

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/12 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- engage with the question throughout their response
- write relevant personal responses that are informed by their close study of the text
- support their comments with well-selected concise quotations
- explore sensitively and in detail ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- refer in general terms to ‘themes’ they have studied without addressing the key words of the question
- show only a basic grasp of surface meanings and are overly dependent on explanation and assertion
- use long quotations without exploring the effects created by specific words and phrases
- log writing devices without exploring the effects created, particularly in poetry responses
- make general personal responses about ideas not actually in the text.

General comments

There was much evidence of assured work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where the most successful candidates showed insight and individuality in their responses to poetry questions.

The excessive length of some answers was caused by candidates trying to cram in too much learnt material without tailoring it to the key words of the question. In these responses, comments were laboured or repeated whereas many shorter responses were more focused because ideas were expressed concisely. The strongest responses showed the ability of candidates to select relevant material for the question that had been set. This is an essential requirement of the examination: questions should not be seen as mere prompts for candidates to unload all their knowledge about the poem or character or theme or setting mentioned in a question. Candidates should be reminded that there is little merit in trying to write exhaustively in 45 minutes, as this is likely to lead to a lack of focus.

Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more effectively organised response. There were, however, many candidates this session who pursued strategies that were less effective. Lengthy introductions tended to delay the actual start of some candidates’ responses to the question; these introductions often included biographical information, a list of themes considered relevant to the text and a list of random techniques the writer uses before addressing the question. The more successful candidates, more confident in their editing skills, produced answers that sustained a clear focus on the question. By contrast, in some less effective responses, candidates were determined to work their way through ‘themes’ they had learned, sometimes alluding to several themes within one paragraph. The idea that listing key themes, regardless of the question, will lead to high reward is based on a misguided assumption; it is important that teachers remind candidates of this.

The most convincing personal responses embedded concise quotations to inform the points they made. Those candidates who had learned a range of direct quotations to use in answering the prose general essay questions performed more strongly than those who had insufficient textual detail and who, as a consequence, tended to rely on general assertions. Some candidates used ellipses to shorten quotations but in a way that omitted the key words that would support the point they were making. Candidates should be taught how to integrate concise quotations into their response.

The most successful responses sustained critical analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses simply logged devices without close exploration of *precise* ways in which writers use them to create *specific* effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesura, which were often mentioned without illustration or precise critical comment rooted in the specific detail of poems studied.

Some candidates applied the terms 'poem', 'play' and 'novel' to the wrong literary form. This led to a lack of appreciation of a writer's use of form in the text being discussed. For these candidates, poetry essays became paraphrases of the poem which tried to pin down meanings rather than explore poetic effects. Similarly, prose essays focused on content and neglected to comment on ways in which fiction writers use, for example, description, dialogue and narrative viewpoint to convey their ideas.

Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting though some did not. Teacher should remind candidates that they need to communicate their ideas clearly to examiners.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The most successful responses offered detailed analysis of words and images used at various stages in the poem to show how Wright powerfully portrays the speaker's great-great-grandmother. Most commented on the difficulty of her pursuing her passion for art whilst bringing up eight children and on the tenseness of the moment her son seems destined to fall to the bottom of the waterfall. Stronger responses explored the implications of the phrases 'difficult distance' and 'artist's isolating eye'. In some less successful answers, much was made about the social significance of the second daughter's petticoats, without making the comments relevant to the question.

Question 2

The most successful responses focused on the key words 'strikingly convey the speaker's thoughts and feelings', commenting on his anger and bitterness towards the planners, and finally in the last few lines his sense of resignation. In these answers, candidates explored the depiction of the planners as viewed from the speaker's perspective, in particular, the building that never stops, the pursuit of perfection and the unthinking destruction of the past. They explored the effects of the extended imagery of dentistry and personification of the seas and sky. Less successful response worked through the poem showing understanding of the planners but not addressing the focus of the question. Examiners reported what appeared to be pre-learned philosophical introductions that did not engage with the key words of the question: e.g., 'Humankind has come to the point in time where in a few more years it will be the victim of its own making'.

Question 3

The strongest responses focused on the detail of the poem as seen from the speaker's perspective: the tedious journey, the cramped conditions on the bus and the sudden action of the boy with the toy gun. These answers analysed the effects of the imagery: the fat man 'like a damp cat'; the boy 'a black-eyed bean'. The effects of sound were also considered: the 'grinding' and 'ripping' of the bus, and the fat man 'cracking open' an apple. There were some answers that made assertions about the speaker's epiphany and sudden spiritual awakening, though candidates did not use textual detail to support their general interpretations.

Question 4

Successful responses sustained a clear focus on the ways in which Jennings creates a sense of mystery. Most candidates commented on the idea that no one knows where the invaders come from and that they appear to have no evil intent. The strongest responses explored the implications of the final stanza in which friends grow suspicious of friends and speak 'cautiously': 'Old friends/Close up the candid looks upon their face.' They also commented on the impact of the final four lines which capture the thoughts of the citizens. Less successful answers adopted a narrative approach as candidates worked through the content of the poem.

Question 5

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 6

The strongest responses sustained a close engagement on both the poem's detail and the key words of the question 'such a powerful poem'. Most candidates commented on the setting of the poem: the speaker sitting in the dark writing his poem. They also understood that the poet is writing about inspiration that is uncontrolled in the way it emerges. The most successful answers included analysis of the vivid physical imagery of the fox in the forest and charted the build-up of suspense until the 'sharp, hot stink of fox' enters the poet's head. Many responses showed an understanding of the poem's deeper implications. Less successful responses worked through the poem's content, with some offering little more than a paraphrase and with little attempt to engage with the word 'powerful'.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates were able to pick out some relevant points to show why this moment is memorable. Candidates commented on the uncontrolled anger of Okonkwo, the extent of his brutal beating of his second wife, the solidarity between the women, Igbo rituals and customs and the reaction of Ezeani to Okonkwo's disregard for the week of peace. Stronger responses noted details like setting and season in the first paragraph, the kola nut offering, and the narrator's comment on Okonkwo's 'justifiable anger'. These responses were able to contextualise this moment within the wider novel. Less successful responses worked through the extract adopting a narrative approach.

