

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/11 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- Sustain a focus on the question from the very start of their answer.
- Write focused personal responses that are informed by their close study of the text.
- Select relevant material to support their answer.
- Support their ideas with well-selected concise quotations.
- Analyse sensitively and in detail ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- Begin their answers with unnecessary background information or list of themes or list of devices the writer uses.
- Refer in general terms to 'themes' they have revised without addressing the key words of the question.
- Show only a simple grasp of surface meanings and lack a detailed knowledge of the text.
- Depend on explanation and assertion rather than close analysis.
- Use long quotations without exploring the effects created by specific words, phrases and sounds.
- Use ellipses in quotations which omit those key words that would support their ideas.
- Log writing devices without exploring the effects created.
- Make general personal responses about ideas not actually in the text, including references to their own lives.

General comments

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

The strongest responses showed evidence of an ability to select and tailor relevant material for the question that had been set. As explained in previous reports, this is an essential requirement of the examination: questions are not prompts for candidates to unload all their knowledge about the poem or character or theme or setting mentioned in a question. In less effective responses, candidates explained themes they had learned without regard to the key words of the 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. The excessive length of some answers was caused by candidates trying to cram in too much learnt material in ways that adversely affected the quality of their answers. In these responses, comments were laboured or repeated whereas many shorter responses were more focused because ideas were expressed concisely. Those candidates who wrote a brief plan before starting their answer tended to produce more effectively organised answers.

The most successful responses focused on the key words of the question in their opening paragraph, paying attention from the start to those intensifiers (adjectives and adverbs such as 'striking' and 'vividly') that help candidates to select relevant material to shape their answers. There were, however, too many introductions that included one or more of the following before addressing the question: biographical information; a list of themes considered relevant to the text; a list of random techniques the writer uses. Some introductions rehearsed at length the main ideas in the subsequent paragraphs. There were also too many unproductive final paragraphs that simply repeated ideas made earlier in the answer and, thereby, wasted time.

The most convincing personal responses integrated concise quotations to support the points they made. For Poetry and extract-based Prose answers, candidates were able to quote directly from the text printed in the question paper. Success in Prose general essays depended on candidates' command of the detail of their set text. More confident candidates were able to deploy an impressively wide range of direct quotation to support their ideas whereas those unable to recall relevant textual reference relied 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 achieve their effects in conveying 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 were found in Poetry answers where enjambment, caesura and patterns of rhyme were often simply mentioned, though without illustration or precise critical comment. Learners should be encouraged to distinguish between assertion and close analysis.

Some candidates applied the terms 'poem', 'play' and 'novel' to the wrong literary form. This was often more than a slip of the pen and was evidence of a lack of appreciation of a writer's use of form. For these candidates, poetry essays became mere paraphrases of the poem attempting to pin down meanings rather than explore ways in which poets achieve their 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. Some candidates referred to the 'play' rather than 'novel' or 'short story'.

Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting though some did not. The audience for the script is the Examiner, not the candidate. Teachers should remind candidates of the importance of communicating their ideas clearly to examiners.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates recognised the extended metaphor of 'rain' as a force of isolation with some seeing it as a symbol of cleansing and catharsis. Many explored the speaker's awareness of death and empathy for the suffering of others. Stronger responses fully explored the imagery of 'broken reeds' with sensitivity and understanding and some recognised the biblical allusion to 'blessed are the dead', with its suggestion of irony as well as melancholy. Some answers read 'sympathy' as both empathetic but also as an awareness of the poignancy of the poem. Some attempted to explore the use of enjambment and lack of rhyme scheme but were not always successful in relating this to meaning.

Question 2

Most candidates answered well on this poem. They responded to the poignancy of the crushed fly and considered the deeper meaning of Turner's poem as reflection of life's fragility, connecting the seemingly insignificant insect with the insignificance of human life. Many analysed the language used to describe the beauty of the fly's wings and the accidental tragedy of its death. Most noted the metaphor of a closing book as a symbol of a sudden end. The strongest responses were achieved through consideration of Turner's philosophy of death and the wider message to the reader of man's own insignificance and his impulse to leave a lasting trace.

Question 3

Almost all candidates who answered this question were able to identify the contrasts in the poem between the glamour of the city and its hidden suffering, with most able to explore the theme of appearance and reality. Stronger responses achieved a more detailed analysis of the striking imagery of the poem such as the direct address and the accusatory tone. The aggressive vocabulary – 'betray', 'furies', 'appalling', 'battered' – was noted too. Less successful responses found themselves confused by the supposed allure of the city to the farmer's children and missed Auden's wider critique of the encouragement of unrealistic ambitions and beliefs together with the loneliness and hardship of the disenfranchised. These responses were often overly descriptive, summarising the content rather than analysing it. Candidates missed opportunities to explore specific language choices that reinforce the poem's emotional resonance.

Question 4

There were several engaged responses on 'The Road' and almost all could appreciate the vigorous pace of the poem, with a focus on the imagery. The question asked for how words and imagery create a striking effect, and most candidates were able to select two or three key images: 'the rising moon'; 'the long black carpet'; 'the fence posts'. However, not all candidates considered the overall effect of these images or how the celestial imagery linked together. Many candidates selected words and made some comment on them without considering the context and overall meaning of the poem.

Question 5

This invited many strong responses with successful focus on how the poem is frightening. Candidates enjoyed exploring powerful imagery: 'winds stampeding the fields'; 'blade-light'; 'dented the balls of my eyes'; 'a black-/Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly' and this led to meaningful and probing analysis, including at a whole-text level. Where candidates were less successful was in projecting a biographical meaning to the poem beyond the poet's intended concern around man's insignificance vs the power of nature. References to Sylvia Plath, which were mainly related to the final image of an unsettled and ominous domestic scene, were hard to substantiate in this analysis. The most exciting responses explored the total disruption caused within the natural world and its distortion even of the physical properties of nature.

Question 6

Many candidates were able to explore Hughes' presentation of the horses as mysterious but there were few responses which were able to fully explore the deeper mystery that this encounter invites the reader to consider. Few candidates commented on the final lines of the poem, thereby losing the opportunity to contrast the 'crowded streets' and wish or hope that 'I still meet my memory in so lonely a place'. Candidates should be reminded to check that they have read to the end of the poem.

Section B

Question 7

All candidates understood the dynamics between Okonkwo and Nwoye and were able to support the idea of Okonkwo being 'inwardly' pleased and how Nwoye was acting to please Okonkwo against his own nature. The best answers supported their close analysis of the extract with relevant reference to the wider text. Often these candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of deeper implications which allowed for thoughtful responses about effects. The allegory of the vulture, and the contrasting imagery of the mother and father's stories, allowed for more sensitive consideration of how Achebe creates effects. Less strong candidates were limited in developing a response to language analysis.

Question 8

Responses to this question were few and tended to provide a narrative account of Okonkwo's banishment. It was understood that he was exiled for unintentionally killing a clansman and that upon his return seven years later he had lost his position in the tribe and that everything had changed. This led him on the path to his killing of the head messenger, his suicide and ignominious end. Detailed support from the text and analysis of Achebe's effects was minimal.

Question 9

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

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

Most candidates spotted the importance of the revelation. The most successful answers explored the passage through the 'dramatic' lens, which allowed for successful analysis considering dialogue, pauses, physical positioning, questioning, climax, revelations. Where answers were less secure, candidates were overly concerned with storytelling or did not consider the details of the characters' interactions. Others in this category misunderstood the actions and speech of Maxim and the narrator. They were confused about which character said 'I love you' and crucially who sought comfort 'like a child'.

Question 14

Candidates largely provided relevant ideas showing understanding of the relationship between Mrs Danvers and Rebecca, noting particularly both the obsessive qualities of Mrs Danvers and what is revealed 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 for a long time, it was not a partnership of equals. The strongest responses explored 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 Mrs Danvers and Rebecca.

Question 15

Most candidates were able to recognise the context of the extract and were able to explore how it is memorable. This led to consideration of Atticus' strong moral beliefs and his realism. The racism was noted but the optimism too as illustrated in the jury debating their decision for so long. Stronger responses explored how Lee uses language to enhance the emotional weight of the moment focusing on the growing maturity of the children and their increasing awareness of societal flaws. Less successful answers tended to be narrative-based and did not consider the wider implications of the extract. In some answers, there was confusion between the characters of Miss Maudie and Miss Stephanie.

Question 16

Weaker responses tended to be narrative-based and were aware that Dill spent his holidays in Maycomb, that he was imaginative and came from a difficult background. No responses paid attention to how adaptable he is in slotting into Maycomb life each time he returns and what that means. His 'engagement' to Scout and his developing closeness to Jem were not identified as attempts to create security in his life. How Lee presents Dill throughout the novel was not considered and references to the text were limited.

Question 17

Candidates were largely able to provide some reasons for this being such a powerful moment with some textual support. The discriminating factor was the level of detail and analysis of Lindsay's effects. To a degree, most candidates could recognise at least some of the following elements: how the characters of the four girls are revealed by their reactions to the 'wonder' of the rock showing Marion's analytical brain; Edith's stupidity; Irma's riches and Miranda's 'calm wordless joy'; the fear created by the terrifying violence of the formation of the Rock which was 'spewed red hot from the boiling bowels of the earth' into a molten mass; the sense of a sinister and deeply unpleasant environment with bats in 'clammy caves', the snake and various insects; an overwhelming sense of human insignificance and the terrifying power of the Rock which dominates the novel.

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

Waker responses provided largely narrative answers. Some responded to the misunderstanding about 'Lucky' and saw this as being entertaining. Overall general comments were made with little support or development. Less successful candidates were often confused as to who was speaking in the dialogue of this extract.

Question 22

Of the few responses seen, several showed some understanding of the moral of the story and made some supporting reference to parts of the text. Less successful answers narrated the story and did not attempt to address ways in which Rossetti's achieves her effects.

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The most successful responses focused on the key words of the question in their opening paragraph, paying attention from the start to those intensifiers (adjectives and adverbs such as 'striking' and 'vividly') that help candidates to select relevant material to shape their answers. There were, however, too many introductions that included one or more of the following before addressing the question: biographical information; a list of themes considered relevant to the text; a list of random techniques the writer uses. Some introductions rehearsed at length the main ideas in subsequent paragraphs of the essay. There were also too many unproductive final paragraphs that simply repeated ideas made earlier in the answer and, thereby, wasted time.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most answers showed understanding that Ozymandias had been a powerful though forgotten figure, mentioned only by the 'traveller from an antique land'. Candidates grasped that he was a tyrannical ruler whose boast 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' is ironically undercut by the brevity of the sentence that follows: 'Nothing beside remains'. The strongest responses sustained a focus on ways in which Shelley vividly contrasts the past and present. These responses explored the enduring impact of the sculptor who captured so skilfully Ozymandias's 'sneer of cold command' that could still be discerned in the statue's 'shattered visage'. Less successful responses worked through the poem, exploring language features such as alliteration, though without linking their comments to either the ideas in the poem or the key words of the question. Some responses were more intent on citing parallels with King George III or Rameses II at the expense of answering the question.

Question 2

Most candidates grasped the central idea that the speaker 'never expected much of life' from his childhood wistfully conveyed in 'Since as a child I used to lie/Upon the leaze and watch the sky'. The most successful responses showed understanding that the speaker never expected 'That life would all be fair', focusing on the significance of the word 'all'. By contrast, those who missed this asserted that the speaker thinks life would not be fair in any way. Stronger responses recognised the reflective and resigned tone of the speaker, conveying his mature realisation that life offers neither extremes of joy nor despair, just 'neutral-tinted haps'. They showed a clear understanding of which lines were spoken by the speaker and addressed to the World and of which lines were spoken by the World to the speaker. Those candidates who were less clear about this distinction assumed that the speaker (rather than the World) had been 'loved desperately' or 'with smooth serenity'. Weaker responses attempted to communicate personal interpretations of the poem which were not rooted in or supported by the detail of the poem and which struggled to address the question.

Question 3

Most answers showed at least some understanding that the everyday action of boarding a bus is made to seem violent and dangerous, with the other passengers representing a threat. Many responses explored the imagery of battle and the use of violent diction (such as 'strangulation' and 'hauled'), and there was much reference to the poem as a set of instructions about how to board a bus. The more successful responses explored the humour created by hyperbole (such as 'tighten your belt/to avoid being undressed'). Stronger answers also analysed the implications of the instruction to 'pay no attention to human sounds' and the idea that 'words lose meaning/until you are inside the bus'. Stronger responses supported their interpretations with relevant textual detail; weaker responses offered overly assertive readings of the poem without exploring ways in which Chingono creates meanings and achieves effects.

Question 4

In most answers there was an awareness that the poem is written in honour of a campaigner against apartheid. There was, in general, an understanding that people like Suzman can bring about change and that, with even a small amount of pressure, significant change can happen. The most successful responses considered the poem's deeper implications, taking their cue from the intensifier 'vividly' in the question. Among the effects explored were those created by the image of 'A lot of small hands in a monstrous hall', the central metaphor of 'very same tune that has been sung/time and again' and the use of repeated onomatopoeia in 'buzz'. More successful responses that commented on the use of rhyme offered specific examples such as the idea of repression conveyed by the rhyming of 'crushed' with 'hushed'. Less successful responses listed devices without analytical comment or focus on the key words of the question.

Question 5

Stronger responses showed an understanding of the setting as being integral to the relationship between the men and nature, with a convincing analysis of, for example, the 'plunging valleys' and 'bareback of hill'. There was understanding of the physicality of both the game and the natural world, seemingly in competition with one another. In these responses, candidates interpreted the poem as a celebration of vitality and resilience amidst harsh but invigorating conditions: 'rubbery men bounced after it', 'wingers leapt'. They likened the men's joy to children and their carefree innocence, supported by the imagery of 'bunting colours' and 'their blown ball bounced'. Less successful responses provided superficial commentary, listing imagery without explanation, paraphrasing or lacking specific examples. Some answers regarded nature as purely hostile, neglecting its beauty and power and the significance of the final two lines. Others wrote about the poet's background at some length and/or provided unnecessary comparisons with Hughes' other poems.

Question 6

Stronger responses provided detailed analysis of Hughes' sensual imagery and descriptions of light, sound and silence, colours and heat. These responses offered an insightful exploration of mood: the calm, almost playful mood of the first two stanzas followed by a shift to reverence and then the darker mood of fear. They analysed the imagery that conveys a sense of awe and respect which gradually affects everything. They commented on the effect of the paradoxical 'sinks upward' and 'booming softly' as indicators of a magical and unpredictable being. Less successful responses attempted a literal interpretation only, struggling with meaning and understanding even of surface meanings. These responses tended to paraphrase without exploring poetic techniques or the poem's changing mood and tone. In these answers, poetic features such as enjambment and caesura were mentioned though not explored. The weakest responses misunderstood or ignored the significance of the harvest and seasonal change, particularly concerning the fields of wheat. Less successful responses tended to list or describe devices.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates were able to pick out details from the extract to show why the moment is dramatic: Chielo breaking abruptly into the peaceful setting; her taking away the sick child; the latter's crying; Chielo's shouts and incantations. Although many candidates grasped the unusual behaviour of Okonkwo 'pleading', only the more successful responses were able to explore sensitively this rare moment of his vulnerability. In analysing ways in which Achebe makes this moment dramatic, the strongest responses sustained a close engagement with his use of symbolism in 'The two voices disappeared into the thick darkness' and the imagery of Ekwefi as the 'hen whose only chick has been carried away by a kite'. Less successful responses tended to concentrate solely on meaning. For example, they stated that the priestess is angry when she says 'Does a

man speak when a god speaks? Beware!'. Some mentioned the use of a rhetorical question, though only the strongest responses considered the tone in which the words are uttered, her pointed contrast between 'man' and 'god' and her not expecting her authority to be challenged.

Question 8

Most answers recognised the contrast between father and son. Unoka was a 'lazy and improvident man', who borrowed money, played music and drank wine whereas Okonkwo is a prize wrestler, earns titles, makes a success of his yams, has a homestead and three wives. Less successful responses tended to write character sketches that treated the characters as real-life people rather than fictional constructs. The most successful responses focused on the presentation of the relationship as one defined by resentment, shame and a deep emotional conflict rooted in Igbo values of masculinity and legacy. In the strongest responses, candidates were able to draw upon a range of direct quotation they had learned. For example, the following quotation with its key word 'ruled' suggested not just Okonkwo's dislike but an obsessive drive: 'Okonkwo was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father loved'. Some candidates drew apt comparison between Okonkwo's resentment of Unoka and Nwoye's resentment in turn of Okonkwo, though in less successful responses candidates strayed too far from the question by focusing excessively on the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye.

Question 9

There was at least some understanding of the context: that Nanda Kaul does not like receiving phone calls at any time, and especially not from Ila Das, who is determined to visit, particularly to meet Raka. Only the strongest answers focused on the question's key word 'disturbing', referring to the unpleasantness of Nanda Kaul's attitude towards a supposed long-standing friend, her scathing mockery of her voice (described as 'her tragedy in life'). These answers explored closely the effects of the detailed descriptions of Ila Das's voice as viewed from Kaul's perspective: 'piping, shrilling screech', 'screamed', 'like a long nail scratching at a glass pane' and 'a small child gone berserk'. They considered Nanda Kaul's obsessive hankering after a life of solitude and the symbolism in her identification with the worm snapped in two by the hen ('she winced at its mutilation'). Less successful responses worked their way through the extract paraphrasing content or explaining quotations they used.

Question 10

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

Most candidates showed an awareness of the context: Magwitch's dying moments in prison having been fatally wounded after trying to escape; his receiving comfort from Pip's visits every day. They understood too the mutual affection between the two evident in the terms of endearment ('Dear boy' and 'Dear Magwitch'). The most successful responses showed insight into the changed relationship between the two characters that make this moment 'so moving', contrasting Pip's earlier embarrassment of Magwitch to his genuine affection in this extract. In such responses, candidates explored Dickens's use of pathos in the sincerity of Pip's words and in the dignity and gentle hand gestures of Magwitch. There was also a sensitive appreciation of the death-bed scene taking place in a prison, though less successful responses strayed from the question when they wrote excessively and assertively about the injustice of the legal system in Victorian England. Less successful responses tended to work through the extract explaining content without addressing the question's key words.

Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Stronger responses achieved a clear focus on the extract and question; analysis was directed to the specific moment, correctly placed in context, with only appropriate and helpful reference to the wider novel. These responses addressed the narrative perspective as essential to a close understanding of the extract, revealing her insecurities and emotions; candidates contrasted her immaturity (as in her childish request to go home) and sense of inadequacy with Maxim's dominance. They explored how du Maurier creates a specific emotional and psychological mood which contributes to the revealing of the characters of Maxim and the narrator. They considered how the scene foreshadows the problems ahead at Manderley. Less successful

responses lacked knowledge of the extract's context, with some candidates thinking Maxim had just proposed or that they were already married. Some responses simply summarised the extract, showing some understanding of it though without linking their points to the specific requirements of the question.

Question 14

More successful responses clearly grasped the development of the narrative as secrets are revealed about the relationship between Maxim and Rebecca; they analysed du Maurier's use of dramatic irony and retrospective narration. They explored the imbalance of power and Rebecca's confident manipulation of everyone, discussing Maxim's loathing of her, his inability to control her and his eventual confession, showing detailed knowledge of the text, supported by specific and well-chosen quotations from key moments. The strongest answers highlighted how Rebecca's public image as the perfect wife contrasted with her true behaviour and made their relationship unbearable for Maxim and commented on how her 'ghost' continues to have power over Maxim and Manderley. Less successful responses lacked an ability to tailor material to the actual question, with some focusing almost entirely on Rebecca herself rather than their relationship, or on Rebecca's influence on the narrator rather than on Maxim. Some suggested that, as part of a patriarchal society, Maxim was entirely to blame for the problems in their relationship, as he did not respect Rebecca's freedom.

Question 15

Stronger answers explored specific techniques used in Lee's portrayal of Atticus (such as dialogue, narrative voice, comparison to others). They explored how his moral courage, kindness, care and respect for his children and his restraint are revealed by reference to the detail of the extract and recognised Scout's perspective at the time and later as shaping readers' impressions. They linked Atticus's views on parenting to his reasons for taking the case and were able to focus on 'striking impressions' rather than just an overview of his character. Less successful responses were character sketches that described Atticus as 'kind', 'a good man' or 'smart' without textual support and described his involvement in the trial at length, and the injustice Tom is facing, without sufficient reference to either the extract or question. Less successful responses wrote excessively about themes, such as justice, without clearly applying them to the question and/or were sidetracked by generalisations about how people 'of that era' generally brought up their children or how they 'all' had racist views.

Question 16

Stronger responses commented on Lee's presentation of Mrs Dubose as a symbol of Maycomb's prejudice but also a brave and determined lady. In these responses, candidates understood her role in the presentation and development of characters in the Finch family and supported their observations about her racism, extreme rudeness to the Finch family and her determination, with precise details and quotations they had learned. In the most successful answers, candidates focused on the key words 'How far?' and 'sympathy', recognising the mixed emotions she engenders. They recognised that she was suffering from isolation and devastating pain and explored Atticus's idea that she had 'real courage'. Less successful answers offered only a few straightforward points at surface level, that she is 'brave' or 'mean', often unsupported by quotations. These answers were repetitive and/or made speculative assertions about her character. Some confused her with other characters, usually Miss Maudie.

Question 17

The more successful responses understood Sarah's unenviable position at the school and how vital it is that Mrs Valange succeeds in helping her – in this pivotal moment in the novel. They focused on the significance of the letter being left at the back of the drawer as a symbol of the neglect Sarah has suffered from. In the strongest answers, there was close exploration of how Lindsay presents the clash between the two women, the contrast between them and how sad and significant it is that Mrs Valange does not triumph. There were thoughtful comments about the language used in the extract, for example, the tone of the letter. Less successful responses showed an insecure understanding of the context, Sarah's position at the school and why the forgotten letter is so significant to the plot of the novel. These answers adopted a narrative approach, simply re-telling the content of the extract and what happened to Sarah afterwards without regard to the question or the detail and language of the extract.

Question 18

Stronger responses included the varied experiences of all those who visited the Rock: the girls and teachers at the Picnic, Mike and Albert, and Mrs Appleyard. They made insightful links between the Rock and

aboriginal history; how the Rock is seen as alive and with secrets of its own; candidates supported their responses with reference to descriptions of the creatures living there, the vegetation, the caves and rock formations as well as the idea of time stopping. They explored the eerie atmosphere which makes the girls sleep and then compels them to keep moving and discussed the fate of the three who are never found. Less successful responses revealed an insufficient range of relevant textual detail, for example, Mike's attempt to find Miranda and Mrs Appleyard's gruesome death there. Some weaker responses were almost entirely narrative or focused entirely on the girls' disappearance on the day of the Picnic. Some responses wrote at length prepared notes about the 'theme' of colonialism without linking their comments to the specific focus of the question.

Question 19

Stronger responses analysed the way Wells presents the curate's physical appearance, his religious language and beliefs about the arrival of the apocalypse using relevant details and quotations from the extract. They contrasted his attitude of pessimism and doom, that the Martians were sent by God and therefore undefeatable, with the narrator's attempts to find a solution with calm rationality. In these responses, candidates understood the narrator's role in the presentation of the curate's unravelling, focusing on the curate's unstable and emotional outbursts, with his questions, repetition, dashes and exclamations, as evidence of his weakness, fragility and increasing disorientation. Less successful responses fixated on the curate as 'mad'/'deranged'/'insane' without much development beyond this. Some candidates wrote excessively about the invasion as symbolic of colonialism, without focusing on either the question or the detail of the extract. Some asserted that various things the curate said or did were 'striking' though without support or analysis.

Question 20

In the few responses seen, there was comment on how the narrator has been learning throughout as the disaster unfolds and a sense of the limits of human change and a misplaced human arrogance. In general, however, responses offered overly assertive comments about the selfishness of humans and their ineptitude in dealing with the invasion, with little evidence of exploring ways in which Wells achieves his effects. Some responses wrote at length about colonialism without addressing the question or providing supporting detail from the text.

Question 21

Stronger responses explored language, dialogue and narrative viewpoint to support ideas about Sharma's 'saintliness' for example, rather than just making points about Sharma's ill-treatment. These responses focused on the question and developed ideas of inequality between the white sahibs and the Indian workers which accounts for the cold, uncaring way he is treated. The most successful responses analysed closely the mounting tension and the extreme anxiety Sharma had to experience while waiting for his meeting with Mr Acton. In these answers, candidates contrasted Mr Acton's 'ambivalent smile' and appearance with the reality of his feelings for his workers, which did not bode well for Sharma; they considered Sharma's modest dreams of retirement and how these were to be shattered with such carelessness by Mr Acton. Less successful responses narrated the rest of the story or mentioned a few points about sympathy but did not develop or support them. Some candidates became distracted by a lengthy consideration of the evils of colonialism and the treatment of the Indian workers without relating their comments to specific details in the extract.

Question 22

Stronger responses argued that Annie was seemingly rejecting her family and home to help her face life alone on the journey and in a new country. These candidates observed that the relationship is nuanced: she wants her independence but will miss her parents. They understood that she has had a caring home with parents who have loved her, showed knowledge of the many examples of her parents' care for her as well as her apparent abhorrence of some of their habits, supporting these with detailed reference and direct quotation. They identified their emotional farewells, particularly with her mother, as she finally left, as evidence of their love for each other. Less successful responses focused only on the negative side of the relationship and lacked textual detail to support their generalised ideas and/or ignored the question's key word 'vivid'.

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 to support their ideas) if they are to achieve the higher levels of the mark scheme.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/13 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- sustain a focus on the question from the very start of their answer
- write focused personal responses that are informed by their close study of the text
- select relevant material to support their answer
- support their ideas with well-selected concise quotations
- analyse sensitively and in detail ways in which writers achieve their effects.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- begin their answers with unnecessary background information or list of themes or list of devices the writer uses
- refer in general terms to 'themes' they have revised without addressing the key words of the question
- show only a simple grasp of surface meanings and lack a detailed knowledge of the text
- depend on explanation and assertion rather than close analysis
- use long quotations without exploring the effects created by specific words, phrases and sounds
- use ellipses in quotations which omit those key words that would support their ideas
- log writing devices without exploring the effects created
- make general personal responses about ideas not actually in the text, including references to their own lives.

General comments

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

The strongest responses showed evidence of an ability to select and tailor relevant material for the question that had been set. As explained in previous reports, this is an essential requirement of the examination: questions are not prompts for candidates to unload all their knowledge about the poem or character or theme or setting mentioned in a question. In less effective responses, candidates explained themes they had learned without regard to the key words of the 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. The excessive length of some answers was caused by candidates trying to cram in too much learnt material in ways that adversely affected the quality of their answers. In these responses, comments were laboured or repeated whereas many shorter responses were more focused because ideas were expressed concisely. Those candidates who wrote a brief plan before starting their answer tended to produce more effectively organised answers.

