

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/11 Drama and Poetry

Key messages

1. Essays should always have a clear and appropriate structure on which to build the arguments.
2. Option **(b)** passage responses may usefully place the passage in the wider text as a relevant context.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with the large majority of learners showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were only a few rubric errors in this session with learners not understanding the optionality on the paper. Centres are encouraged to ensure that all learners know what is expected of them before they sit the exam. Very few responses showed evidence of mismanagement of time in this session. The quality of expression was sound in nearly every case, although there are some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to nearly all the texts on the paper, and answers reflecting a wide range of performance were seen on each of the texts attempted by the learners, with the most popular choices being *All My Sons* in **Section A** and the selection from *Songs of Ourselves* in **Section B**.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

1. Assessment Objective 4 from the Literature in English syllabus states that learners should 'communicate a relevant, structured and supported response'. The overall success of many essays, especially but not only those in the lower levels of assessment, would be improved by the essay having a clear structure. This should always include an introduction, which sets out the learner's approach to the given task, followed by a series of interlinked and developing paragraphs, culminating in an appropriate summative concluding paragraph. Such a framework would add a useful sense of direction to essays which otherwise become repetitive and unfocused.
2. Candidates responding to option **(b)** passage questions, who briefly place the passage within the wider work it is selected from, provide valuable textual context. Appropriate contexts may vary according to the type of question being answered. This equally applies to essays on poetry passages, where the appropriate context might be how typical or otherwise the set poem or extract from a poem is of the poet generally, with perhaps brief supporting references to the wider text. Other types of context such as historical or biographical are also very useful, but learners should be encouraged to explore intra-textual contexts as a way of showing appropriate knowledge of the whole text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Question 1

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

This was the most popular drama text on this paper with nearly three quarters of the entry offering responses, of which the majority chose the passage **(b)** option.

- (a)** Nearly every learner was able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers retold Kate's story, often in great detail, some noting that by the end she has 'lost her son

and her husband,' and seeing her as a tragic figure. Better answers at this level were able to discuss her various relationships with her family and the Deeveres with some seeing, 'her duality of character represented by her two names, showing two different but justifiable sides to her,' as one suggested. These started to become competent as learners explored how, through these relationships, Miller is able to develop the audience's response in different ways. 'Her loyalty to her husband and sons is what we remember most,' one suggested, though others saw her as a significant factor in Miller's development of the plot. More developed responses explored the variety of ways Kate influences the plot and those around her, especially her family, while others compared her relationships with her husband and sons. Where these discussions were supported by close reference to the text, or supporting quotations, the answers often did well. Very good essays considered in detail some of the dramatic methods used by Miller – his use of dialogue and symbols for example, with some very good explorations of the fallen tree. Others saw how language was often used to shape the audience's response, both in what Kate said herself ('often revealing her stubbornness or refusal to listen to those around her,' as one suggested) or in how the other characters spoke of her or to her ('usually with a guarded almost fearful element in their tone and words,' as another put it). Good answers also considered contexts for 'playgoers of the drama's inception would have contained many mournful mothers like Kate, and hence have a more sympathetic response to her attitudes,' as one suggested. Such essays, especially where they were able to see how different audiences might view her in distinct ways, often did very well.

- (b) This was a popular question, with nearly half of the entry choosing this option. Many were able to place the passage into the context of the wider text, with nearly all answers showing at least some knowledge and understanding of the significance of the passage. Some very weak answers did not have the required knowledge, with insecurity about the relationships and the situation severely limiting the success of the essays. Limited answers tended to either paraphrase the passage, with some personal response to the characters, or retell the 'story' of George and Ann and their relationship to Chris. The success of these essays often depended on the relevance of the supporting comments and the engagement shown in the personal response. Better answers were able to see the significance of the passage in terms of its context in the wider text, with many noting the irony of George arriving with his news about his father at this moment in the play. Many answers saw the dramatic nature of the exchanges here, the 'violent undertones just below the surface, as the audience awaits an outburst from any of the characters on stage,' as one essay put it. Good answers looked closely at the language and the action, noting the hints of tension and violence in the stage directions for example. Others saw the hints of doubt in Chris's words, 'so that we are left wondering how much he really knew,' as one suggested. Anne was also well discussed, her role as the 'peace-maker sitting uncomfortably with the audience perhaps when we find out she has Larry's letter all along,' as one good response stated. Very good answers linked points of characterisation and plot with close analysis of the language and dramatic dialogue. Answers which developed this into an interpretation of the significance of this passage to the wider text often did very well.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

This was not a popular choice overall, with the vast majority of responses choosing the passage (b) option.

- (a) There were very few answers seen on this question. Nearly every response was able to select relevant material to discuss, focusing on Don Pedro and Don John's relationship. Some essays also remembered Leonato and Antonio, whilst a very few also considered the 'military brotherhood of Don Pedro, Claudio and Benedick as a significant factor in the play's presentation of loyalty and male bonding,' as one suggested. Weak answers retold some of the key moments from the play, the relevance of which often determined the success of the response. Better answers saw how 'family loyalty or the lack of it, was often contrasted with simple friendship,' as one put it. For other answers the contrast between the two pairs of 'actual brothers was stark, though of course Don John's bastardy was a key element here,' as one said. Those who could explore the characterisation in terms of its effects on the plot and the audience often did well, especially when supporting arguments with relevant, specific references to the text.
- (b) The passage was a more popular choice on this text and most responses were able to find relevant points to make about attitudes to love. Very few were able to place the passage in its dramatic context with any confidence, which often limited the development of arguments. Very weak answers struggled with even the basic situation and the relationships between the various groups

of characters, inevitably limiting the success of any points made. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the various relationships, sometimes in great detail, though often not referring closely enough to what they revealed about love. Success at this level was often determined by how closely the learner explored the actual passage. More competent responses were able to discuss the various attitudes on display, often contrasting Beatrice and Benedick, with Claudio and Hero, in terms of their situations here (and later in the text) and their attitudes. Most commonly 'Hero's ready compliance to her father's agreement and to Claudio is dramatically opposed to Beatrice's position here,' as one stated, though others thought 'her quick recognition of Claudio's jealousy might suggest that Beatrice too has suffered a similar emotion in the past.' Good answers looked carefully at the language and the interplay of the characters, contrasting Hero's silence with Beatrice's volubility. Don Pedro's 'interfering in love here' was often seen as a 'foreshadowing of his later tricking of Beatrice and Benedick'. Other good answers looked closely at Beatrice here, 'who in the absence of Benedick is the dominant force on the stage,' as one suggested. Her refusal of Don Pedro, where discussed, was often done very well, with some good analysis of her 'mocking, almost rude response, as indicated by her uncle's panicked response,' as one noted. Very good answers kept the question clearly in mind, contrasting the different attitudes on display, and discussing what they revealed about Shakespeare's methods of characterisation and the significance of them to the play as a whole.

Question 3

WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This text was a little more popular than the Shakespeare. Again, the vast majority of takers tackled the passage (b) option.

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. Weak answers tended to retell the stories of the two women as revealed in the plays, often in great detail. Success at this level was determined by the relevance of the supporting personal response and the understanding of Soyinka's concerns that was revealed in any commentary. Better answers considered how the women independently influenced the action of the plays and were 'used to develop the characters of the men around them,' as one suggested, with most essays contrasting Amope and Chume with Rebecca and Jero. Good answers were able to develop such ideas into considering Soyinka's concerns in more detail, often his portrayal of male/female relationships, and attitudes to sex and violence. Where such arguments were supported by close reference to the text or appropriate quotation, the answers often did very well.
- (b) Most responses were broadly aware of the context, though few were able to place this exchange precisely. Weak answers tended to either summarise the passage or to retell details of the relationship between Jero and Chume. Better answers at this level were able to shape their ideas to the task and offer some personal response on how Soyinka 'mocks the idea of religion and especially its followers here,' as one suggested. Competent answers saw how the dramatic action and the stage directions serve to create a 'dramatic climax, almost like a religious experience for the audience,' as one noted, whilst others explored the 'contrast between the angry husband, the fervent worshippers and the cool, objective Jero,' as one put it. Good answers developed their arguments by referring closely to the dramatic methods, often contrasting the language of the various characters, and noting the effects created by Jero's comments on the various worshippers. Some did explore the comic effects of the various contrasts and consider how different audiences might respond: 'some might even be pleased that Chume is persuaded away from violence by this religious experience,' as one suggested. Others focused more on the hypocrisy, especially given Jero's later change of mind about Amope, and the exploitation of the vulnerable and the needy. Where such arguments were supported by analysis of specific moments from the passage, the answers often did very well.

Question 4

THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

There were too few responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

Section B: Poetry

Question 5

ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice in this session, with almost all of the answers opting for the passage (b) question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) This was a relatively popular choice in this session, the third most popular **Section B** question. Most answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and understanding. Very weak answers, however, were often puzzled by the situation in the poem and appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with consequent weaknesses in understanding and the discussion. Answers in the lower levels of assessment often attempted a paraphrase of the poem, with some recognising how the woman is 'trying to placate her evidently upset lover,' as one suggested. Some answers were distracted into 'speculating about the cause of the falling out,' as one said or in recounting personal experiences of lovers' quarrels. Those who focused on the set poem were more successful, especially where the personal response was linked to the effects of the poem. Better answers considered some of the details of language and poetic voice and what they revealed about the relationship, with some linking this poem to Browning's dramatic monologues and exploring the drama of the situation in the poem, often effectively. Good answers analysed some of the effects of the language – his use of nature, for example, and biblical references. The tone was often seen as 'pleading, like a threatened animal or latter-day Eve defending herself in Eden,' as one said. Very good answers were able to support their interpretations with apposite context and specific reference to the set poem. Only a very few answers were able to discuss poetic methods confidently, but those that did explore the verse form and the rhythms often did very well.

Question 6

OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was the second most popular choice of text in **Section B**, the large majority of learners choosing the passage (b) question, with only a very few responses to option (a).

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) This was a popular question in **Section B**, with many good responses. Nearly every answer showed knowledge of the basic meaning of the poem, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with some of the details – for example, the actual artistic technique that Sheers is celebrating – resulting in some uneven commentaries. Weak answers often paraphrased some of the poem, with the supporting comments or personal response dictating the success of the essay. More competent responses showed clear knowledge of the poem and often sympathetic understanding of Sheers's concerns, linking the artist to Sheers's own 'poetic word pictures of the world and the people around him', as one put it. Such approaches led naturally into considering some of the poetic methods, with some good analysis of the language and Sheers's use of symbols lifting some answers into the higher levels of assessment. Very good answers focused on the effects of the poetic methods identified, with many learners showing a sensitive appreciation of these effects and a perceptive response to the subtleties of some of the details. This led to insightful interpretations, such as how 'Sheers exploration of the artist leads him back to one of the central concerns of his poetry, changing and challenging relationships.' Analyses which referred to specific moments in the poem, with some awareness of the literary and biographical contexts often did very well.