Question 8

Most candidates showed understanding of Nwoye's naturally gentle character and provided examples to show why they felt sorry for him. They considered Okonkwo's views of Nwoye which were fuelled by his experiences of his own 'weak' father; how Okonkwo frequently wishes that his daughter had been a boy; and the impact of Ikemefuna's tragic death. Many candidates also explored the impact of the arrival of the missionaries and the breakdown of his relationship with his father. Only a minority of candidates were able to recall a wide range of apt quotations to support relevant ideas and use them as a means of analysing closely ways in which Achebe achieves his effects.

Question 9

Most candidates identified impressions of Nanda Kaul in the extract such as her desire for isolation and her need for a simple life after all the responsibilities of her previous role. Some candidates were intrigued by her desire to be alone and thought it weird. Successful responses explored the effects of the imagery such as the barren surroundings, her 'home on the ridge', and her irritation at the 'oafish ox' of the postman. Less successful responses worked through the extract in a descriptive way rather than analysing specific textual detail.

Question 10

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

The most successful answers noted the details of the imagery of the claustrophobic driveway, the comparison to a serpent, the auditory references and the shocking colour of the blood-red rhododendrons. These answers engaged directly with the key word of the question, 'sinister'. They were able to comment on the contrast between the narrator's expectations of Manderley and the reality of the setting as described in the extract. Less successful responses worked through the extract without considering how this is such a 'sinister' moment in the novel. Some less successful responses were sidetracked by excessive comment on the gothic elements of the novel.

Question 14

Most candidates provided relevant points showing understanding of the relationship between Mrs Danvers and Rebecca, noting particularly both the obsessive qualities of Mrs Danvers and what we learn of the manipulative nature of Rebecca. Successful responses explored the deeper implications of Mrs Danvers' continuous attempts to undermine the narrator and the reasons for this. They noted that, although Mrs Danvers and Rebecca had been very close and with each other for a long time, it was not a partnership of equals. The strongest responses explored the ways in which Du Maurier achieves her effects in the description of their interactions and dialogue, the preservation of Rebecca's room, the sinister atmosphere, and use of symbolism. Some candidates focused too much on the narrator rather than the relationship between Danvers and Rebecca.

Question 15

Many candidates worked through the passage noting Scout's first-person, colloquial conversational style, her relationship with Atticus and his advice to her. Stronger candidates saw this moment as a foreshadowing of the events to come with the introduction of the Ewells and their lifestyle. They also noted how Scout was able to 'live' Atticus's advice by the end of the novel and provide sensitive support for Boo Radley. Few candidates really seemed to understand the idea of Scout being 'common folk' and therefore having to obey the law when the Ewells are allowed to disregard it. Less successful responses often lacked a secure understanding of events in this and earlier moments of the novel such as Scout's difficult first day at school. In these responses, candidates tended to describe the content rather than analyse closely ways in which Lee makes this such a memorable moment.

Question 16

Many candidates knew the details of the court case and noted how Atticus was able to demonstrate that it was physically impossible for Tom Robinson to have committed the crime. They were able to comment on the strengths of Atticus's character and how his qualities of courtesy and patience were displayed throughout the trial. Most responses needed more detailed support from the novel to support their ideas. As a result, many candidates provided a simple character study of Atticus, only incidentally relating it to the trial and without achieving a close focus on the question.

Question 17

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 20

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Most candidates were able to comment on what makes the extract disturbing: the innocence of the boy, the blatant discrimination, the unfairness of the situation, the realisation that for one so young discrimination is a reality. Successful responses explored how Ellison conveys the father's underlying feelings from a first-person perspective and how the child's innocence is depicted in his questions and statements. In general, these responses included convincing interpretations for the black and white symbolism. The most successful responses focused on the key word 'disturbing' and considered the extract's position within the whole story. Less successful responses re-told the story without focusing on the question. Some candidates were distracted by the racial discrimination in the story and spent too long writing about their views about this or giving a background history to the situation in America 'at that time'.

Question 22

Most candidates showed at least some general understanding of the story and what makes it sad. They commented on details of Rosie's dementia and the sense of regret in the character of Attila. Stronger candidates considered the couple's history and how essentially sadness had been present from the moment of his departure and his then marrying someone else whilst Rosie remained single. In less successful responses, there was little evidence of close analysis of the detail in the story. Without a sufficient range of textual detail upon which to draw, these responses did not move beyond a descriptive approach. This set text comprises ten stories from *Stories of Ourselves: Volume 2*; candidates need to have a detailed knowledge of the stories (including direct references) if they are to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/22

Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with brief quotations which were analysed fully.

Successful opening paragraphs referenced the question and avoided lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Conclusions need to be more than a summary of points made in preceding paragraphs.

In passage-based questions, successful answers briefly contextualised the passage, selected the most relevant material from across the whole passage, including the ending, and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively. Excessive reference to the whole text is not a requirement of the question.

Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a close focus on the question and used a range of precise textual references from across the whole text.

Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.

An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

General comments

It was pleasing to see that some candidates had studied the new set text, *Antony and Cleopatra*, though the other new text, *A Taste of Honey*, had too few responses to be able to make useful comment. Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts and an engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, and were aware of the text as performance, commenting on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved.