The most successful responses focused on the key words of the question in their opening paragraph, paying attention from the start to those intensifiers (adjectives and adverbs such as 'striking' and 'vividly') that help candidates to select relevant material to shape their answers. There were, however, too many introductions that included one or more of the following before addressing the question: biographical information; a list of themes considered relevant to the text; a list of random techniques the writer uses. Some introductions rehearsed at length the main ideas in the subsequent paragraphs. There were also too many unproductive final paragraphs that simply repeated ideas made earlier in the answer and, thereby, wasted time.

The most convincing personal responses integrated concise quotations to support the points they made. For Poetry and extract-based Prose answers, candidates were able to quote directly from the text printed in the question paper. Success in Prose general essays depended on candidates' command of the detail of their set text. More confident candidates were able to deploy an impressively wide range of direct quotation to support their ideas whereas those unable to recall relevant textual reference relied 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. Some candidates used the extract to answer the general essay question, which limited their response as they need to draw points from the entire novel or short story.

The most successful responses sustained critical analysis of ways in which writers achieve their effects in conveying 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 were found in Poetry answers where enjambment, caesura and patterns of rhyme were often simply mentioned, though without illustration or precise critical comment. Learners should be encouraged to distinguish between assertion and close analysis.

Some candidates applied the terms 'poem', 'play' and 'novel' to the wrong literary form. This was often more than a slip of the pen and was evidence of a lack of appreciation of a writer's use of form. For these candidates, poetry essays became mere paraphrases of the poem attempting to pin down meanings rather than explore ways in which poets achieve their 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. Some candidates referred to the 'play' rather than 'novel' or 'short story'.

Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting though some did not. The audience for the script is the Examiner, not the candidate. Teachers should remind candidates of the importance of communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Many candidates identified the strong emotions experienced by the father and son, such as grief, denial, and 'raw' love. Candidates also discussed the son's attitude to death and observed the father's method of handling grief. They observed the description of the son's 'blight of disbelief' regarding his father's actions. Most candidates understood the metaphors and emotive language as well as the change in the son's attitude toward grief, aligning with his father's approach. Strong answers appreciated the use of symbols like the 'rusty lock' and 'the black leather phone book'. These candidates used words such as 'this could further suggest' to extend their analysis and show insight and individuality. Less successful responses focused solely on the father and a few discussed Harrison's real-life relationship with his father, but these points were not relevant to the question.

Question 2

Most candidates addressed the question and wrote movingly about the speaker's depth of grief at the loss of his loved one. They understood how his demands become increasingly nonsensical such as the request to stop all the clocks (time) and that every aspect of life must show it is mourning to reflect his grief. Many candidates appreciated writing effects such as the use of imperatives, and the melodramatic, exaggerated imagery. Stronger answers commented with insight on features such as the correlation between 'Blues' in the title and the musical genre, or the use of cardinal points to express the poet's loss of direction in life. These answers included well-informed, relevant personal responses which were rooted in the text and considered the question. Less successful responses focused on the background story of the poet or wrote in detail about the loss of their loved ones in what they thought was a personal response to Auden's writing.

Question 3

Candidates understood the abusive relationship and commented on the ferocity and strictness of the mother. Many genuinely empathised with the plight of the boy and wrote with feeling about how the mother deserved to be shouted at by the boy at the end. Stronger answers analysed the predatory behaviour of the mother, picking up on the language features describing her 'contorted movements,' and the use of 'rap' to have

layered meanings. Some candidates noted the irony in the title and how the poem contradicts the idea of 'an afternoon nap'. Less successful responses focused only on the strictness of the mother or the feelings of the boy without analysis of any writing features. Very few answers commented on writing effects such as the unusual punctuation – for example, the effect of full stops in unexpected places, lack of capital letters or abbreviations.

Question 4

Successful answers interpreted the journey as spiritual, likening the bus ride to a pilgrimage in search of enlightenment. These understood the ideas of isolation and disconnection and that in the end the speaker decides not to adopt the older man's beliefs because he chooses 'not to step inside the old man's head'. They effectively analysed the sensory imagery, noting the contrast between the interior and exterior spaces, the shifting perspective (You to Yours) and the impact of the final line. Less successful answers focused mainly on the physical discomforts of the bus journey – unable to see out the window, the darkness, the bumpy road. Some candidates failed to engage with the poem's more complex imagery, particularly the symbolic significance of the 'sawed off sunbeam' and the closing lines.

Question 5

Most candidates engaged with the poem's personal and reflective tone and understood that his family relationships were complex. The strongest answers identified the mixed feelings that Hughes had towards his mother, ranging from his deep love for her through his vivid descriptions of her as an ethereal, glistening flame, his regret (not inviting her to his wedding) and finally his feeling of rejection and resentment that she loved his brother more than him. These successfully analysed the poem's narrative progression, noting how Hughes moves between memory, present reflection, and imagined conversations. They also explored many of the language features in detail, especially the 'celestial' imagery describing his mother and Miriam.

Less successful candidates struggled with the poem's imagery and symbolism, particularly the religious and mystical elements. They did not engage with the emotional complexity of Hughes' relationship with his mother, offering surface-level observations about grief. These answers tended to summarize the narrative, and a few candidates thought Miriam was Hughes's sister, not his aunt.

Question 6

Most candidates showed at least some understanding of the conflict between nature and technology, and most were able to comment on the more literal lines in the poem, such as 'Towns whisper to towns', and 'but the wires cannot hide from the weather'. There was less success in evaluating more complicated lines such as 'such unearthly airs/The ear hears, and withers!' Stronger answers analysed the poem's sound effects and onomatopoeia, linking these to the central metaphor of the wires as musical instruments. They explored the poem's ominous tone, particularly the final lines 'the tones/That empty human bones'. Some candidates struggled to engage with the poem's more abstract imagery, particularly the 'revolving ballroom of space', looking at it more literally. Some less successful answers digressed from the question and wrote at length about Hughes as a poet, his love of nature and his wariness of technology, his relationship with Plath, or how he heard the news of her death.

Section B

Question 7

Candidates generally demonstrated good knowledge of Okonkwo's character and were able to pick out relevant points from the extract to show why this is a striking introduction. Most candidates were impressed with Okonkwo as an embodiment of 'toxic' masculinity and understood how the fear of ending up like his father was his driving force. Many candidates commented at length about Okonkwo's relationship with his family and his childhood trauma that led to his behaviour as an adult. Stronger candidates analysed his motives and commented on phrases such as 'heavy hand', noting both the surface and deeper meanings. Some stronger answers commented on Achebe's use of descriptive imagery to depict him as a volatile and irrational man. Less successful responses presented a straightforward character sketch with little analysis.

Question 8

The few that responded to this question generally showed sound textual knowledge and some understanding of the impact of outsiders on the tribe. They easily recognised the positive impact of outsiders like Mr Brown and his followers who built a school and that the new religion was a haven for characters like Nwoye or the

benefits to economy. Stronger answers considered the negative impact like the dismantling of a way of life and the clash in cultures that led to violence. Less successful answers spent too much time discussing the effect of colonialism or focused on the impact on Okonkwo. Although answers showed knowledge and understanding of the text overall, responses did not offer many direct textual references or a response to writing effects.

Question 9

Most candidates showed an understanding of both characters and their motivations, picking up on how the moment is striking. They commented on the strained relationship of Nanda and Raka and the ideas of alienation and the generational divide. Strong answers understood that Nanda Kaul was unwelcoming while Raka was unenthusiastic about staying with her grandmother. Less successful answers worked through the extract without delving into the deeper meaning or noting writing features such as the physical descriptions, Nanda Kaul's private thoughts or the meaning of Raka's name.

Question 10

There were too few responses for meaningful comment.

Question 11

Most candidates understood how the moment is moving. They viewed Magwitch sympathetically, exploring his sad back story and final moments. Candidates were generally able to identify the transformation in Pip and Magwitch's relationship and wrote about Magwitch's selflessness and his desire to see Pip 'a gentleman'. The strongest responses investigated the subversion of societal norms and expectations around a 'convict'. These answers understood that Magwitch is metaphorically the real 'gentleman' and commented on the narrator's regret in his former attitude towards both Magwitch and Joe. Strong answers also commented on some of the writing features such as the colloquial language used by Magwitch and repeated endearments such as 'dear boy'. Some noted the significance of the 'setting sun'. Less successful answers tend to track through the extract and did not explore the detail closely enough.

Question 12

The few candidates who selected this question showed some understanding of the relationship between Joe and Pip. Some explored the rift in the relationship, blaming Pip for being ashamed of his humble origins but noting that later Pip regrets this, and that the relationship is mended. Many candidates wrote about the relationship on a surface level, and there were few examples of looking deeper into the real motivations of Pip's desperation to be seen as a gentleman, or his desire to disassociate himself from the home of his upbringing. Most candidates simply condemned Pip and his treatment of Joe. Most answers needed to include a response to writing features, for example, characterisation, the detailed physical descriptions, or Pip's internal conflicts. A few candidates used the extract to draw points from, resulting in a limited answer. A handful of candidates confused Joe with Magwitch.

Question 13

Most candidates understood why the moment is memorable, noting the narrator's guilt and embarrassment, Mrs Danvers's power over the narrator and Maxim's reactions. They understood how insecure the narrator felt owing to the oppressive behaviour of Mrs Danvers and the insensitivity of Maxim. Stronger answers explored the relationship between the narrator and Maxim, noted the narrator's thoughts and feelings and explained how these linked to events later in the novel. Stronger answers also dealt with the dynamics of the household – of the reactions of Robert for example – and understanding the reasons why he would feel so upset at the accusations. The build-up of tensions surrounding innocence and manipulation of situations by Mrs Danvers was also explored. Less successful answers lapsed into retelling the passage and had limited knowledge of the text overall. A few candidates at the bottom levels simply narrated the events in the passage and did not realise that the narrator remains unnamed throughout the novel.

Question 14

The few candidates who chose this question had firm ideas about Maxim, mostly negative. They identified Maxim as an upper-class gentleman but disapproved of his insensitivity towards the narrator and his dominating nature in the beginning. Many felt it was morally wrong to kill Rebecca. There were very few responses that offered a holistic portrayal of his character or discussed his dependence on the narrator after

his confession. Generally, there was little textual support and hardly any response to writing features. A few candidates used the extract to draw points from, which resulted in limited answers.

Question 15

Successful answers explored the passage in detail, drawing out many points to show the impact of Mrs Dubose's words on both children. They noted the escalation of Mrs Dubose's attacks, from general rudeness to specific racial slurs and they understood the deeper racial implications. Some stronger answers considered the conflict within Jem, between trying to live up to his father's moral code and his outrage at the racist insults. They explored in detail the different reactions of both children. Higher level answers appreciated writing features such as Lee's use of physical description to show emotional impact, the narrative perspective and the use of racist language. Less successful answers focused mainly on plot summary rather than analysing Lee's specific techniques for depicting emotional impact. Some candidates failed to engage with the significance of this moment in Jem's character development. Others combined the reactions of Jem and Scout, when clearly their reactions are very different, and some missed out on Scout's reactions entirely. Some candidates' responses commented on the background to racial prejudice but to the detriment of focusing on the question.

Question 16

Many candidates showed knowledge and some understanding of Bob and Mayella. In general, candidates highlighted Mayella's confusion, vulnerability and poverty. Bob Ewell's character was identified as rough and crude, and nearly all candidates portrayed him in a negative manner. The most successful answers remained focused on the characters during the trial and explored their actions and motives in depth. For example, they recognised Mayella's manipulations and contradictions but also considered how she was a victim of her father's abuse. They analysed Lee's contrasting characterisation of the two Ewells, noting Bob's aggressive confidence versus Mayella's confusion. These successfully discussed Lee's use of dialogue and speech patterns to reveal character and social class. Less successful responses tended to focus on plot events rather than analysing Lee's characterisation techniques. Some of these did not distinguish between the two characters, treating them as a single entity. Some candidates simply mentioned the theme of racism as linked to Tom Robinson, projecting Atticus as a tool for change, with no direct reference to Bob and Mayella Ewell. A few did not focus on the trial, presenting straightforward character sketches. Other weaker responses digressed by writing at length about racism in the book rather than focusing on the trial.

Question 17

The few candidates who chose this question showed understanding of how the moment is disturbing. Candidates picked out the disturbing implications of both the language and the behaviour of the girls. They commented on the eeriness of the girls falling into a deep sleep at once, their 'sliding over the stones' as if they were hypnotised by a greater power, and Edith's alarm at their behaviour. They noted Edith's panic: her 'terrified cries' and how she runs 'stumbling and screaming.' There was some effective commentary on the imagery of the rock as a dangerous place, the 'monolith rising up ahead like a 'monstrous egg', the unusual and 'queer' creatures on the rock and the 'colourless twilight'.

Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

Stronger responses explored the panic and chaos of this extract in detail and clearly understood the drama in the scene. They commented on the heroism of the brother and the futility of grasping for the coins, putting life in danger. Several candidates analysed the contrast between individual human suffering and the larger catastrophe. These more successful answers appreciated writing effects such as Wells' use of graphic, visceral imagery to depict the chaos and violence of the fleeing crowd, how he builds tension through pacing, his detailed descriptions of the injured man and his use of multiple perspectives and characters to create a wide view of disaster. Less successful answers tended to summarise events rather than analyse the dramatic techniques; some did not focus on the question but wrote in general about the scene. Several moved away from the text itself and commented in excessive detail on Britain's colonialism. Many mentioned the social message about greed and Capitalism but did not link their comments to the question.

Question 20

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

The few who answered this question generally showed understanding of the sadness of the story: that Rosie is unable to recognise Atilla. Some candidates expressed disapproval for Atilla's actions as a young man. Stronger responses explored his deep regret of the past, his hope for reunion with Rosie and his dismay at her condition. These answers appreciated Forna's use of small, telling details to convey emotion, such as the hand holding and Rosie's pat on Atilla's arm. Less successful responses focused mainly on plot summary rather than analysing Forna's techniques to create an emotional story. Some candidates did not engage with the full complexity of the situation, particularly the tragedy of unreciprocated recognition.

Question 22

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/21

Drama

Key messages

- Beginning a response with lengthy comments on social, political and biographical context, giving plot summaries, or listing the writer's techniques to be addressed, are unproductive ways to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points to gain further credit.
- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph. Attention was paid to the modifier, for example 'striking', to help them to select the most appropriate material to answer the question.
- Textual reference and quotation should support ideas, be relevant, concise, and analysed fully, demonstrating how the reference supports the point. Commenting on quotations chosen at random, without relating to context and linking to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- Candidates should be aware that punctuation cannot be seen by an audience, consequently commenting on punctuation per se, is unlikely to achieve reward unless explored in context with the content and effect included.
- 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. Any reference to the whole text should arise from the extract and question and should not be excessive.
- Successful discursive responses remained focused on the question and selected a range of precise textual references from across the whole text to support ideas.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge, enjoyment and engagement with their set texts, demonstrating understanding of the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed recall and appreciation of texts, and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, along with the dramatic impact writers achieved. There were responses seen to all texts although the new set texts, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shelagh Delaney's, *A Taste of Honey*, were less popular. The most popular text, across all components, was *A Streetcar Named Desire* followed by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There were fewer responses seen to *Death and the King's Horseman*: centres are reminded that this text will be replaced on the set syllabus texts in 2026, by Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should begin to answer the question immediately. However, some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, plot summaries, and lists of themes and literary devices to be covered, before referring to the question. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage is a helpful way to begin. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'dramatic' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text.

In essay-based questions, a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points, is a helpful introduction, before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Often, introductions featured valid ideas which were then not covered. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; recalling knowledge of a text or character, but without focusing on the term in the question, is unlikely to achieve high reward. Candidates are reminded not to refer

to line numbers instead of quoting from the text, as this limits opportunities for analysis of the ways writers achieve effects.

The most successful answers had an awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage and that characters were constructs, created by the writer, and not real people. They referred to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. They explored stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the texts' main concerns and to outline their own, or propose other audience members', responses. The best responses 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. Exclamation marks cannot be seen by an audience and not all exclamation marks mean that the character shouts that line. Weaker candidates gravitated towards punctuation rather than the central ideas or accompanying speech. Whilst relevant to the organisation of dialogue, punctuation must be considered in context and the effect explored otherwise the comment is meaningless.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of 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.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to 'feature spot' without relating details to a developing argument. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; the construction of an argument is key, with techniques used to illuminate how authors convey their ideas. Candidates should avoid stating the obvious, for example, the writer uses 'diction', 'lexis' or 'vocabulary', and should consider the effects achieved by specific language choices. Whilst watching a live performance is informative in conveying the dramatic impact of the written text, candidates are reminded that there is no requirement to write about different stage performances they have seen; responses should be firmly rooted in the text.

A large number of candidates answered the **(b)** essay question solely by referring to the extract featured in **(a)** or labelled their answer **(a)** but applied the question prompt for **(b)** as if they had misread the instruction. This inevitably led to a limited range of material. Centres should remind their candidates that the a) and b) questions are separate choices.

On Paper 2, most candidates were clear about the exam requirement and answered one passage-based question and one discursive. However, there was an increase in rubric infringements where candidates answered two passage-based questions or two answers on the same text. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded. Centres are reminded to refer to the syllabus requirements at the start of the course. Candidates should remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of the response.

Lower attaining responses in this series were often markedly brief, offering a few observations with a little support but without the development or range that would enable them to access the higher levels.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

Comments on specific questions

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 1

- (a)** All candidates were able to engage with the character of Geof and made relevant comments on his caring qualities, his practicality ('*your mother should know*') and his concern for Jo ('*you can not be on your own*'), sometimes criticising his attitude to abortion or alternatively asserting that he is prioritising Jo.

More developed responses clearly established the context of the extract, Jo having been abandoned by both her mother and Boy, and were able to comment on how Geof's personality and supportive relationship with Jo provides both a dynamic contrast to Helen in the play, and also an unusually progressive portrayal of a man at this time. They highlighted his emotional intelligence and direct talking, recognising Jo's pregnancy and low spirit ('*I thought so 'a bit depressed*') and commented on his bolstering Jo's self-esteem in his comment '*you can do without make-up*' and his frank '*I like you*'. They evidenced and explored the contrast of his forward-thinking optimism ('*You'll be your usual self soon*') with Jo's pessimism.

A small number of stronger responses explored the shift in the mood of the extract, from gloomy to upbeat, and how the characters identify with each other as '*unique*' and outsiders, strikingly marking the effect Geof will have on Jo's wellbeing within the narrative. Some made succinct reference to the social context and attitudes to teenage pregnancy and homosexuality alongside Delaney's critique of social deprivation and marginalisation, but without excessive departure from the material in the extract and the developing relationship presented here. On the whole, there were few answers which were able to comment on elements of language beyond Geof's use of questions, or attempted to deal with the vernacular exaggeration of the final lines of the extract where Geof and Jo chime in exclamatory fashion. One candidate noted how they reciprocate and bounce off each other, echoing each other's exuberance, albeit possibly ironically, but offering a dramatic contrast with Helen's cynicism.

Weaker responses focused on Geof's sexuality, despite this not really featuring in the extract, and tended to paraphrase his lines or repeat the point of his being a caring character without any development. They were vague regarding the context of the scene and Jo's situation, giving little sense of the play's concerns or characters beyond the exchange featured here.

- (b) All responses showed some knowledge of Helen and Jo's relationship, recognising Helen as neglectful and uncaring towards Jo and also cruel in her rude belittling of her daughter. Some candidates discussed her many affairs and how these had led to an unstable childhood for Jo. There was valid, if often quite generalised, support from the text including instances of both physical neglect and mental abuse, some proposing a role reversal where Jo shows more maturity and care than Helen with regard to alcohol and others recognising the irony of her calling Jo a '*silly little whore*'. Some noted Helen's lack of knowledge of Jo's artistic abilities, in effect overlooking her daughter's qualities, and her inability to provide good housing or food, sarcastically advising Jo to cut out food from her diet. Many demonstrated a strong personal response to her blunt comments on Jo's pregnancy and her mixed race baby, some effectively relating this to social context and attitudes to both race and illegitimacy.

A few stronger responses explored Helen's self-awareness and the occasions in the play when she is honest about her own weaknesses and shortcomings, never professing to be a '*proper mother*' and declaring herself '*self-centred*' but clearly reluctant for Jo to repeat her mistakes. Some offered a little counterbalance to the question and cited her return to the flat, her offer of financial help and support and '*lovely things for the baby*', her urging '*antenatal*' care, a hospital birth and drawing attention to Jo's '*stalks*' for arms. One noted Helen offering to pay for Jo to attend '*art school*' before swiftly shifting to '*I do not care about you*', creating a more complex picture of this relationship. Some interpreted Helen's return as solely self-seeking, following Peter's rejection of her and others considered the lack of certainty in the ending and her curt, perhaps unconvincing, reassurance that she would come back from the pub. Some effectively considered the character in the social context of limited opportunities for women and the genre of the kitchen sink drama. Only the strongest responses dealt fully with AO3 and very few commented on the banter and humour of Helen and Jo's interactions ('*we enjoy it*') or the drama of the text.

Weaker responses recalled, and gave a personal response to, some of the character's actions, for example leaving Jo for Peter and his '*wallet full of reasons*', but offered limited textual support and engagement with language and effects.

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

Question 2

- (a) All candidates who responded were able to draw out the ways in which the women teased and humiliated Amusa, making him seem a ridiculous figure. The stage directions of peeping under the '*baggy shorts*' of the '*embarrassed*' constable and the '*roar*' of laughter were often cited. Stronger

responses engaged with dialogue and the bawdy sexual innuendo in the women's mockery of Amusa, his supposed lack of 'manhood', and how this emphasises his emasculation and weakness. They recognised the on-stage tussle and how the women outnumber and overpower the trio. Some addressed the 'serious' part of the question proposal by commenting on how Amusa's formal tone and threats of '*weapons*' and '*reinforcement*' gave a graver tone but some more developed responses noted how the repeated warnings, reaching Amusa's exasperated '*for the last time*', are ineffectual and still undermined by the women, making him more of a laughing stock.

Only the strongest responses drew out the serious aspects and deeper implications of the extract in detail, focusing on the subservience of Amusa and his constables to the colonialists and their role in suppressing the Yoruba people. They identified the portrayal of the women as guardians of tradition ('*the cloth-lined steps*') and both their scathing comments ('*you ignorant man*') and their more elevated language to convey the importance of those traditions to the Yoruba. Very few drew attention to '*the road your father built*', signifying Amusa's abandonment of the community and traditions his ancestors had created. Many did not reach these closing lines of the extract and only one highlighted the ominous last line alluding to '*our son*' returning from overseas to answer the call of '*blood*' and tradition.

Weaker responses were narrative in approach and often focused on the broad comedy but did not contextualise the passage and gave limited focus to the 'serious' element of the question. Brief reference to the significance of the extract in the wider play would enable candidates to demonstrate understanding of deeper implications.

- (b) The majority took the 'how far...' stem of the question as a cue to say they had sympathy for the character. All responses were able to discuss how Elesin had failed to carry out his ritual duty though not all were sure of the exact nature of his role in the Yoruba tradition. There was also some vagueness and insecurity of knowledge regarding Simon Pilkings' role in disrupting the ritual and how far Elesin's own actions helped to orchestrate his downfall.

Only a small number of responses discussed Elesin's role across the whole play, pointing out his arrogance and hubris. A few responses commented on the character being selfish, taking an already-betrothed bride and ignoring Iyalajah's warnings (his '*restless eye*'), contesting the idea of his being a sympathetic figure. They recognised the combination of his being tied to earthly pleasures and the interference of colonial authority in propelling events. Stronger responses explored the sadness of Elesin's relationship with Olunde, drawing out how the rejection by his son ('*I have no father, eater of leftovers*') evokes pathos. Only the strongest responses discussed the abject figure Elesin becomes by the end of the play in his shame and isolation and were able to precisely reference Soyinka's presentation, his collapsing '*at Olunde's feet*' and '*sobbing into the ground*'. Very few responses included Elesin's suicide.

Weaker responses lacked textual detail and gave a generalised impression of Elesin's character and events of the play. Some shifted the focus of the question to Simon Pilkings' attitudes and role in disrupting the ritual but with limited focus on how far Elesin's own actions are seen to contribute to his plight, leading to narrow responses which saw him solely as a victim. All could offer a personal response to the question but the sparse textual detail relating to the presentation of Elesin himself meant that many stayed at a basic level.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) This question prompted many strong and engaged responses. Most candidates could comment on the dramatic tension between the characters, Blanche's visible anxiety and vulnerability before Stanley's confident interrogation, her attempts to deflect questions, and her subsequent urgent interaction with Stella as Stanley leaves.

Most responses picked up the significance of the opening discussion of astrological signs leading to Stanley revealing his '*contempt*' for Blanche's pretence of purity. Some noted this shift from apparent small talk to a tense atmosphere and were informed by contextual knowledge that Stanley has overheard Blanche's damning view of him as '*an animal*', illuminating Blanche's exclamatory reference to '*– the goat!*' and marking this moment as the beginning of Stanley's revenge.

Most grasped that Blanche was afraid of having her past revealed but some were unable to progress much beyond giving examples of her anxiety or explaining her reputation at the Flamingo, something of which the audience is not aware at this point. Stronger responses, however, considered the audience experience, the subtext of Stanley's apparently innocent questions which are nevertheless menacing for Blanche, the suspicions aroused by Blanche's evasiveness, and resultant tension and expectation of dramatic events to follow.

More successful responses were able to engage with details of both language and stagecraft productively, noting elements such as the contrast between Blanche's elevated discourse to disguise an unacceptable reality (*'perfume'*, *'establishment'*) and conversely Stanley's direct and dismissive *'that stuff'* to refer to Blanche's marker of her status; the legalese (*'some other party'*) and veiled threat in Stanley's interrogation; the ominous murmur of thunder, perhaps relating to the spread of *'unkind'* gossip or the storm clouds brewing; and the proleptic irony of Stanley's subsequent birthday gift – not expensive perfume but a ticket back to Laurel. There was also thoughtful attention paid to Blanche's use of the cologne-dampened handkerchief to signal the precise phases of her distress or to signify attempts to purify herself or mask the whiff of scandal.

The strongest responses perceptively drew out deeper implications directly related to details of the extract, such as the threat to Blanche's entire identity implied in Stanley's attempt to uncover her past, the double standard judging her but not the 'Shaws' at the Flamingo, and the intense competition between Stanley and Blanche for both Stella's attention and mastery of the household. Moreover, the use of secondary characters, Steve and Eunice, and the cycle of fighting and making up, enabled some candidates to address the attendant critique of social and gender stereotypes, and the play's wider treatment of the relationship between love/desire and violent coercion. There was interesting discussion of the implications of Stanley's refusal to kiss Stella – a resistance to being seen as vulnerable, a comment on Blanche's intrusion or a display of masculine control – all valid interpretations given credit. Some wrote perceptively that this scene captures the contrast between Stanley's distrust and Stella's sisterly loyalty, which prefigures the escalating conflict, something which Blanche already clearly fears.

