the Biblical allusion to how faith can move mountains. More candidates appreciated the way the repetition of 'all my faith, and all my love' reiterates the rhetorical tone of the poem's first line, and that the poem has become more emotional and less humorous, as the poet expresses a sincere prayer that his mother will move on.

There is deliberate ambiguity in the final lines of the poem, and this is precisely where a nuanced approach to interpretation is necessary. Candidates should not be afraid of uncertainty and of writing 'perhaps this represents' or 'this may suggest' instead of leaping too quickly to an interpretation. Some were impressively capable of advancing their own readings: *'In the last line of the poem the poet, almost as a last resort, is compiling his love and even his faith almost as some sort of care package to her, hoping she is safe and telling her that she will see morning or see through an air raid'*. Another interesting reading suggested that *'the poet is conveying a greater message in that, though his mother is not fighting physically, she is fighting her own war from the window. She is fighting to maintain normality, something which she is trying to win due to her sheer grit and determination, and refusal to 'drop her gin'*. These are readings sensitive to the images, tone and language of the poem. More speculative interpretations of the mother's move 'from mourning into morning' wanted her to mourn specific people, such as a husband, a lover, herself or the poet. There are some practical problems with the suggestion that either she or the speaker of the poem are dead, but these readings certainly picked up an elegiac element to the poem, especially in these final lines, and there are certainly some hints that her exuberance disguises a deeper disquiet. The best answers appreciated the play on words by placing the homophones in close proximity, and how they enact a transition from dark times to a new dawn, which might be especially relevant in times of war and night time bombing raids. Those who noticed the repetition of 'faith' were in no doubt that the poet is eager to show that he has kept faith with his mother, just as she has remained true to herself.

## Question 2

The prose extract from a short story, *Buckets of Blood* by Tessa Hadley, uses the free indirect narrative voice and communicates to us the thoughts and feelings of Hilary Culvert, as she travels away from home for the first time to visit her older sister, Sheila, already a student at university. What we hear are Hilary's thoughts, communicated to us in the third person as she makes her journey, and the way she and Sheila have talked about their mother and their family life in the past. The passage transmits Hilary's desperate desire to escape the miseries of her very large family, and the humiliations of being deprived of the comforts she thinks she has a right to expect, as everything has to be shared around so many brothers and sisters, on

a minister's limited income, and with parents apparently preoccupied with the mass of children, or with the ministry, rather than having time for the growing girls and their needs. We get glimpses of how they envy their older brother, Andrew, but fear that as women, they may have less opportunity to escape, and the alternative would be the misery of their older sister, Sylvia, condemned to repeat the cycle of their mother's life, already worn down by motherhood. There are quite a few suggestions that the narrator and her sister exaggerate their miseries for dramatic effect, enjoying the hyperbole. We are given the impression that we should not necessarily take their judgements on their family at face value, or assume that the author agrees with their often cruel mockery of their parents. In their preparation for this paper, candidates should practise hearing different narrative voices, and become aware that narrators are not always reliable and their own attitudes might be the object of exaggeration and satire. We almost overhear the sisters communicating their embarrassments and their fear of being trapped into a life of domestic servitude, but should be prepared to find elements of humour and entertainment in their vigorous contempt for the choices of others, as well as the excitement Hilary feels in the possibility of escape.

The bullet points helped candidates to make a judicious selection of areas to explore more closely. Weaker responses tended to take the whole experience at face value and focus on the narrative rather than the emotions behind Hilary's descriptions. The expressions between the two sisters and the fact that they 'had confided' their mutual lack of faith in the existence of God and the desirability of motherhood show that this is a secret and shared mission, based on scorn for their mother and their life at home, leading them to want to go as far away 'as possible.' Those who looked more closely at the rhetoric saw that these judgments by Hilary and Sheila are relative to the lives of 'other people' who live 'somewhere else'. There may be an element of wishful thinking, and the notion that 'the grass is greener on the other side of the fence'. Nevertheless, many wrote well about the sensory deprivation of 'clammy' hand-me-downs and the 'paltry warmth' of the heaters, some seeing the latter as a metaphor for the lack of warmth within the family. This is reinforced by a lack of trust, leading them to sleep with keys round their necks, only to find the locks 'picked and smashed'. A few thought this showed the girls lived in a bad neighbourhood; most worked out that this was the result of brothers and sisters who operate 'an honour code rather than anything resembling Christian charity' and appreciated the irony of a vicar unable to practise what he preached in his own home. One candidate wrote that this seemed to be a form of *'frontier justice'*.