Too often candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, plot summaries, lists of themes and literary devices before referring to the question, resulting in a loss of focus on the actual terms of the chosen question. There is no requirement for them to write a thesis statement or to retell the plot before answering the specific question. With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should use the time wisely and begin to answer the question immediately. In passage-based questions there were many linear approaches which worked through the passage, explaining what was happening, with little or no reference to the actual question. Textual references selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text. Listing literary features or themes as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'moving' or 'tragic', is also an unproductive way to start a response. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is required for a successful response; simply working through a passage or the text without focus on the terms of the question is unlikely to achieve high reward. There was often misunderstanding of what constitutes an 'informed personal response' (AO4) with candidates relating characters and themes to their own lives and perspectives rather than exploring the dramatic impact of texts on an audience with comments firmly rooted in the text.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage informed the most successful answers. These responses looked at the text from an audience perspective and commented on authors' intentions with regard to the audience and commented in detail on the dramatic impact created. They were aware that, although stage directions inform an actor's performance, an audience is not a reader, so commenting on the

punctuation in the stage directions rather than the tone and mood created, is unproductive. Less successful answers referred to the 'reader' and not the 'audience', failing to explore the text as a piece of drama.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of relevant material from the whole text, supporting points with quotation or very specific textual reference. The ability to integrate brief, well-selected reference to the text is a key discriminator as indicated in the Level Descriptors. Candidates who memorise direct quotations are likely to be better prepared to analyse the ways in which writers achieve their effects (AO3). However, these should be fully explored rather than remain inert or used to support a narrative approach.

All but a few candidates were clear about the exam requirements and answered one passage-based question and one discursive with very few rubric infringements seen. Where there is a rubric infringement, both essays are marked but only the higher mark awarded. Candidates are reminded to label their answers clearly with the question number at the top of the response.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly.

Comments on specific questions

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 1

There were too few seen to make meaningful comment.

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

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates showed understanding of the situation and Iyaloja's doubts that Elesin would fulfil his duty to commit ritual suicide. The most successful responses focused closely on the question and the 'ominous' aspects of the passage, analysing Iyaloja's wisdom and warnings that his love of life would interfere in his role as king's horseman. Elesin's arrogance and casual attitude to his duty, foreshadowing tragic future events was explored and well-supported. Most referenced Iyaloja's reservations about Elesin's marriage and included her 'sacrifice' of allowing her son's betrothed to become Elesin's bride. There was some close analysis of the language, '*restless eye*', '*curse*', '*the awusa nut*', '*your eyes were clouded*' and the images of nature wreaking havoc on the tribe's habitat. The best answers explored Elesin's facial expression and distraction from Iyaloja's words, ominously requiring her to ask, '*Did you hear all I said just now?*' They commented on the interaction between the two which creates the tension and his response to her 'blunt' words and reminders.

Less successful answers found the language difficult to navigate and worked through the passage explaining lines, out of context, with insecure understanding of their meaning and missing the dramatic effect. There was a tendency to limit analysis to 'this means that...' or 'this shows that...' without links to the question or understanding of the text quoted.

Weaker responses retold the plot with little focus on either the question or the passage, demonstrating very little understanding of the situation or language.

- (b) The terms of the question, 'How far', offered candidates the opportunity to explore reasons for, and against, sympathising with Amusa. A few of the best answers were able to offer a balanced response claiming he does not stand up for himself sufficiently and that Soyinka creates humorous effects, first with him knocking over the vase resulting in Pilkings' joke, and then in the marketplace which is a light-hearted scene providing some comic relief before Elesin's arrest. Most candidates recognised reasons to sympathise with Amusa's difficult position between different cultures and explored his worries over the egungun costumes, Pilkings' reference to his Moslem faith and his isolated position between his own faith and the Christian and Yoruba traditions. There was clear understanding of the lack of respect shown to him by Pilkings and his taunting by the women, neither respecting him or taking him seriously. The best answers highlighted the patronising tone used by Pilkings and the language and actions of disrespect from the women and Iyaloja with their

sexual jibes and the removal of symbols of authority. The impact of Amusa's awkward choice of language when dealing with both groups was noted – how he refers to Elesin and his pidgin English and use of 'murder', signifying his inability to belong to either group. Some showed that even Joseph was treated more fairly and received an apology.

Less successful responses spent too much time retelling the plot with some misunderstanding of Amusa's position, the scene with Simon and Jane Pilkings as well as the scene in the marketplace where he is so ineffectual against the young women who mock him mercilessly. Overall, textual support was often lacking and there was little comment on how his treatment encouraged the audience to sympathise with Amusa. In an attempt to write a 'personal response', weaker responses related his treatment to their own experiences or focused on the social context and how Soyinka is critiquing colonialism and its effect on the colonised. Candidates should be reminded that Assessment Objective (AO4) requires 'an informed personal response' firmly rooted in the text rather than their personal lives.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) This was the most popular text and question. There were many responses which featured extensive introductions retelling the plot and listing differences in class and background, but without relating these to the question or using supporting reference from the passage.

All candidates could select some evidence of how impressions were created of Stanley and Blanche in the passage noting his masculinity, animalistic features and sexualisation of women. This was contrasted sharply with Blanche's fragile and nervous appearance. The most successful responses recognised the significance of Stanley holding the bottle of whiskey to the light and Blanche's need to present herself as powdered, both of which could be related to the wider play's motifs. They identified the contrast in speech and language and how Stanley both physically and interrogatively dominates the scene. The very best showed insight into impressions created and noted Stanley's shirt removal and claim about being unrefined as showing him to exude masculine energy and be unapologetic, which contrasts with Mitch who is reluctant to remove his jacket and be seen perspiring. They linked the comment about territory not only to animal imagery but to Blanche's Southern values marking her as foreign to Stanley's world, which he points out bluntly. There was detail to the dramatic impact of their meeting. Stanley's ability to damage Blanche's speech, stability and physical wellbeing, as she as she stutters and involuntarily recoils from him, which foreshadows the effect he will have later in the play, were all explored and supported by well-selected textual detail.

Less successful answers spent too long on the introductory comments, labouring the point of Stanley's masculinity and force. This led to repetition - he's animalistic, an animal, behaves aggressively like an animal – at the expense of the interaction between the characters. There was often misunderstanding of the text for example, 'Gaudy seed-bearer', and 'hens' seen as male so missing the point of Stanley's 'power and pride' amongst them. There was also much assertion: Blanche being attracted towards Stanley and her sexual desire as she wants him to remove his shirt. Some saw Stanley as flirting with her, when there is not the evidence of this in the extract.