Weaker responses tended to focus largely on the stage directions and exclamatory speech but with more limited focus on what the characters actually say. Stage directions conveying Blanche's anxiety were frequently cited but often paraphrased, for example *'afraid'* shows she is afraid with less focus on how or why Stanley creates this fear, or how the audience themselves feel. Less successful answers tended to write about themes or previous areas of focus, such as reality versus illusion, the 'Old South' versus the 'new America', or Stanley as an animal, but this was unhelpful without anchorage to the extract.

There were some surprising misreadings: in the 1950s, GOAT did not stand for Greatest of All Time; some candidates interpreted Blanche as attempting to seduce Stanley here, or already having an affair with Stanley which she was trying to hide from Stella. There were lengthy speculations about the symbol of flamingos which detracted from the focus. Blanche's final questions were often unconvincingly developed as many thought she was shouting at Stella. Some rigidly, and unhelpfully, approached the text in terms of Greek tragedy, hindering their achievement: this scene is not a good example of stichomythia, hamartia, peripeteia or anagnorisis, and candidates who tried to read the scene solely in these terms again lost the focus on 'tension' and the audience experience.

Most significantly, a large number of candidates treated **Question 3** as a combination of the essay prompt and the extract, writing about how Blanche was a victim in the extract only and thereby limiting their range and achievement.

- (b) The quality of responses varied considerably and was largely determined by the precision and range of textual support given. Most candidates agreed that Blanche is portrayed as a victim and discussed Stanley's cruel treatment, the death of her husband and the loss of Belle Reve and how these events collectively led to her fragility.

Many candidates discussed how Stanley's aggression and violence contributed to the pitiful figure Blanche presents in certain moments and particularly at the end of the play, some referencing Stanley's dramatic physicality versus Blanche's fragile moth-like appearance. Some precisely explored his rifling through her possessions and his physical and verbal cruelty, foreshadowing the final *'menacing'* assault and the horror of his subjecting *'her inert figure'* to rape. Some developed

this exploration of power relations to consider Stella's desertion, her denial of the rape, her collaboration with her husband, and her lies about the doctor's identity thereby consolidating Blanche's status as an impotent victim of Stanley's superior influence and command.

Some stronger responses argued that Blanche powerfully presents herself as a victim or injured party when accusing Stella of deserting Belle Reve to cope with the '*Grim Reaper*', her plaintive recollection of her first lost love and her claim that Stanley and Mitch have been '*deliberately cruel*' to her, some of which could be perceived as a refusal to be accountable for her own actions. Others considered that she subjects herself to, and is a victim of, stereotypical ideas of femininity, purity and physical attractiveness which are unsustainable. This enabled them to discuss her delusional romanticism, the symbolism of her paper lantern and her need for jewels and perfume to face the world. Some saw her as a victim of society's values and double standards, the sexual politics of a woman's only currency being her physical appeal. Others considered that Blanche might be seen as a casualty of the historical and social landscape changing and that she is presented as incongruous and struggling to fit in with this new post-war setting. Such interpretations, when supported by relevant textual detail and Williams' language and effects, were rewarded. Many saw her as a victim of a past that she cannot escape, the stronger responses recognising and analysing the haunting sounds and lighting effects Williams dramatically and expressionistically employs to signify Blanche's vulnerability and trauma.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the character and used references to her clothes, the paper lantern and her illusions but struggled to tailor such material to the question of 'victim', meaning relevance was often less convincing. Such responses became generalised character sketches but lacked focused analysis of how Blanche is dramatically shown to be an injured or impotent figure in specific moments of the play. When establishing Stanley's toxic masculinity, the focus on Blanche herself was sometimes rather obscured. Some weaker candidates wholly challenged the proposal, seeing Mitch as a victim of her lies or that she victimised young men, but with limited consideration of the character's motivation or without eliciting deeper implications. A significant number of candidates answered the question by drawing exclusively on the extract provided for discussion in **Question 3 (a)**, which obviously limited the range of textual references they used.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates understood the context of the passage and were able to identify some relevant elements such as Puck's error as the catalyst for the unfolding situation and the drama of the conflict between Hermia and Demetrius, producing fairly developed responses with some textual support. Many responses swiftly established the context of the comic confusion and focused well on the exchange between Hermia and Demetrius, discussing the highly emotional language which characterised it: Hermia's desperate reaction to Lysander's disappearance ('*kill me too*'), her professions of love and ironic faith in Lysander ('*the sun was not so true unto the day*'), and Demetrius' dismissive response to her anguish. Some considered Demetrius's delayed revelation that he has not killed Lysander as prolonging the drama, and the violent and alliterative language he uses to express Hermia's '*stern cruelty*' and '*breath so bitter*' alongside the classical allusion to Venus as dramatically displaying his continued devotion. The strongest answers responded in detail to Hermia's angry diatribes ('*out dog!*'), Demetrius's blunt disdain for Lysander's '*carcass*' or the grand scope of Hermia's metaphorical language. One even noticed the half line to mark the dramatic climax of Hermia's plea.

With regard to deeper implications, there were some strong discussions of the scene's contribution to the play's presentation of the fickleness and unpredictability of love, the tragicomic take on the theme of infidelity and love's potential for dangerous transformations. Candidates recognised the dramatic and apparently tragic nature of the discourse, with '*bitter*' accusations of '*murder*', but recognised the audience's secure knowledge and the dramatic irony. One recognised the tragic potential of Hermia misperceiving her lover's death and impulsively being prepared to die '*too*', linking the scene to Pyramus and Thisbe, another tragedy later to be afforded comic treatment. Some stronger responses explored what the dialogue reveals about both characters, Hermia and Demetrius, within the social and gender expectations of the day ('*maiden's patience*' '*O brave touch*') as well as the generic standards of Shakespearean comedy and courtly love.

Weaker responses stayed very much at the surface of the text, tending to rely on narrative summary, or spending overlong establishing the earlier chain of events leading to this moment. There was some confusion over Lysander's fate and how much the audience already knows. Many ignored the opening section and few recognised the dramatic element of the fairies witnessing the unfolding drama and the anticipation of Oberon's response to Puck's mistake. Oberon's opening line was often misinterpreted as his delight in this mistake, rather than Titania's situation. Many weaker responses focused entirely on the dramatic nature of Hermia's mistaken assumption about Lysander's death and her frequent questions, and ended up repeating rather than developing their discussion or engaging with language. Some candidates wrote at length about rhyming couplets, but this did not contribute to their discussion of drama.

- (b) All candidates engaged agreed that the character warranted sympathy from audiences. All were able to discuss Titania's qualities of loyalty and compassion and her motivation in wishing to retain the changeling boy. Most candidates had an understanding of the conflict with Oberon over the child and asserted that Oberon's tricking of Titania with the love juice created sympathy for her. The more successful answers ranged across Titania's contribution to the play's ideas and did not narrow their focus to one aspect or particular scene.

Stronger candidates considered the drama of her opening scene, Titania's language revealing her close bond with the votress, her determined commitment to the boy (*'Not for thy fairy kingdom'*), creating an impression of sympathetic friends (*'laughed'* and *'gossiped by my side'*) rather than monarch and subject. They understood how the audience is positioned to feel antipathy for Oberon, given his manipulative and indignant reproach that she would dare *'cross her Oberon'*, his menacing intentions to *'torment'* and make her *'madly dote'* on some particularly *'vile thing'*, and his desire to humiliate Titania. The scenes featuring Titania's actual humiliation at the hands of Oberon were very rarely considered in any detail, with most candidates simply stating that she was made into a sympathetic figure here. Stronger responses could reference her ill-placed and ironic devotion to Bottom (*'what angel wakes me?'*) and how Puck draws attention to her folly (*'straightway love an ass'*), to Oberon's delight, which could be cause for sympathy or have comedic value, although such lighter effects were rarely considered. One candidate noted Oberon's proud boast of taking *'pleasure'* having *'taunted her'* and making her *'beg'*, reversing the opening power dynamic and awarding him the prize of the boy, thereby creating sympathy for Titania as a victim of injustice. Another recognised that even Oberon feels *'pity'* once he witnesses Titania crowning the *'hateful fool'* Bottom, encouraging the audience to feel the same sympathy.

With regard to deeper implications and themes from the wider play, there was much comment on patriarchy, the abuse of women and coercion and some assertion that she is in an unhappy marriage, but with few acknowledging the presentation of fairy monarchs at the end of the play, *'new in amity'*, fulfilling the conventions of the genre of comedy.

Weaker responses were narrative in approach and repeated the point of Titania being treated unfairly by Oberon, without development or range of material. There was little focus on the character beyond this opening scene and limited textual detail or consideration of language and effects.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify Antony's anger at what he saw as Cleopatra's betrayal of him and some were able to point to his abusive language (*'Foul Egyptian'* *'Triple-turned whore'*) and exclamations (*'Avaunt!'*) to illustrate his fury. There was some understanding of the context of the passage, that after being victorious against Caesar on land, Antony put his best forces to sea, and is now witnessing his fleet's surrender. The first 15 lines, Scarus' role and the stage directions of the Alarum did not feature in answers and few candidates engaged effectively with the language or put it in context of Antony and Cleopatra's tempestuous and volatile relationship in the wider play.

Stronger responses gave a greater range of suitable, supporting details from the extract to illustrate understanding of Antony's belief in Cleopatra's duplicity (*'false soul of Egypt'*), analysing the hyperbolic, insulting superlatives (*'the greatest spot of all thy sex'* *'most monster-like'*) and the violence of his wish for her foil, *'patient Octavia'*, to enact vengeance (*'plough thy visage up'*). One candidate recognised his anger or disappointment at his fleet who *'cast their caps up and carouse together'*, the hard consonants emphasising his bitterness. Only one candidate broadened their

response to consider Antony's anger at Caesar, '*this novice*', who is '*blossoming*' in contrast to himself, now '*bark'd*', or his anger at what he perceives is his gloomy fate ('*Fortune and Antony part here*'). The deeper implications of Antony's reflection on his own fall in favour ('*the hearts/That spaniel'd me at heels*') and his apportioning blame to Cleopatra ('*my charm*' '*spell*') for having '*beguil'd*' him, and his resistance to being accountable, were underdeveloped and most responses gave a narrow account of his angrily insulting Cleopatra alone.

Weaker responses either left the context of the moment unclear and remained vague regarding the events happening off stage or discussed historical matters at length which led to a narrative approach with limited focus on language or dramatic effects employed in the extract. Many remained at a surface level, identifying exclamations and abusive terms but without exploration of the significance of those insults or the implications regarding the characters or the wider play.

- (b) There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/22

Drama

Key messages

- Beginning a response with lengthy comments on the writer's life and times, giving plot summaries, or listing the writer's techniques to be addressed, are unproductive ways to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph. Attention was paid to the intensifier, to help them to select the most appropriate material to answer the question.
- Textual reference and quotations should support ideas, be relevant, concise, and analysed fully, demonstrating how the reference supports the point. Commenting on quotations chosen at random, without exploring the context and linking it to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- Candidates should be aware that punctuation cannot be seen by an audience, consequently commenting on punctuation per se, is unlikely to achieve reward unless explored in context with the content and effect included.
- 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 discursive responses remained focused on the question and selected a range of precise textual references from across the whole text to support ideas.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge, enjoyment and engagement with their set texts, demonstrating understanding of the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, were aware of the text as performance and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved. There were responses seen to all texts although the new set texts, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shelagh Delaney's, *A Taste of Honey*, were less popular. The most popular text, across all components, was *A Street Car Named Desire* followed by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There were fewer responses seen to *Death and the King's Horseman*; centres are reminded that this text will be replaced on the set syllabus texts in 2026, by Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should begin to answer the question immediately. However, some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, plot summaries, and lists of themes and literary devices to be covered, before referring to the question. This often resulted in responses with tenuous links to the actual question so lacked the relevant textual detail to meet the criteria for the higher levels. There is no requirement for candidates to write a thesis statement or to retell the plot before answering the specific question.

In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage is a helpful way to start an answer. It is also helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'dramatic' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. The selection of the most relevant material and

issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text, without focusing on the terms of the question, is unlikely to achieve high reward. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text, as this limits opportunities for analysis of the ways writers achieve effects.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage informed the most successful answers. The most successful candidates understood that characters were constructs, created by the writer, and not real people. They referred to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. They were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts and to outline their own, or propose other audience members', responses. The best responses 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. Exclamation marks cannot be seen by an audience and not all exclamation marks mean that the character shouts that line. Punctuation is relevant in so far as it organises speech but any comment on the use of punctuation has to be analysed in context and the effect explored otherwise the comment is meaningless.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of 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. Similarly, beginning a paragraph with a reference or quotation rather than supporting a point does little to develop an argument effectively.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms that are not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. These can be relevant but only if related to the ideas conveyed in the text. Candidates should avoid stating the obvious, for example, the writer uses 'diction', 'lexis' or 'vocabulary', and should focus on analysing specific language and the effects achieved. Whilst watching a live performance of their chosen texts is informative in conveying the dramatic impact of the written text, candidates are reminded that there is no requirement to write about different stage performances they have seen; responses should be firmly rooted in the text.

Most candidates were clear about the exam requirement and answered one passage-based question and one discursive. However, there was an increase in rubric infringements where candidates answered two passage-based questions or two answers on the same text. In this case, both essays were marked but only the higher mark awarded. Centres are reminded to refer to the Syllabus requirements at the start of the course. Candidates should remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of the response and be made aware that mislabelled questions will be amended by the Examiner and, where appropriate, the rubric penalty applied.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

Comments on specific questions

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 1

- (a) This was the least popular text but unsurprisingly as this is its first year of examination. Few answers gave context to this moment and why Helen was there with many focusing entirely on Peter, overlooking the other characters' lines. Most answers considered the arguing to be dramatic and explored the drama of Helen and Peter's relationship. Peter's drunken antics provide a good deal of drama in this scene that is not difficult to explain or illustrate, and most candidates focused mostly on him, often to good effect but also to the detriment of exploration of the other characters. His singing, swearing, clumsiness, and rudeness to all the others on stage, provide a wealth of

relevant material, and many candidates achieved highly by quoting and commenting on key instances.

The most successful answers focused on 'dramatic' both in the written text – the arguing, insults, swearing – and in the action on stage – Peter's initial sudden and unexpected entrance and his drunken singing. His behaviour was considered humorous and disgusting in equal measure. Better answers explored Delaney's black humour and the stage directions with the 'loud crash' offstage and his drunkenness, singing and falling over and derogatory comments to all. Most answers expressed outrage at Peter's attitude to Helen, Jo and Geof, with his vulgar, abusive comments and could explore some of the language. His prejudices, homophobia and sexism and unkindness to Jo as an unmarried, expectant young girl, are openly displayed, and most candidates were alert to the writer's intentions here.

The best responses explored closely his discriminatory language, for example his insulting and salacious comments to and about Helen, while less successful answers wrote more generally about what his remarks say about gender politics in the 1950s without precise focus on the language he uses. They noted Jo's increased restraint suggesting her character development and the ironically dismissive treatment of Geof, given his importance to Jo and the calm he has brought to the flat. Some perceptive responses also commented on how Peter seems to be actively enjoying himself here, receiving sadistic pleasure from his performance, understanding the reference to the Oedipus story – how he too had married an older woman (Helen being old enough to be his mother) and understanding how unlike Oedipus he had 'only scratched out one' of (his eyes), a reference to him losing the sight of an eye.

Weaker answers focused on background information, the text as an example of a 'Kitchen-sink drama' with attempts to contextualise this moment in terms of the play's themes; the status of women in society and how attitudes to homosexuality have changed since the play was written. These responses often become quite general, losing focus on the question and the passage, making assertions without providing close textual reference in support. Attempts to explore the text focused on Peter being drunk and rude, quoting 'Jezebel' and 'bubble belly' but without understanding how they were insulting or indicative of deeper attitudes.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Some wrote a character study, all they knew about Geof: his homosexuality; his caring, maternal nature and the happiness he brings into Jo's life but without addressing how this contributes to the dramatic impact. All candidates were aware that homosexuality was considered a crime in the 1950s and the most successful answers were sympathetic to the problems this created for him, exploring his desire for a happy family life with Jo, linking this to his dramatic impact. They were able to identify how they were both social misfits and how that affected their place in life and the limited opportunities they would be afforded because of their identity or circumstance. Better answers contrasted him with Helen and her treatment and abandonment of Jo and how he dramatically invites Helen back into Jo's life, with the unforeseen consequences for himself. They explored what he brings into Jo's life and how he benefits from their relationship with acceptance, partnership and family life.

Less successful answers found it difficult to recall sufficient textual detail other than Helen and Peter's rudeness to Geof whilst some simply used the passage for 1(a) to list things Peter says to him without other detail. Some gave a lengthy outraged personal response to their attitudes towards Geof and homosexuality in general without addressing the question or supporting ideas. Others focused on how they felt sorry for Geof, retelling his relationship with Jo, and with stereotypical comments on how gay men were intrinsically more caring than others.

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

Question 2

- (a) There was good understanding of the text with insightful analysis of how Soyinka makes this pivotal scene so shocking. The most successful briefly contextualised the passage and how Amusa's unsuccessful attempt to arrest Elesin had resulted in Pilkings being called from the ball to deal with the disturbance, at the same time as Olunde arrives to bury his father. They showed understanding of the tensions and cultural conflict at the heart of this scene, particularly the shock surrounding Elesin's failure to fulfil his ritual duty, and the emotional aftermath between father and son. Many commented insightfully on Elesin's shame and fall from honour, recognising the dramatic contrast between his earlier role and his current humiliation, exemplified by Olunde's words: '*I have no*

father, eater of leftovers,’ but only the best answers demonstrated a clear understanding of his words.

The best answers noted the understatement of Pilkings’ reference to the *‘affair’* and *‘crisis’*, his motivation in keeping *‘His Highness’* happy and the role reversal with the final shocking image of Elesin, sobbing in the dirt with the *‘light’* fading. They explored the dramatic effect of offstage voices, which inform both the audience, Olunde and Jane of what has happened. They recognised the dramatic contrast of the commotion and stage directions of Elesin’s, *‘bellowing’* and *‘powerful steps’* against Olunde’s frozen stance and silence – perhaps conveying Olunde’s realisation of what this means for his father and his people, and of course his own fate and what he now must do, emphasised by how *‘walks slowly’* and with intent along *‘the way’* his father had run.

Less successful answers spent too much time retelling the plot, the presentation of Simon Pilkings or colonial issues and Jane’s comforting of Olunde, but did not reach the most shocking part. These tended to work through the passage either paraphrasing events, or adopting a linear approach, rather than focusing on the most relevant material making this moment so shocking. There was limited focus on discussing the language or stage directions. Assertions were made, for example, Elesin *‘shows shame’* but no exploration or development as to why.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question with only the most successful answers addressing Jane Pilkings’ dramatic impact in the play. Most answers identified her as a contrast to Pilkings, a more culturally sensitive and humane version of colonialism. She was seen as a supportive and dutiful wife but able to confront her husband, for example in the 1(a) passage where she screams: *‘Simon, tell them to leave him (Elesin) alone’* and where she admonishes Simon for his views, *‘devious bastards’* on the locals. She was also seen as generally more sympathetic towards Amusa and Joseph in the Egungun costume scene. Though she does not understand Olunde’s story and view of death as one for the greater good of others, she at least attempts to understand the cultural importance of Yoruba tradition in contrast to Pilkings’ view of it as all *‘mumbo jumbo’*. Better answers commented on her complex role as both observer and reluctant participant in the colonial disruption of Yoruba customs. They tracked her development from typical colonial wife to a more nuanced and emotionally involved figure by the end of the play with her growing empathy and insight, such as her attempt to shelter Olunde and recognise the enormity of his loss (*‘poor orphan’*). A few insightful answers drew comparisons between Jane and Iyaloja and their dramatic impact suggesting similar issues of women in both cultures being controlled by powerful and flawed men.

Less successful responses struggled to find enough to say and go beyond a character study of Jane and her role as Pilkings’ wife. Some scenes were summarised with limited textual detail or engagement with the dramatic impact. She was seen as kind and sympathetic but without deeper exploration of her dramatic role.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) There were many critical and insightful responses which engaged with the text and question. The most successful briefly contextualised the passage, the break-up with Mitch and Stella is in hospital and, being alone with Blanche, this was the ideal moment for Stanley to challenge her *‘lies and conceit and tricks,’* with all the evidence needed to exact his revenge. There is much which is disturbing to explore and most candidates commented on the disturbing mental breakdown Blanche experiences adding to the cruelty of Stanley’s verbal and physical attack.

Most candidates understood the tensions and the dynamics between the characters and sympathised with Blanche in the face of the barrage from Stanley, commenting on Blanche’s lies unravelling and Stanley’s brutal disassembling of these. The contrast in the dialogue was noted with Blanche’s short responses and Stanley’s increasingly aggressive comments. The most successful answers commented in depth about the use of dialogue with well-selected references to support ideas. The domination of dialogue by Blanche at the start, Stanley’s short responses, then the dramatic change as the power dynamic changed was explored. Many candidates made relevant references to the themes and how the exchange addressed *‘delusion and reality’*. Very few understood *‘casting my pearls before swine’*, with literal explanations of the *‘pearls’* representing Blanche, and the *‘swine’*, Stanley and Mitch, leading to some unusual comments about pigs.

The best answers made critical comments on the punctuation, especially as Blanche begins to stutter and her use of broken or unfinished sentences that indicate her panic and fear. They recognised Stanley's metaphorical tearing of the '*paper lantern*' and reference to her '*worn out*' outfit and '*crazy crown*' as a disturbingly cruel exposure of Blanche's insecurities regarding appearance and class, compounding Mitch's actions in the previous scene. There was critical understanding of the disturbing aspects, and importance of the stage directions, the ominous lines as Stanley '*walks into the bedroom*' and '*goes into the bathroom and closes the door*' dramatically invading Blanche's previous areas of sanctuary. Much was made of the disturbing aspects of rape insinuated though some candidates argued that there had been a sexual attraction between them from the start and tended to undermine the significance of this disturbing act. The interpretation of '*lurid reflections*' was very different. Some saw these as Blanche hallucinating, her past catching up with her, her separation from the truth and Stanley's presence as the '*menacing form*'.

Less successful answers 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. Some wrote at length about William's life and family at the expense of writing about the actual extract and question. Attempts at exploring the dialogue and punctuation were perfunctory, with lists of the punctuation used, for example, exclamation marks and ellipsis but without understanding the context and effects achieved.

- (b) There was much thoughtful discussion of Stella's character and clear expressions of feelings about her. Successful answers maintained a close focus on the question and used a range of precise textual references from across the whole text. Better answers showed a nuanced understanding of Stella's internal conflict, torn between loyalty to her sister and dependence on Stanley. They saw the difficult situation Stella was in and her divided loyalties with her marriage to Stanley ultimately winning. These candidates supported arguments with apt quotations, for example: '*I could not believe her story and go on living with Stanley*', and analysed language and stage directions to show how Williams presents Stella's denial and vulnerability. Others highlighted that Stella was drawn to the 'animalistic sexual desire' between her and Stanley as the reason for her staying, concluding that she cannot be pitied by the audience because she is making the same mistake of choosing Stanley over her sister, who had advised that they run away, which later led to Blanche's downfall.

Many candidates felt sympathy for Stella but some were critical of her leaving Belle Reve and Blanche. Some responses considered Stella's limited options as a woman with a young child, dependent on her husband's money (as she tells Blanche that he gave her more money after the assault), thus eliciting audience pity given the societal expectations for women in homes at that time. A woman without a husband and with a baby will be out of options. There was understanding of her feelings of guilt, and distress, at the end of the play but some were very critical of her and argued that this was short lived as Stanley promptly consoles her.

Weaker responses were one dimensional, often outraged by Stanley's treatment but repetitive and assertive, seeing her as a pitiful victim of domestic violence. Such answers lacked sufficient textual support to offer a nuanced appraisal of the character and the range of responses she evokes.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) In weaker responses showed some misconceptions about language and whether characters spoke in blank verse or prose. Understanding was insecure with many saying the courtiers spoke in blank verse and the mechanicals in prose, and some responses were built solely around this and how it portrayed their social status, rather than focusing on the actual performance and the courtiers' response to it. The most successful answers engaged with the passage with a clear awareness of its place in the play and its contribution to the resolution. They made relevant comments on the 'play within the play' although a few candidates wrote extensively about 'metatheatrical' losing focus on the actual passage. There was effective comment on the chaotic and humorous performance of the mechanicals and the courtiers' interjections were generally understood to be rude and mocking but also encouraging in part.

There was a wide range of interpretations of Starveling's comment: '*All I have to say is to tell you*' with some saying he was standing up to the courtiers because of their interruptions whilst

others said that he was just trying to explain what he was doing and breaking both the fourth wall and his iambic meter. In terms of language, there was appropriate comment about Bottom's over-the-top performance with some candidates stating that he was a good actor. His monologue with its 'clunky rhymes', overuse of alliteration and oxymoron with his language more suited to the sun than the moon was often explored in detail. It was recognised that Pyramus is not interrupted, leading to Theseus and Hippolyta's more measured praise of his 'passion' that has held their attention.

The best answers explored the reversal of roles, where the courtiers are childish and unruly, versus the mechanicals' more formal, earnest manner and poetic form. They commented on the male courtiers' new unity and the silence of the female courtiers, Helena and Hermia, suggesting contentment or a restoration of 'order' and gender roles after their woodland release of emotion and voice. Some reflected on the submissive role of women at the time whilst recognising Hippolyta's higher status as the only female to join the male courtiers in commenting on the performance.

- (b) The wording of the question, 'How far' Shakespeare's portrayal of the characters made the audience feel they deserved their happy ending gave candidates the opportunity to offer a balanced view, offering reasons they agreed or disagreed. The most successful answers took this approach and there were some effective comments on Demetrius and Lysander and the extent to which they deserved their happiness. They balanced the differences between the two men at the start of the play and their attitudes towards Hermia, with the chaos in the woods and resolution at the end where the two pairs of lovers are finally united. Lysander was generally seen as brave and loyal, fighting for his love. Even under the influence of the love potion, he was considered romantic. Demetrius was much criticised for his attitude towards Hermia at the start of the play as his '*right*', his object. Some candidates were very critical of his treatment of Helena and the way he had changed from '*making love*' to her, to rejecting her. Many also felt that he had been very clear about his feelings to Helena and she was effectively 'stalking' him and felt some pity. The best answers were aware of the conventions of comedy and understood that the happy ending was inevitable, though some candidates argued that the ending was tempered by the fact that the juice sprinkled into the eyes of the characters by Puck had some bearing on the final outcome, and therefore there were some misgivings about whether not the characters' happiness was deserved.