The chaos, rivalry and lawlessness of the family are set against the 'broken way' the mother communicates, her head down and incapable of 'completed sentences and consecutive dialogue'. The author probably intends us to pity her more than Hilary does: for the two girls she simply epitomises the fecund domestic life they want to run as far away from as possible. Hilary's descriptions of her mother are remorseless, completely lacking in sympathy or compassion. Many commented that the details add up to the portrait of a witch or 'stalking' and 'chasing' monster. The more able started to question why two young women would create such a misogynistic caricature of motherhood. Some saw this as the embarrassment of 'suffering adolescence' and horror at the thought of their mother's apparently ceaseless reproduction. Others wrote more sensitively about 'her huge deflated stomach and bosom ...slapped like insults on to a girl's bony frame' and realised she is a projection of what the girls fear might happen to them, and has already happened to their sister, Sylvia. Some showed awareness of the gender politics behind this unappealing portrait. The mother is only ever 'accidentally' seen beside her husband, and she looks as if she had been in 'some momentous fight for his life' which 'he hadn't'. The contrast is stark and ironic, and the sentence 'As girls, Sheila and Hilary had to be especially careful' is a further indication that their greatest fear is of this kind of future.

Stronger answers invariably considered the fate of Sylvia, fated to follow her mother by marrying a local RE teacher and transformed from a 'sprightly young girl' to 'standing uncommunicatively' (like her mother) surrounded by 'urine-pungent steam', 'masses of boiling nappies', bawling babies and a 'battered wooden playpen that had been handed on from the vicarage'. Not only does this passage reproduce the sensuous horrors as experienced by the sensitive Hilary, with alliterative emphasis, but the final line gives away the idea that the paraphernalia of motherhood have been handed down (like the wellingtons) from mother to daughter. In these circumstances, Andrew's rebellion, joining a 'Trotskyite entrist group' and not coming back for Christmas appears glamorous as well as defiant.

In response to the third bullet point, good answers took evidence from different parts of the passage. They were alert to the sensuous excitement which 'burned up brightly' in Hilary at the thought of escape, and that she sees it as breaking out of a trap or out of prison, even if it actually only takes her somewhere 'equally colourless'. They explored this as a sense of both mental and physical release from the dire future which she thinks might otherwise confront her, reduced to wordless misery and domestic slavery. This ability to look at the ideas and attitudes which lie behind exaggerated and distorted description marked out the strongest essays. A particularly strong example can be seen in: *'With the alliteration of 'babies bawling...battered', stressing the uncomfortable, jarring nature of both the babies' wails and their playpen, portraying them as*



*repulsive figures in a repulsive environment...the playpen 'handed down from the vicarage' stresses how dangerously easy it would be for Hilary to turn out like Sylvia by linking Sylvia's repulsive, degenerate state to the vicarage in which Hilary currently resides'.*

This kind of sensitive response to details of the writing and what they imply mark out the best responses to this paper, alert to the implications of description in narrative, and how situations prepare readers for later narrative developments.

# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/43  
Paper 43 Unseen

## Key Messages

- Careful reading of the introductory rubric will help to avoid confusion.
- Brief introductions which give an overview of the whole text, and concise conclusions which evaluate its overall effect on the reader provide strong essay structure.
- The bullet points assist candidates in addressing both the question and the Assessment Objectives in the mark scheme.
- Candidates should practise Prose passages as well as Poetry so that they are well-prepared for either question.
- Key discriminators for good responses are clarity of understanding and a developed response to the writers' effects.

## General comments

Candidates are generally very well-prepared for this paper and show good reading skills. Some struggle to move beyond a literal reading of the text, sometimes with a great deal of paraphrase or over-long quotation. However, most show some degree of comprehension through understanding of surface meaning. More common are responses which make some attempt to write about language and imagery, but lack a clear overall understanding of the text. These show some understanding but their interpretations are inconsistent and often involve inventing a back story for the text which is not supported by the evidence in front of them. Responses placed in Band 4 or Band 5 often make some interesting individual observations, and a credible attempt at critical reading of the writers' effects and impact on the reader. However, greater cohesion and purpose is needed for Band 6 and above.

Sometimes candidates appear to think that looking 'beyond surface meaning' (AO2) involves the discovery of a hidden meaning and they will speculate about a 'back story' or alternative narrative which is different from the words of the text in front of them. Text choices are not intended to trick candidates in any way. Any context required is provided in the brief introductory rubric, which introduces characters, their relationships and the situation, if relevant. The introductory rubric also clarifies the gender of characters and narrators where applicable, so this should not be misunderstood. No other knowledge is expected or necessary beyond what is provided in the text, rubric and glosses. The inferences which candidates need to make should come out of their response to the words, the tone, the situation, and the relationships revealed in the texts themselves and how they develop.