- (b) This was a less popular question, but successful responses understood Stella's divided loyalties, exploring her shifting emotions but understanding that in the end she actively chooses not to believe Blanche about the rape, allowing her to remain with Stanley. Stella's defence over the loss of Belle Reve and Flamingo accusations, her obeying orders to buy coke, and anger at Stanley's coarse behaviour and his crushing Blanche's hopes by telling Mitch were all considered as evidence of her loyalty towards Blanche. Some recognised the similar language used by Stella in vilifying Stanley as an animal. However, there was nuance to these answers, the best citing her hugging Stanley after Blanche's accusations, her confession that his violence is 'thrilling' and her returning to him after the Poker game assault. They recognised the ending being foreshadowed.

The best responses identified that although Stella appears to care and support her sister earlier in the text as she repeatedly defends her to Stanley, her later betrayal of Blanche did not come as a surprise as the fact that she has not kept in touch with Blanche, or helped her with the family struggles at Belle Reve, sets the scene for Stella's later abandonment of Blanche. Most attributed Stella's later actions as purely driven by financial dependence as a new mother, missing the

moments through the play where Williams' reveals sexual and emotional dependence, driven more by selfish desire.

Weaker responses were narrative in approach and lacked precise moments and textual detail when Stella offers support.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. The most successful responses identified the power struggle and the source of conflict between Titania and Oberon and explored their differing approaches to this through their language. Oberon's demands and Titania's strong refusal were supported by well-selected references and close analysis of the language. Most referenced Oberon's cruelty, his choice to '*torment*' Titania and her forceful '*Not for thy fairy kingdom*'. Stronger responses considered Oberon's attempts to persuade, '*I do but*', minimising the request and '*her Oberon*' playing on their emotional bond. Strong responses discussed Titania's maternal sympathy for her '*vot'ress*' shown by the imagery, her egalitarian loyalty to her servant and friend, and her boy, in contrast to Oberon's desire to make the child a '*henchman*' or servant. The best answers engaged with the dramatic impact of the conflict and analysed in depth the rich poetry presenting the fairy world, the power of the couple and their connection with nature and deities.

Less successful responses commented on the play in general with discussion of love as a theme, and of Titania and Oberon being a parallel of Theseus and Hippolyta but with little attempt to link this to the terms of the question and to the passage itself. Some lost focus on the passage and explored the social context of patriarchal control and the unusual nature of a woman's defiance but this was laboured, with links to Queen Elizabeth 1 and Elizabethan women in general, at the expense of close analysis of the language and passage.

- (b) This was a less popular question. The most successful responses engaged with the comedy and what they found personally funny in both the rehearsals and the performance, including the role of the courtiers in mocking the actors. Most featured Bottom's overconfidence, the physical portrayal of the Moon and Wall and the choice of a tragedy for a wedding. Better responses recognised the earnestness of the players and Bottom's inability to see his failings, and the irony shown in him being unaware of his ass's head. They were able to reference the verbal comedy with detailed textual support and close analysis of the language.

Many responses were general and relied upon narrative, with little detailed textual support. The comedy of Bottom's arrogance and of his misunderstandings and malapropisms was understood, but comments lacked specific textual detail and support.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) Successful responses understood the dramatic irony that Cleopatra has not committed suicide which adds to the pathos of Antony believing Cleopatra's death has made her more noble and masculine than himself. There was understanding that Antony wishes to die, but the tragedy of the moment was not fully explored and nor was his dramatic language of dishonour. Most candidates understood Eros's choice to die rather than kill his beloved leader and Antony's feelings of shame. Many mentioned the reference to his dishonour and his expected debasement by Caesar but very few considered the word choice and imagery. Eros's admiration and loyalty was explored and some made the strong point that this was moving, given Enobarbus' earlier desertion and that Antony is at his lowest point but still warrants love and loyalty from his men. Very few reached the end of the passage to comment on the guards' contribution.

Less successful responses narrated the plot or focused on the love story between Antony and Cleopatra, rather the passage and this tragic moment in the play. Some failed to move beyond the political and historical events.

- (b) In weaker responses, candidates struggled to recall the specific details of Pompey in the text. A few successful answers understood Pompey's dramatic impact, acting as a catalyst, with his actions leading to Antony's return to Rome and awareness of his neglect of duty, forcing Antony

and Caesar into an alliance. They understood how he characterises the triumvirs. They related his actions and dialogue with Menas, when he prevents the murder of his guests, to the theme of Roman honour and related this to the other characters.

Less successful responses lapsed into a discussion of Antony or Caesar and there was sometimes confusion between Pompey and his father. One candidate interpreted this as Pompey as Pompeii and Vesuvius erupting and the tragedy there.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/32 Drama (Open Text)
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Key messages

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Less successful answers found the language difficult to navigate and worked through the passage explaining lines, out of context, with insecure understanding of their meaning and missing the dramatic effect. There was a tendency to limit analysis to 'this means that...' or 'this shows that...' without links to the question or understanding of the text quoted.

Weaker responses retold the plot with little focus on either the question or the passage, demonstrating very little understanding of the situation or language.

- (b) The terms of the question, 'How far', offered candidates the opportunity to explore reasons for, and against, sympathising with Amusa. A few of the best answers were able to offer a balanced response claiming he does not stand up for himself sufficiently and that Soyinka creates humorous effects, first with him knocking over the vase resulting in Pilkings' joke, and then in the marketplace which is a light-hearted scene providing some comic relief before Elesin's arrest. Most candidates recognised reasons to sympathise with Amusa's difficult position between different cultures and explored his worries over the egungun costumes, Pilkings' reference to his Moslem faith and his isolated position between his own faith and the Christian and Yoruba traditions. There was clear understanding of the lack of respect shown to him by Pilkings and his taunting by the women, neither respecting him or taking him seriously. The best answers highlighted the patronising tone used by Pilkings and the language and actions of disrespect from the women and Iyaloja with their sexual jibes and the removal of symbols of authority. The impact of Amusa's awkward choice of language when dealing with both groups was noted – how he refers to Elesin and his pidgin English and use of '*murder*', signifying his inability to belong to either group. Some showed that even Joseph was treated more fairly and received an apology.