Less successful answers treated them as almost the same character deserving of the same fate, or retold the plot with little reference to the question. Some omitted the events in the woods entirely and focused mainly on the beginning and the ending of the play. Characters were seen in simple terms, Lysander was loving so deserved his happiness but Demetrius being cruel to Helena did not. These answers lacked sufficient textual reference.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) There were many insightful responses to both questions and it was clear that most candidates enjoyed writing about this play. Most were aware of the power struggles at play within the triumvirate, as well as the reconciliation with Pompey. Context was established with the celebration of the peace treaty between the triumvirs and Pompey and the jovial mood of celebration with the drunken behaviour, juxtaposed with the serious threat of murder and the triumvirs being oblivious of Menas's plot to kill them. The most successful answers referred accurately to significant moments and quotations, and were able to comment insightfully on character motivations, political power struggles, and thematic concerns such as loyalty, betrayal, and ambition. They engaged with the drama and considered Menas's repeated attempts to engage Pompey, including cryptic comments about him being '*lord of the whole world*' and how this raised curiosity in the audience. The number of asides and whispering was considered as dramatic as evidence of deception and secrets amongst these 'equals'.

Discussions around power were often strong, with many candidates noting Menas's belief that Pompey could become an '*earthly Jove*'. This was developed to demonstrate how Pompey, being slow to understand, '*what say'st thou?*', suggested he would not be an effective world leader or have the bravery to be a Jove. His 'twisted' sense of honour was also closely examined. These ideas were typically well integrated into arguments about the play's dramatic tension. Better responses explored the hypocrisy regarding Roman concepts of honour and where similar celebratory behaviour in Egypt was condemned. Antony's mind being still on Egypt was

recognised, together with Lepidus' drunken folly and Caesar's more controlled manner, signifying their flawed union and the instability of the triumvirate.

Many weaker responses ignored the opening 16 lines but focused on the interaction between Menas and Pompey. Those who did, struggled with the crocodile scene and there was a lot of confusion over how the triumvirs would be poisoned and that Antony is threatening Lepidus with 'quicksands'. There were some comments on the 'crocodile' and the alliteration without securing it to the demands of the question. Similarly, a discussion of the significance of serpents did not help to meet the requirements of the question. However, most recognised what Menas was offering Pompey and his reasons for declining, considering him honourable, but without considering his final lines. There was a range of interpretations of the crocodile exchange but few understood Antony's nonsensical humour and the deeper implications of what this revealed about Lepidus.

- (b) Most answers had plenty to say about the many facets to Cleopatra's character. The more successful responses engaged with the wording of the question, particularly the word 'fascinating' and explored how fascination was created rather than just stating she was 'fascinating'. They considered Enobarbus's description of her allure and understood how her royal status is conveyed through the throne, purple, servants and authority, and how she is so attractive not only to people, but also to nature itself, the water and the wind. All candidates explored her relationship with Antony and how this conveyed her manipulative nature. The most successful answers selected their material well from across the text and selected the different sides to Cleopatra: her appearance and how her beauty eclipses the goddess Venus; the intensity of her love; how she manipulates Antony; how her ships flee battle at Actium and her regained nobility at her exotic death.

The best answers considered her swift mood swings and how she symbolises Egypt – the luxury, the exotic and leisure – in contrast to Rome's logic, discipline and restraint. Cleopatra's portrayal as a lover juxtaposing this with the Cleopatra, 'the leader of men' who had ultimate confidence in her actions away from her relationships with men.

Less successful answers focused more on Antony and considered his actions rather than Cleopatra's character. Most of the discussion centred around her control of Antony and what he gave up for her, demonstrating knowledge but without linking this to the question. Some made sweeping assertions without supporting textual reference, for example, she manipulates Antony, betrays Antony or 'she represents Egypt'.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/23 Drama
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Key messages

- Successful responses focused on the question terms and avoided introductions which consisted of extensive outlines of historical background or lists of the writer's themes. Effective conclusions were more than a repetition of earlier points.
- Brief and precise quotations which were analysed fully were the best form of textual support. Line numbers in the place of quotations should not be used.
- Contextualisation of the passage is important in passage-based responses, and selection of material from throughout the passage, including the ending, is essential. Close exploration of the language was a feature of successful passage-based responses.
- In successful discursive responses the question remained in focus and precise textual references were selected from throughout the text.
- If literary terms are identified, their intended effect on the audience should also be considered if the response is to progress.
- Successful responses showed an awareness of the text as drama and engaged with the impact of the play onstage.

General comments

Personal engagement with and enjoyment of the set texts was observed in most responses and an awareness of the texts as drama was often evident. A perceptive and sensitive approach to characterisation, stagecraft and language was a feature of effective responses.

There were two new texts this year, *A Taste of Honey* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Centres are reminded that *Death and the King's Horseman* will be replaced in 2026, by Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

Candidates should remain focused on the key terms of the question such as 'striking', 'entertaining', 'revealing' or 'disturbing' in order to produce a successful response. Making a brief plan before starting to write assists candidates in choosing relevant material from the text, and to help them to keep the question in mind. Annotation of the passage is always worthwhile as part of planning.

Engagement with the visual and aural impact on the audience was a feature of strong responses and referring to 'audience', rather than 'reader', and to 'play', rather than 'book', demonstrated this awareness. However, there is no requirement to outline recent stage productions of the play at length. This wastes valuable exam time which would be better spent focusing on the passage and question provided. Some less successful responses summarised the plot and listed facts about the play but with little or no focus on the question.

Contextualisation of the passage at the start is important in a passage-based response and is helpful in demonstrating an understanding of structure. Introductions should not consist of lengthy discussions of historical context, summaries of the plot or lists of literary techniques; but should briefly set the passage in context. The response should consider the key words in the question, the events of the scene and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience. Brief well-selected references should be analysed fully.

Effective discursive responses chose a range of material from the text as a whole and used brief, well-selected references to support ideas but many responses tended to point out literary techniques such as simile, metaphor or iambic pentameter without analysis of their effects. A detailed exploration of how the writer achieves his or her effects is an essential part of a well-developed response.

There were a few rubric infringements on Paper 23, where two passage-based questions or two discursive questions had been answered. A small number of candidates answered two questions on the same text.

Comments on specific questions

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates showed understanding of the extract's role as an introduction to the play, of Helen's lack of concern for her daughter's upbringing and well-being and of their poor living arrangements. There was some response to the 'banter' between Helen and Jo, understanding that it is more like the language in a conversation between friends rather than mother and daughter. Candidates commented that it shows the toxicity of the relationship and foreshadows what will happen when Helen leaves Jo when she marries Peter. The entertaining nature of Helen's use of the third person when referring to Jo was commented on and the use of sound effects being executed with comedic timing was noted by a few candidates who commented on how this creates a moment of light heartedness.

Candidates were able to show how the text is 'revealing' and made observations on the new flat being next to a slaughterhouse, with some responses seeing this as comic. Stronger responses were able to comment on Helen's dissatisfaction with the flat but noted that she has an understanding of her financial capabilities which shows her realistic outlook. The symbolism of the bulbs and of Jo's hopes for a better future were commented on, as was the fact that she has had to steal the bulbs. There was some useful comment on Jo longing to belong and feel recognised when she asks if any '*young people*' live nearby. Helen's ominous comment that the '*cool, dark place*' is '*where we all end up sooner or later*' was explored. Candidates also identified the interesting way that Helen refers to Jo in the third person and her innuendo in '*It was not his nose I was interested in*'.

Weaker responses lost focus and began to dwell on the general traits of the characters Jo and Helen throughout the play as opposed to their actions in the given passage. They did not refer to the context of the passage, of Helen and Jo moving to a new flat, and misunderstood the conversation, thinking that Helen and Jo have a fun relationship. There was some misunderstanding that when Helen says, '*silly cat*', she is referring to Jo, when in fact she is referring to '*that landlady's daughter*'. Some responses to this question seemed to treat the passage as if unseen, with misunderstanding of the characters and events, and with no contextualisation of the passage.

- (b) Most responses focused on women's reliance on men and on the theme of poverty. Amongst the stronger responses there was valid comment on women being objectified and having to shoulder the consequences of men's abusive behaviour towards them. They considered women as a marginalised group having little opportunity to improve their lives, hence Helen's dependency on men to survive. Jo, being abandoned by the father of her baby, is left to suffer the consequences of being an unmarried mother in a time when this status was not acceptable. Many candidates were able to recognise the moral context of the time by referring to Helen's observation of her daughter being '*a silly little whore*' and Jo's recognition of herself as being '*ruined*'. Responses that engaged with such language explored the helplessness and resignation of women who were crushed by the judgement of the society in which they lived, unlike the unreliable men they engaged with.

Some weaker responses focused more on Helen and Jo's relationship than on women's problems in general. Others were very generalised about women being financially dependent on men, of men being unreliable and abandoning women, with little close focus on the text.

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

Question 2

- (a) This passage was effective in engaging candidates of all abilities in the idea that the British couple show little understanding of, or respect for, the local culture and noted the ignorance they show when they wear the important Egungun tribal dress as a trivial dressing-up option.

Successful responses established the context of this moment, with reference to the prior focus on the Yoruba community and the Horseman ritual. They engaged with the different use of music in the two cultures—with the previous scene of joy and dancing among the Yoruba people in the marketplace with its rhythmic powerful drumming, contrasted with the staid *'tango playing from an old hand-cranked gramophone'*, in the Pilkings' residence. These responses identified Jane and Simon's disrespect for and lack of understanding of the local culture, illustrated vividly in their wearing of the Egungun costumes which are part of a solemn Yoruba ritual cult of the ancestors, while they dance the tango. Amusa's horrified reaction to this situation was discussed along with the fact that he cannot believe the desecration of religious rites of the Yoruba people, to which Simon and Jane seem oblivious. These responses discussed the power balance between Simon and Amusa and that, although Amusa has a responsible position in the local administration, Simon does not respect this and treats him in a patronising manner. Simon's language such as *'mumbo jumbo'* and *'nonsense'* was referenced to illustrate this lack of respect. The staging in this moment, with the description of the tango music, Jane and Simon dressed in *'some form of fancy dress'* and Amusa knocking over the flowerpot, was referenced to explore the build-up of tension and the *'striking'* nature of what is being revealed in this moment of the play. This level of response often included an outraged sense of disgust at the Pilkings' behaviour. The strongest responses managed to recognise that Jane is not quite as obviously *'superior'* as Simon, and that she might have a restraining influence on her husband.

Weaker responses tended to be rather general and understanding remained at a surface level, providing little context about the Egungun costumes or Amusa's horrified reaction to their use as *'fancy dress'* by Simon and Jane. The lengthy stage directions at the beginning of the extract were often overlooked, missing the importance of Amusa's reaction, which is revealed to the audience before Simon and Jane even know that he is outside the window. Some responses confused Amusa with Joseph, and a few responses lost focus by concentrating more on historical context instead of the passage in question.

- (b) Most candidates showed knowledge of Olunde having moved to the UK to pursue his medical studies, Pilkings' assistance of Olunde in his plans, and Elesin's disapproval of this. There was some insight into Olunde's attitude to the Yoruba culture, and that although he has lived away from Nigeria, he retains an understanding and respect for the culture, travelling back with the intention of burying his father, who he assumes will have done his duty by now and committed ritual suicide. Olunde does not share Jane Pilkings' horror of this duty and indeed is ashamed when he realises that his father is still alive and has broken the cycle of life by failing to die.

The line, *'I have no father, eater of leftovers'*, was quoted in many responses to show Olunde's disgust that Elesin has not fulfilled his duty; and Olunde's suicide, taking his father's place in order to protect the community was admired in its attempt to restore family honour. Strong responses engaged with Olunde's appearance, *'like a ghost'* and the power of Elesin being confronted by the *'seeming statue'* of his son, immediately collapsing in grief and shame. Engagement with these elements of the staging of the passage showed a clear understanding of the text as performance.

Weaker responses relied heavily upon narrative and often showed confusion about the circumstances of Olunde's move to the UK. These responses rarely contained detailed textual support.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) Candidates of all abilities engaged effectively with the text and task. There was much worthwhile comment on the dynamics of Stella and Stanley's relationship and their contrasting attitudes to Blanche's arrival in their home and to the sale of Belle Reve. Successful responses contextualised the passage and established Blanche's arrival at the Kowalski home and her claim that Belle Reve

has been lost paying for the illnesses and funerals of various relatives. These responses showed a clear critical understanding of, and a sensitive response to the contrast between Stella's concern for her sister, her naivety and lack of interest in details about Belle Reve, Stanley's greed and determination to get what he thinks is his right under the 'Napoleonic code' and his determination not to be '*swindled*'. Stanley's dominance of Stella was described in one case as 'mansplaining the Napoleonic code', and his intent to '*enlighten*' her was often explored. Stella's frustration was understood and was referenced in her '*Shhh! she'll hear you*', which is dismissed by Stanley's, '*I do not care if she hears me.*'

The role of Stella as mediator, or a 'bridge' between Blanche and Stanley, was understood as was Stanley's volatility, which makes this role impossible. Many responses pointed out that Stanley's aggression and lack of care for Blanche foreshadows the later rape scene, with one candidate perceptively identifying that Stanley's nature is to 'pounce and attack', while Stella's is to avoid conflict, please people and smooth over difficulties. Stage directions '*ominously*' and '*vaguely*' were used to support these points. Stanley's repetition of '*So?*' and '*How?*' was understood to illustrate his determination not to show consideration for Blanche, and to pursue his greed and self-interest; and his sarcastic and mocking tone in '*Sister Blanche*', was noted. Strong responses also identified Stella's loyalty to her 'Kowalski present', particularly as she is pregnant, and her disassociation with her 'Dubois past', meaning that her concern about the loss of Belle Reve is minimal and not in the forefront of her mind. Strong responses interestingly discussed the irony of Blanche's '*captive maid*' song and its relevance to ideas about women being trapped by their dependence on men. Examples given were Stella's financial dependence on her husband and Blanche's state of being trapped within the Kowalski household due to her life circumstances.

Less successful responses often included a lengthy and general introduction, lingering on historical context: the Old versus New South, or gender roles, at the expense of a detailed response to the passage. Coverage of the passage was often narrow and consisted largely of straightforward comments about Stella's kindness and Stanley's dominance, with little exploration of a limited number of textual references. Some responses drifted to other parts of the play and sometimes contrasted Blanche, rather than Stella, with Stanley. They often wandered from the passage and discussed contemporary gender roles of male dominance and female compliance and how Stanley and Stella fit these roles. These comments were rarely rooted in the text and were at the expense of contextualising the passage or discussing the characters' reactions to Blanche's arrival in their home. Similarly, themes of the play such as illusion vs reality were often outlined with no textual support. There was some confusion with Stanley's word '*gander*' and 'gender'. The practical stage direction of Stella putting on her dress was often over-analysed and cited as evidence of her weakness and femininity.

- (b) Successful responses were able to outline the relationship between Blanche and Allan and there was an understanding of how young they both were when they fell in love and how Allan was everything to Blanche. The circumstances of Allan's suicide and its dramatic impact upon the rest of Blanche's life and her mental health was understood; the fact that Blanche never recovers from this and it creates her insecurities, with the belief that she has not only failed Allan but failed to uphold the idea of her role as a wife. The resulting guilt about Allan's death leads to her becoming promiscuous, seeking affection and validation from men after her rejection by Allan. One candidate commented that, 'Blanche has coped with the loss of one man by seeking solace in many others.' Examples of being sacked from her job for an affair with a young candidate and kissing the newspaper boy were all cited. There was understanding that Blanche's need for '*magic*' has doomed her to disillusionment in a world of harsh truths. The question allowed candidates to demonstrate their understanding of staging and performance with some effective observations on the motifs of light, Blanche's addiction to alcohol and the constant bathing, all reflecting her need for protection and avoidance of the harsh reality of her situation.

Strong responses also referenced staging features such as the Varsouviana polka and its haunting impact on Blanche's mental stability, as well as the gunshot recalling Allan's suicide. Relevant structural aspects of the play were discussed, particularly the way in which details of Blanche's relationship with Allan are gradually revealed, and the parallels that exist between this relationship and the relationship between Blanche and Mitch. Those candidates who recognised that Blanche's memories and emotions are equally as raw as the day Allan committed suicide, were able to engage with how an audience would feel sympathy for her. Strong responses linked Mitch's disgusted comments to Blanche with her own comments about Allan.

Weaker responses did not engage with the facts about Allan's homosexuality or his suicide and became rather general with little textual support or detail. These responses were often muddled and instead of focusing on Blanche and Allan, examined the relationship between Blanche and Stanley and/or Stella and Stanley instead.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates engaged with Helena's lack of self-worth and Demetrius's cruelty which create a disturbing moment.

In stronger responses, candidates contextualised the passage as following on from Helena's revelation to Demetrius of Hermia and Lysander's flight from Athens. These responses understood that Demetrius is now rejecting Helena after having previously been her suitor and is treating her in an ungentlemanlike manner, thus making his brash and cruel comments towards her even more disturbing. They engaged with the disturbing nature of this moment, expressing rage and disgust at Demetrius's treatment of Helena and understanding that what may have been amusing to an audience of Shakespeare's contemporaries is now disturbing to a modern audience. There was some recognition that both Demetrius and Helena are suffering from unrequited love at this point in the play and the idea that both are powerfully obsessed with someone who does not return their love was related to the theme of love as madness. Some candidates felt embarrassed for Helena and the way in which she demeans herself, feeling that this is inappropriate behaviour.

Candidates gave detailed responses to the imagery of the spaniel and the semantic field of violence, in '*spurn me, strike me*', and noted that this representation of Helena's self-abasement is hard to accept for a modern audience. Strong responses were able to connect Helena's language to the theme of despair and madness associated with unrequited love and the responses which related this self-degradation to the theme of the loss of logical thinking when in love, were more successful than those who merely saw it as an attempt by Helena to gain the attention of Demetrius.

Demetrius's appalling behaviour towards Helena was discussed, giving examples of him saying that Helena makes him '*sick*', leaving her to the '*mercy*' of wild beasts and threatening her chastity, '*do thee mischief*'. The forest setting and its danger to Helena embodied in the sexual threat from Demetrius was often discussed as part of the candidates' discomfort and shock. There was also a developed response to the language of the 'Daphne/Apollo' reference in the most successful responses, which explored the reverse hunting image where the one who should be pursued becomes the pursuer: '*The dove pursues the griffin*'. Helena's line, '*The story shall be changed*', referring to the Apollo and Daphne allusion, was interpreted as also foreshadowing the ending of the play where due to the love potion the story is indeed changed, and Demetrius ends up loving Helena.

Weaker responses were quite repetitive on the subject of unrequited love, with limited coverage of the passage, an absence of textual detail and limited development of ideas. They often lost focus on the passage and became generalised, discussing gender roles in Shakespeare's time without connecting comments to the passage. Some began to discuss the influence of magic on the Lovers, inaccurately stating that Demetrius is under a spell, which makes him behave so unpleasantly. Coverage of the passage was often limited to brief discussion of Helena being a '*spaniel*' and an outline of what this breed of dog is like. Some candidates also discussed past productions of the play at length, which is not productive when the time allowed for this question is 45 minutes. The implied sexual threat of Demetrius's '*I shall do thee mischief in the wood*', was often missed, as was the idea of the chase in the Daphne and Apollo reference.

- (b) Stronger responses established Theseus as a fair ruler capable of both mercy and humour, but also a product of the patriarchal society who values law and order; and they noted that this status is suggested by him speaking the first lines of the play. They showed understanding that he provides Hermia with an alternative solution when faced with her father's intransigence, and that he asks her opinion: '*What say you, Hermia?*'. His overruling of Egeus was highlighted by candidates, showing his ability to be flexible, fair and benevolent and they understood his significant role in the play's resolution.

However, in balanced responses there were reservations about Theseus's relationship with Hippolyta: '*I wooed thee with my sword*'; and comment on how his relationship with her was made as a part of a transaction, thus objectifying Hippolyta as a trophy rather than as an equal. She is, according to some candidates, a symbol of his power rather than aligning with the context of wooing within the play. Perceptive responses noted Theseus' use of triples '*in pomp, in glory and in revelry*', indicating his superficial adoration of Hippolyta being rooted in his achievements in war and not based on mutual respect and sentiment. These responses also commented on the fact that although Theseus presents Hermia with an alternative future, the fact remains that he represents the patriarchy and men's ownership and control over women. In the end, Hermia's choices are limited and controlled by the men around her.

Weaker responses struggled to find sufficient relevant material about Theseus to make a meaningful response, losing focus on the character and relying upon narrative. These responses struggled to relate to the character and contained little or no supporting textual detail.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) The passage offered candidates of all abilities the opportunity to engage with the main characters and the way that their relationship is judged by others. Successful responses contextualised the passage, outlining the fact that Antony has abandoned his wife Fulvia and is living with his lover, Cleopatra, in Egypt. He has done nothing to help Caesar and Lepidus maintain control of Rome while it is under threat from Pompey and the Parthians.

These responses engaged with the dramatic technique of Philo introducing Antony and Cleopatra before they enter the scene. They understood that some of Philo's comments foreshadow Antony's downfall, and that as one of Antony's followers, his words of criticism of Antony as a once great soldier who has neglected his duties and become a fool through his infatuation with Cleopatra, are particularly pertinent. They understood the friction between Egypt and Rome in Antony's reception of the messenger and a foreshadowing of his recklessness later in the play. Candidates explored Cleopatra's taunting of Antony when they enter the scene and how she almost makes fun of him. The '*Let Rome in Tiber melt*' line was referenced often, with varying degrees of understanding and analysis. Stronger responses understood its significance in describing Antony and Cleopatra's love: that it transcends the known world and is worth the loss of Rome. The derogatory language about Cleopatra, '*tawny front*', '*gypsy*', '*strumpet*' was referenced and analysed in successful responses, as was her teasing language towards Antony. Some candidates who engaged personally with the passage commented on the sexism in the labelling of Cleopatra as a '*strumpet*', while it is actually Antony who is married and is therefore being unfaithful.

Weaker responses often relied upon narrative and consisted of a discussion of the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra without close reference to the question or passage. Many candidates did not show understanding of how Cleopatra is challenging and taunting Antony about the extent of his love and about Fulvia and his attitude towards Rome.

- (b) Successful responses engaged with the decadence of Egypt and its strong effect on Antony: he finds it difficult to leave and is drawn back against his own best interests. They identified Egypt as a place for fun and play; indulgent, gossipy and lazy, but detailed textual support for these ideas was often lacking.

Some candidates understood how Cleopatra is an embodiment of Egypt with its decadence, hedonism and sensuality, in contrast to Rome's business-like formality and martial nature, but they often did not develop significantly beyond this idea.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/31 Drama (Open Text)
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Key messages

- Beginning a response with lengthy comments on social, political and biographical context, giving plot summaries, or listing the writer's techniques to be addressed, are unproductive ways to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points to gain further credit.
- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph. Attention was paid to the modifier, for example 'striking', to help them to select the most appropriate material to answer the question.
- Textual reference and quotation should support ideas, be relevant, concise, and analysed fully, demonstrating how the reference supports the point. Commenting on quotations chosen at random, without relating to context and linking to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- Candidates should be aware that punctuation cannot be seen by an audience, consequently commenting on punctuation per se, is unlikely to achieve reward unless explored in context with the content and effect included.
- 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. Any reference to the whole text should arise from the extract and question and should not be excessive.
- Successful discursive responses remained focused on the question and selected a range of precise textual references from across the whole text to support ideas.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge, enjoyment and engagement with their set texts, demonstrating understanding of the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed recall and appreciation of texts, and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, along with the dramatic impact writers achieved. There were responses seen to all texts although the new set texts, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shelagh Delaney's, *A Taste of Honey*, were less popular. The most popular text, across all components, was *A Streetcar Named Desire* followed by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There were fewer responses seen to *Death and the King's Horseman*: centres are reminded that this text will be replaced on the set syllabus texts in 2026, by Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should begin to answer the question immediately. However, some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, plot summaries, and lists of themes and literary devices to be covered, before referring to the question. In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage is a helpful way to begin. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'dramatic' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text.

In essay-based questions, a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points, is a helpful introduction, before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Often, introductions featured valid ideas which were then not covered. The selection of the most relevant material and issues to be discussed is an important skill; recalling knowledge of a text or character, but without focusing on the term in the question, is unlikely to achieve high reward. Candidates are reminded not to refer

to line numbers instead of quoting from the text, as this limits opportunities for analysis of the ways writers achieve effects.

The most successful answers had an awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage and that characters were constructs, created by the writer, and not real people. They referred to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. They explored stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the texts' main concerns and to outline their own, or propose other audience members', responses. The best responses 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. Exclamation marks cannot be seen by an audience and not all exclamation marks mean that the character shouts that line. Weaker candidates gravitated towards punctuation rather than the central ideas or accompanying speech. Whilst relevant to the organisation of dialogue, punctuation must be considered in context and the effect explored otherwise the comment is meaningless.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of 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.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to 'feature spot' without relating details to a developing argument. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; the construction of an argument is key, with techniques used to illuminate how authors convey their ideas. Candidates should avoid stating the obvious, for example, the writer uses 'diction', 'lexis' or 'vocabulary', and should consider the effects achieved by specific language choices. Whilst watching a live performance is informative in conveying the dramatic impact of the written text, candidates are reminded that there is no requirement to write about different stage performances they have seen; responses should be firmly rooted in the text.

A large number of candidates answered the **(b)** essay question solely by referring to the extract featured in **(a)** or labelled their answer **(a)** but applied the question prompt for **(b)** as if they had misread the instruction. This inevitably led to a limited range of material. Centres should remind their candidates that the a) and b) questions are separate choices.

Lower attaining responses in this series were often markedly brief, offering a few observations with a little support but without the development or range that would enable them to access the higher levels.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

Comments on specific questions

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 1

- (a)** All candidates were able to engage with the character of Geof and made relevant comments on his caring qualities, his practicality (*'your mother should know'*) and his concern for Jo (*'you can not be on your own'*), sometimes criticising his attitude to abortion or alternatively asserting that he is prioritising Jo.

More developed responses clearly established the context of the extract, Jo having been abandoned by both her mother and Boy, and were able to comment on how Geof's personality and supportive relationship with Jo provides both a dynamic contrast to Helen in the play, and also an unusually progressive portrayal of a man at this time. They highlighted his emotional intelligence and direct talking, recognising Jo's pregnancy and low spirit (*'I thought so' 'a bit depressed'*) and commented on his bolstering Jo's self-esteem in his comment *'you can do without make-up'* and

his frank '*I like you*'. They evidenced and explored the contrast of his forward-thinking optimism ('*You'll be your usual self soon*') with Jo's pessimism.

A small number of stronger responses explored the shift in the mood of the extract, from gloomy to upbeat, and how the characters identify with each other as '*unique*' and outsiders, strikingly marking the effect Geof will have on Jo's wellbeing within the narrative. Some made succinct reference to the social context and attitudes to teenage pregnancy and homosexuality alongside Delaney's critique of social deprivation and marginalisation, but without excessive departure from the material in the extract and the developing relationship presented here. On the whole, there were few answers which were able to comment on elements of language beyond Geof's use of questions, or attempted to deal with the vernacular exaggeration of the final lines of the extract where Geof and Jo chime in exclamatory fashion. One candidate noted how they reciprocate and bounce off each other, echoing each other's exuberance, albeit possibly ironically, but offering a dramatic contrast with Helen's cynicism.