Examiners often commented that answers could be improved by better planning and more effective introductions. Fewer candidates now begin their essays with a disconnected list of technical devices which may or may not be present in the text. Nevertheless, many believe that 'addressing the question and bullet points' means copying them out or writing a very close paraphrase to which it was difficult for Examiners to give any reward. Likewise, many responses lack a conclusion, while others repeat the term 'finally' many times, or repeat points made earlier and already credited.

A good introduction is possible when a candidate has read the whole text carefully two or three times, considered its overall meaning and the kind of writing it represents, and begun to consider how the writing makes an impact on the thoughts and feelings of the reader. It is helpful to mark up key words and images in the passage and to divide it into sections, and very helpful to sketch out a brief plan in the answer booklet before beginning to write. This demonstrates that a candidate's personal response is a critical and analytical essay, based on evidence and observations. Candidates should then think about how they can sum up the overall impact of the text, and the purpose of the writer, in just two or three sentences, before exploring the textual evidence in more detail.

Conclusions should be brief. A good conclusion moves the essay beyond the skills of analysis towards higher order skills of review and evaluation. It is a chance for the candidate to show what they have found. If the focus of an introduction should be the writer's overall purpose, the focus of the conclusion should be the overall effect on the reader, evaluating the mood of the whole piece and how successfully it has been created.

Candidates are provided with bullet points to assist with planning, and these usually help them both to work their way through the passage and to ensure they address the Assessment Objectives. They draw attention to notable aspects of style and structure, and to the way the passage or poem develops and changes, often signalling a shift in perspective or change of tone. Effective planning should involve awareness of such structural features of the writing. Candidates often spend too long on earlier parts of poems or passages, and not long enough on shifts, developments and revelations later in the text. The last bullet point usually assists the process of evaluation, either of the final lines, or of the text as a whole, or both of these. The question remains the stem question, in bold at the top of the page.

This year saw fewer answers to **Question 2**. Some candidates may be better suited to writing about texts with a clear narrative structure – indeed some attempted to impose such narratives on the poems when they opted for **Question 1**. It is not the expectation that candidates will write line-by-line analysis of prose, and practising commentary on prose will help learners with skills of planning, selection, analysis and evaluation, and with concise but pertinent and well-integrated quotation and comment, which are useful for all Literature components. We recommend that learners are given plenty of practice in both kinds of question, using past papers supported by past Examiners' Reports, in order to develop their skills, and to ensure that, as candidates, they have a choice of questions.

Close study of key terms in the mark scheme should help teachers to apply the Cambridge standard and to see what examiners are looking for in good responses. Key differences between Band 5 and Band 6 are the clarity of understanding both of each part of the text and the text as a whole, and the development of response to language. The writer's techniques should not be merely identified but their effect on the reader described. The term 'developed' implies that the candidate should be able to move fluently from one observation to the next, linking them and seeing connections across the whole text. Critical observations in prose might be linked to the viewpoint of the narrator, with awareness that their perspective can bias what they see. Good candidates are able to relate the part to the whole, and to show a confident overall grasp from the beginning of their answer, or to work their way towards greater insight as they connect and evaluate their observations.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### **Question 1**

This question was based on the poem "Late Love" by Jackie Kay from her collection *Life Mask*. The focus of the question is on how the poet memorably portrays people's experience of love in the poem. The bullet points invite the candidates to explore how the poet describes people in love, how she describes those not in love and what she suggests about the relationship between love and time.

This was a popular choice of question and candidates clearly found the poem engaging, with the great majority of candidates producing a relevant personal response and with a significant number accessing the top three bands with well-developed, detailed and responsive answers. There were plenty of opportunities to analyse language. Differentiation largely stemmed from the extent to which candidates were able to go beyond a broad, subjective response and to focus in an analytical and critical manner on the qualities of the writing, the effects created and, in particular, the shifting tones of the poem.

The majority of candidates showed understanding of how those in love are transformed, both physically and mentally, and focused on how this was suggested through, for instance, the choice of the word "filmic" or the manner in which their hair is described as "glossy" and their skin as "shining". A number of candidates picked up successfully on the aural effects created here and the use of sibilance, for instance, to underscore this sense of an almost unreal beauty and health. Many commented on the line "They don't remember who they have been" as if those in love are reborn. Most made a developed response to the stark contrasts set up in the poem. The world revolves around the lover: "Every church bell ringing a fresh sign". In contrast, the unloved (colloquially and, as some observed, perhaps dismissively "the lot") inhabit a wholly different world, one which is monochrome, dreary and dull. Many observed the use of pathetic fallacy as the unloved "trudge/up and down the streets in the rain", lost in a cold, lonely world of monotony and absence of meaning or direction. Good answers focused on the series of specific oppositions in language choice employed by the poet such as "shining"/"lustreless" and the emphatic effects created.