Less successful responses spent too much time retelling the plot with some misunderstanding of Amusa's position, the scene with Simon and Jane Pilkings as well as the scene in the marketplace where he is so ineffectual against the young women who mock him mercilessly. Overall, textual support was often lacking and there was little comment on how his treatment encouraged the audience to sympathise with Amusa. In an attempt to write a 'personal response', weaker responses related his treatment to their own experiences or focused on the social context and how Soyinka is critiquing colonialism and its effect on the colonised. Candidates should be reminded that Assessment Objective (AO4) requires 'an informed personal response' firmly rooted in the text rather than their personal lives.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) This was the most popular text and question. There were many responses which featured extensive introductions retelling the plot and listing differences in class and background, but without relating these to the question or using supporting reference from the passage.

All candidates could select some evidence of how impressions were created of Stanley and Blanche in the passage noting his masculinity, animalistic features and sexualisation of women. This was contrasted sharply with Blanche's fragile and nervous appearance. The most successful responses recognised the significance of Stanley holding the bottle of whiskey to the light and Blanche's need to present herself as powdered, both of which could be related to the wider play's motifs. They identified the contrast in speech and language and how Stanley both physically and interrogatively dominates the scene. The very best showed insight into impressions created and noted Stanley's shirt removal and claim about being unrefined as showing him to exude masculine energy and be unapologetic, which contrasts with Mitch who is reluctant to remove his jacket and be seen perspiring. They linked the comment about territory not only to animal imagery but to Blanche's Southern values marking her as foreign to Stanley's world, which he points out bluntly. There was detail to the dramatic impact of their meeting. Stanley's ability to damage Blanche's speech, stability and physical wellbeing, as she as she stutters and involuntarily recoils from him, which foreshadows the effect he will have later in the play, were all explored and supported by well-selected textual detail.

Less successful answers spent too long on the introductory comments, labouring the point of Stanley's masculinity and force. This led to repetition - he's animalistic, an animal, behaves aggressively like an animal - at the expense of the interaction between the characters. There was often misunderstanding of the text for example, '*Gaudy seed-bearer*', and '*hens*' seen as male so missing the point of Stanley's 'power and pride' amongst them. There was also much assertion: Blanche being attracted towards Stanley and her sexual desire as she wants him to remove his shirt. Some saw Stanley as flirting with her, when there is not the evidence of this in the extract.

- (b) This was a less popular question, but successful responses understood Stella's divided loyalties, exploring her shifting emotions but understanding that in the end she actively chooses not to believe Blanche about the rape, allowing her to remain with Stanley. Stella's defence over the loss of Belle Reve and Flamingo accusations, her obeying orders to buy coke, and anger at Stanley's coarse behaviour and his crushing Blanche's hopes by telling Mitch were all considered as evidence of her loyalty towards Blanche. Some recognised the similar language used by Stella in vilifying Stanley as an animal. However, there was nuance to these answers, the best citing her hugging Stanley after Blanche's accusations, her confession that his violence is 'thrilling' and her returning to him after the Poker game assault. They recognised the ending being foreshadowed.

The best responses identified that although Stella appears to care and support her sister earlier in the text as she repeatedly defends her to Stanley, her later betrayal of Blanche did not come as a surprise as the fact that she has not kept in touch with Blanche, or helped her with the family struggles at Belle Reve, sets the scene for Stella's later abandonment of Blanche. Most attributed Stella's later actions as purely driven by financial dependence as a new mother, missing the moments through the play where Williams' reveals sexual and emotional dependence, driven more by selfish desire.

Weaker responses were narrative in approach and lacked precise moments and textual detail when Stella offers support.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. The most successful responses identified the power struggle and the source of conflict between Titania and Oberon and explored their differing approaches to this through their language. Oberon's demands and Titania's strong refusal were supported by well-selected references and close analysis of the language. Most referenced Oberon's cruelty, his choice to '*torment*' Titania and her forceful '*Not for thy fairy kingdom*'. Stronger responses considered Oberon's attempts to persuade, '*I do but*', minimising the request and '*her Oberon*' playing on their emotional bond. Strong responses discussed Titania's maternal sympathy for her '*vot'ress*' shown by the imagery, her egalitarian loyalty to her servant and friend, and her boy, in contrast to Oberon's desire to make the child a '*henchman*' or servant. The best answers engaged with the dramatic impact of the conflict and analysed in depth the rich poetry presenting the fairy world, the power of the couple and their connection with nature and deities.

Less successful responses commented on the play in general with discussion of love as a theme, and of Titania and Oberon being a parallel of Theseus and Hippolyta but with little attempt to link this to the terms of the question and to the passage itself. Some lost focus on the passage and explored the social context of patriarchal control and the unusual nature of a woman's defiance but this was laboured, with links to Queen Elizabeth 1 and Elizabethan women in general, at the expense of close analysis of the language and passage.

- (b) This was a less popular question. The most successful responses engaged with the comedy and what they found personally funny in both the rehearsals and the performance, including the role of the courtiers in mocking the actors. Most featured Bottom's overconfidence, the physical portrayal of the Moon and Wall and the choice of a tragedy for a wedding. Better responses recognised the earnestness of the players and Bottom's inability to see his failings, and the irony shown in him being unaware of his ass's head. They were able to reference the verbal comedy with detailed textual support and close analysis of the language.