Weaker responses focused on Geof's sexuality, despite this not really featuring in the extract, and tended to paraphrase his lines or repeat the point of his being a caring character without any development. They were vague regarding the context of the scene and Jo's situation, giving little sense of the play's concerns or characters beyond the exchange featured here.

- (b) All responses showed some knowledge of Helen and Jo's relationship, recognising Helen as neglectful and uncaring towards Jo and also cruel in her rude belittling of her daughter. Some candidates discussed her many affairs and how these had led to an unstable childhood for Jo. There was valid, if often quite generalised, support from the text including instances of both physical neglect and mental abuse, some proposing a role reversal where Jo shows more maturity and care than Helen with regard to alcohol and others recognising the irony of her calling Jo a '*silly little whore*'. Some noted Helen's lack of knowledge of Jo's artistic abilities, in effect overlooking her daughter's qualities, and her inability to provide good housing or food, sarcastically advising Jo to cut out food from her diet. Many demonstrated a strong personal response to her blunt comments on Jo's pregnancy and her mixed race baby, some effectively relating this to social context and attitudes to both race and illegitimacy.

A few stronger responses explored Helen's self-awareness and the occasions in the play when she is honest about her own weaknesses and shortcomings, never professing to be a '*proper mother*' and declaring herself '*self-centred*' but clearly reluctant for Jo to repeat her mistakes. Some offered a little counterbalance to the question and cited her return to the flat, her offer of financial help and support and '*lovely things for the baby*', her urging '*antenatal*' care, a hospital birth and drawing attention to Jo's '*stalks*' for arms. One noted Helen offering to pay for Jo to attend '*art school*' before swiftly shifting to '*I do not care about you*', creating a more complex picture of this relationship. Some interpreted Helen's return as solely self-seeking, following Peter's rejection of her and others considered the lack of certainty in the ending and her curt, perhaps unconvincing, reassurance that she would come back from the pub. Some effectively considered the character in the social context of limited opportunities for women and the genre of the kitchen sink drama. Only the strongest responses dealt fully with AO3 and very few commented on the banter and humour of Helen and Jo's interactions ('*we enjoy it*') or the drama of the text.

Weaker responses recalled, and gave a personal response to, some of the character's actions, for example leaving Jo for Peter and his '*wallet full of reasons*', but offered limited textual support and engagement with language and effects.

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

Question 2

- (a) All candidates who responded were able to draw out the ways in which the women teased and humiliated Amusa, making him seem a ridiculous figure. The stage directions of peeping under the '*baggy shorts*' of the '*embarrassed*' constable and the '*roar*' of laughter were often cited. Stronger responses engaged with dialogue and the bawdy sexual innuendo in the women's mockery of Amusa, his supposed lack of 'manhood', and how this emphasises his emasculation and weakness. They recognised the on-stage tussle and how the women outnumber and overpower the trio. Some addressed the 'serious' part of the question proposal by commenting on how Amusa's formal tone and threats of '*weapons*' and '*reinforcement*' gave a graver tone but some more developed responses noted how the repeated warnings, reaching Amusa's exasperated '*for*

the last time', are ineffectual and still undermined by the women, making him more of a laughing stock.

Only the strongest responses drew out the serious aspects and deeper implications of the extract in detail, focusing on the subservience of Amusa and his constables to the colonialists and their role in suppressing the Yoruba people. They identified the portrayal of the women as guardians of tradition (*'the cloth-lined steps'*) and both their scathing comments (*'you ignorant man'*) and their more elevated language to convey the importance of those traditions to the Yoruba. Very few drew attention to *'the road your father built'*, signifying Amusa's abandonment of the community and traditions his ancestors had created. Many did not reach these closing lines of the extract and only one highlighted the ominous last line alluding to *'our son'* returning from overseas to answer the call of *'blood'* and tradition.

Weaker responses were narrative in approach and often focused on the broad comedy but did not contextualise the passage and gave limited focus to the 'serious' element of the question. Brief reference to the significance of the extract in the wider play would enable candidates to demonstrate understanding of deeper implications.

- (b) The majority took the 'how far...' stem of the question as a cue to say they had sympathy for the character. All responses were able to discuss how Elesin had failed to carry out his ritual duty though not all were sure of the exact nature of his role in the Yoruba tradition. There was also some vagueness and insecurity of knowledge regarding Simon Pilkings' role in disrupting the ritual and how far Elesin's own actions helped to orchestrate his downfall.

Only a small number of responses discussed Elesin's role across the whole play, pointing out his arrogance and hubris. A few responses commented on the character being selfish, taking an already-betrothed bride and ignoring Iyalajah's warnings (his *'restless eye'*), contesting the idea of his being a sympathetic figure. They recognised the combination of his being tied to earthly pleasures and the interference of colonial authority in propelling events. Stronger responses explored the sadness of Elesin's relationship with Olunde, drawing out how the rejection by his son (*'I have no father, eater of leftovers'*) evokes pathos. Only the strongest responses discussed the abject figure Elesin becomes by the end of the play in his shame and isolation and were able to precisely reference Soyinka's presentation, his collapsing *'at Olunde's feet'* and *'sobbing into the ground'*. Very few responses included Elesin's suicide.

Weaker responses lacked textual detail and gave a generalised impression of Elesin's character and events of the play. Some shifted the focus of the question to Simon Pilkings' attitudes and role in disrupting the ritual but with limited focus on how far Elesin's own actions are seen to contribute to his plight, leading to narrow responses which saw him solely as a victim. All could offer a personal response to the question but the sparse textual detail relating to the presentation of Elesin himself meant that many stayed at a basic level.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) This question prompted many strong and engaged responses. Most candidates could comment on the dramatic tension between the characters, Blanche's visible anxiety and vulnerability before Stanley's confident interrogation, her attempts to deflect questions, and her subsequent urgent interaction with Stella as Stanley leaves.

Most responses picked up the significance of the opening discussion of astrological signs leading to Stanley revealing his *'contempt'* for Blanche's pretence of purity. Some noted this shift from apparent small talk to a tense atmosphere and were informed by contextual knowledge that Stanley has overheard Blanche's damning view of him as *'an animal'*, illuminating Blanche's exclamatory reference to *'– the goat!'* and marking this moment as the beginning of Stanley's revenge.

Most grasped that Blanche was afraid of having her past revealed but some were unable to progress much beyond giving examples of her anxiety or explaining her reputation at the Flamingo, something of which the audience is not aware at this point. Stronger responses, however, considered the audience experience, the subtext of Stanley's apparently innocent questions which

are nevertheless menacing for Blanche, the suspicions aroused by Blanche's evasiveness, and resultant tension and expectation of dramatic events to follow.

More successful responses were able to engage with details of both language and stagecraft productively, noting elements such as the contrast between Blanche's elevated discourse to disguise an unacceptable reality ('*perfume*', '*establishment*') and conversely Stanley's direct and dismissive '*that stuff*' to refer to Blanche's marker of her status; the legalese ('*some other party*') and veiled threat in Stanley's interrogation; the ominous murmur of thunder, perhaps relating to the spread of '*unkind*' gossip or the storm clouds brewing; and the proleptic irony of Stanley's subsequent birthday gift – not expensive perfume but a ticket back to Laurel. There was also thoughtful attention paid to Blanche's use of the cologne-dampened handkerchief to signal the precise phases of her distress or to signify attempts to purify herself or mask the whiff of scandal.

The strongest responses perceptively drew out deeper implications directly related to details of the extract, such as the threat to Blanche's entire identity implied in Stanley's attempt to uncover her past, the double standard judging her but not the 'Shaws' at the Flamingo, and the intense competition between Stanley and Blanche for both Stella's attention and mastery of the household. Moreover, the use of secondary characters, Steve and Eunice, and the cycle of fighting and making up, enabled some candidates to address the attendant critique of social and gender stereotypes, and the play's wider treatment of the relationship between love/desire and violent coercion. There was interesting discussion of the implications of Stanley's refusal to kiss Stella – a resistance to being seen as vulnerable, a comment on Blanche's intrusion or a display of masculine control – all valid interpretations given credit. Some wrote perceptively that this scene captures the contrast between Stanley's distrust and Stella's sisterly loyalty, which prefigures the escalating conflict, something which Blanche already clearly fears.

Weaker responses tended to focus largely on the stage directions and exclamatory speech but with more limited focus on what the characters actually say. Stage directions conveying Blanche's anxiety were frequently cited but often paraphrased, for example '*afraid*' shows she is afraid with less focus on how or why Stanley creates this fear, or how the audience themselves feel. Less successful answers tended to write about themes or previous areas of focus, such as reality versus illusion, the 'Old South' versus the 'new America', or Stanley as an animal, but this was unhelpful without anchorage to the extract.

There were some surprising misreadings: in the 1950s, GOAT did not stand for Greatest of All Time; some candidates interpreted Blanche as attempting to seduce Stanley here, or already having an affair with Stanley which she was trying to hide from Stella. There were lengthy speculations about the symbol of flamingos which detracted from the focus. Blanche's final questions were often unconvincingly developed as many thought she was shouting at Stella. Some rigidly, and unhelpfully, approached the text in terms of Greek tragedy, hindering their achievement: this scene is not a good example of stichomythia, hamartia, peripeteia or anagnorisis, and candidates who tried to read the scene solely in these terms again lost the focus on 'tension' and the audience experience.

Most significantly, a large number of candidates treated **Question 3** as a combination of the essay prompt and the extract, writing about how Blanche was a victim in the extract only and thereby limiting their range and achievement.

- (b) The quality of responses varied considerably and was largely determined by the precision and range of textual support given. Most candidates agreed that Blanche is portrayed as a victim and discussed Stanley's cruel treatment, the death of her husband and the loss of Belle Reve and how these events collectively led to her fragility.

Many candidates discussed how Stanley's aggression and violence contributed to the pitiful figure Blanche presents in certain moments and particularly at the end of the play, some referencing Stanley's dramatic physicality versus Blanche's fragile moth-like appearance. Some precisely explored his rifling through her possessions and his physical and verbal cruelty, foreshadowing the final '*menacing*' assault and the horror of his subjecting '*her inert figure*' to rape. Some developed this exploration of power relations to consider Stella's desertion, her denial of the rape, her collaboration with her husband, and her lies about the doctor's identity thereby consolidating Blanche's status as an impotent victim of Stanley's superior influence and command.

Some stronger responses argued that Blanche powerfully presents herself as a victim or injured party when accusing Stella of deserting Belle Reve to cope with the '*Grim Reaper*', her plaintive recollection of her first lost love and her claim that Stanley and Mitch have been '*deliberately cruel*' to her, some of which could be perceived as a refusal to be accountable for her own actions. Others considered that she subjects herself to, and is a victim of, stereotypical ideas of femininity, purity and physical attractiveness which are unsustainable. This enabled them to discuss her delusional romanticism, the symbolism of her paper lantern and her need for jewels and perfume to face the world. Some saw her as a victim of society's values and double standards, the sexual politics of a woman's only currency being her physical appeal. Others considered that Blanche might be seen as a casualty of the historical and social landscape changing and that she is presented as incongruous and struggling to fit in with this new post-war setting. Such interpretations, when supported by relevant textual detail and Williams' language and effects, were rewarded. Many saw her as a victim of a past that she cannot escape, the stronger responses recognising and analysing the haunting sounds and lighting effects Williams dramatically and expressionistically employs to signify Blanche's vulnerability and trauma.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the character and used references to her clothes, the paper lantern and her illusions but struggled to tailor such material to the question of 'victim', meaning relevance was often less convincing. Such responses became generalised character sketches but lacked focused analysis of how Blanche is dramatically shown to be an injured or impotent figure in specific moments of the play. When establishing Stanley's toxic masculinity, the focus on Blanche herself was sometimes rather obscured. Some weaker candidates wholly challenged the proposal, seeing Mitch as a victim of her lies or that she victimised young men, but with limited consideration of the character's motivation or without eliciting deeper implications. A significant number of candidates answered the question by drawing exclusively on the extract provided for discussion in **Question 3 (a)**, which obviously limited the range of textual references they used.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates understood the context of the passage and were able to identify some relevant elements such as Puck's error as the catalyst for the unfolding situation and the drama of the conflict between Hermia and Demetrius, producing fairly developed responses with some textual support. Many responses swiftly established the context of the comic confusion and focused well on the exchange between Hermia and Demetrius, discussing the highly emotional language which characterised it: Hermia's desperate reaction to Lysander's disappearance ('*kill me too*'), her professions of love and ironic faith in Lysander ('*the sun was not so true unto the day*'), and Demetrius' dismissive response to her anguish. Some considered Demetrius's delayed revelation that he has not killed Lysander as prolonging the drama, and the violent and alliterative language he uses to express Hermia's '*stern cruelty*' and '*breath so bitter*' alongside the classical allusion to Venus as dramatically displaying his continued devotion. The strongest answers responded in detail to Hermia's angry diatribes ('*out dog!*'), Demetrius's blunt disdain for Lysander's '*carcass*' or the grand scope of Hermia's metaphorical language. One even noticed the half line to mark the dramatic climax of Hermia's plea.

With regard to deeper implications, there were some strong discussions of the scene's contribution to the play's presentation of the fickleness and unpredictability of love, the tragicomic take on the theme of infidelity and love's potential for dangerous transformations. Candidates recognised the dramatic and apparently tragic nature of the discourse, with '*bitter*' accusations of '*murder*', but recognised the audience's secure knowledge and the dramatic irony. One recognised the tragic potential of Hermia misperceiving her lover's death and impulsively being prepared to die '*too*', linking the scene to Pyramus and Thisbe, another tragedy later to be afforded comic treatment. Some stronger responses explored what the dialogue reveals about both characters, Hermia and Demetrius, within the social and gender expectations of the day ('*maiden's patience*' '*O brave touch*') as well as the generic standards of Shakespearean comedy and courtly love.

Weaker responses stayed very much at the surface of the text, tending to rely on narrative summary, or spending overlong establishing the earlier chain of events leading to this moment. There was some confusion over Lysander's fate and how much the audience already knows. Many ignored the opening section and few recognised the dramatic element of the fairies witnessing the unfolding drama and the anticipation of Oberon's response to Puck's mistake. Oberon's opening

line was often misinterpreted as his delight in this mistake, rather than Titania's situation. Many weaker responses focused entirely on the dramatic nature of Hermia's mistaken assumption about Lysander's death and her frequent questions, and ended up repeating rather than developing their discussion or engaging with language. Some candidates wrote at length about rhyming couplets, but this did not contribute to their discussion of drama.

- (b) All candidates engaged agreed that the character warranted sympathy from audiences. All were able to discuss Titania's qualities of loyalty and compassion and her motivation in wishing to retain the changeling boy. Most candidates had an understanding of the conflict with Oberon over the child and asserted that Oberon's tricking of Titania with the love juice created sympathy for her. The more successful answers ranged across Titania's contribution to the play's ideas and did not narrow their focus to one aspect or particular scene.

Stronger candidates considered the drama of her opening scene, Titania's language revealing her close bond with the vot'ress, her determined commitment to the boy (*'Not for thy fairy kingdom'*), creating an impression of sympathetic friends (*'laughed'* and *'gossiped by my side'*) rather than monarch and subject. They understood how the audience is positioned to feel antipathy for Oberon, given his manipulative and indignant reproach that she would dare *'cross her Oberon'*, his menacing intentions to *'torment'* and make her *'madly dote'* on some particularly *'vile thing'*, and his desire to humiliate Titania. The scenes featuring Titania's actual humiliation at the hands of Oberon were very rarely considered in any detail, with most candidates simply stating that she was made into a sympathetic figure here. Stronger responses could reference her ill-placed and ironic devotion to Bottom (*'what angel wakes me?'*) and how Puck draws attention to her folly (*'straightway love an ass'*), to Oberon's delight, which could be cause for sympathy or have comedic value, although such lighter effects were rarely considered. One candidate noted Oberon's proud boast of taking *'pleasure'* having *'taunted her'* and making her *'beg'*, reversing the opening power dynamic and awarding him the prize of the boy, thereby creating sympathy for Titania as a victim of injustice. Another recognised that even Oberon feels *'pity'* once he witnesses Titania crowning the *'hateful fool'* Bottom, encouraging the audience to feel the same sympathy.

With regard to deeper implications and themes from the wider play, there was much comment on patriarchy, the abuse of women and coercion and some assertion that she is in an unhappy marriage, but with few acknowledging the presentation of fairy monarchs at the end of the play, *'new in amity'*, fulfilling the conventions of the genre of comedy.

Weaker responses were narrative in approach and repeated the point of Titania being treated unfairly by Oberon, without development or range of material. There was little focus on the character beyond this opening scene and limited textual detail or consideration of language and effects.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify Antony's anger at what he saw as Cleopatra's betrayal of him and some were able to point to his abusive language (*'Foul Egyptian'* *'Triple-turned whore'*) and exclamations (*'Avaunt!'*) to illustrate his fury. There was some understanding of the context of the passage, that after being victorious against Caesar on land, Antony put his best forces to sea, and is now witnessing his fleet's surrender. The first 15 lines, Scarus' role and the stage directions of the Alarum did not feature in answers and few candidates engaged effectively with the language or put it in context of Antony and Cleopatra's tempestuous and volatile relationship in the wider play.

Stronger responses gave a greater range of suitable, supporting details from the extract to illustrate understanding of Antony's belief in Cleopatra's duplicity (*'false soul of Egypt'*), analysing the hyperbolic, insulting superlatives (*'the greatest spot of all thy sex'* *'most monster-like'*) and the violence of his wish for her foil, *'patient Octavia'*, to enact vengeance (*'plough thy visage up'*). One candidate recognised his anger or disappointment at his fleet who *'cast their caps up and carouse together'*, the hard consonants emphasising his bitterness. Only one candidate broadened their response to consider Antony's anger at Caesar, *'this novice'*, who is *'blossoming'* in contrast to himself, now *'bark'd'*, or his anger at what he perceives is his gloomy fate (*'Fortune and Antony part here'*). The deeper implications of Antony's reflection on his own fall in favour (*'the hearts/That spaniel'd me at heels'*) and his apportioning blame to Cleopatra (*'my charm'* *'spell'*) for having

'beguil'd' him, and his resistance to being accountable, were underdeveloped and most responses gave a narrow account of his angrily insulting Cleopatra alone.

Weaker responses either left the context of the moment unclear and remained vague regarding the events happening off stage or discussed historical matters at length which led to a narrative approach with limited focus on language or dramatic effects employed in the extract. Many remained at a surface level, identifying exclamations and abusive terms but without exploration of the significance of those insults or the implications regarding the characters or the wider play.

- (b)** There were too few responses to make an appropriate comment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/32 Drama (Open Text)
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Key messages

- Beginning a response with lengthy comments on the writer's life and times, giving plot summaries, or listing the writer's techniques to be addressed, are unproductive ways to start an essay. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- The most successful responses addressed the key terms of the question in the introductory paragraph. Attention was paid to the intensifier, to help them to select the most appropriate material to answer the question.
- Textual reference and quotations should support ideas, be relevant, concise, and analysed fully, demonstrating how the reference supports the point. Commenting on quotations chosen at random, without exploring the context and linking it to the question, is unlikely to achieve reward.
- Candidates should be aware that punctuation cannot be seen by an audience, consequently commenting on punctuation per se, is unlikely to achieve reward unless explored in context with the content and effect included.
- 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 discursive responses remained focused on the question and selected a range of precise textual references from across the whole text to support ideas.
- An awareness of the text as drama and a personal engagement with the impact of the play onstage are essential in successful responses.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge, enjoyment and engagement with their set texts, demonstrating understanding of the characters, ideas and themes they contain. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts, were aware of the text as performance and commented on stagecraft, mood and tone, as well as the dramatic impact writers achieved. There were responses seen to all texts although the new set texts, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shelagh Delaney's, *A Taste of Honey*, were less popular. The most popular text, across all components, was *A Street Car Named Desire* followed by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There were fewer responses seen to *Death and the King's Horseman*; centres are reminded that this text will be replaced on the set syllabus texts in 2026, by Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

With 45 minutes per essay, candidates should begin to answer the question immediately. However, some candidates wrote lengthy introductions of extraneous information, plot summaries, and lists of themes and literary devices to be covered, before referring to the question. This often resulted in responses with tenuous links to the actual question so lacked the relevant textual detail to meet the criteria for the higher levels. There is no requirement for candidates to write a thesis statement or to retell the plot before answering the specific question.

In passage-based questions, a brief introduction, contextualising the passage is a helpful way to start an answer. It is also helpful for candidates to write a sentence or two, referencing the question, and giving a brief overview of the key points before going on to develop them in the main body of the essay. Too often, candidates took a linear approach, working through the passage, explaining what was happening, and often failing to reach the end where key points may have been missed. Textual references which were selected were often over-analysed, resulting in responses which were narrow in range with limited coverage of the passage or text. Listing literary features as a way in which a passage was, for example, 'dramatic' or 'shocking', is also an unproductive way to start a response. The selection of the most relevant material and

issues to be discussed is an important skill; simply working through a passage or the text, without focusing on the terms of the question, is unlikely to achieve high reward. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text, as this limits opportunities for analysis of the ways writers achieve effects.

An awareness that these texts are written to be performed onstage informed the most successful answers. The most successful candidates understood that characters were constructs, created by the writer, and not real people. They referred to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. They were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts and to outline their own, or propose other audience members', responses. The best responses 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. Exclamation marks cannot be seen by an audience and not all exclamation marks mean that the character shouts that line. Punctuation is relevant in so far as it organises speech but any comment on the use of punctuation has to be analysed in context and the effect explored otherwise the comment is meaningless.

In discursive questions, the most successful answers covered a range of 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. Similarly, beginning a paragraph with a reference or quotation rather than supporting a point does little to develop an argument effectively.

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms that are not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded; techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. These can be relevant but only if related to the ideas conveyed in the text. Candidates should avoid stating the obvious, for example, the writer uses 'diction', 'lexis' or 'vocabulary', and should focus on analysing specific language and the effects achieved. Whilst watching a live performance of their chosen texts is informative in conveying the dramatic impact of the written text, candidates are reminded that there is no requirement to write about different stage performances they have seen; responses should be firmly rooted in the text.

Handwriting was observed to have deteriorated and at times obscured meaning: candidates should endeavour to write legibly and to avoid numerous crossings out which often resulted in a loss of clarity in expression.

Comments on specific questions

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 1

- (a) This was the least popular text but unsurprisingly as this is its first year of examination. Few answers gave context to this moment and why Helen was there with many focusing entirely on Peter, overlooking the other characters' lines. Most answers considered the arguing to be dramatic and explored the drama of Helen and Peter's relationship. Peter's drunken antics provide a good deal of drama in this scene that is not difficult to explain or illustrate, and most candidates focused mostly on him, often to good effect but also to the detriment of exploration of the other characters. His singing, swearing, clumsiness, and rudeness to all the others on stage, provide a wealth of relevant material, and many candidates achieved highly by quoting and commenting on key instances.

The most successful answers focused on 'dramatic' both in the written text – the arguing, insults, swearing – and in the action on stage – Peter's initial sudden and unexpected entrance and his drunken singing. His behaviour was considered humorous and disgusting in equal measure. Better answers explored Delaney's black humour and the stage directions with the 'loud crash' offstage and his drunkenness, singing and falling over and derogatory comments to all. Most answers expressed outrage at Peter's attitude to Helen, Jo and Geof, with his vulgar, abusive comments

and could explore some of the language. His prejudices, homophobia and sexism and unkindness to Jo as an unmarried, expectant young girl, are openly displayed, and most candidates were alert to the writer's intentions here.

The best responses explored closely his discriminatory language, for example his insulting and salacious comments to and about Helen, while less successful answers wrote more generally about what his remarks say about gender politics in the 1950s without precise focus on the language he uses. They noted Jo's increased restraint suggesting her character development and the ironically dismissive treatment of Geof, given his importance to Jo and the calm he has brought to the flat. Some perceptive responses also commented on how Peter seems to be actively enjoying himself here, receiving sadistic pleasure from his performance, understanding the reference to the Oedipus story – how he too had married an older woman (Helen being old enough to be his mother) and understanding how unlike Oedipus he had 'only scratched out one' of (his eyes), a reference to him losing the sight of an eye.

Weaker answers focused on background information, the text as an example of a 'Kitchen-sink drama' with attempts to contextualise this moment in terms of the play's themes; the status of women in society and how attitudes to homosexuality have changed since the play was written. These responses often become quite general, losing focus on the question and the passage, making assertions without providing close textual reference in support. Attempts to explore the text focused on Peter being drunk and rude, quoting 'Jezebel' and 'bubble belly' but without understanding how they were insulting or indicative of deeper attitudes.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Some wrote a character study, all they knew about Geof: his homosexuality; his caring, maternal nature and the happiness he brings into Jo's life but without addressing how this contributes to the dramatic impact. All candidates were aware that homosexuality was considered a crime in the 1950s and the most successful answers were sympathetic to the problems this created for him, exploring his desire for a happy family life with Jo, linking this to his dramatic impact. They were able to identify how they were both social misfits and how that affected their place in life and the limited opportunities they would be afforded because of their identity or circumstance. Better answers contrasted him with Helen and her treatment and abandonment of Jo and how he dramatically invites Helen back into Jo's life, with the unforeseen consequences for himself. They explored what he brings into Jo's life and how he benefits from their relationship with acceptance, partnership and family life.

Less successful answers found it difficult to recall sufficient textual detail other than Helen and Peter's rudeness to Geof whilst some simply used the passage for 1(a) to list things Peter says to him without other detail. Some gave a lengthy outraged personal response to their attitudes towards Geof and homosexuality in general without addressing the question or supporting ideas. Others focused on how they felt sorry for Geof, retelling his relationship with Jo, and with stereotypical comments on how gay men were intrinsically more caring than others.

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

Question 2

- (a) There was good understanding of the text with insightful analysis of how Soyinka makes this pivotal scene so shocking. The most successful briefly contextualised the passage and how Amusa's unsuccessful attempt to arrest Elesin had resulted in Pilkings being called from the ball to deal with the disturbance, at the same time as Olunde arrives to bury his father. They showed understanding of the tensions and cultural conflict at the heart of this scene, particularly the shock surrounding Elesin's failure to fulfil his ritual duty, and the emotional aftermath between father and son. Many commented insightfully on Elesin's shame and fall from honour, recognising the dramatic contrast between his earlier role and his current humiliation, exemplified by Olunde's words: '*I have no father, eater of leftovers*,' but only the best answers demonstrated a clear understanding of his words.

The best answers noted the understatement of Pilkings' reference to the '*affair*' and '*crisis*', his motivation in keeping '*His Highness*' happy and the role reversal with the final shocking image of Elesin, sobbing in the dirt with the '*light*' fading. They explored the dramatic effect of offstage voices, which inform both the audience, Olunde and Jane of what has happened. They recognised the dramatic contrast of the commotion and stage directions of Elesin's, '*bellowing*' and '*powerful steps*' against Olunde's frozen stance and silence – perhaps conveying Olunde's realisation of

what this means for his father and his people, and of course his own fate and what he now must do, emphasised by how *'walks slowly'* and with intent along *'the way'* his father had run.