Question 7

Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

This was the most popular text from **Section B**, with over half of the learners choosing this text and most of those offering the (a) essay option.

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant poems to discuss, the most popular choices being Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *If Thou must Love Me*, Moniza Alvi's *The Wedding*, W B Yeats's *When You are Old* and John Warren's *A Song of Faith Foresworn*. Weaker answers had knowledge of relevant poems but were often limited in their understanding of the poetic concerns, so that the required comparison was often only implicit. Better answers at this level often gave detailed summaries of the selected poems and were able to compare them in terms of content and personal response. Where such responses considered some concerns such as loyalty, loss or love, the answers started to become competent. Other sound answers tended to show understanding of the concerns and were able to offer a comparison of the chosen poems, often treating each poem separately with a summative, comparative conclusion. Better answers explored the poetic methods, often the language and the imagery, through specific reference to the text, in some cases showing how the different poets used these methods to shape a reader's response to the presented relationship. Good answers always focused closely on the details of the writing, exploring how the different choices of form, rhythm and rhyme, as well as language and imagery, enable the poets to create effects, often integrating the comparison into the body of the essay. Very good responses developed such points into sophisticated interpretations of the poets' concerns, often selecting appropriate quotations and embedding a telling use of appropriate contexts into their arguments.
- (b) This was the second most popular (b) question from **Section B** on the paper with a quarter of the entry choosing this option. Very weak answers attempting to retell 'the story of the poem,' as one suggested, often struggled to show relevant knowledge, discussing the poem apparently as an unseen and making unconnected points about some poetic aspects of the poem, with little sense of the underlying meaning. Lower-level answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a summary with some generally relevant personal response on 'how disappointing it can be to go back to somewhere after you have left it behind,' as one put it. Sounder answers at this level were able to explore the meaning of Peters's poem, often showing some understanding of 'the speaker's feelings of anticipation and disappointment,' as one suggested. Competent answers linked such ideas to the poetic methods, often focusing on language and imagery, for example noting Peters's use of 'natural imagery such as floods, uprooted trees and weeds to convey the sense of unwanted change,' as one put it. Good answers developed such ideas into analysis, exploring the effects of 'loaded words like Virgins and skeletons,' or the imagery of 'death and burial that suggests something gone forever but not forgotten,' as one response stated. Very good answers offered perceptive analysis of the effects of the poetic choices, sensitively interpreting the speaker's 'changing emotions as the situation develops,' as one suggested. Other very good responses offered more metaphorical interpretations, about 'aging and the loss of an important relationship,' as one said. Where such discussions were structured, so that context, analysis and interpretation were fully integrated, the answers often did very well.

Question 8

GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was the least popular text in **Section B**, with nearly every learner choosing the passage (b) question.

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to be able to make a general comment on performance.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Weak answers tended to summarise the poem, showing some knowledge, but often very limited understanding of Clarke's concerns. Better answers at this level did have some personal response to share, such as 'Clarke's criticism of the poems would put me off trying to write one,' as one response put it. Sounder answers were aware of Clarke's concerns, noting the 'irony of her writing a poem about poems,' with a few responses thinking this was 'arrogant of her'. Good responses were more focused on Clarke's methods, particularly her use of fire to 'suggest a sort of cathartic experience for her,' as one said. Others developed the analysis of the fire imagery, exploring what it revealed about Clarke's own attitude to poetry – the 'importance of a voice, of poetic skill and having something to say,' as one put it. Very good answers developed such analyses into a sophisticated interpretation of the effects created by Clarke's choices, with in some cases, well-integrated contextual pointing to support their arguments.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/12 Drama and Poetry

Key messages

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General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with the large majority of learners showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were only a few rubric errors in this session with learners not understanding the optionality on the paper. Centres are encouraged to ensure that all learners know what is expected of them before they sit the exam. Very few responses showed evidence of mismanagement of time in this session. The quality of expression was sound in nearly every case, although there are some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to nearly all the texts on the paper and answers reflecting a wide range of performance were seen on each of the texts attempted by the learners, with the most popular choices being *All My Sons* in **Section A** and the selection from *Songs of Ourselves* in **Section B**.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

1. Assessment Objective 4 from the Literature in English syllabus states that learners should 'communicate a relevant, structured and supported response'. The overall success of many essays, especially but not only those in the lower levels of assessment, would be improved by the essay having a clear structure. This should always include an introduction, which sets out the learner's approach to the given task, followed by a series of interlinked and developing paragraphs, culminating in an appropriate summative concluding paragraph. Such a framework would add a useful sense of direction to essays which otherwise become repetitive and unfocused.
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Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Question 1

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

This was the most popular drama text on this paper with over half of the entry offering responses, of which a slight majority chose the passage **(b)** option.

- (a) Almost every response had sufficient knowledge of the text with which to address the task. The main focus was the Keller family, with weaker answers retelling the story of their trials and tribulations often in great detail. Some more successful answers at this level were able to recognise different types of loyalty within the family, contrasting 'Kate's unswerving devotion to Joe, with Chris's more self-righteous attitude to the business,' as one put it. Other responses contrasted Chris and Larry's response to the scandal engulfing the family and some focused on Ann Deever's lack of loyalty to her family, 'as she switches from one brother to the other without apparently much emotional problem,' as one stated. Such responses became competent where sufficient supporting textual detail was provided. Other competent answers contrasted the Kellers with the Deevers, especially the relationships between the fathers and their children. Good answers focused more on Miller's dramatic exploration of these concerns, analysing ways in which the two families are 'deliberately contrasted by Miller to create layers of dramatic irony,' as one suggested. Very good work focused on specific details, such as Larry's army of brothers and the cleverness of the play revolving around him despite his absence, 'because of his loyalties, he gave his life for his father's crimes' as one suggested. Others saw Ann's difficulty as defining her loyalties – 'Ann desperately wants to start a family to make up for the one she abandoned', as one suggested. Some focused on George, whose 'loyalty to his father does not cause him to ignore the truth, but to seek it, as a contrast to Chris'. Where such interpretations were linked to analysis of specific dramatic methods such as the use of language and symbols the answers did well. Very good answers integrated telling contextual details, as well as specific appropriate quotation, to support such perceptive interpretations and often did very well.
- (b) This was a popular question, with nearly a third of the entry choosing this option. Most placed the passage in the context of the wider text, with nearly all answers showing at least some knowledge of the characters at this point in the play. Some very weak answers did not have the required knowledge, with insecurity about the relationships and the situation severely limiting the success of the essays. Limited answers tended to either paraphrase the passage, with some personal response to the characters, or retell Joe's 'story' and his relationship with Chris. The success of these essays often depended on the relevance of the supporting comments and the engagement shown in the personal response. Better answers were able to see the significance of the passage in terms of its context in the wider text, with many noting the irony of Joe's references to detectives and prison, 'which given what we find out about his past actions is dramatically shocking to the audience,' as one put it. More competent answers saw the ambivalence of Joe's relationship with Bert, with a typical response being: 'Is Joe really just a good guy who likes kids, or is he using Bert to make sure his reputation is not under threat?' Good answers developed such personal insights by close reference to the detail of the passage: the references to law and order and police work, the easy-going, physical relationship between Joe and Bert, the effect of having Chris on-looking throughout and the 'references to the hunting or arresting gun, which of course later Joe uses to kill himself,' as one noted. Very good answers saw how Miller used the exchanges here to develop Joe's characterisation, his relationship with Chris and some of the key themes such as of law and order and relationships between adults and children (especially fathers and sons). Some answers explored the language and the action in close detail, noting for example the 'tone of suppressed violence in Chris's final words,' as one put it or 'Chris's final words are an ironic foreshadowing that the kids (Deevers and him) will come for him'. Where such interpretations were lifted by apt reference to the wider text and to relevant contexts, the answers did very well.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

This was a popular choice overall, with about one third of the entry choosing this text, of which the majority offered the passage (b) option.

- (a) Nearly every response was able to select relevant material to discuss, with many learners able to range throughout the text with knowledge. Popular discussion points were the separate gullings of Beatrice and Benedick, the 'supposed spying on the immoral Hero,' as one put it, and the role of Borachio (and through him Don John) as a 'spy in Don Pedro's court,' as one suggested. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of these events or the underlying relationships. Where some attention was paid to the drama Shakespeare created by these means, the answers started to become competent. Better answers focused clearly on the 'dramatic use', with some good personal responses seen to the 'comedy and tragedy created by spying, where often at least one of the characters misinterpreted the situation or was deliberately misled,' as one stated. Good answers developed such ideas into a more thorough consideration of Shakespeare's 'social and moral

concerns throughout the play,' as one suggested. Others focused on what these events revealed about the attitudes to and the treatment of women, for example, for 'despite the comedic thread, the great deception of Hero looms over the plot, keeping the audience engaged in its resolution,' as one noted. Very good answers were able to support arguments with apposite quotation from the text, often analysing the use of language and tone, so that, for some learners, 'spying was accompanied by the language of deception and a tone of mistrust, so that even the comic, almost slapstick, moments were given a darker effect for the audience,' as one put it. Where such answers were supported by appropriate contexts they often did very well.

- (b) The passage was a more popular choice on this text and most responses were able to find relevant points to make about the different lovers. The dramatic context was important for this passage, coming as it does from the masked ball and those not recognising this tended to have difficulty following the dialogue, which often limited the development of any argument. Very weak answers struggled with even the basic situation and the relationships between the various groups of characters, inevitably limiting the success of any points made. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the various relationships, sometimes in great detail, though often not referring closely enough to the passage itself. Success at this level was often determined by how closely the learner explored the actual passage. More competent responses were able to discuss the various lovers and their relationships, with many speculating about whether Beatrice and Benedick had actually recognised each other, often offering interesting alternative interpretations. Others noted Claudio's reactions, 'a clear foreshadowing of his readiness to believe the worst, even about his adored Hero,' as one put it. Such interpretations were lifted by some consideration of 'Shakespeare's presentation,' with many exploring the language and the action in detail, noting, for example, 'the gentle mockery of Beatrice and Benedick's words, contrasted with the reproachful, self-interest on Claudio's soliloquy,' as one said. His speech is 'overly-dramatic and long-winded, making him pompous and self-righteous, compared to Benedick,' as another noted. Very good answers kept the question clearly in mind, exploring details with perception and discussing what they revealed about Shakespeare's methods of characterisation and the significance of them to the play as a whole. One noted 'Beatrice's "I would he had boarded me" as a clear example of her true affection for Benedick,' whereas others identified how 'Don John clearly sees others in love as a sign of their weakness and therefore an opportunity to make mischief, a key factor for his more serious interventions later in the play.' Where such interpretations were supported by close analysis of the passage and an awareness of the relevant textual contexts, the responses often did very well.

Question 3

WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This text was minority choice, with most takers opting for the passage (b) option.