Many responses were general and relied upon narrative, with little detailed textual support. The comedy of Bottom's arrogance and of his misunderstandings and malapropisms was understood, but comments lacked specific textual detail and support.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) Successful responses understood the dramatic irony that Cleopatra has not committed suicide which adds to the pathos of Antony believing Cleopatra's death has made her more noble and masculine than himself. There was understanding that Antony wishes to die, but the tragedy of the moment was not fully explored and nor was his dramatic language of dishonour. Most candidates understood Eros's choice to die rather than kill his beloved leader and Antony's feelings of shame. Many mentioned the reference to his dishonour and his expected debasement by Caesar but very few considered the word choice and imagery. Eros's admiration and loyalty was explored and some made the strong point that this was moving, given Enobarbus' earlier desertion and that Antony is at his lowest point but still warrants love and loyalty from his men. Very few reached the end of the passage to comment on the guards' contribution.

Less successful responses narrated the plot or focused on the love story between Antony and Cleopatra, rather the passage and this tragic moment in the play. Some failed to move beyond the political and historical events.

- (b) In weaker responses, candidates struggled to recall the specific details of Pompey in the text. A few successful answers understood Pompey's dramatic impact, acting as a catalyst, with his actions leading to Antony's return to Rome and awareness of his neglect of duty, forcing Antony and Caesar into an alliance. They understood how he characterises the triumvirs. They related his actions and dialogue with Menas, when he prevents the murder of his guests, to the theme of Roman honour and related this to the other characters.

Less successful responses lapsed into a discussion of Antony or Caesar and there was sometimes confusion between Pompey and his father. One candidate interpreted this as Pompey as Pompeii and Vesuvius erupting and the tragedy there.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/42 Unseen

Key messages

- Candidates who struggle with surface-level understanding of the poem should consider the prose.
- Texts selected for unseen assessment will usually have a sub-text to explore once surface understanding is achieved.
- Language, form and structure contribute towards meaning and so comment on effects needs to move beyond identification.
- Strong personal responses are critical responses to the writer's purpose and how their methods contribute to achieving that purpose.

General comments

Examiners reported their enjoyment of a good range of strong, individual and analytical personal responses to the texts in this session. Both told a story, although the surface narrative was clearer in the case of the prose, but used language symbolically to suggest a darker subtext. Discrimination between different levels of response was often a matter of how successfully candidates explored that subtext, regardless of the conclusions reached.

AO1 Knowledge supported by textual reference

Candidates are advised to spend the first twenty minutes of the exam reading both texts, making their choice and planning their answer. It is a particularly good idea to divide the text into three sections, in order to articulate first impressions, key developments and a response to the way the text ends. Candidates would benefit from highlighting the text on the question paper. In this way, both the overall structure and thrust of the text, and the impact of the ending are noted before beginning to write the response. The introductory rubric is intended to help candidates to avoid making mistakes about the narrative sequence and characters of the text, so that the surface meaning of the text should emerge clearly. Reading is not a subjective process, and candidates should be able to show their knowledge of the situation at the beginning of the text, key developments and how the text ends, supported by relevant textual reference. The bullet points can help them to provide their essays with this framework.

AO2 Understanding at a deeper level

A critical approach should include consideration of why the writer is telling this story or expressing these emotions. Strong responses are evaluative and consider why as well as how. These scripts explore the subtext by identifying the emotions expressed and the impact of the writer's choices of language and imagery on the reader. A history may emerge for characters or emotions expressed through the writer's form of expression, while key developments may change the reader's initial presumptions. Writers may use symbolism to express more complex ideas through description or imagery. The focus or structure of the text may change in revealing ways, or a different perspective might be offered by different characters, voices or tenses. The language of the text will reveal this through changes of viewpoint, tense or tone.

AO3 Language, structure and form

Candidates will often begin their essays by listing particular effects of the writing which they have identified in their preliminary reading. This is not necessary: while it is good to see that unseen texts have been annotated and features of the writing have been spotted, a literary technique only makes sense in relation to the creation of meaning, so commentary on the writer's language should be integrated within the personal response or interpretation. The quality of a response can often be assessed by the quality of comment on a particular choice of word or image. Stronger scripts show more extended commentary on that choice and its

likely effect on the reader, in the context of the meaning and emotional sub-text of the passage, and of this particular moment in the structure of the text as a whole. The unseen paper tests all the Assessment Objectives of Literature in English, but it does so holistically, so analysis of detail should contribute to the candidate's overall argument and appreciation of the text.

AO4 Personal response

At higher levels of attainment, a personal response is a critical interpretation. It is not necessary to make parallels with personal experience, to consider a moral that the writer wishes to teach readers about how to live their lives or to make comparisons with other studied texts. There were examples of all of these at the end of responses in this session, some of which were already over-long and repetitive. It would be better to give more time to consideration of how to present a convincing, coherent and consistent conceptual overview of what the writer wished to achieve in the text, and how the reader is encouraged to share that perspective. The texts are chosen for their complexity, in order to test the full range of ability, and stronger candidates might wish to evaluate different possible interpretations of the text and justify their own reading. Examiners reward the process of coming to a conclusive interpretation of the text, and not the outcome, so they will appreciate a range of different readings and responses. However, any interpretation needs to be securely grounded in understanding of both surface meaning and possible implications, supported by textual reference and consideration of the effects of language, imagery and form.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem 'February Day' by the American writer and Guggenheim Fellow Susan Hahn was a very popular choice for candidates, who were clearly stimulated by its portrayal of real and raw emotions in response to a difficult relationship. Candidates enjoyed the poet's choice of images, and the confessional nature of the poem but were perhaps too keen to read their own ideas and experiences into the text, instead of looking carefully at what it says. Like many modern poems, the structure of this text depends on its use of enjambment, end-stopping, and on sound effects and images rather than traditional forms and structures. This should also encourage readers to focus on the logic of each sentence, as well as the movement from stanza to stanza, in order to get a clear sense of the surface narrative of the text before speculating about deeper meanings. Some candidates could follow the logical sequence of the poem and the way it describes a particular day and phone call, with reference back to what has happened in the past, and what might happen in the future. Others were more speculative and wanted to supply a narrative of separation by war or even death which did not fit the surface narrative of the text. Many candidates wanted the February Day to be Valentine's Day, although there is no explicit support for this idea. Some candidates thought the phone call was a dream or delusion, which might be easier to justify if the poet had not included the voice of her lover. These were not misinterpretations if they were related to the poet's language and expression and sometimes were convincing or even perceptive when linked to sensitive comment on details of the writing. They were more successful if considered alongside other possible readings, or when an interpretation did not depend on an assertion about the poem based on a misreading of grammar or tone.