Less successful answers spent too much time retelling the plot, the presentation of Simon Pilkings or colonial issues and Jane's comforting of Olunde, but did not reach the most shocking part. These tended to work through the passage either paraphrasing events, or adopting a linear approach, rather than focusing on the most relevant material making this moment so shocking. There was limited focus on discussing the language or stage directions. Assertions were made, for example, Elesin 'shows shame' but no exploration or development as to why.

- (b) There were fewer answers to this question with only the most successful answers addressing Jane Pilkings' dramatic impact in the play. Most answers identified her as a contrast to Pilkings, a more culturally sensitive and humane version of colonialism. She was seen as a supportive and dutiful wife but able to confront her husband, for example in the 1(a) passage where she screams: *'Simon, tell them to leave him (Elesin) alone'* and where she admonishes Simon for his views, *'devious bastards'* on the locals. She was also seen as generally more sympathetic towards Amusa and Joseph in the Egungun costume scene. Though she does not understand Olunde's story and view of death as one for the greater good of others, she at least attempts to understand the cultural importance of Yoruba tradition in contrast to Pilkings' view of it as all *'mumbo jumbo'*. Better answers commented on her complex role as both observer and reluctant participant in the colonial disruption of Yoruba customs. They tracked her development from typical colonial wife to a more nuanced and emotionally involved figure by the end of the play with her growing empathy and insight, such as her attempt to shelter Olunde and recognise the enormity of his loss (*'poor orphan'*). A few insightful answers drew comparisons between Jane and Iyaloja and their dramatic impact suggesting similar issues of women in both cultures being controlled by powerful and flawed men.

Less successful responses struggled to find enough to say and go beyond a character study of Jane and her role as Pilkings' wife. Some scenes were summarised with limited textual detail or engagement with the dramatic impact. She was seen as kind and sympathetic but without deeper exploration of her dramatic role.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) There were many critical and insightful responses which engaged with the text and question. The most successful briefly contextualised the passage, the break-up with Mitch and Stella is in hospital and, being alone with Blanche, this was the ideal moment for Stanley to challenge her *'lies and conceit and tricks'*, with all the evidence needed to exact his revenge. There is much which is disturbing to explore and most candidates commented on the disturbing mental breakdown Blanche experiences adding to the cruelty of Stanley's verbal and physical attack.

Most candidates understood the tensions and the dynamics between the characters and sympathised with Blanche in the face of the barrage from Stanley, commenting on Blanche's lies unravelling and Stanley's brutal disassembling of these. The contrast in the dialogue was noted with Blanche's short responses and Stanley's increasingly aggressive comments. The most successful answers commented in depth about the use of dialogue with well-selected references to support ideas. The domination of dialogue by Blanche at the start, Stanley's short responses, then the dramatic change as the power dynamic changed was explored. Many candidates made relevant references to the themes and how the exchange addressed 'delusion and reality'. Very few understood 'casting my pearls before swine', with literal explanations of the 'pearls' representing Blanche, and the 'swine', Stanley and Mitch, leading to some unusual comments about pigs.

The best answers made critical comments on the punctuation, especially as Blanche begins to stutter and her use of broken or unfinished sentences that indicate her panic and fear. They recognised Stanley's metaphorical tearing of the *'paper lantern'* and reference to her *'worn out'* outfit and *'crazy crown'* as a disturbingly cruel exposure of Blanche's insecurities regarding appearance and class, compounding Mitch's actions in the previous scene. There was critical understanding of the disturbing aspects, and importance of the stage directions, the ominous lines as Stanley *'walks into the bedroom'* and *'goes into the bathroom and closes the door'* dramatically invading Blanche's previous areas of sanctuary. Much was made of the disturbing aspects of rape

insinuated though some candidates argued that there had been a sexual attraction between them from the start and tended to undermine the significance of this disturbing act. The interpretation of '*lurid reflections*' was very different. Some saw these as Blanche hallucinating, her past catching up with her, her separation from the truth and Stanley's presence as the '*menacing form*'.

Less successful answers 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. Some wrote at length about William's life and family at the expense of writing about the actual extract and question. Attempts at exploring the dialogue and punctuation were perfunctory, with lists of the punctuation used, for example, exclamation marks and ellipsis but without understanding the context and effects achieved.

- (b) There was much thoughtful discussion of Stella's character and clear expressions of feelings about her. Successful answers maintained a close focus on the question and used a range of precise textual references from across the whole text. Better answers showed a nuanced understanding of Stella's internal conflict, torn between loyalty to her sister and dependence on Stanley. They saw the difficult situation Stella was in and her divided loyalties with her marriage to Stanley ultimately winning. These candidates supported arguments with apt quotations, for example: '*I could not believe her story and go on living with Stanley*', and analysed language and stage directions to show how Williams presents Stella's denial and vulnerability. Others highlighted that Stella was drawn to the 'animalistic sexual desire' between her and Stanley as the reason for her staying, concluding that she cannot be pitied by the audience because she is making the same mistake of choosing Stanley over her sister, who had advised that they run away, which later led to Blanche's downfall.

Many candidates felt sympathy for Stella but some were critical of her leaving Belle Reve and Blanche. Some responses considered Stella's limited options as a woman with a young child, dependent on her husband's money (as she tells Blanche that he gave her more money after the assault), thus eliciting audience pity given the societal expectations for women in homes at that time. A woman without a husband and with a baby will be out of options. There was understanding of her feelings of guilt, and distress, at the end of the play but some were very critical of her and argued that this was short lived as Stanley promptly consoles her.

Weaker responses were one dimensional, often outraged by Stanley's treatment but repetitive and assertive, seeing her as a pitiful victim of domestic violence. Such answers lacked sufficient textual support to offer a nuanced appraisal of the character and the range of responses she evokes.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

Question 4

- (a) In weaker responses showed some misconceptions about language and whether characters spoke in blank verse or prose. Understanding was insecure with many saying the courtiers spoke in blank verse and the mechanicals in prose, and some responses were built solely around this and how it portrayed their social status, rather than focusing on the actual performance and the courtiers' response to it. The most successful answers engaged with the passage with a clear awareness of its place in the play and its contribution to the resolution. They made relevant comments on the 'play within the play' although a few candidates wrote extensively about 'metatheatre' losing focus on the actual passage. There was effective comment on the chaotic and humorous performance of the mechanicals and the courtiers' interjections were generally understood to be rude and mocking but also encouraging in part.

There was a wide range of interpretations of Starveling's comment: '*All I have to say is to tell you*' with some saying he was standing up to the courtiers because of their interruptions whilst others said that he was just trying to explain what he was doing and breaking both the fourth wall and his iambic meter. In terms of language, there was appropriate comment about Bottom's over-the-top performance with some candidates stating that he was a good actor. His monologue with its 'clunky rhymes', overuse of alliteration and oxymoron with his language more suited to the sun than the moon was often explored in detail. It was recognised that Pyramus is not interrupted, leading to Theseus and Hippolyta's more measured praise of his 'passion' that has held their attention.

The best answers explored the reversal of roles, where the courtiers are childish and unruly, versus the mechanicals' more formal, earnest manner and poetic form. They commented on the male courtiers' new unity and the silence of the female courtiers, Helena and Hermia, suggesting contentment or a restoration of 'order' and gender roles after their woodland release of emotion and voice. Some reflected on the submissive role of women at the time whilst recognising Hippolyta's higher status as the only female to join the male courtiers in commenting on the performance.

- (b) The wording of the question, 'How far' Shakespeare's portrayal of the characters made the audience feel they deserved their happy ending gave candidates the opportunity to offer a balanced view, offering reasons they agreed or disagreed. The most successful answers took this approach and there were some effective comments on Demetrius and Lysander and the extent to which they deserved their happiness. They balanced the differences between the two men at the start of the play and their attitudes towards Hermia, with the chaos in the woods and resolution at the end where the two pairs of lovers are finally united. Lysander was generally seen as brave and loyal, fighting for his love. Even under the influence of the love potion, he was considered romantic. Demetrius was much criticised for his attitude towards Hermia at the start of the play as his '*right*', his object. Some candidates were very critical of his treatment of Helena and the way he had changed from '*making love*' to her, to rejecting her. Many also felt that he had been very clear about his feelings to Helena and she was effectively 'stalking' him and felt some pity. The best answers were aware of the conventions of comedy and understood that the happy ending was inevitable, though some candidates argued that the ending was tempered by the fact that the juice sprinkled into the eyes of the characters by Puck had some bearing on the final outcome, and therefore there were some misgivings about whether not the characters' happiness was deserved.

Less successful answers treated them as almost the same character deserving of the same fate, or retold the plot with little reference to the question. Some omitted the events in the woods entirely and focused mainly on the beginning and the ending of the play. Characters were seen in simple terms, Lysander was loving so deserved his happiness but Demetrius being cruel to Helena did not. These answers lacked sufficient textual reference.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) There were many insightful responses to both questions and it was clear that most candidates enjoyed writing about this play. Most were aware of the power struggles at play within the triumvirate, as well as the reconciliation with Pompey. Context was established with the celebration of the peace treaty between the triumvirs and Pompey and the jovial mood of celebration with the drunken behaviour, juxtaposed with the serious threat of murder and the triumvirs being oblivious of Menas's plot to kill them. The most successful answers referred accurately to significant moments and quotations, and were able to comment insightfully on character motivations, political power struggles, and thematic concerns such as loyalty, betrayal, and ambition. They engaged with the drama and considered Menas's repeated attempts to engage Pompey, including cryptic comments about him being '*lord of the whole world*' and how this raised curiosity in the audience. The number of asides and whispering was considered as dramatic as evidence of deception and secrets amongst these 'equals'.

Discussions around power were often strong, with many candidates noting Menas's belief that Pompey could become an '*earthly Jove*'. This was developed to demonstrate how Pompey, being slow to understand, '*what say'st thou?*', suggested he would not be an effective world leader or have the bravery to be a Jove. His 'twisted' sense of honour was also closely examined. These ideas were typically well integrated into arguments about the play's dramatic tension. Better responses explored the hypocrisy regarding Roman concepts of honour and where similar celebratory behaviour in Egypt was condemned. Antony's mind being still on Egypt was recognised, together with Lepidus' drunken folly and Caesar's more controlled manner, signifying their flawed union and the instability of the triumvirate.

Many weaker responses ignored the opening 16 lines but focused on the interaction between Menas and Pompey. Those who did, struggled with the crocodile scene and there was a lot of confusion over how the triumvirs would be poisoned and that Antony is threatening Lepidus with 'quicksands'. There were some comments on the 'crocodile' and the alliteration without securing it to the demands of the question. Similarly, a discussion of the significance of serpents did not help

to meet the requirements of the question. However, most recognised what Menas was offering Pompey and his reasons for declining, considering him honourable, but without considering his final lines. There was a range of interpretations of the crocodile exchange but few understood Antony's nonsensical humour and the deeper implications of what this revealed about Lepidus.

- (b) Most answers had plenty to say about the many facets to Cleopatra's character. The more successful responses engaged with the wording of the question, particularly the word 'fascinating' and explored how fascination was created rather than just stating she was 'fascinating'. They considered Enobarbus's description of her allure and understood how her royal status is conveyed through the throne, purple, servants and authority, and how she is so attractive not only to people, but also to nature itself, the water and the wind. All candidates explored her relationship with Antony and how this conveyed her manipulative nature. The most successful answers selected their material well from across the text and selected the different sides to Cleopatra: her appearance and how her beauty eclipses the goddess Venus; the intensity of her love; how she manipulates Antony; how her ships flee battle at Actium and her regained nobility at her exotic death.

The best answers considered her swift mood swings and how she symbolises Egypt – the luxury, the exotic and leisure – in contrast to Rome's logic, discipline and restraint. Cleopatra's portrayal as a lover juxtaposing this with the Cleopatra, 'the leader of men' who had ultimate confidence in her actions away from her relationships with men.

Less successful answers focused more on Antony and considered his actions rather than Cleopatra's character. Most of the discussion centred around her control of Antony and what he gave up for her, demonstrating knowledge but without linking this to the question. Some made sweeping assertions without supporting textual reference, for example, she manipulates Antony, betrays Antony or 'she represents Egypt'.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/33 Drama (Open Text)
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Key messages

- Successful responses focused on the question terms and avoided introductions which consisted of extensive outlines of historical background or lists of the writer's themes. Effective conclusions were more than a repetition of earlier points.
- Brief and precise quotations which were analysed fully were the best form of textual support. Line numbers in the place of quotations should not be used.
- Contextualisation of the passage is important in passage-based responses, and selection of material from throughout the passage, including the ending, is essential. Close exploration of the language was a feature of successful passage-based responses.
- In successful discursive responses the question remained in focus and precise textual references were selected from throughout the text.
- If literary terms are identified, their intended effect on the audience should also be considered if the response is to progress.
- Successful responses showed an awareness of the text as drama and engaged with the impact of the play onstage.

General comments

Personal engagement with and enjoyment of the set texts was observed in most responses and an awareness of the texts as drama was often evident. A perceptive and sensitive approach to characterisation, stagecraft and language was a feature of effective responses.

There were two new texts this year, *A Taste of Honey* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Centres are reminded that *Death and the King's Horseman* will be replaced in 2026, by Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

Candidates should remain focused on the key terms of the question such as 'striking', 'entertaining', 'revealing' or 'disturbing' in order to produce a successful response. Making a brief plan before starting to write assists candidates in choosing relevant material from the text, and to help them to keep the question in mind. Annotation of the passage is always worthwhile as part of planning.

Engagement with the visual and aural impact on the audience was a feature of strong responses and referring to 'audience', rather than 'reader', and to 'play', rather than 'book', demonstrated this awareness. However, there is no requirement to outline recent stage productions of the play at length. This wastes valuable exam time which would be better spent focusing on the passage and question provided. Some less successful responses summarised the plot and listed facts about the play but with little or no focus on the question.

Contextualisation of the passage at the start is important in a passage-based response and is helpful in demonstrating an understanding of structure. Introductions should not consist of lengthy discussions of historical context, summaries of the plot or lists of literary techniques; but should briefly set the passage in context. The response should consider the key words in the question, the events of the scene and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience. Brief well-selected references should be analysed fully.

Effective discursive responses chose a range of material from the text as a whole and used brief, well-selected references to support ideas but many responses tended to point out literary techniques such as simile, metaphor or iambic pentameter without analysis of their effects. A detailed exploration of how the writer achieves his or her effects is an essential part of a well-developed response.

Comments on specific questions

SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates showed understanding of the extract's role as an introduction to the play, of Helen's lack of concern for her daughter's upbringing and well-being and of their poor living arrangements. There was some response to the 'banter' between Helen and Jo, understanding that it is more like the language in a conversation between friends rather than mother and daughter. Candidates commented that it shows the toxicity of the relationship and foreshadows what will happen when Helen leaves Jo when she marries Peter. The entertaining nature of Helen's use of the third person when referring to Jo was commented on and the use of sound effects being executed with comedic timing was noted by a few candidates who commented on how this creates a moment of light heartedness.

Candidates were able to show how the text is 'revealing' and made observations on the new flat being next to a slaughterhouse, with some responses seeing this as comic. Stronger responses were able to comment on Helen's dissatisfaction with the flat but noted that she has an understanding of her financial capabilities which shows her realistic outlook. The symbolism of the bulbs and of Jo's hopes for a better future were commented on, as was the fact that she has had to steal the bulbs. There was some useful comment on Jo longing to belong and feel recognised when she asks if any '*young people*' live nearby. Helen's ominous comment that the '*cool, dark place*' is '*where we all end up sooner or later*' was explored. Candidates also identified the interesting way that Helen refers to Jo in the third person and her innuendo in '*It was not his nose I was interested in*'.

Weaker responses lost focus and began to dwell on the general traits of the characters Jo and Helen throughout the play as opposed to their actions in the given passage. They did not refer to the context of the passage, of Helen and Jo moving to a new flat, and misunderstood the conversation, thinking that Helen and Jo have a fun relationship. There was some misunderstanding that when Helen says, '*silly cat*', she is referring to Jo, when in fact she is referring to '*that landlady's daughter*'. Some responses to this question seemed to treat the passage as if unseen, with misunderstanding of the characters and events, and with no contextualisation of the passage.

- (b) Most responses focused on women's reliance on men and on the theme of poverty. Amongst the stronger responses there was valid comment on women being objectified and having to shoulder the consequences of men's abusive behaviour towards them. They considered women as a marginalised group having little opportunity to improve their lives, hence Helen's dependency on men to survive. Jo, being abandoned by the father of her baby, is left to suffer the consequences of being an unmarried mother in a time when this status was not acceptable. Many candidates were able to recognise the moral context of the time by referring to Helen's observation of her daughter being '*a silly little whore*' and Jo's recognition of herself as being '*ruined*'. Responses that engaged with such language explored the helplessness and resignation of women who were crushed by the judgement of the society in which they lived, unlike the unreliable men they engaged with.

Some weaker responses focused more on Helen and Jo's relationship than on women's problems in general. Others were very generalised about women being financially dependent on men, of men being unreliable and abandoning women, with little close focus on the text.

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

Question 2

- (a) This passage was effective in engaging candidates of all abilities in the idea that the British couple show little understanding of, or respect for, the local culture and noted the ignorance they show when they wear the important Egungun tribal dress as a trivial dressing-up option.

Successful responses established the context of this moment, with reference to the prior focus on the Yoruba community and the Horseman ritual. They engaged with the different use of music in the two cultures—with the previous scene of joy and dancing among the Yoruba people in the marketplace with its rhythmic powerful drumming, contrasted with the staid *'tango playing from an old hand-cranked gramophone'*, in the Pilkings' residence. These responses identified Jane and Simon's disrespect for and lack of understanding of the local culture, illustrated vividly in their wearing of the Egungun costumes which are part of a solemn Yoruba ritual cult of the ancestors, while they dance the tango. Amusa's horrified reaction to this situation was discussed along with the fact that he cannot believe the desecration of religious rites of the Yoruba people, to which Simon and Jane seem oblivious. These responses discussed the power balance between Simon and Amusa and that, although Amusa has a responsible position in the local administration, Simon does not respect this and treats him in a patronising manner. Simon's language such as *'mumbo jumbo'* and *'nonsense'* was referenced to illustrate this lack of respect. The staging in this moment, with the description of the tango music, Jane and Simon dressed in *'some form of fancy dress'* and Amusa knocking over the flowerpot, was referenced to explore the build-up of tension and the *'striking'* nature of what is being revealed in this moment of the play. This level of response often included an outraged sense of disgust at the Pilkings' behaviour. The strongest responses managed to recognise that Jane is not quite as obviously *'superior'* as Simon, and that she might have a restraining influence on her husband.

Weaker responses tended to be rather general and understanding remained at a surface level, providing little context about the Egungun costumes or Amusa's horrified reaction to their use as *'fancy dress'* by Simon and Jane. The lengthy stage directions at the beginning of the extract were often overlooked, missing the importance of Amusa's reaction, which is revealed to the audience before Simon and Jane even know that he is outside the window. Some responses confused Amusa with Joseph, and a few responses lost focus by concentrating more on historical context instead of the passage in question.

- (b) Most candidates showed knowledge of Olunde having moved to the UK to pursue his medical studies, Pilkings' assistance of Olunde in his plans, and Elesin's disapproval of this. There was some insight into Olunde's attitude to the Yoruba culture, and that although he has lived away from Nigeria, he retains an understanding and respect for the culture, travelling back with the intention of burying his father, who he assumes will have done his duty by now and committed ritual suicide. Olunde does not share Jane Pilkings' horror of this duty and indeed is ashamed when he realises that his father is still alive and has broken the cycle of life by failing to die.

The line, *'I have no father, eater of leftovers'*, was quoted in many responses to show Olunde's disgust that Elesin has not fulfilled his duty; and Olunde's suicide, taking his father's place in order to protect the community was admired in its attempt to restore family honour. Strong responses engaged with Olunde's appearance, *'like a ghost'* and the power of Elesin being confronted by the *'seeming statue'* of his son, immediately collapsing in grief and shame. Engagement with these elements of the staging of the passage showed a clear understanding of the text as performance.

Weaker responses relied heavily upon narrative and often showed confusion about the circumstances of Olunde's move to the UK. These responses rarely contained detailed textual support.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 3

- (a) Candidates of all abilities engaged effectively with the text and task. There was much worthwhile comment on the dynamics of Stella and Stanley's relationship and their contrasting attitudes to Blanche's arrival in their home and to the sale of Belle Reve. Successful responses contextualised the passage and established Blanche's arrival at the Kowalski home and her claim that Belle Reve

has been lost paying for the illnesses and funerals of various relatives. These responses showed a clear critical understanding of, and a sensitive response to the contrast between Stella's concern for her sister, her naivety and lack of interest in details about Belle Reve, Stanley's greed and determination to get what he thinks is his right under the 'Napoleonic code' and his determination not to be '*swindled*'. Stanley's dominance of Stella was described in one case as 'mansplaining the Napoleonic code', and his intent to '*enlighten*' her was often explored. Stella's frustration was understood and was referenced in her '*Shhh! she'll hear you*', which is dismissed by Stanley's, '*I do not care if she hears me.*'

The role of Stella as mediator, or a 'bridge' between Blanche and Stanley, was understood as was Stanley's volatility, which makes this role impossible. Many responses pointed out that Stanley's aggression and lack of care for Blanche foreshadows the later rape scene, with one candidate perceptively identifying that Stanley's nature is to 'pounce and attack', while Stella's is to avoid conflict, please people and smooth over difficulties. Stage directions '*ominously*' and '*vaguely*' were used to support these points. Stanley's repetition of '*So?*' and '*How?*' was understood to illustrate his determination not to show consideration for Blanche, and to pursue his greed and self-interest; and his sarcastic and mocking tone in '*Sister Blanche*', was noted. Strong responses also identified Stella's loyalty to her 'Kowalski present', particularly as she is pregnant, and her disassociation with her 'Dubois past', meaning that her concern about the loss of Belle Reve is minimal and not in the forefront of her mind. Strong responses interestingly discussed the irony of Blanche's '*captive maid*' song and its relevance to ideas about women being trapped by their dependence on men. Examples given were Stella's financial dependence on her husband and Blanche's state of being trapped within the Kowalski household due to her life circumstances.

Less successful responses often included a lengthy and general introduction, lingering on historical context: the Old versus New South, or gender roles, at the expense of a detailed response to the passage. Coverage of the passage was often narrow and consisted largely of straightforward comments about Stella's kindness and Stanley's dominance, with little exploration of a limited number of textual references. Some responses drifted to other parts of the play and sometimes contrasted Blanche, rather than Stella, with Stanley. They often wandered from the passage and discussed contemporary gender roles of male dominance and female compliance and how Stanley and Stella fit these roles. These comments were rarely rooted in the text and were at the expense of contextualising the passage or discussing the characters' reactions to Blanche's arrival in their home. Similarly, themes of the play such as illusion vs reality were often outlined with no textual support. There was some confusion with Stanley's word '*gander*' and 'gender'. The practical stage direction of Stella putting on her dress was often over-analysed and cited as evidence of her weakness and femininity.

- (b) Successful responses were able to outline the relationship between Blanche and Allan and there was an understanding of how young they both were when they fell in love and how Allan was everything to Blanche. The circumstances of Allan's suicide and its dramatic impact upon the rest of Blanche's life and her mental health was understood; the fact that Blanche never recovers from this and it creates her insecurities, with the belief that she has not only failed Allan but failed to uphold the idea of her role as a wife. The resulting guilt about Allan's death leads to her becoming promiscuous, seeking affection and validation from men after her rejection by Allan. One candidate commented that, 'Blanche has coped with the loss of one man by seeking solace in many others.' Examples of being sacked from her job for an affair with a young candidate and kissing the newspaper boy were all cited. There was understanding that Blanche's need for '*magic*' has doomed her to disillusionment in a world of harsh truths. The question allowed candidates to demonstrate their understanding of staging and performance with some effective observations on the motifs of light, Blanche's addiction to alcohol and the constant bathing, all reflecting her need for protection and avoidance of the harsh reality of her situation.

Strong responses also referenced staging features such as the Varsouviana polka and its haunting impact on Blanche's mental stability, as well as the gunshot recalling Allan's suicide. Relevant structural aspects of the play were discussed, particularly the way in which details of Blanche's relationship with Allan are gradually revealed, and the parallels that exist between this relationship and the relationship between Blanche and Mitch. Those candidates who recognised that Blanche's memories and emotions are equally as raw as the day Allan committed suicide, were able to engage with how an audience would feel sympathy for her. Strong responses linked Mitch's disgusted comments to Blanche with her own comments about Allan.

Weaker responses did not engage with the facts about Allan's homosexuality or his suicide and became rather general with little textual support or detail. These responses were often muddled and instead of focusing on Blanche and Allan, examined the relationship between Blanche and Stanley and/or Stella and Stanley instead.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates engaged with Helena's lack of self-worth and Demetrius's cruelty which create a disturbing moment.

In stronger responses, candidates contextualised the passage as following on from Helena's revelation to Demetrius of Hermia and Lysander's flight from Athens. These responses understood that Demetrius is now rejecting Helena after having previously been her suitor and is treating her in an ungentlemanlike manner, thus making his brash and cruel comments towards her even more disturbing. They engaged with the disturbing nature of this moment, expressing rage and disgust at Demetrius's treatment of Helena and understanding that what may have been amusing to an audience of Shakespeare's contemporaries is now disturbing to a modern audience. There was some recognition that both Demetrius and Helena are suffering from unrequited love at this point in the play and the idea that both are powerfully obsessed with someone who does not return their love was related to the theme of love as madness. Some candidates felt embarrassed for Helena and the way in which she demeans herself, feeling that this is inappropriate behaviour.

Candidates gave detailed responses to the imagery of the spaniel and the semantic field of violence, in '*spurn me, strike me*', and noted that this representation of Helena's self-abasement is hard to accept for a modern audience. Strong responses were able to connect Helena's language to the theme of despair and madness associated with unrequited love and the responses which related this self-degradation to the theme of the loss of logical thinking when in love, were more successful than those who merely saw it as an attempt by Helena to gain the attention of Demetrius.

Demetrius's appalling behaviour towards Helena was discussed, giving examples of him saying that Helena makes him '*sick*', leaving her to the '*mercy*' of wild beasts and threatening her chastity, '*do thee mischief*'. The forest setting and its danger to Helena embodied in the sexual threat from Demetrius was often discussed as part of the candidates' discomfort and shock. There was also a developed response to the language of the 'Daphne/Apollo' reference in the most successful responses, which explored the reverse hunting image where the one who should be pursued becomes the pursuer: '*The dove pursues the griffin*'. Helena's line, '*The story shall be changed*', referring to the Apollo and Daphne allusion, was interpreted as also foreshadowing the ending of the play where due to the love potion the story is indeed changed, and Demetrius ends up loving Helena.