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question. Weak answers tended to retell the stories of the women, particularly Amope and Rebecca, often in great detail. Success at this level was determined by the relevance of the supporting personal response and the understanding of Soyinka's concerns that was revealed in any commentary. Better answers considered how the women independently influenced the action of the plays and were 'used to develop the characters of the men around them,' as one suggested. Some responses focused on Amope and Chume, noting how his attitude to her changes and the consequent effect on his relationship with Jero. Others discussed Rebecca, noting Jero's evident attraction to her but also, 'how he uses her and her appeal to wrong foot others, such as officials and prophets, so that he can take advantage of them,' as one suggested. Good answers were able to develop such ideas into considering Soyinka's concerns in more detail, often his portrayal of male/female relationships, attitudes to sex and violence, with some exploring how these concerns are used as a means of characterisation of the prophets, for example, and also to develop the plot. One learner for example noted, 'How Jero watches one young woman going bathing and the audience sees how he controls himself in order to focus on his political ambitions,' whereas others noted how 'Amope's reaction to other women is as aggressive and violent as her husband's is to her.' Where such arguments were supported by close reference to the text or appropriate quotation, the answers often did very well.
- (b) Most responses were broadly aware of the context, though few were able to place this exchange precisely. Weak answers tended to either summarise the passage or to retell details of the prophets' behaviour and actions. Better answers at this level were able to shape their ideas to the task and offer some personal response on how Soyinka 'mocks the idea of religion,' and ridicules its leaders here, 'who are either pompous, drunk, lascivious or light-fingered,' as one suggested.

Competent responses explored the different types of comedy, 'verbal, visual and physical,' as one noted, 'but always undermining the role of these religious leaders.' Good answers developed their arguments by referring closely to the dramatic methods, often contrasting the language of the various characters and considering what the effects on the audience might be. Good answers also considered how different audiences might respond. 'Some would be appalled at Soyinka's presentation of the hypocritical, coarse prophets,' as one thought, whereas others were alive to 'the rich comedy of the interactions between these charlatans, well managed by the cool and beautiful Rebecca.' Very good answers considered the language in detail, contrasting Shadrach's educated self-importance with the coarse vulgarity of Ananias and Caleb, for example. Others saw how 'the playwright uses them as comedy instruments of satire for the audience', or explored them as 'shameless hypocrites where Soyinka's parody combines humour with reality to keep the play universal', as another argued. Where such arguments were supported by analysis of specific moments from the passage, the answers often did very well.

Question 4

THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

There were not enough responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

Section B: Poetry

Question 5

ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice in this session, with most of the answers opting for the passage (b) question.

- (a) Nearly all answers were able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Popular choices were *Women and Roses*, *Pictor Ignatus*, *The Laboratory* and *Meeting at Night*. Some weaker answers tended to range more widely through selection to find examples of symbols, without focusing in sufficient detail on two poems. Other weak answers summarised or paraphrased their chosen poems; in these cases, success was determined by the relevance of the supporting personal response and the level of understanding shown in the occasional comments. Better answers were able to explore their chosen poems in detail, often showing secure knowledge of meaning and clear understanding of Browning's concerns, with many noting how he 'chooses symbols to create impressions in his readers, such as roses for women and rocks or night-time for difficulties in relationships,' as one noted. Better answers explored the symbols in the context of other poetic methods such as verse form and language, with some learners offering sensitive analyses of the possible effects on the reader. For example, in the case of *Porphyria*, 'the environment symbolises the emotion of the male, showing insecurities and the Speaker's imbalance,' as one argued. Very good answers were able to develop such ideas into a detailed comparison of the meaning and effects of their chosen poems. Where such interpretations were supported by appropriate contexts and precise quotation from the poems, the answers often did very well.
- (b) This was a relatively popular choice in this session, the second most popular question in **Section B**. Most answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and understanding. Very weak answers, however, were often puzzled by the situation in the poem and appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with consequent weaknesses in understanding and the discussion. Answers in the lower levels of assessment often attempted a paraphrase of the poem, with some recognising how the man is 'coming to terms with losing his lover and trying desperately to hold it all together,' as one suggested. Other weaker answers did show knowledge of the meaning of the poem and were able to support their comments with some relevant personal response, though this was more successful where the personal response was linked to the meaning and effects of the poem. Better answers considered some of the details of language and poetic voice and what they revealed about the speaker's feelings, with some linking this poem to Browning's dramatic monologues and exploring the drama of the situation in this poem, often effectively. Good answers analysed some of the effects of the language – the 'resigned and yet affectionate mood that Browning creates,' for some, whereas others 'felt the deep emotion and sense of loss created by details such as his asking to hold her hand and then keeping it longer than he should.' Other good answers explored the 'reported dialogue and how he neatly shapes this to the poetic structures,' as one suggested, so that the 'tone is sombre, the pace deliberately slow,' as

one stated. There was good exploration of Browning's use of rhyme, with many noting how 'they landed on emotive words such as "bitter", "black" and "longer" to reinforce the speaker's repressed emotions,' as one said. Very good answers were able to support such interpretations with appropriate context and specific reference to the set poem. Only a very few answers were able to discuss other poetic methods confidently, but those that did explore the verse form in detail and the rhythms often did very well.

Question 6

OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was a minority choice of text in **Section B**, most learners choosing the passage **(b)** question, with only a very few responses to option **(a)**.

- (a)** Nearly all answers were able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Popular choices were *Mametz Wood*, *Keyways*, *Happy Accidents* and *Liable to Floods*. Weaker answers often had some relevant knowledge of their chosen poems and at times understanding of Sheers's concerns. Answers at this level often paraphrased the content of the poems, with some personal response and occasional comments on language. More competent answers had a sound understanding of the concerns and meaning of the poems and were able to shape their essays to consider how Sheers was 'exploring conflict'. Some essays considered more violent conflict such as war or the physical threat of the poetic characters, such as the fishmonger or Dr Hunzvi. Others however explored 'the emotional conflict that comes from the way Sheers portrays his relationships in such graphic detail,' as one suggested. Good answers looked closely at some of his poetic methods, particularly his use of imagery and language, 'often violent and threatening even in his 'nature' poems such as *Y Gaer* where the "rain's beating" and "the hail's pepper shot" attack the grieving father,' as one stated. Such ideas were developed by very good answers into a consideration of the effects of these choices, as well as exploring other poetic methods such as rhythm and verse form. Answers which developed these interpretations with contextual points often did very well.
- (b)** This was a popular question in **Section B**, with many good responses. Nearly every answer showed knowledge of the basic meaning of this extract from *Amazon*, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with some of the details – for example, apparently unaware of the woman's struggle with cancer – resulting in some uneven commentaries. Weak answers often paraphrased this extract, with the supporting comments or personal response dictating the success of the essay. More competent responses showed clear knowledge of the whole poem and often sympathetic understanding of the woman's situation. Better answers considered some of the poetic methods, with some good analysis of the language and Sheers's use of symbols, most commonly the Amazon references, lifting some answers into the higher levels of assessment. Very good answers focused on the effects of the poetic methods identified, such as the 'shifting of the focus from the woman's inner voice to her family and back again,' as one suggested. Others saw it as 'presenting feminine power and independence – a noticeable, overarching theme of the collection' and the persona as 'using her disadvantage as an advantage,' as one put it. Others had a sensitive appreciation of the subtleties of some of the details, such as 'the emotional opening of the saved bottle of champagne,' or for others the 'focus on the woman's physical response to the loss of breast,' or 'the final water image is very powerful – she found cancer in the shower so reclaims the water and her body at the same time,' with such analyses leading to insightful interpretations. Responses which referred to the effects of such specific moments in the poem, especially when supported by some awareness of the literary and biographical contexts, often did very well.

Question 7

Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

This was the most popular text from **Section B**, with nearly three quarters of the learners choosing this text and all but a very few of those offering the **(b)** passage option.

- (a)** Nearly every answer was able to select relevant poems to discuss, the most popular choices being Owen's *Futility*, Browning's *If Thou Must Love Me*, Wroth's *Song*, Browning's *The Cry of the Children* and Byron's *Darkness*. Weaker answers had knowledge of relevant poems but were often limited in understanding of the poetic concerns, so that the discussion often only implicitly linked

the poems. Better answers at this level often gave detailed summaries of the selected poems and were able to compare them in terms of content and personal response. Where such responses considered the causes of regret such as loyalty, loss or love, the answers started to become competent. Other sound answers tended to show understanding of the concerns and were able to offer a relevant commentary, though treating each poem separately with a summative conclusion. Better answers explored the poetic methods, often the language and the imagery, through specific reference to the text, in some cases showing how the different poets used these methods to present different types of regret. Good answers always focused closely on the details of the writing, exploring how the different choices of form, rhythm and rhyme, as well as language and imagery, enable the poets to create effects, often integrating their ideas about each poem into the structure of their essay. Very good responses developed such points into sophisticated interpretations of the poets' concerns, often selecting apt quotations and embedding a telling use of appropriate contexts into their arguments.

- (b) This was the most popular (b) question from **Section B** on the paper with over two thirds of the entry choosing this option. Very weak answers often struggled to show relevant knowledge, with some assuming the speaker to be a woman for example and others discussing the poem apparently as an unseen with limited grasp of the meaning. Better answers at this level tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer an overall summary with some generally relevant personal response on, 'the desire to stop time when we are in love,' as one put it. Sounder answers were able to show understanding of Shakespeare's concerns, often focusing on time, love and the power of poetry, with some showing an awareness of some of the poetic methods, particularly language and imagery, though some were puzzled by 'Shakespeare's use of archaic language,' as one put it. Good answers explored the effects of the language and the underlying personification of time, where 'the dramatic device of talking to Time enables Shakespeare to describe its power at the same time as challenging it,' as one said. Other good answers considered the poetic voice, with some noting that, 'though on the surface talking to time, he is in fact addressing his lover,' whilst others noted that all the 'impossible things mentioned in fact do come to pass eventually, so that his prediction of immortality in verse sounds more plausible.' Very good answers considered the poetic form, the use of the sonnet structure and the rhyming pattern, all in the context of the meaning of the poem and its intended effects. Where such analyses were supported by appropriate contexts the answers did very well.

Question 8

GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was a minority choice this session, with nearly every learner choosing the passage (b) question.