There was much scope for candidates to produce well-developed answers by responding to the first three stanzas in a straight-forward manner. Particularly strong scripts, however, were perhaps rather more attuned to the elements of irony and humour in the tone of these stanzas and saw elements of comic exaggeration in the portrayal of both the loved and the unloved. Some candidates had the confidence to read against the grain to an extent and observed a satirical quality to the presentation of the loved, some seeing something unattractively shallow, arrogant or hubristic in the manner in which they “strut about”, their concern with appearances or how they feel themselves somehow “above” the others’ petty, “mundane” concerns. The repetition of “how” here was to be read more in the spirit of mockery than awe or wonder. In such readings, the loved were sometimes objects to be disliked or perhaps pitied rather than to be uncritically admired. Such readings were also likely to see the writer empathically and sympathetically relating to the unloved although particularly sensitive candidates again accentuated more a light, tongue-in-cheek quality to the writing as opposed to a laboured sense of pity or self-pity.

Having a sensitive ear to the range of tones present in a piece is a valuable asset for candidates and can often be the means whereby they are able to access the meanings of texts with perceptiveness and insight. In this case, strong scripts were able to identify a tonal shift in the final stanza, one towards possibly a more personal reflection on the theme of love, of love that has been lost or of love which has failed to materialise. Here the defining mood was one of melancholy or a wistful nostalgia. Much excellent work was done here on the ambiguities of the “one kiss in a dark alley” or the “lovely wait”. Some candidates wondered about the tone behind the endearment “baby” (affectionate/mocking?) although a few lost hold of the syntax of the sentence and mused on whether a child entering into the relationship was to be viewed as positive and binding or otherwise.

A significant discriminator was the candidates’ ability to explore the imagery of the final two lines and their depiction of the past with its “rush of velvet” and its “secret hush” and its apparently inexorable movement into distance and darkness. Sensitive readings focused on the writer’s use of light as a structural motif throughout and tied the final words of the poem to its title with all its suggestive ambiguities. While there was some strained comment on the use and effects of enjambment in the poem generally, there was also some convincing structural analysis here as to how the running on of the penultimate line into a single line final stanza might represent the ineluctable, accelerating movement of time or the speaker’s growing sense of distance from the moments of experience and the sense of loneliness or alienation felt. Candidates who fail to concentrate on the endings of texts and their impact tend to disadvantage themselves. Candidates should be reminded that it is very much good practice to foreground the destination or end point of the text early in the essay as part of a holistic introductory overview.

## Question 2

This question was based on an extract from *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox* by Maggie O’Farrell. The passage is the opening to the novel, where Esme is looking back over her early life. The focus of the question is on how the writer strikingly captures interest in Esme’s life. The bullet points are designed to help candidates with the time shifts in the passage and especially encourage candidates to focus on the writer’s descriptions of the dance, Esme’s life on the psychiatric ward and how she makes them feel about Esme’s attempts to make sense of her past and perhaps present life.

The passage throws the reader straight into the moment and conventional expository background information is withheld, although the introductory preamble gives candidates sufficient bearings to be able to begin an exploration of the text. At the heart of the passage is a mystery regarding who exactly Esme feels she is, how her life has been shaped in the way that it has and what has brought to her current state.

Only a minority of candidates attempted this question. Most of those who did achieved quite considerable success, with many essays demonstrating admirable perception and, at times, insight and sensitivity of analytical response. Many candidates across the range of ability are likely to find the prose text more engaging and stimulating than the poetry and they should not close themselves off to this as an option. A careful, thoughtful and open-minded reading of *both* questions and texts at the start of the examination ought to be something which all candidates engage in as a matter of course.

There was certainly much here in the writing for candidates to be drawn in by and to analyse. The passage raises more questions than it answers and many candidates successfully explored how the writer creates intrigue and tension from the very first line of the novel with its rather curious invitation to the reader: “Let us begin with two girls at a dance.” There was some outstanding close reading of the paragraph which describes the dance including the effects of juxtaposing short and long sentences; the febrile energy and movement of the dancing couples which seem to fascinate Esme but from which she appears oddly and

awkwardly detached; the somewhat ominous reference to the windows “blank with night”; the uncertain identity of the “seated girl”; the unsettling and vaguely suggestive details regarding the “dark red frock” which Esme self-consciously feels doesn’t suit her and the lost gloves; the apparent certainty of “It begins here” which is immediately undercut by the first words of the next paragraph “Or perhaps not.” Many responses were remarkably prescient in identifying how the writing creates a disconcerting sense of foreboding here.