Weaker responses were quite repetitive on the subject of unrequited love, with limited coverage of the passage, an absence of textual detail and limited development of ideas. They often lost focus on the passage and became generalised, discussing gender roles in Shakespeare's time without connecting comments to the passage. Some began to discuss the influence of magic on the Lovers, inaccurately stating that Demetrius is under a spell, which makes him behave so unpleasantly. Coverage of the passage was often limited to brief discussion of Helena being a '*spaniel*' and an outline of what this breed of dog is like. Some candidates also discussed past productions of the play at length, which is not productive when the time allowed for this question is 45 minutes. The implied sexual threat of Demetrius's '*I shall do thee mischief in the wood*', was often missed, as was the idea of the chase in the Daphne and Apollo reference.

- (b) Stronger responses established Theseus as a fair ruler capable of both mercy and humour, but also a product of the patriarchal society who values law and order; and they noted that this status is suggested by him speaking the first lines of the play. They showed understanding that he provides Hermia with an alternative solution when faced with her father's intransigence, and that he asks her opinion: '*What say you, Hermia?*'. His overruling of Egeus was highlighted by candidates, showing his ability to be flexible, fair and benevolent and they understood his significant role in the play's resolution.

However, in balanced responses there were reservations about Theseus's relationship with Hippolyta: '*I wooed thee with my sword*'; and comment on how his relationship with her was made as a part of a transaction, thus objectifying Hippolyta as a trophy rather than as an equal. She is, according to some candidates, a symbol of his power rather than aligning with the context of wooing within the play. Perceptive responses noted Theseus' use of triples '*in pomp, in glory and in revelry*', indicating his superficial adoration of Hippolyta being rooted in his achievements in war and not based on mutual respect and sentiment. These responses also commented on the fact that although Theseus presents Hermia with an alternative future, the fact remains that he represents the patriarchy and men's ownership and control over women. In the end, Hermia's choices are limited and controlled by the men around her.

Weaker responses struggled to find sufficient relevant material about Theseus to make a meaningful response, losing focus on the character and relying upon narrative. These responses struggled to relate to the character and contained little or no supporting textual detail.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

Question 5

- (a) The passage offered candidates of all abilities the opportunity to engage with the main characters and the way that their relationship is judged by others. Successful responses contextualised the passage, outlining the fact that Antony has abandoned his wife Fulvia and is living with his lover, Cleopatra, in Egypt. He has done nothing to help Caesar and Lepidus maintain control of Rome while it is under threat from Pompey and the Parthians.

These responses engaged with the dramatic technique of Philo introducing Antony and Cleopatra before they enter the scene. They understood that some of Philo's comments foreshadow Antony's downfall, and that as one of Antony's followers, his words of criticism of Antony as a once great soldier who has neglected his duties and become a fool through his infatuation with Cleopatra, are particularly pertinent. They understood the friction between Egypt and Rome in Antony's reception of the messenger and a foreshadowing of his recklessness later in the play. Candidates explored Cleopatra's taunting of Antony when they enter the scene and how she almost makes fun of him. The '*Let Rome in Tiber melt*' line was referenced often, with varying degrees of understanding and analysis. Stronger responses understood its significance in describing Antony and Cleopatra's love: that it transcends the known world and is worth the loss of Rome. The derogatory language about Cleopatra, '*tawny front*', '*gypsy*', '*strumpet*' was referenced and analysed in successful responses, as was her teasing language towards Antony. Some candidates who engaged personally with the passage commented on the sexism in the labelling of Cleopatra as a '*strumpet*', while it is actually Antony who is married and is therefore being unfaithful.

Weaker responses often relied upon narrative and consisted of a discussion of the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra without close reference to the question or passage. Many candidates did not show understanding of how Cleopatra is challenging and taunting Antony about the extent of his love and about Fulvia and his attitude towards Rome.

- (b) Successful responses engaged with the decadence of Egypt and its strong effect on Antony: he finds it difficult to leave and is drawn back against his own best interests. They identified Egypt as a place for fun and play; indulgent, gossipy and lazy, but detailed textual support for these ideas was often lacking.

Some candidates understood how Cleopatra is an embodiment of Egypt with its decadence, hedonism and sensuality, in contrast to Rome's business-like formality and martial nature, but they often did not develop significantly beyond this idea.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/41 Unseen

Key messages

- The quality of introductions has much improved, but candidates need more practice in concluding their responses.
- Deep understanding requires more developed or sustained analysis of the effects of language choices and imagery.
- Literary devices are correctly identified, but more exploration of their purpose is needed for higher marks.
- Personal response should go beyond recognising a narrative: it requires interpreting how it achieves its effect on the reader.

General comments

This is a very well-established component of the course now, and centres who choose this option prepare their candidates very well for it. Texts chosen by those setting the paper remain challenging and reflect the diversity of contemporary Literature in English, as well as the literary tradition. Past papers remain the best source for practice, especially as these reports provide a supporting commentary on what the strongest candidates achieve. All the Assessment Objectives are tested by this component, so it remains a good synoptic test of all the skills candidates have learned on the course, including the ability to construct a thoughtful literary essay. Successful responses are therefore more likely to be planned, communicate an overview of the whole text before investigating details, and tackle each part of the text in similar depth. Strong answers also have effective evaluative conclusions, exploring why the text makes an impact, as well as how. It is better to write three or four well-planned sides of writing rather than attempt an exhaustive commentary on each detail. Clear expression is also a virtue, and although handwriting is not assessed, it helps to communicate ideas without ambiguity. Examiners reported a very large number of scripts which were untidy and difficult to read. Candidates who need to word-process their work can apply for access arrangements and growing numbers do so.

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AO2 Understanding at a deeper level

A deep level of understanding which sustains analysis and evaluation is the key to higher marks. The most successful responses do not just look at parts of the text in isolation, section by section, but consider their interrelation, linking their observations about how the text is constructed. Some candidates would benefit from more guidance in how to embed quotations and analysis within a clearly expressed argument about the meaning of a text. Stronger answers show critical awareness of genre, structural devices and the writer's style. All of these are crucial in establishing the tone of the writing and evaluating its effect on the reader. While most candidates can easily construct a surface narrative for the text, stronger responses need

awareness of the text as a construct with a critical approach to how the writer manipulates narrative viewpoint or the speaking voice of the poem. Poetic conventions allow candidates scope for exploring underlying meaning, and choices of figurative expression; candidates sometimes seem less aware of the conventions of prose writing and can retell what happens rather than thinking about the intended effect on the reader.

AO3 Language, structure and form

Candidates realise that effective analysis of language choices and structural features – indicated by the L annotation in marked scripts – are a key discriminator in this paper. Most candidates are keen to identify the literary techniques used by writers, sometimes using obscure Latin or Greek rhetorical terms to do so. This is not necessary, as the quality of commentary is much more important than its quantity. It is better to identify a small number of key images or structural devices and extend analysis to explore how they shape the deeper meaning and impact of the text, rather than to produce a long list of figurative language followed simply by their literal meaning. Some candidates still look at poetry line by line, or image by image, without reading the meaning of the whole sentence or stanza or exploring how images are related to each other. More successful responses have a more conceptual approach from their opening paragraph, illustrating their interpretative ideas through sustained analysis and showing a clear overview of the structural progression of the whole text, before drawing conclusions about its final effect on the reader.

AO4 Personal response

Candidates would benefit from practice in writing effective conclusions as well as effective introductions. Less successful responses waste time with conclusions that treat the text as a didactic lesson about social problems, or simply repeat points made earlier. Strong conclusions focus on evaluating the literary impact of the text on the reader, and how that has been achieved by the cumulative effect of the devices the writer has used. Good responses have insight into the writer's choices and show individuality and flair in assessing their impact on the mood recreated for the reader.

The most effective concluding paragraphs follow on from the impact of the final section of the writing and see how it relates to the opening and other earlier parts of the text, relating its impact to narrative style and voice. Appreciation of structural changes and developments helps a final assessment of the impact of the writing on the reader. Candidates are showing greater thought about the structure and form of texts, and how they shape their impact on the reader, but these need to be related to meaning and the emotional impression made by effective expression.

Examiners are skilled in engaging with the meaning of candidate's work even if their written English is not always clear: we assess the quality of the process of making meaning from literary texts and do so without a prescription for an 'ideal answer'. We are open to different readings and interpretations of texts, but they need to be securely grounded in an evidence base of quotation, analysis of literary effects and exploration of meaning and impact. Stronger responses are alert to ambiguity and suggestion in literary texts, employing modal verbs to explore meaning tentatively instead of rushing to judgement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem '*Alone*' is by Gabriel Griffin, a British poet based in Italy. Perhaps inevitably, in response to unseen poetry and prose, many candidates began by trying to work out 'the story' behind the poem or passage. Surprisingly, there were many instances where candidates appeared not to have read the introduction provided to guide them in this initial task. The prompt told them that the poem is about the speaker missing the physical presence of her children – now grown up. Several candidates deduced, instead, that the speaker has lost 'loved ones' which might have been a partner, lover, or a friend, depending upon the candidate's interpretation, and that these 'loved ones' are now deceased. Unfortunately, these personal interpretations, which were not actually rooted in the text, tended to skew students' ability to make full sense of the poem. Another less common, but still quite prevalent, misunderstanding of the speaker's situation, was that she had decided to become a nun, or at least, 'taken holy orders' and was consigned, by the strict regulations of that order, to a solitary life. This interpretation was also self-limiting in discerning the poet's intentions. Even given these misunderstandings, some candidates managed to offer some plausible, credit-worthy, interpretations of individual lines of text and to note several poetic devices used by the poet, albeit without achieving a sense of 'complete' understanding of the poet's feelings or memories.

Where candidates did make full use of the introduction, answers were generally much more successful in recognising the various stages of the mother's feelings as she moves from a state of grief for the physical loss of her children's company, to a state of acceptance of the inevitable distance between them and, eventually, to a state of relative contentment as she anticipates a future, coloured by her past experiences of her children and her happy memories of them, which she believes will persist even in an 'empty room'. Many candidates, irrespective of whether they fully appreciated the poet's intended meaning, revealed well-developed sensitivity to the poet's use of language. Particularly well-handled was the poet's use of sounds within the poem. Candidates remarked on the 'chimes' of the bells, on the 'thrum' of the wind, on the 'thudding' sky and the 'whispering' leaf. Some interesting work was seen on the poet's use of synaesthesia in the third stanza where 'echoes' appear to have the capacity to 'shine'. Others focused on the prominence of hands in the poem citing the 'hidden hands' from stanza 1, that seemed, to some candidates, to be a 'mysterious' receptacle for secrets. These same candidates sometimes suggested that the 'curtain tossed aside' implied impatient young hands, while the reference to horizons 'that only they will reach' also conjured images of outstretched hands grasping for future successes.

Many candidates seemed to enjoy the poet's use of imagery relating to dance, such as the 'tap-dance' of the children's names that insistently remind the speaker of her absent family members. Candidates also seemed to revel in the notions of the names 'whirling' into a 'thundering dance', and the whimsical sense of the 'pirouette', as they made their elegant exit from the 'screen'. Quite a few candidates interpreted this reference to a 'screen' as representing the speaker's memory. Some conflated the poet's references to the 'silver' script and the 'screen' to suggest that the speaker's memories were like an 'old movie' playing and replaying in the 'silver screen' of her imagination.

Some candidates appreciated the poet's use of imagery related to movement other than 'dance', and they noted the frequent use of present participles lending a sense of immediacy to the writing. Many candidates picked out vocabulary that suggested both movement and light, and they commented on the poet's frequent use of sibilance, which some interpreted as mimicking the sentimental aspects of the memories: 'sparkling', 'shimmering' and 'shining', in the first part of the poem. These candidates also noted the use of present participles in the second part of the poem, where 'young hands waving' and 'scarves fluttering' continued the sense of perpetual movement that is maintained, though not linked latterly to light nor especially to sound.

Many, but by no means all, candidates noted the break between the stanzas, indicated by the asterisk. For many who noticed this shift, this was to be read as a signal, from the poet, to suggest that the speaker is 'moving on' from the past and shifting her perspective to consider the future, both for her children and for herself. Candidates supported this idea by referring to the lines that describe the children, who are imagined as 'racing towards horizons' though beyond their mother's grasp. Many candidates noted the use of second person address, after the asterisk, and some offered the observation that this use of an apostrophe to an absent son or daughter – 'your name' – is the first indication of a possibly special relationship with one of her children. In the first part of the poem these candidates recognised that the speaker seems to think about her children as a single entity using plural pronouns 'they/them/their/they've'. While in the second part, she does not refer to 'your names' (plural), when she writes about hanging the letters on 'your wind-chimes' but 'your name' (singular). Some sensitive readers concluded, from this, that the speaker has one child who she especially misses or yearns for.

The poem's ending was almost universally interpreted as being an example of 'positive thinking', not that the speaker is expecting a return of her children (or of her 'favourite' child, as a minority of students interpreted it), but of a future time when she would glean comfort from the ringing of the name, albeit in a still 'empty room'. Very few candidates who attempted this question failed to make any sense of it at all and many were relatively successful in their analysis of poetic method even where they had made unlikely assumptions about its overall meaning.

Question 2

Answers on the prose passage, an extract taken from the novel *A Boy in Winter* by Rachel Seiffert, covered the full range of achievement.

This short passage was introduced, as usual, with some guidance for candidates about why the two young brothers were running through their town, at daybreak, in fear for their lives. Most candidates absorbed and utilised this guidance in a purposeful way. Some others were distracted by the mention of the Second World War, leading them to divulge their historical knowledge about this dark period in European history, and they wrote, at more length than was beneficial, about the perils and outcomes of that particular war.

In most answers, however, candidates made good use of the context. Candidates who understood the threat that motivated the elder brother to take charge of his younger sibling, appeared sensitive to the tension of the situation, and to how the writer created that tension. Although some candidates speculated about the cause of the emptiness of the town – some suggesting that other inhabitants had fled or already been killed – most focused on the experience of the boys, as they negotiated the empty streets under cover of both darkness and fog.

There was some very good analysis of the way the writer presented the ‘first grey of morning’. Candidates interrogated the presentation of the fog, the way that it both obscured the boys from the enemy and hampered their progress. Candidates were also often sensitive to language that suggested the complete absence of signs of other life: ‘nothing’, ‘no one’, ‘no sounds’, ‘no lamplight’. They noted the powerful effect of the author’s use of the phrase ‘no one here yet to find them’; replete with proleptic anticipation of the portentous ‘rumbling’ to come, in the shape of the invaders’ vehicles, rolling through the fog and into the town.

Many astute candidates commented on the frequently used ‘time-related’ vocabulary of ‘when’, ‘already’, ‘now’; and of the repeated word ‘soon’, as well as the ominous ‘yet’ and how the accretion of these words helps the writer to make the opening of the novel so tense.

Some candidates focused more on the relationship between the boys; this was successful provided that candidates linked their relationship to the writer’s methods for making the passage either ‘tense’ or (in the last two paragraphs) ‘dramatic’. These candidates tracked the elder brother’s state of high alertness, as he ‘stops listening a moment’ and surveys his environment with ‘darting eyes’; all the while, shepherding his little brother, urgently yet tenderly, towards the safety that he expected to find at the home of the schoolmaster. In some answers, the reactions of the younger brother acted as a ‘barometer of tension’ throughout the passage. First, he is depicted, tagging ‘just behind’ the elder brother, holding on to him with his ‘small fingers twisted in a fistful of his jerkin’ emphasising the vulnerability of the little boy and, thereby, increasing the sense of the elder brother’s responsibility and heightened sense of danger, creating tension for the reader.

Candidates noted how later, our young ‘hero’ pulls ‘his young brother close, pressing them both to the stone walls...’ then, at the little boy’s entreaty, ‘holding up his arms to be lifted’, the big brother ‘pulls him onto his back to carry him; still cautious’. To increase the tension further, candidates commented upon how the writer continues to relay the physical as well as the mental pressure that the little boy exerts over his elder brother, as he is described as feeling his little brother ‘shivering too’, presumably through fear as well as chill, as the little boy ‘clutched to his shoulders’. At the ‘glare’ of the headlights, ‘in the fog’ – as if this phrase were not ‘dramatic’ enough – astute candidates noted how the writer continued to use the smaller brother’s fear to make the passage tense, as he is described as gripping his elder brother with ‘small fists tight and fearful’. This final action seemed to some candidates to galvanise the elder boy, who is propelled into ‘running, ‘making for the shelter of one of the town’s many alleyways’ and to a temporary form of relative safety.

Not all candidates appreciated the writer’s craft with such sensitivity, and examiners reported that there were very many answers that were little more than a paraphrase of the action. Other answers were almost entirely speculative about, for example, the fate that awaited the boys should they be captured, or the escape route they might be advised to take, should they reach the house of the schoolmaster.

There were, inevitably, answers that fell in between paraphrase/fantasy and a meticulous exploration of Seiffert’s prose. In many less accurate, and more fanciful, answers, the ‘old schoolmaster’ became the ‘Headmaster’ and acquired a range of characteristics that were not apparent from a reading of the given extract.

In the answers of carefully prepared candidates, examiners reported seeing sensible explorations of the setting – the deserted town on a misty/foggy morning. Candidates remarked on the use of pathetic fallacy with the physical ‘fog’ being representative of the boys’ lack of security about their future. Many candidates acknowledged the writer’s methods for creating tension through the use of present participles, which make the reader feel the immediacy of the boys’ plight. These candidates picked out, especially, the sense of the almost constant motion of the boys, from the initial sentence ‘He is out and running ...’. The elder brother’s sense of impending danger is communicated vividly as he is described as ‘hurrying’; the boys are described, ‘flitting from street to street’ and, in the face of the arrival of the ‘invaders’, the boy is described as ‘turning, already he is running, making for shelter...’

Even in the briefest of answers, and in otherwise quite literal approaches to the ‘story’ almost all candidates recognised the ‘cliffhanger’ effect created by the abrupt end of the extract as the military vehicles rumbled into the town.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/42 Unseen

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Candidates would benefit from practice in writing effective conclusions as well as effective introductions. Less successful responses waste time with conclusions that treat the text as a didactic lesson about social problems, or simply repeat points made earlier. Strong conclusions focus on evaluating the literary impact of the text on the reader, and how that has been achieved by the cumulative effect of the devices the writer has used. Good responses have insight into the writer's choices and show individuality and flair in assessing their impact on the mood recreated for the reader.

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Examiners are skilled in engaging with the meaning of candidate's work even if their written English is not always clear: we assess the quality of the process of making meaning from literary texts and do so without a prescription for an 'ideal answer'. We are open to different readings and interpretations of texts, but they need to be securely grounded in an evidence base of quotation, analysis of literary effects and exploration of meaning and impact. Stronger responses are alert to ambiguity and suggestion in literary text, employing modal verbs to explore meaning tentatively instead of rushing to judgement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The poem 'From Shore to Shore' by Helen Harvey proved overwhelmingly popular this year, and its themes of love, commitment and disenchantment clearly appealed to teenage readers. There was strong personal response to and engagement with each of these stages and developed analysis of the poem's sustained metaphors of shore, sea and sailing to describe a romance which ends in shipwreck. The best responses were alert to the way the tide turns in this first-person narrative addressed to the former lover, to its retrospective tone, to changes of tense to the present, and to the ambiguity of the poem's final line. While some were too keen to turn the poem's images into a brutally literal narrative, others explored its expression in a more nuanced way, without preconceptions, and were alert to its lyricism, musical use of rhyme and structure, and play of enjambment and caesura to mimic the advancing and retreating tide of love.

Many managed time well to cover the full scope of the poem, though earlier stanzas received more attention overall as some candidates clearly left themselves less time to deal with some of the complexities towards the poem's end. This was unfortunate as the more challenging formal aspects of the poem, and the richest

imagery came in the third and fourth stanzas. While the idea of love as an overwhelming current, pulling you into deep waters, was clearly understood by most, candidates were less certain about what the different shores in the title might represent, what it might mean to be 'becalmed' and why the speaker compares herself to 'accommodating sand' yet also 'strange gold' at the end of the text.

Most candidates were alert to the 'soothing' nature of the opening of the poem, quoting widely the words 'gently' and 'lulling' and frequently pointing to enjambment as mimicking the smooth flow of both water and relationship at this stage. There was disagreement regarding the 'distant shore' on line 3: many considered that the speaker was being carried far away, occasionally linking this to notions of change to show the impact of the relationship; some interpreted the distance as representing an 'ideal' of the relationship's direction, rather than a reality, linking in with the image of the lovers whose strolling and laughing was only a possibility, indicated by the inclusion of 'perhaps'. One candidate referred to this as creating a '*layer of mist to their relationship*', adding that the poem '*never confirms a loving relationship*'. Understanding of the decline of the relationship later on in the poem was picked up by the majority of candidates, though not all noticed signs like this early on, indicated when the poem shifts into the present tense. 'I do not remember any more' also led to some varied responses. Some saw a positive tone in this, linking to ideas some shared of the sense of being so 'engrossed' in the first stages of love that other memories did not matter. Others took a more pessimistic approach, seeing the lack of further memories to indicate a '*reckless*' journey of falling too quickly into the relationship, some linking this to ideas of 'young love' and a failure to think about consequences. A slightly more sinister approach drew on potentially darker interpretations of earlier verbs like 'carried' and 'lulling' ('*into a false sense of security?*') and suggested the submission of the speaker to the lover's control, one candidate claiming that the situation '*almost mirrors an abduction*', suggesting that not remembering could be a response to the trauma and heartbreak outlined later in the poem.

Some candidates struggled to engage with much of stanza two, though the verbs 'launched' and 'tumbling' received a lot of attention, with many candidates helpfully contrasting these choices with the gentle language in the first stanza. Some candidates noted the change from second to first person pronouns here, the speaker now possibly taking responsibility for her actions, rather than merely being at the mercy of the lover. Comments on the metaphor 'ocean of promises' were also widespread, with lots noting how 'vast' these promises must have been and with some varying interpretations as to whether this creates a sense of deception, conveys the excitement of the budding relationship or a combination of both readings. The words 'launched' and 'lifted' were connected by some candidates, described by one as 'propelled', many showing understanding of the poet's emphasis on powerful emotions and 'lack of hesitation'. Some higher-level responses were able to link this to wider suggestions by the poem, relating to dangers of jumping into relationships too quickly, using the analogy of launching into waters which could turn rough. The 'swell' and 'sigh' of the tide received some attention, including from candidates who found beauty in the sibilance and even a suggestion of physical intimacy. The 'sharp and fragile corals' interested more candidates, with lots of focus on the hints of the relationship being 'hurtful', 'brittle' and 'delicate'. Strongest answers tended to see the corals in its context of the preceding lines, clarifying the action of the speaker being lifted over them, but their presence lurking below. One candidate tackled this by suggesting that '*Sharp could depict the pain that the poet would feel if their relationship were to end*', adding that '*Fragile reveals how their relationship is not particularly strong.*' The reference to 'open water' led to differing views again: some saw this as indicating freedom and adventure, while others saw the danger and risk involved with being so far from the shore, a small number referring back to the title in considering how far the relationship has progressed, perhaps beyond the point of comfort. Some explored the corals as an indication of how beauty and risk can coexist in a relationship. Lots of comments were offered on the use of 'tumbling', with some seeing the fun in this and others noting its suggestion of being out of control and potentially dangerous. Many linked this with the detail of being 'drawn' by a 'current' to discuss the poet's further development of the speaker being controlled by the lover, unable to escape and potentially at risk. As one candidate put it: '*smooth seas can quickly change into rapid currents and dangerous storms*'.

There were frequent observations on the repetition of the word 'drawn' connecting the second and third stanzas, and the best rightly saw this as a turning point, at which the risks inherent in the second stanza became evident. Candidates were unsure whether the punctuation was a hyphen, which connects, or a dash, which separates. A few commented on a single sentence taking up the entirety of stanzas one and two and the possible effects of this. There were some good responses to the extended noun phrase of the sea being 'flat' and 'leaden': many candidates contrasted the gentle movement of the waves earlier in the poem with a 'flat' and motionless sea, related to the experience of being 'becalmed'; others contrasted the lightness of being 'carried' and 'lifted' with the weighted heaviness suggested in 'leaden', often referring to the verb 'weighed' which was heavy enough to prolong this description over the line break. A few candidates made a connection between tears (noting their salty composition) and the use of sea, with one seeing the tears as '*insignificant in contrast to the vast sea around them*' to show understanding of the speaker's sense of abandonment at this stage of the poem. The use of the verb 'left' was seen by some as representing the

action of abandonment (emphasised by the word finishing the line and returning to an emphasis on being at the mercy of the lover), whilst others saw it as descriptive of the consequence of heartbreak. The action of 'drifting' was compared well with earlier, more active verbs to highlight a lack of direction and control in the speaker's situation at this point of the poem – a *'drifting sense of love'*. Those who tackled the image of being 'parched silent by salt in the sun' frequently commented on the sibilance in the line, some linking this to a depiction of sizzling heat, others claiming a hissing sense of evil. Strong answers tended to focus in on the speaker's lack of voice here, with one connecting this to a removal of self and identity hinted at earlier in the poem as they are *'drawn'* to a place *'far beyond' their earlier self*. One candidate saw the parched image as indicating a *'loss of passion and hope'*. The desperation in the final line of stanza 3 was widely noted, with lots of detailed thinking regarding language choices here: one script is typical of this in seeing the verb 'clinging' as showing *'desperation, dependence and yearning'*; the metaphor of 'debris' led to lots of useful analysis, noting ideas of destruction and waste: *'implying some sort of explosion or catastrophic event rather than a slow corrosion of love'*. The disrupted structure in this stanza was picked up in a few cases and linked to the shift in tone here, mirroring the disruption of the relationship itself. One candidate approached this disruption in an individual response by listing together 'tumbling', 'drifting' and 'clung' as 'all having connotations of being lost at sea' to suggest they are *'helpless and lost in the development of the relationship'*. Far fewer noticed that the rhyme scheme remains the same, suggesting retrospective awareness that all this was fated to follow a pattern.

Some candidates referred to the change in tense in the final stanza, indicated by the opening 'Now'. Candidates with a stronger sense of past and present were able to make better sense of the poem as a whole. On the other hand, many did notice the shift towards more violent and dramatic language in the final stanza, picking up on verbs like 'crash' and 'smash', occasionally noting the onomatopoeia here as emphasising the strength of the waves and frequently commenting on the difference between the large waves in 'breakers' compared to the flat and gentle stages of the sea earlier on. One candidate paid particular attention to the sounds in these descriptions in 'breakers crash', observing the *'harsh clipping 'k's' and 'c's' that draw opposites to the soft vowels of 'lulling'*. The mention of the 'opposite shore' was taken by some candidates to refer to the position of the lover (i.e. some suggesting movement to a new partner) and seen by others to refer to the speaker's current position, a long way ('opposite') from her starting point. Stronger responses also referenced the movement implicit in the poem's title. The idea of this movement potentially changing the speaker was suggested in a few scripts, especially drawing on the 'accommodating sand' image in the following line. The violence and destruction in this image were well noted, as was the sense of the speaker being a victim here. Generally, the most engaged responses paid attention to the addition of 'accommodating', viewing this as a suggestion of loss of self/identity, changing to fit the partner's requirements; this was particularly impressive where these comments linked to similar hints elsewhere in the poem. The sand itself received a lot of focus, one seeing it as *'a symbol of the destructing power of the sea, once proud rocks turned into feeble, small and formless sand.'* Another candidate referred to the *'nullification of individuality'*, whilst one took a different approach and thought of the image as more liberating, signalling the sand as representative of *'starting anew'*.