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question, with most learners able to select some relevant poems to discuss. Popular choices were *Catrin*, *Death of a Cat*, *February*, *Scything*, *Seal* and *White Roses*. Weaker answers retold the 'stories' of their chosen poems, often in detail and showing some knowledge of meaning. Better answers at this level started to show understanding of Clarke's concerns, with some shaping of ideas to the given task, 'feelings of loss'. Some more competent responses identified different kinds of loss and chose poems which enabled a wide-ranging interpretation. 'Loss of life, or children or hope are all part of Clarke's typical topics,' as one suggested. Other sound responses considered some poetic methods, most usually language and imagery, with some well-focused analyses of Clarke's use of for example roses, animals and nature generally. Good answers looked at the effects of her choices, how she 'creates a mood of melancholy or even tension in her writing,' as one put it, with a few learners able to appreciate other poetic methods such as her choice of verse form and use of rhythm. Where such interpretations were supported by appropriate contexts, the answers did very well.
- (b) Most answers had some knowledge of the poem and were able to discuss its meaning. Weak answers tended to summarise the poem, showing some knowledge, but often very limited understanding of Clarke's concerns. Better answers at this level did have some personal response to share and were at least partly aware of the two responses to climbing the mountain. Sounder answers were aware of Clarke's concerns, particularly how 'humans respond to nature and dangerous situations,' as one suggested and were able to explore how she reveals them in this poem. More competent answers analysed how she links the act of climbing to her writing, 'the subtle use of the word "page", showing how the climber's exhilaration and facing danger is repeated in the way she writes her poems,' as one put it. Good answers explored the language and the imagery in detail, her use of the symbols of nature such as the Lake and the mountain itself.

More sophisticated response considered other poetic methods – her use of stanza form, rhythms and enjambement were often well analysed at this level. Where such discussions were aware of different layers of meaning and had some contextual insights to share, the answers often did very well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/13 Drama and Poetry

Key messages

1. Essays should always have a clear and appropriate structure on which to build the arguments.
2. Option **(b)** passage questions may usefully place the passage in the wider text as a relevant context.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with the large majority of learners showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were only a few rubric errors in this session with learners not understanding the optionality on the paper. Centres are encouraged to ensure that all learners know what is expected of them before they sit the exam. Very few responses showed evidence of mismanagement of time in this session. The quality of expression was sound in nearly every case, although there are some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to nearly all the texts on the paper and answers reflecting a wide range of performance were seen on each of the texts attempted by the learners, with the most popular choices being *All My Sons* in **Section A** and the selection from *Songs of Ourselves* in **Section B**.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

1. Assessment Objective 4 from the Literature in English syllabus states that learners should 'communicate a relevant, structured and supported response'. The overall success of many essays, especially but not only those in the lower levels of assessment, would be improved by the essay having a clear structure. This should always include an introduction, which sets out the learner's approach to the given task, followed by a series of interlinked and developing paragraphs, culminating in an appropriate summative concluding paragraph. Such a framework would add a useful sense of direction to essays which otherwise become repetitive and unfocused.
2. Candidates responding to option **(b)** passage questions, who briefly place the passage within the wider work it is selected from, provide valuable textual context. Appropriate contexts may vary according to the type of question being answered. This equally applies to essays on poetry passages, where the appropriate context might be how typical or otherwise the set poem or extract from a poem is of the poet generally, with perhaps brief supporting references to the wider text. Other types of context such as historical or biographical are also very useful, but learners should be encouraged to explore intra-textual contexts as a useful way of showing appropriate knowledge of the whole text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Question 1

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

This was the second most popular drama text on this paper with a third of the entry offering responses, of which the great majority chose the passage **(b)** option.

- (a) Almost every response had sufficient knowledge of the text with which to address the task. The main focus of almost every essay was Joe Keller and his family, though many answers did also discuss the Deever family as well. Weaker answers tended to retell the Keller family history, often with good detail and some relevant personal response, such as 'I find the hypocrisy of Joe and Kate, pretending to be the perfect family, despite what they have done, very upsetting,' as one put it. Better answers at this level showed some understanding of Miller's concerns which added focus to the narrative summaries, with many speculating on whether Miller 'believes that Joe's eventual suicide is real justice for him,' as one stated. Others considered what justice in the context of the play might be: 'Losing his life or losing both of his sons,' one suggested. More competent answers linked justice to other concerns, attitudes to money and relationships, for example, with many referring appropriately to the American dream in the post-war period, as a useful contextualisation of the issues. Good answers looked in detail at the methods and their effects, particularly the language and the contrasting relationships, where, for some learners, the role of Anne was significant: 'her apparently easy switch from Larry to Chris, whilst keeping the truth of Larry's fate secret, makes justice for her seem questionable,' as one put it. Other good answers contrasted the outcomes for Steve and Joe, and through them their children, with some good analysis of the dramatic methods, 'how Miller sets Steve's actual prison against Joe's pretend prison in the basement and his mental prison, which gradually reveals itself,' as one suggested. Very good responses were alive to the dramatic tensions created as the 'lack of real justice is revealed by the intervention of George,' as one said, as well as the way 'Miller gradually reveals the awful truth to a horrified audience.' Where such interpretations were supported by precise and relevant quotation the answers often did very well.
- (b) This was a popular question with nearly a quarter of the entry choosing this option. Most placed the passage in the context of the wider text, with nearly all answers showing at least some knowledge of the characters at this point in the play. Some very weak answers did not have the required knowledge and were unsure of the roles of Anne and Larry for example, with a consequent lack of understanding of the play's concerns. Better answers at this level were able to explore the stories of the various relationships and offer some personal response relevant to the given task, family tensions. When narrative summaries were supported by some understanding of Miller's concerns such as guilt, love and loyalty and an awareness of the underlying 'deceptions held inside by so many of the characters,' as one put it, the answers became increasingly competent. Other sound answers focused on the relationship between Joe and Chris, 'who though father and son seem to be very different in their personalities,' as one put it. Others explored 'the tensions around Anne, Kate and the factory which even now father and son are not honest about,' as one suggested. Good answers developed such interpretations by looking at Miller's dramatic presentation – the use of dialogue, stage directions, the specific language chosen for each Joe and Chris at this point in the play were often well analysed. For example, 'Joe's "ignoring" what he can not face, already signalled by his only reading the back page of his paper, foreshadows how he is bit by bit forced to face up to his deceit,' as one suggested. Very good answers considered the effects of the language and the various revelations in this scene, such as 'Joe's obsession with the factory and passing it on to Chris, who, well aware of this, uses it to manipulate his dad into helping him get what he really wants – Anne, his brother's girl-friend,' as one put it. Where such insights were supported by an awareness of context and the dramatic situation before the audience, the answers did very well.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

This was the most popular choice of text overall, with two thirds of the entry choosing this text, of which the large majority offered the passage (b) option.

- (a) Nearly every response was able to select relevant material to discuss, with many learners able to range throughout the text with knowledge. Popular discussion points were the lovers' conflicts, especially the verbal jousting between Beatrice and Benedick and the 'more damaging and savage attacks on Hero by Claudio,' as one put it. Many other responses also considered other relationship conflicts, such as between Don John and Don Pedro, Benedick and Claudio and Dogberry and Conrade. Weak answers tended to retell the story of their chosen 'conflicts', often with some engaged personal response and at times some understanding of the underlying concerns, as 'conflict in the play is often to do with reputation, jealousy, attitudes to sex and social differences,' as one neatly put it. Sounder answers developed such ideas into considering other kinds of conflict as well, especially Benedick and Beatrice's internal dialogues about each other and 'the conflicted loyalties which trouble so many of the characters – Benedick caught between Beatrice and Claudio

or Don Pedro between being a ruler and a friend, for example,' as one suggested. Good answers looked at Shakespeare's presentation of these various conflicts – language and imagery were often well discussed. For example, 'Beatrice's use of animal imagery to display her hostility to men in general and Benedick in particular,' as one noted, with others analysing Don John's 'use of dark and melancholy language to display his conflict with the world around him,' for example. These interpretations became very good where they were developed into considering other dramatic methods – Shakespeare's use of contrasts or the various comic moments in the play, for example. Other very good essays focused on the effects of the various kinds of conflict on the audience, noting that 'though much of the verbal and physical comedy, in the gulling scenes for example, makes the audience laugh, the violent language and aggressive misogyny of such as Claudio would have a much darker effect on them.' Where such sophisticated arguments were supported by appropriate contexts and specific textual support, the answers did very well indeed.

- (b) The passage was the most popular choice on the paper and most responses were able to find relevant points to make about the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick. Very weak answers struggled with even the basic situation of the relationship and the characters, inevitably limiting the success of any points made. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the relationship, sometimes in great detail, though often not referring closely enough to the passage itself. Success at this level was often determined by how much the learner did refer to the actual passage and the occasional supporting comments. Some answers at this level were able to offer some engaged personal response and, as more attention was paid to the concerns discussed in the passage, so the answers became more convincing. Better answers were alive to the context and considered what an audience learns about the relationship in this, the first on-stage meeting of the couple. Many noted that 'they only seem to have eyes for each other and though Beatrice says, "nobody marks" him, she evidently is.' Others argued for a previous attachment between them ('I know you of old') which 'perhaps had ended bitterly because they could not commit,' as one suggested. More competent answers developed through exploring other aspects of the dramatic situation, the public nature of their exchange and the need 'to keep up appearances' as one put it. Others explored the language noting the use of animal imagery 'in the cut and thrust of their witty exchanges,' as one noted. Good answers considered other dramatic techniques – the staging of the scene, Leonato's teasing of Benedick and the pace of the dialogue were all well analysed, sometimes in terms of their potential comic effects. Where essays developed into considering the effects of the dramatic choices Shakespeare makes, especially when supported by relevant quotation, the answers often did very well.

Question 3

WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

There were not enough responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

Question 4

THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

There were not enough responses to this text to be able to make a general comment on performance.

Section B: Poetry

Question 5

ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

This was the least popular **Section B** text in this session, with most of the answers opting for the passage (b) question.

- (a) There were only a few takers for this question. Nearly all answers were able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Popular choices of poems were *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St Praxed's Church*, *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, *The Confessional* and *Confessions*. Weak answers summarised or paraphrased their chosen poems, and their success was determined by the relevance of the supporting personal response, though there were occasional comments which suggested some understanding of Browning's concerns. Better answers were able to explore their chosen poems in detail, often showing secure knowledge of meaning and

clear understanding of Browning's concerns, with many noting how he 'satirises the pomp and hypocrisy of the Catholic church but has nothing positive to say about the people or their beliefs,' as one noted. Sounder answers looked at the presentation of the concerns, with many analysing at least some elements of his use of dramatic monologue. Nearly every answer at this level was aware of language and to some extent the 'mocking tone, which was often created by what Browning does not say,' as one noted. Only good answers were confident in exploring his use of rhythm and poetic form, with some contrasting the stanzas of *Soliloquy* with the more narrative form of *The Bishop*, for example. Very good answers focused on the 'presentation' and were often able to explore the imagery and the 'uncomfortable language of wealth or hate that the characters use,' as one said, with perception and insight. Where these essays included appropriate support from the text and some specific relevant context, they did very well indeed.