The opening of the poem is one of its most complex aspects. When the poet suggests that 'the flowers will not allow themselves/to be tricked' her personification suggests they represent her own emotions. In early spring, it might not be wise, if flowers could reason, that they should expose themselves to the coldness that might follow a 'sudden blaze of sun', and the poetic persona seems similarly wary and untrusting. The bright day proves, as candidates who had read the poem clearly understood, to be proleptic of what appears to be a change of fortune, but the poet's initial tone does not encourage us to see that immediately. More than one level of irony is therefore established in these opening lines. Most candidates quickly identified contrasting binaries of 'blaze/ice', 'day/night', 'sun/shade' and found quick access to the difference between the nightmarish 'immolations of the mind' in the second stanza and the flowers and sunshine of the new day and possible new season. Many also made the link to the emotions of the persona, already wounded by past 'explosions' and therefore wary of the active fire imagery of 'blaze', 'ignites', 'melts', 'lights'. Some nevertheless insisted on reading the poem optimistically, perhaps because they wanted the poem to have a Valentine theme. A few, encouraged by the fact that the poem was twenty eight lines long, insisted on reading the poem as an expression of love's persistence in 'the month of love': this could be linked to the imagery of the final stanza, but the poem's emotions seem darker and more troubled. Nor do spring and the new day appear to bring a promise of renewal or rebirth, as they are aligned with the fire of passion, destruction and 'heated dreams'.

Many candidates, familiar with traditions of cremation, read the 'immolations/of the mind' as suggestive of death. This could be a productive line of enquiry, when linked 'the time your body's actually set on fire' and the love 'scattered beyond loss' or 'the endless scenes of hunger and singular deaths'. However, sometimes these images, which depict the persona's state of mind, were interpreted very literally. Her lover was a soldier, they live in a country at war, there is famine, he has died, she is in mourning rather than waiting for contact (as advised in the rubric). Stronger responses interpreted the images more psychologically, as the product of 'night terrors' and imaginary interpretations of the lover's prolonged silence. These readings were especially successful when these hyperbolic expressions were contrasted with the glib and colloquial voice of the lover which we finally hear saying no more than 'hello, how's it going'. Strong responses saw this as a reinforcement of the rhetorical question about 'your spirit adrift always/from mine?' and the poem as an expression of unrequited or unequal love. The adverb 'dramatically' in the stem question was especially helpful to candidates able to hear the different voices, appreciate the melodrama of the nightmare sequence and contrast expressions of new life or rebirth and death.

Many candidates appreciated the juxtaposition of 'months of silence' and 'endless scenes with 'one switch of the dial' in the penultimate stanza. They could see that a phone call was so easy for the lover, and yet so heavily weighted for the persona. Enjambment certainly elides this stanza with the last, so it was easy to see why some thought the phone call itself was a product of 'heated dreams'. Some wanted the whole poem to be a reflection on the phone call after it had happened, which in a sense it is. However, this ran the risk of detracting from the poet's use of the present tense to make the persona's emotions play out in front of us, in real time. In an eternally repeating present, in the persona's dreams, she continues to 'push and push' and is 'forever trying to reach it, /forever saying Yes.' More sentimental readers wanted the poem to end on a note of acceptance, and even to see this as the moment when she accepts a Valentine's Day proposal. The evidence of the words and tone of the text does not easily support such a reading. Others pointed out that she is still pushing through the 'mud' and not quite reaching that voice. Some noticed that her 'Yes' does not answer his question (if it was a question) and that they remain at cross-purposes and not really communicating what they truly feel. Many wrote well about how the poet uses enjambment to enact yearning and 'heated' memory, or repetition and anaphora to suggest a voice lost in reenactments of desperation and humiliation. Both the imagery and tone suggest she is still trapped in the language of 'immolations/of the mind.'

The following examples of statements from candidates' work might be useful for teaching more or less successful ways of reading the poem:

- *'The poet here is getting flowers for her own grave, as in she's dead'* – here the image of flowers is viewed in isolation from its specific grammatical context and linked to other images of death and 'mud' to imagine the voice of the poem as coming from beyond the grave. If that were so, how could she gather flowers, or indeed take a phone call, whether in reality or her dreams? Some interpretations are simply unconvincing.
- *'[The speaker uses] hyperbole in describing the sun, referring to it as a 'blaze' that 'ignites' her windows. While these words do not directly hold a negative connotation, a 'blaze' could imply destruction, further depicting her inability to even think that things may be improving, as she attempts to somewhat villainise the light from the sun, [showing] cynicism towards positive change'* – this is a much more convincing reading, linking associated imagery within the same stanza to form a perceptive conclusion about the emotional subtext of the poem's opening.
- *'The use of 'tricked' relates to betrayal and deception and can be a metaphor for how she feels betrayed in her relationship and how unlike the flowers she is naïve and let herself be 'tricked' – this is an insight about language that leads into an interpretation of the whole poem.*
- *'The repetition of push and push shows the effort she is making not to be tricked and pulled back and 'mud' can show how messy and suffocating she perceived the relationship to be'* – here detail and poetic technique are explored in order to come to convincing conclusions about the different perceptions of this relationship, which might qualify that final 'Yes'.

Examiners will reward any interpretation of the final lines of the poem, whether optimistic or not, which is securely grounded in analysis of language and a developed critical interpretation of how they relate to the rest of the poem.