There were some very thoughtful ideas about the closing lines of the poem, with a number mentioning the inevitability of the tide 'ebbing' and some picking up on the addition of 'once more' to suggest that the partner left and returned repeatedly to hint at a turbulent relationship. There were also many perceptive points raised about the 'strange gold' metaphor. Some saw 'strange' as emphasising the speaker's changes, others saw it as referring to her confusion after becoming single or even more positively as showing uniqueness. 'Gold' led to more agreement amongst the bulk of candidates, with links made to connotations of treasure and value in particular. One candidate pulled the description together as *'meaning that she now knows how valuable they are but only worthy to those who know their value'* and another saw it as *'meaning she feels like a prize to be won but never loved, something you either hoard or trade for something better.'* The 'cautious' nature of the verb 'edging' was noted by some and the movement to 'foreign land' was seen as significant by many. Again, there was a variety of thoughts regarding the importance of 'foreign', some considering negatives like loneliness and loss of self, others finding the positives of adventure and a fresh start. The importance of a shift to land in the final word of the poem was noted only by an odd few, one claiming that the land *'represents how she is finally going to ground herself and discover herself.'* The additional shift to an ABAB rhyme scheme in the final stanza was also spotted by the few rather than many; those who did see this tended to comment well on the potential implication of finality in the relationship and as perhaps signalling a stronger, more secure sense of self in a future separate from the partner.

In exploring the overall message of the poem candidates ranged from seeing it as a warning about 'love bombing' and toxic relationships, a cautionary tale about the risks of young love and, sometimes linked, a reminder about the power of love to change individuals. Some paralleled the cyclical structure of the poem with cycles of creation and destruction in nature to suggest that *'the relationship was cursed from the start'*. One candidate summarised their interpretation neatly: *'through the poet addressing someone they once*

loved, they intend to explore the universal human truth of a desire to be loved and cared for, and how people can be changed emotionally by relationships.'

Question 2

The prose extract was taken from the opening of the 2019 novel *Dolores* by Australian writer Lauren Aimee Curtis, set in a remote Andalusian convent. This proved less popular – fewer than 20 per cent of responses – and Examiners saw fewer strong, detailed and strongly conceptualised responses.

The first bullet point was generally tackled with an understanding of the girl's vulnerability, although surprisingly none realised that she was pregnant, highlighting the imposing nature of the convent compared to her weakened physical state. There were suggestions about the 'heavenly' nature of the convent due to its position 'at the top of the hill' and being described as 'golden'. Some struggled to marry this with the ominous (and possibly Gothic) reference to the crows and the 'oppressive' air, whilst one or two interpreted the convent as the girl's sanctuary to escape from a problematic outer environment. Some were able to refer to the relief of water in the next paragraph but more rarely linked this to the coolness of the dormitory later. A common interpretation of the convent's initial presentation was its resemblance to a prison (drawing on features like the small windows and black iron gates). Candidates were perhaps more successful in linking these observations to the sense later in the passage of the girl being – as some saw – trapped in the convent and new way of life. Other noteworthy observations from the opening of the passage include the initial portrayal of the nuns as nurturing (indicated by their action of gardening) and the 'resilience' of the girl in her determination to reach the convent. In the most successful responses, candidates also looked at the narrative perspective and how, despite the use of the third person, the reader was watching the scene unfold through the eyes of the as yet unnamed girl in the first few sentences, before switching to an omniscient narrator before then seeing the girl as the nuns would have seen her. The last sentence of the first paragraph was not given much attention, although one or two mentioned religious imagery in the kneeling and falling prostrate and one wrote '*the prose seems to me to contain a subtle undertone of anti-religious mockery*'. Most agreed that the convent was an odd place for a teenager to seek help.

A number of learners noticed that after the first paragraph the rest of the passage was written in the present tense, and the more successful were able to discuss the implications of this, combined with the cumulative effect of the short and sometimes incomplete sentences throughout the text. They pointed out that it was unsettling, giving scattered impressions and providing a commentary on what was happening, but lacking emotional context, as if the girl was completely passive. Spanish speakers pointed out the significance of the name Dolores, indicating pain and sorrow, and a number of others commented on how many times it was repeated in the middle section of the text. There was speculation on why she was given a new name when they could have found her real name from her passport or actually asked her. The mention of a passport also gave some learners a reason for the lack of communication as there could have been a language barrier and added to the mystery of why she was travelling alone to a different country.

The second bullet point tended to prompt candidates to focus on the girl's mimicking of the nun's actions, some seeing her efforts to conform as stemming from gratitude, a desire to please or fear/intimidation. The fact that '*Dolores cannot help but respond*' was seen by some as pointing to a lack of choice and removal of identity, which some connected to the imposition of a new name, heightened by the fact that readers are not privy to her original name ('*reduced to a pronoun*,' as one candidate noted). Other candidates interpreted Dolores' repetition of the nun's action as a sign of her meek character, her sincerity, her love for religion (alternately her lack of knowledge about religious practices) or her guile and cunning in fooling the nuns. There was general agreement over a sense of mystery and ambiguity in the depiction of the nun, with reference to seemingly contrasting descriptions like 'cold' and 'soft', 'child' and 'old woman's body'. There was some uncertainty as to whose 'face cracks into a large smile'. Some saw the nun leading Dolores 'arm in arm' and Dolores being 'told to sleep' as indicating compulsion, taking away the girl's free will, whereas others saw these actions as signalling kindness and care. This was certainly a moment of unspoken breakthrough or acceptance, leaving readers curious about the nature of their connection and Dolores' future in the convent.

Similarly, the dormitory led to differing impressions: some saw the orderly description as a positive sign of neatness and unity (those repeated 'twelves'); others felt it to be unnatural and eerie, implying loss of individual identity. This was also reflected in perceptions of the rock walls, which some linked to stability and a cool relief from the oppressive heat outside, whilst others felt the cave-like depiction to be sinister and cold. The closing of the blind was seen as symbolic by a couple of candidates, shutting out the world beyond and the girl's previous identity. Symbolism of the 'slither of light' also captured many candidates, one noting the link to the moon as '*mystical*' and full of '*spiritual*' implication'. Others connected this to the idea of a snake and the notion of Dolores's captivity or gulling. Some realised that bells are associated with marriage, death

and observance. The clothes featured most prominently in many answers, with many seeing these as representing a new identity for Dolores and there were differing interpretations about the extent of her choice in accepting this. One candidate claimed that *'these clothes almost symbolise an initiation and by putting them on, it is almost like a contract binding you to a new life at the convent.'* Another noted the 'heavy' adjective as indicating that they might be a 'burden' on her. The smell of the bundle was widely commented on but not with a lot of confidence. One more able candidate commented on the contrast between the 'clean' soap and the 'pungent' onions but the comment on this was limited to saying how this makes the clothes 'foreign' to her without elaborating further. The missing passport was much understood as representative of identity and freedom to 'escape', as some termed it. Where some saw something sinister in Dolores closing her eyes, as though put under a spell or (from one candidate) drugged, most felt this to be a sign of acceptance, resignation or relief and peace. Some speculated about why Dolores was so relieved to abandon her past identity and saw her new identity as 'Dolores' as suggesting erasure or rebirth. A few commented on the contrast between the cool and comfort of the convent and the harsh heat of outside, but only one or two extended this to ideas of Dolores being protected and sheltered from the outside world.

Overall, the quality (or frequency) of observations around form and structure for the passage was limited, though one candidate suggested that the short and factual sentences about the dormitory were in contrast to the narrative style in the opening, emphasising the basic simplicity of the setting. Another comment picked up on a stream-of-consciousness style created through many short sentences throughout the passage, which the candidate claimed, *'separates the text into many small fragments of language and gives a fast and frantic rhythm'*, linking to tension. The same candidate noted the absence of direct speech and claimed a level of mystery is created through this. The best responses were alert to the passage's purpose as the opening of a novel, designed to raise more questions than it answers and keeping the attentive reader puzzled and curious.

Overall, candidates were agreed that the text led to the reader asking questions, but fewer were able to then deal with this idea effectively. This was a shame as the text is rich in imagery. Those who focused on how details were intriguing and why were more successful than those who provided a running commentary on surface meaning. Responses which sought very dramatic interpretations of what was going on were less successful than those who explored the simple but effective significance of small descriptive details, and how the lack of dialogue (Dolores herself is voiceless), first person narrative or explicit context sustained tension and curiosity. Candidates might benefit from more practice in analysing texts open to different interpretations which remain partly unresolved.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/43 Unseen

Key messages

- The quality of introductions has much improved, but candidates need more practice in concluding their responses.
- Deep understanding requires more developed or sustained analysis of the effects of language choices and imagery.
- Literary devices are correctly identified, but more exploration of their purpose is needed for higher marks.
- Personal response should go beyond recognising a narrative: it requires interpreting how it achieves its effect on the reader.

General comments

This is a very well-established component of the course now, and it is clear that centres who choose this option prepare their candidates very well for it. Texts chosen by those setting the paper remain challenging and reflect the diversity of contemporary Literature in English, as well as the literary tradition. Past papers remain the best source for practice, especially as these reports provide a supporting commentary on what the strongest candidates achieve. All the Assessment Objectives are tested by this component, so it remains a good synoptic test of all the skills candidates have learned on the course, including the ability to construct a thoughtful literary essay. Successful responses are therefore more likely to be planned, communicate an overview of the whole text before investigating details, and tackle each part of the text in similar depth. Strong answers also have effective evaluative conclusions, exploring why the text makes an impact, as well as how. It is better to write three or four well-planned sides of writing rather than attempt an exhaustive commentary on each detail. Clear expression is also a virtue, and although handwriting is not assessed, it helps to communicate ideas without ambiguity. Examiners reported a very large number of scripts which were untidy and difficult to read. Candidates who need to word-process their work can apply for access arrangements and growing numbers do so.

AO1 Knowledge supported by textual reference

Candidates are advised to spend 20 minutes reading the texts, making a choice of which question they attempt, annotating their texts and planning their response. It is a good idea to divide texts into three sections, identify key shifts in focus or turning points and prepare some comments on how texts end before beginning to write. The bullet points are intended as a guide to this process: they assist in organising essays and ensuring candidates give thought to the writer's methods and the reader's response to the way each text ends. However, what Examiners mark is a response to the stem question, which is an analytical 'how' question. Thus, although candidates are expected to show knowledge supported by textual quotation, they need to go well beyond this for higher marks, analysing how the writing works. The best introductory paragraphs have an overview of the purpose and structure of the extract, and do not simply repeat the bullet points or list literary devices used – that is simply to waste precious time in the examination.

AO2 Understanding at a deeper level

A deep level of understanding which sustains analysis and evaluation is the key to higher marks. The most successful responses do not just look at parts of the text in isolation, section by section, but consider their interrelation, linking their observations about how the text is constructed. Some candidates would benefit from more guidance in how to embed quotations and analysis within a clearly-expressed argument about the meaning of a text. Stronger answers show critical awareness of genre, structural devices and the writer's style. All of these are crucial in establishing the tone of the writing and evaluating its effect on the reader. While most candidates can easily construct a surface narrative for the text, stronger responses need

awareness of the text as a construct with a critical approach to how the writer manipulates narrative viewpoint or the speaking voice of the poem. Poetic conventions allow candidates scope for exploring underlying meaning, and choices of figurative expression; candidates sometimes seem less aware of the conventions of prose writing and can retell what happens rather than thinking about the intended effect on the reader.

AO3 Language, structure and form

Candidates realise that effective analysis of language choices and structural features – indicated by the L annotation in marked scripts – are a key discriminator in this paper. Most candidates are keen to identify the literary techniques used by writers, sometimes using obscure Latin or Greek rhetorical terms in order to do so. This is not necessary, as the quality of commentary is much more important than its quantity. It is better to identify a small number of key images or structural devices and extend analysis to explore how they shape the deeper meaning and impact of the text, rather than to produce a long list of figurative language followed simply by their literal meaning. Some candidates still look at poetry line by line, or image by image, without reading the meaning of the whole sentence or stanza, or exploring how images are related to each other. Similarly, some responses to prose only look at individual paragraphs and not how they relate to each other. Candidates who took such an exhaustive approach to analysis of their texts often ran out of energy before the end. More successful responses have a more conceptual approach from their opening paragraph, illustrating their interpretative ideas through sustained analysis and showing a clear overview of the structural progression of the whole text, before drawing conclusions about its final effect on the reader.

AO4 Personal response

Candidates would benefit from practice in writing effective conclusions as well as effective introductions. Less successful responses waste time with conclusions that treat the text as a didactic lesson about social problems, or simply repeat points made earlier. Strong conclusions focus on evaluating the literary impact of the text on the reader, and how that has been achieved by the cumulative effect of the devices the writer has used. Good responses have insight into the writer's choices and show individuality and flair in assessing their impact on the mood recreated for the reader.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was based on the poem 'As the Child' by Louis de Bernieres. The focus of the question was on how the poet – or speaker – memorably presents himself to the unnamed 'listener' or object of his love. The bullet points invited candidates to explore how the poet portrays his feelings, the imagery he uses to convey what he offers and the different ways in which he compares himself to a child on the beach. The text and task elicited some lively, engaged and, at times, passionately responsive work, much of which was of an extremely high standard. There were, however, a slightly higher than usual number of scripts which advanced rather idiosyncratic lines of interpretation or broadly subjective responses which were not always convincingly underpinned by the words of the text itself.

The setters of this examination spend much time carefully considering the information or context which is provided to candidates in the words which preface the question itself. It is imperative that candidates pay close attention to the guidance offered here. In this case, it was made clear that the poet is 'speaking to someone he loves'. While some candidates chose to interpret the poet as addressing, for instance, the child,

the world in general or, in one or two cases, God, the majority used the rubric provided to inform their response to the text as a 'love poem' in which the poet is offering himself in terms of a relationship or as a lover to the presumed reader or listener (AO1). There was the recognition that he has been making 'approaches' for some time but these have been thus far both 'tentative' and as yet 'unregarded' or acknowledged. Strong scripts invariably displayed a clear understanding (AO2) that the poet is offering the entirety of himself – his 'body', his 'heart' and his 'hands' – all that he is as a person. He declares himself 'ready to work' and to be courageous and bold in the face of whatever challenges might arise. He offers to 'conjure joy' and to bestow 'gifts' on his beloved even if these are of the unostentatious and everyday kind. He says that he is prepared to wait for a response, maintaining his composure until his offer is either accepted or refused, remaining both 'patient' and 'proud'. He views what he has to offer – his affections, loyalty and commitment – as something which others in the past have seen as something valuable, a 'treasure' and something to be 'prized' and used with pleasure when won and wept for when lost.

At the heart of strong responses was a critical exploration (AO3) of the extended analogy which the poet draws between himself and his situation and the child at play on the beach skimming stones into the sea or searching the rock pools for nature's simple 'gifts', unusual stones, feathers and shells. There was a recognition of how the poem is structured around this analogy and how the ending draws us back to the beginning. This, along with the balance between repetition and development in the analogy, being indicative perhaps of both the settled, grounded character of the poet and his forward-looking, hopeful attitude. Complementary to this, some particularly impressive responses analysed the use and effects of the stanza structure and how the stanzas' end-stopped, coherent nature further conveys the self-composed, calm and deliberate tone, rhythm and 'voice' of the poem.

Many scripts explored the details of the analogy with considerable sensitivity and insight. In the opening stanza, some candidates, for example, saw an open-hearted hopefulness suggested in the 'casting' of the stones as opposed to their merely being thrown, while others felt a vibrant energy and vivacity in the 'splash and grind in the green wave'. The connotations of 'rummage' were sometimes explored, some candidates reading in the use of this word the poet's dedication and willingness to go the extra mile or to metaphorically get his hands dirty in the 'flotsam and the weed' in order to discover whatever it is that his beloved might desire from him. The description of how the child 'Will shed her clothes when the sun breaks cloud' connoted a sense of freedom or openness, with some candidates also registering the suggestion of an implicit erotic impulse. The image of the poet standing on the shoreline bracing his legs for the 'shock of waves' denoted for many his anticipation of the intense, breathless sensations of both pleasure and pain that the relationship might bring. That acute sense of pain and the poet's recognition of love as no easy affair was also present in the poet's envisaging of how he will 'sting in the sand whipped up by the wind'. The use of imagery throughout the poem was often fruitfully explored in fact, whether that was the grasping of the nettle, the depiction of the ruby of the poet's heart as something rare, precious and passionately red, or the shedding of his emotional 'armour' of self-protection and the leaving of his 'fortress' to face the dangers of love and self-revelation once again.

There was much lively personal response (AO4) in relation to the manner in which the poet presents himself and what he offers. Some candidates detected a certain arrogance or conceitedness in his self-portrayal and identified in the repeated injunction to 'take it/me/them or not' a brusque or even bitter carelessness of tone. The majority of candidates, however, conveyed in different forms an admiration for the poet's persistence, composure, resilience and honesty as regards the value inherent in who he is and what he offers. Many commented on the humility and grace of the simple gesture of the offering of the hand and the granting to the putative beloved an autonomy and space in which to decide and act in the way they desire. Some saw in this openness and implicit sense of respect something rather romantic and an antidote to forms of 'toxic masculinity' so prevalent in today's society. In similar fashion, many found moving the image of the child on the sand with its backdrop of the cold sea, alone with its hopes or fears or simply innocent and free in the self-absorption of play. In this light, the recurring refrain of 'Just as the child...' was seen to carry a powerful emotional and imaginative weight.

Question 2

This was based on an extract from the novel *Aaron's Rod* by D H Lawrence and the depiction of an anti-government demonstration. Candidates were asked to explore how the writer vividly portrays the events which Aaron, the novel's central protagonist, observes. The bullet points prompted candidates to consider how the writer presents the young man's climb up the building, the crowd's response to his climb and how he conveys the drama of the last two paragraphs. Candidates were obviously drawn to the exciting and dramatic nature of the extract resulting in a fairly even split between poetry and prose responses overall. The question and prompts clearly worked well, with a generally high or very high quality of response with very few scripts below mid-Level 3 being encountered.

The majority of candidates showed a competent knowledge of the situation and the events which unfold and were able to demonstrate this by means of apt textual reference (AO1). Those candidates who displayed a facility to carefully select relevant details of the text for comment in a sharp and concise manner were considerably advantaged in this regard. The quotation of large sections of text only tends to lead to an imprecision in analytical focus and comment, as well as essentially wasting valuable time, of course.

Most scripts evinced a clear understanding (AO2) of the actions of the young man who scales the face of the building to reach the flag at its top and the agility, speed and continuous movement displayed in the climb. There was an appreciation of the daring and dangerous nature of the ascent and how the climber appears fearful but is driven upwards as if 'possessed' and in a trance-like state. Strong scripts also traced in some detail the presentation of the crowd. At first, it is described as being 'non-plussed' with the protestors arguing amongst themselves. Some candidates picked up on the initial scepticism of some members of the crowd regarding the youth's likely success, although it was clear that not many understood the precise meanings of 'derision' or 'half-derisive'. Before long, however, the crowd becomes a unified 'mass' and is driven to a fever pitch of excitement watching the young man and his progress, with the latter seeming to be 'lifted up, almost magically' by the clamour and passion of the crowd's enthralled engagement.

Many candidates sensibly took as their starting point a critical exploration (AO3) of the means by which the writer vividly portrays the movements of the young man. There was a focus on the use and effect of striking similes comparing the boy to an animal: 'clinging like a monkey', 'like a sudden cat' and 'like some frantic lizard' scuttling upwards in 'one unending wriggling movement'. A perceptive contrast was sometimes made between the forbidding size of 'the impassive heavy stone house' with its sheer 'great wall-front' and the diminutive and barely delineated nature of the climber, 'a smallish-black figure of a youth', his insubstantiality underscored at one point by the image of him as no more than 'an upward-moving shadow'.

As has been suggested, there was much excellent close reading applied to the language employed in the depiction of the protestors and the rising intensity of the crowd's reaction, moving from 'Steam was getting up' to 'wild, ragged ejaculations'. Comment was made on how the drama of the final paragraphs is set up by the crowd suddenly becoming 'electrically still', a phrase which suggested both a pulsing energy and an almost unbearable moment of hiatus and breathless apprehension and anticipation. Strong scripts explicitly identified the trajectory of the narrative as moving to a climax here in the portrayal of the young man as he 'rose erect, cleaving to the wall with the tips of his fingers'. Despite the precariousness of his position, he 'did not hesitate for one breath' and the momentum of the writing sweeps forward as he does, the repetition of both 'running' and 'narrow' in the sentence which follows accentuating the sense of pace and of danger as he directs his movements 'straight to the flag'. Some candidates recognised the power of the monosyllabic diction and compressed syntax at the moment of success: 'He had got it, he had clutched it in his hand, a handful of it' and 'He had torn it down'. Strong scripts explored the perhaps unsettling connotations of the figurative language used to describe the crowd's climactic response: 'like a great flame rose the simultaneous yell', 'a snarl of triumph', 'searing like a puff of flame' and 'a great clutch and hiss'. In contrast, the young man's demeanour is portrayed at this moment as curiously detached and undemonstrative as 'with the slightest gesture he threw the flag from him' and as the 'yelling rose up unheard' so 'The boy still stood unmoved...in a sort of abstraction'.

Indeed, it was candidates' interpretative response (AO4) to the youth at this moment that proved something of a discriminator at Levels 6 – 8. Some saw him as simply beginning to come to his senses after his adrenaline-fuelled escapade and as being shocked and stunned, wondering how he is to return to the safety of ground level. Others read regret and self-doubt as to the ethics or morality of his actions while, conversely, some saw a hubristic sense of self-achievement with the discarding of 'the gaudy remnant' to the masses below as a dismissive, careless act of superiority. A number commented on the sense of mystery and enigma here and one or two particularly sophisticated readers pointed out how, for all the vividness of the writing, the attitude of the narrator or the writer to the events and its participants is never made especially clear. A certain distance is maintained. It is for the reader to decide if the climber is a heedless, reckless youth or a noble, heroic embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the people. Likewise with the protestors as a whole. Some candidates saw in the wild and animalistic depiction of the crowd all the dangers of mob rule and its threat to the rule of law, social stability and civilised virtues, something emphasised by the writer's repeated use of fire imagery. Others wrote about how the protestors' sense of unity, passion and defiance helped inspire an act which itself seemed to defy gravity and the laws of physics, and which was suggestive of the indomitable quality of the human spirit. Whatever their point of view in this regard, most candidates were clearly wrapped up in the excitement of the narrative, a number suggesting that it worked on the reader like the commentary to a particularly intense moment of sporting drama as it moves with a steadily rising pitch to its denouement.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 0475/05 Coursework

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- focus explicitly on a task that enables candidates to reach the higher levels
- use relevant, concise references to support analysis
- analyse in detail ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have only a basic knowledge of surface meanings
- lose focus on the task because candidates do not select material relevant to the task
- make unsupported assertions
- list techniques without analysing precise ways in which writers achieve their effects.

General comments

There was much evidence of coursework of a high standard this session, where candidates showed perceptive and convincing informed personal responses to texts; these responses sustained a clear critical understanding informed by an impressive command of textual detail. There was much evidence that candidates had enjoyed studying their coursework texts and had taken the opportunity to develop their skills of researching, drafting and presenting their assignments. Texts studied included *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Journey's End*, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Lord of the Flies* and poetry by Seamus Heaney, Wilfred Owen, Owen Sheers and Carol Ann Duffy.

The most successful assignments sustained a clear focus on a carefully worded task that enabled candidates to meet the requirements of the highest levels set out in the level descriptors. It is important that tasks direct candidates to analyse ways in which writers achieve their effects. Where tasks did not do this, candidates tended to treat characters as real-life people (rather than fictional or dramatic constructs); in such responses, there was little appreciation of the writer's craft. Where necessary, individual centres have been directed to guidance on effective task-setting in the 0475/0992 Coursework Training Handbook.

Although some less successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text, they lacked a clear focus on the task. Because of this, some assignments read like character sketches. In other responses, candidates were intent on listing themes they had studied, which resulted in an inconsistent focus on the task. The more successful candidates grasped the importance of selecting material in a way that directly addresses the task set, with every sentence contributing to the relevance of the unfolding argument. This skill will help candidates in their preparation for the examination papers where, in the 45 minutes allocated to set text questions, candidates must select rather than write exhaustively.

The most convincing and persuasive essays sustained a critical engagement with ways in which writers achieve their effects (Assessment Objective 3), relating their points to the task. As in previous sessions, some poetry assignments simply logged features such as alliteration, caesura, enjambment and ABAB rhyme schemes without exploring how the writer uses these devices to convey their ideas. This led to assignments that were overly reliant on description rather than close analysis.

Several centres submitted empathic responses, with the necessary information supplied: the name of the character and the precise moment in the text that the interior monologue takes place. Centres should encourage their candidates to select their own character and moment for empathic responses to encourage informed personal responses to texts.

Guidance for teachers

It is important that centres comply with the requirements of the Coursework folder, which are set out in the Syllabus. For example, assignments must:

- select from the whole prose or drama text (and not focus exclusively on individual chapters or scenes)
- be based on texts that have the same level of demand as IGCSE set texts.

Guidance on task-setting can be found in the Coursework Handbook, which stresses the importance of **(a)** wording tasks that direct candidates explicitly to explore ways in which writers achieve their effects and **(b)** avoiding the use of insufficiently challenging command words such as 'Describe' and 'Explain'. Teachers within a centre should together discuss the appropriateness of proposed tasks before they are given to candidates. This enables any problems with proposed tasks to be resolved early during the course.

There follows a reminder of what constitutes good practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

- Start each assignment with the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment should be clearly stated. This is important since it allows the moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has captured an authentic voice for the character and moment.
- Use focused ticking in the body of the text to indicate valid points, together with concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the level descriptors. This provides information to the external moderator about how the final mark was arrived at. Avoid words such as 'superficial', 'thin', 'brilliant' and 'wow' which do not feature in the level descriptors.
- Provide a brief explanation on the assignment itself or on the cover sheet in cases where marks are changed during internal moderation. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it allows a centre to provide a rationale for the marks it awards.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (for example, of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality; labelling by assessment objective. Simply putting the supposed relevant AO in the margin is of very little benefit to any subsequent reader, 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 wording of the level descriptors.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently, using the current version of the Individual Candidate Record Card, and securing it by treasury tag or staple to allow easy access to candidate work. In well-administered centres, care had been taken to:

- include all candidates on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form in candidate number order
- transcribe totals accurately across the various documents.

All centres are advised to include a final clerical checking stage in their moderation procedures before submitting their paperwork 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. The official moderation checklist should be included with the sample folders.