- (b) This was a popular choice in this session, the second most popular **Section B** question. Most answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and understanding. Very weak answers, however, were often puzzled by the situation in the poem and appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with consequent weaknesses in understanding and the discussion. Answers in the lower levels of assessment often attempted a paraphrase of the poem, with some recognising the extended personification of the earth. Other weaker answers did show knowledge of the meaning of the poem and were able to support their comments with some relevant personal response, though this was more successful where the personal response was linked to the meaning and effects of the poem. Better answers considered some of the details of language and poetic voice and what they revealed about Browning's use of nature. Good answers analysed some of the effects of the language and the imagery, with confident interpretations exploring his 'belief in the power of nature and the position of man in the universe,' as one put it. His presentation of 'low nature is not only verbal, but also rhythmic, echoing the ripples and the relaxed atmosphere in the flow of the lines,' as one suggested. Where such ideas developed into considering the effects on the reader the essays did well, especially when they were able to discuss other poetic methods confidently.

Question 6

OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

This was the second most popular choice of text in **Section B**, with most learners choosing the passage (b) question, with only a few responses to option (a).

- (a) Nearly all answers were able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Popular choices were ranged from across the collection, though *Amazon*, *The Farrier*, *Flag* and *Skirrid Fawr* were among the most popular. Weaker answers often had some relevant knowledge of their chosen poems and at times some understanding of Sheers's concerns. Answers at this level often explained the symbols in terms of the poem's narrative, with some personal response and occasional comments on language. More competent answers had a sound understanding of the concerns and meaning of the poems and were able to shape their essays to consider how Sheers was using various symbols in subtle and sensitive ways. For example, 'even the title of *Skirrid Fawr* is symbolic of unity, being a mixture of English (*Skirrid*) and Welsh (*Fawr*),' as one essay pointed out. Other competent answers often linked the symbols to various of his concerns, so that the 'flag' was at once a symbol of Welsh history and pride but also 'in its degenerated state a symbol of the decline of Wales,' as one put it. Good answers looked closely at some of his poetic methods, particularly his use of 'imagery and language to explore deeper meanings such as the symbol of the horse and the way the Farrier is described almost like a romantic lover in order to make the reader see the relationship in a different way,' as one stated. Very good answers explored the poetic methods, so that 'his use of tercets itself symbolises the stubborn continuance of doing things in the old way,' as one suggested, though for others 'they were a celebration of Welsh culture and history.' Such ideas were developed by very good answers into a consideration of the effects of these choices and, where supported by relevant quotation the responses did very well as did answers which developed these interpretations with appropriate contextual support.
- (b) This was a popular question in **Section B**, with many good responses. Nearly every answer showed knowledge of the basic meaning of *The Farrier*, though there were a few very weak responses which struggled with some of the details, such as the fact the farrier is putting new shoes on the horse, resulting in some uneven details. Weak answers retold the 'story' of the poem, with the supporting comments or personal response dictating the success of the essay, though nearly every response was aware of the way 'Sheer's describes the man and the horse as though

they were lovers,' as one put it. More competent answers used their knowledge of the text to show understanding of the concerns here – man and nature, work, and relationships were commonly identified – and in the wider text. Good answers explored the language and imagery, analysing the use of the 'romantic imagery' and how Sheers 'chooses words like "smells", "slap", "bride" to show the male dominance of females and humans of nature,' as one put it. Others explored the language of 'masculinity, such as the roll-up, putting his shoulder in, the sound of his steel, all of which help to show the farrier as working man,' as one said. Others though saw the sexual politics as the 'lexical field of femininity undermines the horse's power - though stronger than the man, she's diminished due to her gender,' as one suggested. Some very good answers looked at his use of verse form – many noting the historical context of the use of tercets, for example – and imagery which for some was 'strangely feminine, the bride and the seamstress seeming odd in this male dominated workplace,' as one suggested. Those essays which developed such astute analyses by selecting relevant literary and biographical contexts, often did very well.

Question 7

Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2

This was the most popular text from **Section B**, with nearly half of the learners choosing this text and most of those offering the **(b)** passage option.

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to select more or less relevant poems to discuss, the most popular choices were wide ranging: Hood's *The Song of the Shirt*, Yeats's *When You Are Old*, Owen's *Futility*, Browning's *The Cry of the Children*, Shakespeare's *Sonnet 19* and Byron's *Darkness*. Weaker answers had knowledge of relevant poems but were often limited in understanding of the poetic concerns, with some struggling to shape their ideas to the task. Better answers at this level often gave detailed summaries of the selected poems and were able to show the presentation of fear in terms of content and personal response. Where such responses considered the causes of fear such as war, growing old, loss or love, the answers grew in competence. Other sound answers tended to show secure understanding of the concerns through their comments, though treating each poem separately with a summative conclusion. Better answers explored the poetic methods, often the language and the imagery, through specific reference to the text, in some cases showing how the different poets used these methods to present fear 'as something intangible and yet to the sufferer physically very real,' as one put it. Others though thought 'fear was often a result of some other issue, loss of love leading to a fear of being alone or forgotten,' as one noted. Many answers at this level were able to analyse the language and imagery, which 'are the most important tools for creating the intangible feelings of fear,' as one suggested. Where the analysis was fully supported by quotations and close textual references the answers reached the higher levels of assessment. Good answers explored other poetic choices too: choices of form, rhythm and rhyme. Where they showed how these 'tools, enable the poets to create effects,' the answers did well. Very good responses developed such points into sophisticated, structured interpretations of the poets' concerns, often embedding a telling use of appropriate contexts into their arguments.
- (b) This was the second most popular **(b)** question from **Section B** on the paper with over one third of the entry choosing this option. Very weak answers often struggled to show relevant knowledge. Better answers at this level tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a general summary with some generally relevant personal response on 'how difficult it is to put up with betrayal by a lover,' as one put it. Sounder answers were able to show understanding of Dryden's concerns, disappointment, pain, betrayal, all being popular choices. More competent answers explored some of the methods, often language, with some noting 'the repetition of pain for love and life,' as one said. Others tracked the speaker's changing emotions, of 'anger, hurt, rage, despair and hopelessness,' as one put it. Good answers looked closely at poetic methods. Some noted the poetic voice, 'as Dryden takes on the persona of a woman trapped in a miserable relationship, thus affording a voice to the voiceless,' as one said. Others saw how the 'rigid structure of verse form and rhyme helped to capture the woman's feelings of helplessness and being trapped,' as one suggested. Very good answers always looked at the language closely and often analysed its effects, the 'use of words like pain, dying, injured, all help to convey the woman's sense of misfortune and yet are also have a slightly remote effect, as though Dryden is pretending an emotion he does not quite feel,' as one put it. Where such analyses were supported by appropriate contexts the answers did very well.

Question 8

GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

This was a relatively popular choice this session, with nearly every learner choosing the passage (b) question.

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question, with most learners able to select some relevant poems to discuss. Popular choices were *Cold Knap Lake*, *Neighbours*, *Climbing Cader Idris* and *White Roses*. Weaker answers retold the 'stories' of their chosen poems, often in detail and showing some knowledge of meaning. Better answers at this level started to show understanding of Clarke's concerns, with some shaping of ideas to the given task, 'people facing dangerous situations'. More competent answers were able to compare the types of danger and the people facing them, with some answers linking ideas to some of Clarke's other concerns, such as 'people in the natural world who often seem to be either in danger or dangerous,' as one noticed. Better answers tackled the word 'presents' by looking at language and imagery, often in detail and with some analysis. One noted for example how 'in *Climbing Cader Idris* her diction enables her to separate the two responses to the danger, one physical and one mental,' and with appropriate support such answers became proficient. Very good answers looked at other poetic methods, such as her use of rhythm and verse form, though these were disappointingly rare. Answers which developed into considering the effects of Clarke's poetic choices, especially where such interpretations were supported by appropriate contexts, did very well.
- (b) Most answers had some knowledge of the poem and were able to discuss its meaning. Some learners appeared to approach the poem as an unseen, misunderstanding the central relationship between the mother and her pup, with a consequent unevenness in the responses. Weak answers were able to summarise the poem, showing some knowledge, but often only a basic understanding of Clarke's concerns. More competent responses had a sound knowledge of the meaning of the poem and often a clear understanding of how the poem reflects some of Clarke's central concerns, such as 'motherliness and maternal angst,' as one suggested, as well as nature 'and what it teaches us about human behaviour,' as another learner suggested. Others noted the 'harshness of nature, as the basic instincts that drive the seal take over and the pup is abandoned to its own fate,' as one put it. Good answers inevitably explored the language and the imagery in detail, the 'personification of the experience by making the pup like a human baby in its "cot", waiting for its mother's milk,' as one noted. Others explored the use of detail: the colours as of the sea and the leaking milk were often considered, as was her use of imagery such as the thunder, the noose and the shawl. Where these analyses considered the effects of her choices the answers started to become very good. Some sophisticated responses considered other poetic methods as well – her use of stanza form, rhythms and enjambement were often well analysed at this level. Where such discussions were aware of different layers of meaning and had some contextual insights to share, the answers did very well.

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Key messages

- Successful responses focus on ways in which the writers present the meaning and content of their texts to the reader.
- Successful responses use analysis of specific references and quotations to support the points made. This should be particularly remembered for the Prose **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Successful responses to Prose **(b)** passage questions analyse the writing of the selection or extract in great detail.
- In **Section B: Unseen**, candidates should use the three prompts as a guide to aspects of the texts to consider rather than as an essay structure. Dealing with them separately makes it difficult to write about the relationships between them.

General comments

Examiners saw responses to questions on all of the texts. Though there were notably fewer responses to the questions on Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood*, it was a more popular text than it had been in the June series, and attracted some thoughtful answers. Most essays demonstrated appropriate knowledge of the plots and characters of the texts, and many were confident in exploring ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through their choices of language, form and structure. Candidates would always be well advised to pay greater attention to ways in which the texts are written. Candidates responding to the **(a)** questions are much more successful when they offer some analysis of specific episodes from the texts. While there is no specific requirement for candidates to make connections between selected extracts in the **(b)** questions and the wider text, an awareness of the rest of the novel or short story usually informs a view of the passage helpfully.

In the **Unseen** section of the paper, candidates generally were able to make specific points about the structure and techniques of poetry; more preparation on the structure and techniques of prose and drama would benefit their responses to these text types. It is particularly helpful if candidates are able to express something of the performance potential of drama passages by looking at the setting and the use of stage directions. Some candidates took a line-by-line approach to the **Unseen** extracts, which helped them to spot features but was not effective in showing an understanding of the overall meaning and content of the poem or extract. It is usually a good idea to begin with an overview of the extract which establishes the candidate's understanding as a foundation for the essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Prose

Question 1

E M Forster: *Howards End*

- (a)** There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b)** There were few responses to this question, but among those responses, candidates commented on the dominance of Henry Wilcox, patronising people around him with references to Evie's 'little plan'; to the Schlegels as 'two distressed females'; his dismissal of Margaret's choice from the menu; and his comment about tipping 'a few piastres' among waiters. Essays also noted

Margaret's compliance, surrendering her food choice to Wilcox and vocally agreeing with his statements when internally disagreeing. Candidates often placed the extract within the text, noting that this visit to the restaurant is a significant point of development in the relationship between Margaret and Wilcox. They noted that here Forster presents them in very contrasting ways, suggesting the unlikeliness of a romantic attachment. A few noted Forster's contrast of Margaret and Henry Wilcox with Evie and Percy Cahill, whose conventionally romantic behaviour is gently held up to ridicule by their dialogue and Forster's narrative comments. Some observed that later in the novel it will be Margaret who takes change, while some pointed out the significance of Wilcox's time in Cyprus, with reference to Jacky Bast's later revelations.