There was ample evidence of similarly detailed close reading throughout the passage from the grille and Esme’s perception through and beyond it to the melancholy depiction of the other patients on the ward and to the analogy of the “zoetrope inside her head” with its swirl of memory and image whose movement defines the movement of the narrative itself: “Whir, whir. Stop.” There was much to write about in the passage and candidates need to be selective in their focus. Again, though, those scripts which devoted time to the final paragraph and its evocation of a memory from early childhood days in India tended to finish particularly strongly. For some candidates, the mimosa trees “shaking their heads at her” was indicative of a more general sense of disapproval and disappointment which Esme felt in the eyes of others. Others saw a similar deeper metaphorical significance in the analogy of the “itch she can’t reach to scratch.” While some identified a sense of nostalgia in the warm colour palette of the “yellow dust” and the “sliver of mango”, others registered ominously violent undertones in the onomatopoeia of the extract’s close with its “Slap shunt slap shunt slap shunt” echoing in a different vein the “drumming shoes” of the opening scene.

Candidates should be encouraged to identify from the outset the particular narrative perspective(s) being employed by the writer and to trace the effects of such narrative point(s) of view throughout the piece. Here the tension between intimacy and detachment, from being inside Esme’s head seeing things as she sees them and being on the outside viewing her like all the other characters as an object of curiosity and an unfathomable enigma, is both striking and poignant.



# LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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Paper 0486/05  
Coursework

## Key messages

- Set tasks which allow candidates to meet the requirements of both the syllabus and band descriptors.
- Support the moderation process with the use of focused ticking and purposeful annotation, linked to the mark scheme.
- Carry out a clerical check of the transcription of the centre's internally moderated marks to the relevant forms.

## General comments

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

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

The most successful critical essays sustained sensitive analysis of the ways in which writers achieved their effects in presenting characters and themes. These essays always had an appreciation of the writing, what might be termed the poet, novelist or playwright 'at work'. Less successful essays were marked by the use of explanation and unsupported assertion rather than a close critical probing of the text. The focus in these latter essays tended to be on character rather than characterisation, with candidates writing about apparently real-life people rather than fictional constructs. Stronger essays combined apt succinct quotation and critical comments whereas weaker essays used lengthy inert quotation, used perhaps to illustrate a point but not to contribute to a critical analysis of the text.

Most centres set tasks which enabled their candidates to demonstrate the skills of close analysis of writers' effects required in the highest bands. Tasks which do not target this can have the effect of limiting candidate performance. For example, the following questions do not explicitly direct candidates to explore the writing: 'To what extent is Shylock a villain?'; 'Who is responsible for Lennie's death?'; 'Social responsibility in *An Inspector Calls*'. Centres are reminded that examples of effective task-setting can be found in the *Coursework Handbook*.

Moderation has to take into account any failure to meet syllabus requirements. It is not acceptable for tasks to focus exclusively on one scene or chapter from a text. In assignments on poems and short stories, candidates should write about two poems or two stories. Centres which set tasks requiring candidates to compare two poems are reminded that comparison is neither required by the syllabus nor rewarded in the band descriptors. Moderators reported that the mechanics of comparing two poems took candidates away from the central task of developing a critical analysis of either poem. Furthermore, centres are reminded that set texts can be used for only one of the coursework essays.

The most successful empathic responses focused on a key character and specific moment from a novel or play. Sensible choices enabled candidates to construct an authentic voice for both character and moment.

In view of the importance of setting tasks that enable candidates to address the assessment criteria, the suitability of tasks should be agreed within departments early on in the course so as to avoid problems later on.

There was much evidence of good practice in the presentation of coursework folders. Each assignment started with a clear indication of the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment were clearly stated. This is important since it allows the Moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has addressed the task. Where there was good practice, teacher annotation comprised the focused ticking of valid and thoughtful points, and concise marginal and summative comments which related to the wording of the band descriptors. Where marks were changed during internal moderation, a brief explanation was provided. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it allows a centre to justify its award of particular marks. The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (e.g. of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise; labelling of AOs. Simply putting the supposed relevant AOs in the margin is of little benefit to the Moderator, as it does not reveal the extent to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed; instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant band descriptors.

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

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

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