Question 2

The extract from Edward St Aubyn's often disturbing 1992 novel *Never Mind* might initially seem playful and innocent enough but there is darkness at the heart of his evocation of childhood games and recklessness which stronger candidates quickly identified through the personification of the danger lurking at the bottom of the forbidden well. The passage worked well as few candidates had any difficulty in working out that what Patrick is doing is dangerous and involves him confronting his own fears. Most also appreciated that we largely share Patrick's viewpoint and perspective, in a third-person limited narrative, which is full of actions and imaginative roleplay, only hinting at darker emotions. More sophisticated readings were alert to the presence of the writer behind the character, and the best were able to see that his range of emotions is actually quite disturbing for such a young child, and that both his bravery in confronting his fears and his independent and imaginative spirit might also be responses to neglect or abuse. Many could see that he is really confronting his own fear of death, that the danger of the well is real, and that the writer is therefore creating a tense scene that works on the reader's own fears as well as those of his character.

The passage begins with Patrick's uphill climb to the well, and it quickly becomes clear that this is a habitual place of fascination for him. Some effectively contrasted the two stark simple sentences deliberately placed in juxtaposition: 'He was forbidden to play by the well' and 'It was his favourite place to play.' Good responses noted both Patrick's defiant and disobedient nature, and how little rules seem to be enforced in this context. Some noticed that he has played a number of games here before not least with his friend Andrew, and worked out that there must be something particular about this visit. Most noticed that if the wood was 'rotten', the lid of the well was not the safest form of 'trampoline', and that Patrick's imagination is at odds with adult ideas of health and safety. Some began to ask themselves why he is so reckless and unstoppable. Many noted the descriptions of the well as revolving around 'blackness': the 'black' reverberates alliteratively when he throws stones down the open shaft, and emerges when the comparatively attractive 'pink paint had peeled off' to reveal the rottenness of the lid. Stronger responses appreciated that this was potentially a deadly place to play, and that the 'darkness' might refer to more than just the depth of the well.

Symbolic interpretations of the well, and deeper implications, are certainly encouraged by the second paragraph. For Patrick, it appears to be just a game, and it is a matter of 'triumph' that the cover of the well is off. He wants to confront the darkness of the well as if it is an inviting antagonist in his games. The superlatives applied to the stones suggest he is up for the challenge: they are the 'biggest' and 'roundest'. Candidates were invited by the bullet points to focus on the well, and they enjoyed the personification of the water 'hiding', and gleaming back 'disturbed' and 'unreliably' when under attack from Patrick's bombardment. The strongest responses appreciated that the waters of the well are a slippery and dangerous antagonist, rotten both outside and within. The bricks of the shaft are 'green then black', and the water 'so heavy and black it was more like oil'. Not only does this hint at the risk to Patrick if he falls, but it makes the well represent his morbid fears. Some even saw the dark waters as a reflection of something within Patrick himself, as they are 'a damp echo of his own voice.'

Certainly, the next paragraph reinforces the reader's impression of Patrick's daredevil nature as he remembers the previous time he stood on the ledge of the open well shaft, when Andrew repeatedly pleaded with him not to do it. Many candidates noticed how the writer is building tension by making Patrick's actions increasingly reckless, at the same time as his descriptions of Patrick's climb in 'scuffed blue sandals' shows how young and small he really is. Some noticed a reminder of how isolated Patrick is on this occasion, without Andrew. Most noticed that he is now 'dizzy' and 'wobbling' as if his own body is now resisting the psychological 'dare' he has set himself. The strongest responses all looked at 'the invitation of the emptiness behind him.' Some saw this as an extension of the personification of the waters of the well, some as the provocation of the void and blackness which Patrick imagines as his ultimate antagonist, and a few saw this as a representation of death itself, and Patrick turning his back on his deepest fears. Several looked in detail at how he takes control of his body 'clenching his fists and toes' and focuses his mind 'looking down very seriously at the hard ground' in order to achieve his 'conquest'. Some noticed that his fear is also personified almost as a kind of policeman that 'tried to arrest his limbs'.

Good responses noticed how tension is created and rises at this point in the third paragraph to a climax, before the rising action subsides into child's play once Patrick has achieved 'an enormous effort of will' and completed the conquest of his imaginary enemies, both internal and external. Most candidates loved the childish glee of Patrick's (plastic) swordplay, his precociously active imagination as 'the commander of the special soldiers with purple cloaks' and his exuberant fight against these antagonists, shouting 'hooray' and making the noise of clashing metal. Many wanted to see the extract as a moral story about resilience and courage. However, more perceptive responses tended to be more questioning of why Patrick is alone, why his imagination is so active that he wants to overcome the danger of being 'ambushed and 'smashed to bits'

and noticed his 'morbid groan' as he stabs the air beneath the bay leaf. Some asked why he feels a need to conquer death, and linked this to the morbid imagery surrounding the description of the well and the dark waters. These scripts responded well to the final bullet point which encouraged a more holistic consideration of Patrick's volatile emotions in the whole passage. Strong responses therefore linked Patrick's triumphant swordplay with the challenge of his darkest antagonist.

Here are several skilful candidate analyses of the well and the water below:

- *By conveying how [Patrick's] voice echoes, the reader wonders what truly lingers in these waters...creating a sense of unease'.*
- *'the word; reverberating; further intensifies this feeling [of a heightened level of threat] as if the water is alive and is able to reciprocate the actions inflicted on it'.*
- *'he is at the mercy of the water...the writer's contrasting use of; invitation; and; pull; enhances this effect. This contrast creates the effect of the water; hiding; under a different behaviour to lure Patrick into a false sense of security'.*

All of these candidates perceptively addressed the way the water seems to be alive, challenging Patrick and luring him into a trap that he only manages to resist with 'an enormous effort of will'. Some went on, quite rightly, to ask why a five-year-old child would have such an awareness of darkness and danger as an enticement. Others were able to appreciate the retrospective way in which the small boy's complex emotions are recreated.