Question 2

Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) While there were some strong responses to this passage, many would have been more successful had they concentrated carefully on Levy's skilful characterisation of Bernard, who 'dithered over change' in the first paragraph, leading to the various forms of repetition used to illustrate Queenie's frustration. Stronger answers explored how Auntie Dorothy's perception of Bernard is presented in contrast to Queenie's, which leads to Queenie's own implicit feelings that she is therefore wrong to have doubts, with phrases such as 'But Auntie Dorothy said he was a gentleman' and 'you'll be safe as houses with him.' Candidates also explored Levy's focus on Auntie Dorothy's relationship with Bernard at this point in the text rather than Queenie's relationship with him, already indicating problems between them in the future. Many commented effectively on the image of Bernard's kiss being like 'a chicken's beak' and some connected this with the depiction of his love-making later in the novel.

Question 3

Stories of Ourselves Volume 2

- (a) Candidates were able to select appropriate stories for this question, with *The Doll's House*, *The Black Ball* and *The Paper Menagerie* proving to be the most popular choices. All three stories allowed candidates to use the lens of either class or race through which to tackle the question about social status. Most answers showed evidence of sound use of quotation to support points made, which is important in an (a) question. However, many candidates needed to go further to develop a response to the phrase 'ways in which', by commenting on the effects of language or structure in those quotations. This is much more effective than merely listing details of the plot which illustrate differences in social status. There was, though, some effective discussion of the symbol of the doll's house and the black ball themselves in Mansfield's and Ellison's stories, while many recalled details of the derogatory dialogue from the neighbours in Liu's story. Some also discussed ways in which the stories showed the possibility of differences in social status being overcome, with Kezia's generosity, the invitations of the union man, Jack's relationship and his reconciliation with his background through his mother's letter.
- (b) A number of essays simply produced lists of Singlebury's characteristics without clearly focusing on Fitzgerald's presentational methods. Most commented on Singlebury's style of clothing, often commenting on his smart appearance and regular habits, which some candidates thought made him an exemplary employee. Few commented explicitly that his unvarying routine and the blandness of his clothing presents him as very dull. The most successful essays showed that the candidates recognised that the story is written in the form of a report to a manager, which accounts for the stilted formality of its opening. This was discussed as a key presentational device, meaning that Singlebury is only presented in a detached way, as an employee, rather than as an individual human being. There was some perceptive comment on the way the last sentence of the extract emphasises how much Singlebury has been overlooked and unappreciated.

Question 4

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Section B: Unseen

Question 5 – Prose

Approximately two thirds of candidates opted for the prose unseen passage. In their answers, candidates usually demonstrated sound understanding of the relationship between the siblings. They appreciated that Eileen loves Brendan, but recognised that the feelings are complicated, often contrasting the statements that she was 'genuinely pleased for her brother' but that she 'had hated him'. Some candidates did not read the changes in tense and indications of time closely enough, and therefore did not recognise that parts of the passage refer to episodes further back in the past. Many candidates focused carefully on the final paragraph, noting the significance of his description as women as 'tools' and the impact on Eileen. This was connected with her observation of Brendan's treatment of their mother, as well as recognising the father's influence. Examiners saw less evidence of candidates subtly teasing out the more nuanced elements of the relationship, indicated in such phrases as 'she could not blame her brother' and 'it saddened her'. Candidates would have been more successful had they considered more closely the limited third person perspective and how this influences the reader's perspective of the relationship as it is seen through Eileen's eyes.

Question 6 – Poetry: *Night Rain*

The poem was not as popular as the prose passage, and it proved problematic for those candidates who wanted it to be about something more than night rain. Several argued that the rain was a metaphor for warfare, which demanded ingenious but unconvincing interpretations of the 'Great water drops...dribbling', and Mother distributing 'wooden bowls and earthenware' to catch those drops. Where candidates choose to impose a very specific figurative reading of a text, they need to be able to support it very persuasively with details. Far more successful were those candidates who wrote about the presentation of sleep disturbed by a storm and the rainwater making its progress through the 'roof-thatch', causing disturbance. Some candidates explored the varied imagery used by the poet to depict the rain, suggesting different moods, like 'drumming hard', 'insistent ardour', 'like orange or mango/Fruits' and 'like beads.../... on string'. Some noted with amusement that it is Mother who has to get up to deal with the leaks and ensure foodstuffs are out of the way of water, while the speaker and his 'brothers' 'roll over on our back' and are able to ignore the rain's problems, instead finding it like a 'soothing hand'. Candidates would be able to demonstrate their appreciation of the form of poetry much more successfully if they quoted it in its lines rather than reducing it to prose.

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Key messages

- Successful responses focus on ways in which the writers present the meaning and content of their texts to the reader.
- Successful responses use analysis of specific references and quotations to support the points made. This should be particularly remembered for the Prose **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Successful responses to Prose **(b)** passage questions analyse the writing of the selected or extract in great detail.
- In **Section B: Unseen**, candidates should use the three prompts as a guide to aspects of the texts to consider rather than as an essay structure. Dealing with them separately makes it difficult to write about the relationships between them.

General comments

Examiners saw responses to questions on all of the texts. Though there were notably fewer responses to the questions on Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood*, it was a more popular text than it had been in the June series, and attracted some thoughtful answers. Most essays demonstrated appropriate knowledge of the plots and characters of the texts, and many were confident in exploring ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through their choices of language, form and structure. Candidates would always be well advised to pay greater attention to ways in which the texts are written. Candidates responding to the **(a)** questions are much more successful when they offer some analysis of specific episodes from the texts. While there is no specific requirement for candidates to make connections between selected extracts in the **(b)** questions and the wider text, an awareness of the rest of the novel or short story usually informs a view of the passage helpfully.

In the **Unseen** section of the paper, candidates generally were able to make specific points about the structure and techniques of poetry; more preparation on the structure and techniques of prose and drama would benefit their responses to these text types. It is particularly helpful if candidates are able to express something of the performance potential of drama passages by looking at the setting and the use of stage directions. Some candidates took a line-by-line approach to the **Unseen** extracts, which helped them to spot features but was not effective in showing an understanding of the overall meaning and content of the poem or extract. It is usually a good idea to begin with an overview of the extract which establishes the candidate's understanding as a foundation for the essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Prose

Question 1

E M Forster: *Howards End*

- (a)** Most responses to this question discussed the relationship between the Schlegels and Leonard Bast in terms of class. Where the focus was maintained on the specific relationship, this was successful. Candidates cited instances of meetings between the Schlegels and Leonard, beginning with the Beethoven concert, showing how each is significant in the development of the relationship. Candidates often referred to Leonard's aspirations towards culture and art, and most considered the significance of the poor employment advice which Margaret and Helen elicit from Henry Wilcox.

Many responses considered the meaning of friendship and the possibility of friendship between classes, while most candidates felt that Leonard was a social experiment to the Schlegels. Leonard's relationship with Helen was sometimes touched upon, with their child offering some hope for Howards End and the next generation.

- (b) Successful responses carefully explored the contrast between the way Henry and Margaret speak of money, with Henry's evasion and Margaret's directness. Some observed that Margaret does not play the conventional wifely submissive role in the face of Henry's attempts to dominate the conversation. More sharply focused responses commented on Margaret's 'I can do the sum just as well by proportion' as an example of her intelligence as well as her frankness and Henry's discomfort apparent in his wincing. However, many essays commented on Henry's comment that Margaret is 'downright' and that he reacts by 'patting her arm', recognising both as signs of his continued unease in the conversation and an attempt to patronise her. Some also recognised the mirroring when Margaret pats Henry's arm. Confident responses commented closely on how Forster reinforces the materialism of Henry compared with the altruism of Margaret who wants to give away most of her money. Some essays were restricted by a largely narrative approach when careful reading of the dialogue was crucial. Some responses became confused about which lines of the dialogue are attributed to each speaker in the passage.

Question 2

Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

- (a) Candidates who tackled this question often showed an understanding of Hortense as one of the primary narrators of the novel and were able to cite key incidents which reveal her character, often including the revelations about Celia's mother, her job interview and gradually developing relationship with Gilbert. Most commented on her feelings of superiority and slavish adherence to the idea of the Mother Country, both of which prove to be sources of disillusionment. Strong candidates argued that this changing perspective is a key element of her role in the novel. The most successful answers provided specific details and analysed the impact of Levy's choices on the reader. Less confident candidates tended to narrate the plot and make passing comments on how the reader might feel about the events described.
- (b) This was a very popular passage and many candidates appreciated the ways in which Levy encourages the reader to reassess the previously unsympathetic character of Bernard. They responded sensitively to the development of Bernard's feelings towards the baby through the passage, selecting apt supporting details, moving from 'the imposter child' to 'a dear little thing' by the end. There was careful consideration of his exploration of his feelings in the first paragraph, and acknowledgement of the power of phrases such as 'His dark skin fresh as a polished shoe', where Bernard describes the baby's skin colour in a way which acknowledges its beauty. Stronger responses looked at the baby's response to Bernard as well, noting the importance of its acceptance of him in moulding the bond between them in the final lines of the passage. This demanded careful acknowledgement of the sequence of little events from Bernard stepping into the room to the baby 'Clamping his gums' around Bernard's 'little finger'. Carefully focused responses looked at Levy's use of short sentences and sentence fragments throughout the extract, typical of Bernard's narration and internal dialogue. Such answers showed how the style emphasises his restrained emotions and his attempts to do the right thing. Phrases such as 'numb ... longed for something to stir me once more to opinion ... blank as a piece of white paper' prompted some interesting discussions of Bernard's expressions of feeling.

Question 3

Stories of Ourselves Volume 2

- (a) From the selected short stories, candidates usually picked out those divisions in society which are caused by money, class or race. This created opportunities for discussion of stories like *The Black Ball*, *The Doll's House* and *The Paper Menagerie* in particular. A few looked at poverty and wealth more broadly in *The Plantation*, while political divisions were sometimes discussed in *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*. A number of responses struggled to move beyond an account of the plots of the chosen stories, as some candidates lacked strategies to tackle the 'ways in which' writers present the divisions. Candidates should be encouraged to consider elements such as narrative perspective, the structuring of the plot, the role of dialogue as well as details of the language and imagery. Examples of successful answers looked at how school reinforces the social

divisions in *The Doll's House*; how the entrenched divisions lead to John's suspicions about the union man in *The Black Ball*; and how cultural divisions are symbolised in the battle between Obi-Wan Kenobi and Laohu in *The Paper Menagerie*.

- (b) Examiners saw occasional examples of misunderstanding of this passage, and a few candidates thoroughly disapproved of a young boy speaking so cheekily to an adult, but overall the excerpt and the story was much appreciated by candidates. Responses usually demonstrated a firm focus on the two characters. Many commented on Van Cheele's apparent authority ('demanded'; 'You can't live in the woods'), but also recognised this as an attempt to impose authority in response to a situation he cannot quite grasp – 'a problem that was eluding him' – and that in fact it is the boy who has the upper hand throughout the passage. Details of the passage were selected appropriately to support the understanding of the boy as both intriguing and eerie – the way he pronounces the word 'flesh' 'as though he were tasting it'; the reference to hunting; the seemingly light-hearted but presumably serious reference to 'children when I can get any'; the 'weird low laugh ... pleasantly like a chuckle ... disagreeably like a snarl.' There was also much consideration of the focus on the physical description of the boy, especially the final paragraph in which he plunges into the pool, with much discussion of homoerotic interpretations. Candidates who were aware of Cunningham's early warning in the story and of its conclusion were able to use this knowledge to develop their responses to the passage effectively. The most successful responses showed close engagement with how Saki's writing in the excerpt creates its effects, selecting relevant details and analysing precisely how effects are created.

Question 4

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) This question was quite a popular option, with some excellent, detailed responses, but it proved problematic for many candidates. Most knew the novel well and were able to marshal the details of a great many events that happen within it. The careful selection and focus for the question was often less successful, with candidates discussing various aspects that they had studied, such as religion, education, women, exploitation, corruption and colonialism with a brief assertion that it is one of the ways the history of Kenya is presented. Some answers only considered colonialism in a broad way, as if that was Kenya's only history. Secure responses focused clearly on the 'ways in which' Kenya's history is presented in the novel. These answers therefore considered the role of Nyakinyua in preserving the history of Ilmorog through her songs, stories and legends. They discussed Abdulla's role, which serves as a connection between the past and the present as part of the Mau Mau rebellion. Ilmorog itself, and the changes which occur, were often seen as emblematic of the country's history, from Ndemi and Mwathi to the modern town. Some subtle responses considered the distinctive narrative voice of the community and the beautiful lyrical passages which describe the history of the landscape as well as its people.
- (b) Successful responses to the passage were able to discuss its details efficiently, linking them to the wider context of the novel and looking at the characterisation of the lawyer in particular, as well as exploring ways in which the end of the journey seems to be a good outcome for Ilmorog. Some recognised that this is a very self-serving response on the part of the politicians and media who seize the opportunity to be seen to be championing the poor, especially when compared with Rev Jerrod Brown's earlier role and Nderi's previous inaction. Content tended to be handled well, though the analysis of Ngũgĩ's literary methods was often less secure. Many candidates would have benefited from more developed discussion of aspects such as narrative point of view, language or structure. Although some candidates seemed insecure in their knowledge of the novel and were highly critical of the 'ruthless' lawyer, most were able to show how his professional skills are presented and how they destroy the case against the villagers. Phrases such as 'totally contemptuous', 'castigated the negligence', 'epic journey' and 'dramatically asked' were picked up to show how he handles the court, while the description of the newspaper photograph and headline was also discussed well. Some also noted Ngũgĩ's use of a lexis of abundance used to contrast the villagers' poverty in 'Donations poured in', 'flooded with donations' and 'filled to the top'.

Section B: Unseen

Question 5 – Drama

Answers to the two unseen passages were distributed very evenly and while there were some descriptive and narrative responses to the drama extract, there were far more which engaged with its humour and

theatrical possibilities. Mrs Pringle's social ambitions for her daughter and Elaine's reluctance to comply were almost always noted, with Mrs Pringle's particular interest in Mr Farnsworth's 'millions'. Candidates paid careful attention to Mrs Pringle's role as 'a wonderful hostess', often seeing her as self-serving and hypocritical. Candidates who were alert to the humour wrote well on how the telephone is used to demonstrate her two-faced responses, such as '*delightedly* ... Good! The widow can't come ... That's a shame! I'm heart-broken ... I'm reduced to tears ... Well, I'm glad she dropped out'. Perceptive responses noted the structure of the passage, with Mrs Pringle's initial glee at unwelcome guests dropping out changing to her '*getting more and more distraught*' as more pull out of the dinner. Dunham's role was often noted, struggling with the '*unaccustomed help*', though few noted the physical, almost slapstick humour of his confusion ending with breaking plates and dropping silver, '*his fingers all thumbs*'. Some essays noted the patriarchal nature of the society presented in the extract, recognising the 'need' for Mr Pringle to sit at the head of the table as part of the satirical comedy.

Question 6 – Prose

A small handful of candidates misunderstood the passage and thought that the brothers were climbing within a building, but most recognised a climbing expedition in a remote mountainous area. A few were puzzled by the formality of the brothers' dress, though a very few recognised that gentlemen wore such formal attire even for mountaineering well into the twentieth century. Most candidates were able to describe what was happening in the passage and that one of the brothers was very supportive of the other one who was more badly injured. Plentiful details were selected to support the narrative. Close discussion and analysis of the writer's choices was less developed. Those that engaged with detail considered the role of the narrator and the presentation of their perspective. Astute responses argued that the narrator is clearly a mountaineer themselves, from the references to the 'President of the Alpine Club' and the knowledgeable way in which they speak about the difficulties faced by James. Some candidates also recognised that the narrator is retelling a story told to them by James, quoted in ll. 47–48. There was some discussion of the narrator's sense of wonder at James' achievements and their quite light-hearted chatty approach to a story which involves great danger. This gives reassurance to the reader, thoughtful candidates argued, that James and John survived the incident, despite John's horrific injuries apparent at the opening.

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Key messages

- Successful responses focus on ways in which the writers present the meaning and content of their texts to the reader.
- Successful responses use analysis of specific references and quotations to support the points made. This should be particularly remembered for the Prose **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Successful responses to Prose **(b)** passage questions analyse the writing of the selected or extract in great detail.
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General comments

Examiners saw responses to questions on all of the texts. Though there were notably fewer responses to the questions on Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood*, it was a more popular text than it had been in the June series, and attracted some thoughtful answers. Most essays demonstrated appropriate knowledge of the plots and characters of the texts, and many were confident in exploring ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through their choices of language, form and structure. Candidates would always be well advised to pay greater attention to ways in which the texts are written. Candidates responding to the **(a)** questions are much more successful when they offer some analysis of specific episodes from the texts. While there is no specific requirement for candidates to make connections between selected extracts in the **(b)** questions and the wider text, an awareness of the rest of the novel or short story usually informs a view of the passage helpfully.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A: Prose

Question 1

E M Forster: *Howards End*

- (a)** While some candidates seemed curiously unprepared for such a central question on the novel, most responses cited examples of how Margaret and Helen connect with people, and particularly how they connect with Leonard Bast. They were also able to discuss how the Wilcoxes do not connect to people in the same way. Those who wrote only about these connections on the level of meetings proved to be quite limited; more successful candidates discussed emotional and spiritual connections. They noted that Margaret and Helen connect spiritually with others, though perceptive

answers recognised that they were able to do this because they had the support of good incomes to cushion them in a way that Leonard does not have. Henry Wilcox's counterpart to this kind of connection was discussed, exploring Forster's balance in the novel, with candidates noting that he is a changed character by the book's conclusion. Strong responses also noted how Margaret, like Mrs Wilcox, connects with *Howards End*, and that her connection with Leonard is different from that which Helen establishes. Some perceptive and subtle answers argued that that all the major characters need to connect within themselves – especially Henry, but also Margaret, Helen and Leonard, all of whom were seen, initially at least, as too single-minded. These essays considered how Forster shows their varying degrees of success in seeing that they need to examine themselves more, after which they can successfully connect with others.

- (b) Candidates had a generally sound grasp of what is happening in this passage and appreciated its appropriateness towards the end of the novel. Many wrote about Henry's continuing authority, without noticing that Forster depicts him 'lying' in his chair and speaking 'in a weary voice'. It is significant too that Henry is introduced as 'Her husband', an adjunct to Margaret. The 'dark and airless' room contributes to the rather oppressive, sombre nature of the occasion, and essays often noted the reactions of the Wilcox children effectively. The word 'apparently' in Paul's speech was noted to add a petulant tone, while 'scratching at his arm' shows the physical manifestation of his irritation. Observant responses contrasted this portrayal of Paul to the figure early in the novel, with whom Helen fell in love. Candidates contrasted Paul to Evie's 'holding [Henry's] hand rather ostentatiously' and her 'Of course, father', showing her desire to be seen to be a sympathetic and obedient daughter. Dolly's comparatively garrulous answer, with her reliance on what the absent Charles thought and wanted and said, was also observed. Margaret was sometimes overlooked, but stronger responses considered ll. 29–31 closely, marking her final 'triumph'. Many commented on the leaving of the house to Helen's child, some noting the pause before 'to her nephew', though fewer explored the way Forster presents Henry's voice providing Margaret's views and actions, and the effect of her sustained silence.

Question 2

Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

- (a) There were not many answers to the question on Bernard's experiences in India and many of those which were attempted were narrative in approach, lacking clear engagement with the importance of those experiences to the novel. More developed responses discussed how Bernard's racism becomes entrenched in India, considering the nature of not only his experiences, but the language he uses to describe them. His sense of superiority as a white Englishman was noted, with the comment that these are the attitudes with which he returns to England, which naturally affects the way he responds to Gilbert and Hortense. Few answers, though, considered the importance of Bernard's friendship with Maxi, which develops his more human side, or his encounter with the prostitute, which not only causes him intense shame but keeps him from returning home at the end of the war.
- (b) The passage was much more popular, though it was often subject to misunderstandings. Some mistook the degeneration of the letter's handwriting into 'childlike scribble' as Hortense's own difficulty in reading, rather than Mrs Roberts' loss of composure in writing, and argued that Hortense is wilfully ignoring the import of the letter. More sensitive responses noted that her contemptuous phrase 'childlike scribble' shows that, not only does she not understand the letter, but lacks the empathy to consider that the letter writer might be emotionally affected. Buoyed by the confidence gained from sitting 'on this padded seat designed for dignitaries', she even goes on to 'assure' Miss Morgan, the principal. Such essays noted the disparity Levy creates between Hortense's confidence and the principal's difficulty and patience as she is 'shuffling the paper', speaking 'slowly' and 'Closing her eyes'. They saw the climax of the passage as Miss Morgan makes the letter's meaning explicit, and despite Hortense's protestations, her 'trembling' hands indicate her final realisation. Thoughtful responses looked at the formality of the language of both the letter and Miss Morgan, creating a linguistic control of a horrific event, matched by the suggestion that 'It does not do to get too emotional' when faced with loss and grief. Many candidates offered thoughtful comment on the significance of the chair and the language Hortense uses to describe it. Indeed, some candidates spent the bulk of their essay discussing the first three lines of the passage. Observant candidates noted that Hortense's narration describes it as 'designed for dignitaries ... a befitting throne', with many connecting it to her general admiration for England and some commenting on the significance of the chair 'to read news about Michael', denoting the pedestal on which he is placed, alongside England, in Hortense's mind. A few

candidates made a neat connection between the 'mischief' that Michael is 'always off doing' with his roughly concurrent sexual encounter with Queenie.

Question 3

Stories of Ourselves Volume 2

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Candidates usually knew this story well and were able to explain who Emma Saxon is. The passage gave a good opportunity for candidates to write effectively about narrative point of view, with many able to explore its effects here. Structure too was frequently explicitly discussed, with candidates considering the way in which Wharton controls the journey through the empty house to build up tension. Many candidates commented on the depiction of the narrator's physical responses to the experience and how these mirror her psychological response, as well as the way in which she seems compelled to continue, possibly by a supernatural force, presented in such phrases as 'she was drawing me after her', 'it was as if she had dragged me with ropes' and the simile 'like a dog'. Many commented too on Wharton's presentation of the setting and how the imagery, such as 'her figure looked black and lonely in the snow' and 'she made the whole countryside seem lonely as the grave', contributes to the eerie isolation of the experience. Some candidates made the interesting observation that it is in the last paragraph, when 'it was my turn to act', that the narrator's tension seems at its peak – 'my heart beating fit to strangle me' – and that the passage ends with Emma Saxon watching the narrator who has been following throughout – the roles now reversed.

Question 4

*Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: **Petals of Blood***

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) This passage, rich in detail for analysis, was well received. Many candidates noted the hypocrisy of much of what Fraudsham does, several commenting on the aptness of his name. They discussed the rejection of the 'imaginary thick-lipped African in a grey woollen suit', the desire not to turn out 'black Europeans but true Africans,' while enforcing cross-country, cold showers and saluting the British flag. While few commented on the reinforcement of a particular European view of Africa and Africans, many focused on the particular line from their hymn – 'Wash me, Redeemer, and I shall be whiter than snow' – with its idea that cleanliness is denoted by whiteness. Many essays noted the repeated references to the Empire and the attendant irony, with the useful wider context of colonialism. Candidates also picked up on the characterisation of Fraudsham in the last line of the extract. Very few explored narrative point of view as a 'way in which' the presentation is achieved, however, with little exploration of who is speaking and how that influences the reader's perception of Fraudsham. There was also little consideration of the way Fraudsham's voice is brought to life through the indirect speech and its references to 'my boys'.

Section B: Unseen

Question 5 – Drama

While there were some descriptive accounts of this passage, there were many candidates who found much to say in teasing out the presentation of the relationship between Charles and Belinda, with some quite mature contemplation of marriage. Answers showed some very detailed and often sensitive observation about what each character said, with plenty of personal response to each. Many felt that Belinda is entirely justified in wanting to escape the legal bands that Charles wants their marriage to rely on. However, there were equally some quite thoughtful expressions of sympathy and support for Charles. Candidates interpreted his '*low voice*' in different ways, varying between defeat, embarrassment and a lack of care. It was often contrasted with Belinda's long speech ll. 32–41, with its metaphors and emotional quality. Details were often observed well, such as the juxtaposition of 'a state of law' and 'a state of mind', which sums up the contrasting points of view very neatly. There was also observation of the way the playwright apportions the dialogue, with Belinda having the majority of the lines in longer speeches generally being felt to reflect her greater emotional investment in the relationship. Many commented on Charles speaking '*brusquely*' and explored the tone of Belinda's responses appropriately, as well as looking at her use of imagery. Some candidates were very successful in imagining the impact of the stage directions, including Belinda's taking of

the ruler, recognising how the positions and movements of the characters illustrate the tension in the relationship.

Question 6 – Poetry: *The Rise of the Angry Generation*

Most responses tried to establish some definition or idea about the identity of the angry generation. A few argued that the poem refers to today's young generation, currently politically and ecologically active in the face of climate change. Others stated with certainty that the 'great eagle' is a representation of America and its neo-colonial ambitions, while others argued it was the eagle of Indigenous Americans. It would be better if candidates offered their readings as potential interpretations rather than fixed certainties, which tend to become inflexible. Sometimes these readings were imposed so determinedly that they forced candidates to ignore sections of the poem which failed to fit the interpretation. Those who insisted that the 'shells' referred to explosives had to ignore the eagle's nest and the fact that they are 'the shells of childhood'. Some sidestepped the issue of identity entirely and explored ways in which the poet describes the angry generation, regardless of who that generation might be. The poem provided ample opportunities for discussion of language and imagery. There was plentiful discussion of the light/dark images, of the beauty and ferocity of the eagle, and in almost every response there was careful consideration of the final four lines of the poem. Candidates commented on the forceful repetition of the lines' openings and there was plenty of exploration of the iron, bee and volcano images, but few candidates looked closely at the final line. Of these, the most convincing suggestion was that the Angry Generation is reviving the spirit of the Ancestral Forefathers, which has been betrayed and forgotten by the intervening generations. A number of candidates commented on the structure of the poem, discussing the lack of punctuation, with some sensible comments that this reflects the speed and anger of the angry generation.

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Key messages

- Contexts, when used, should be clearly relevant to the text as a work of literature, not merely background information about the text's composition or historical circumstances.
- Candidates must consider and attempt to evaluate others' opinions and interpretations in their responses.
- Both context and evaluation of others' opinions should be an integral part of a candidate's developing argument, not a bolt-on, simply there for the sake of it.

General comments

Readers of this report need to be aware that this component is taken by a very small number of candidates. It follows, therefore, that responses at all levels of the mark scheme are not necessarily seen on each question.

The vast majority of the candidates know their texts well and write with enthusiasm about them. With scripts at the lower end, there is often a lack of detail, or a lack of a developing, coherent structure to an essay. Occasionally it seems that candidates simply throw knowledge of the text at the question, in the hope that some of it will be relevant to the question. At the other end, however, there is often original, perceptive, and fully argued work that suggests detailed and original engagement with all aspects of the texts. In the middle responses are clearly argued and relevant, with some ability to engage with a writer's methods and concerns.

If candidates are to do a passage-based question, they need to remember that the passage must be the central focus of the answer and that it is printed on the paper so that they can make detailed reference to particulars. Although candidates are expected to talk more widely about the text, a **(b)** type answer must keep coming back to the passage presented. It is important that candidates take a strategic view of a passage. A line-by-line going through is not a helpful approach. In some questions, a particular focus is called for: in this instance, candidates need to be attentive to the prompt, rather than writing generally about the passage. The generic question asks about a writer's methods and concerns. Oddly, very few candidates actually use methods (vocabulary choice, staging device) as a means of organising paragraphs, though it is an obvious way of avoiding a general, all-purpose approach.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) The best responses talked confidently about nature as the great chain of being and were able to write about the presentation of 'great creating nature' as a positive force in the play with authority. There were many responses that linked the natural world to human nature in a variety of different ways. Many focused on the discussions of flowers and regeneration in Act 4. Other responses took a more general view of the change of tone halfway through the play and were able to place this in relation to plot and character. Less good responses were often generalised and unsupported, with the focus often on the first half of the play and with a weaker grasp of the structure and patterns of the whole.
- (b) A small number of responses confused Camillo with Polixenes. Some responses failed to broaden out from the passage to discuss Camillo's role as part of the reconciliation scene at the end of the play. Most responses were able to clearly see the difference between Leontes's mad ravings and Camillo's calm, regulated response, mingled with his shock ('No, no, my lord') at being asked to concur with Leontes's views. The best responses looked closely at the language of the passage, often analysing the language of disease that runs through the passage.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) The best responses developed supported and synthesized discussions of the pros and cons of Lear's actions and reactions during the play, to produce well-balanced, analytical conclusions. There were often interesting discussions of Lear's tragic 'flaw' as a means of contextualising the play in relation to theories about tragedy. Most of these responses emphasized — and analysed — the catalytic scenes on the Heath which predicate the 'before and after' man. Less good responses tended to focus on the early scenes and some of its consequences, often heaping blame on Goneril and Regan without going into the of the weakness in Lear that allows them to take advantage of him. Responses at the lower end tended to take one half of the quotation or the other, rather than seeing that the debate must include both.
- (b) The best responses saw that the scene is underpinned by a series of clashing loyalties which confuse the regal and the personal, often analysing the nature and status of Regan and Cornwall. They then went on to remark the utter chaos and upending of order in the exchange between Cornwall and the servant. Less searching responses looked in some detail at the vicious interrogation of Gloucester by the Cornwalls but made little of Gloucester's outcry at line 38. There was often useful discussion of the violence of the scene and of the issue of blindness, both real and metaphorical. Responses at the at the lower end of the mark scheme tended to give general and summative accounts of the scene with suitable horror at the climax, but a lack of textual focus elsewhere.

Question 3

ATHOL FUGARD: *Township Plays*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. Candidates were able to range across the plays (even including *Antigone* at times) and talk about the various ways in which Fugard raises issues of inequality between the sexes or the common plight of all under apartheid. The best responses were able to analyse technical matters, such as the use of dialogue and staging to support their points. Contexts of apartheid were clearly present in all essays; some candidates had obviously read critics and were able to develop their own views in relation to 'received' opinion.
- (b) Again, there were very few takers for this question. Less good responses gave a blow-by-blow account of the passage, drawing attention to some of its features and remarking on the plight of those who are 'booted around by life.' Better responses made connections across the plays, often in relation to the presentation of apartheid. There was often sensible discussion of self-respect, in terms of a longing for financial independence or a desire to be heard.

Question 4

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

- (a) There was a full range of responses to this question. All candidates were aware that Williams is working with symbols throughout, and most were able to produce a series of examples, ranging from Laura's animals to the fire escape, the portrait of Mr Wingfield to Tom's tale about the magician. Answers at the lower end tended to produce a list. Better responses were able to wrestle with 'dramatic significance' and analyse how the symbols provide a shorthand for the play's action or act as an objective correlative for what is going on in the characters' heads. There was often useful contextual discussion of 'plastic theatre' or of Brechtian techniques in the best responses. Less good answers tended to deal with context in terms of the American dream and the harsh economic realities which the Wingfields find themselves confronting.
- (b) This was a popular question which produced answers across the whole mark range. Weaker answers tended to give an account of the scene or remark on the ways in which the characters are acting typically at this moment. Better responses saw how Amanda is living through her daughter. Some answers raised the interesting issue of whether Amanda only imagines the past she talks about, as Mr Wingfield does not seem from his portrait to have the glamour of the 'gentleman callers' evoked in the passage. There was often useful discussion of appearance and reality, with

Amanda's desire to stage manage Laura seen as a metaphor for how the action of the play works as a whole.

Question 5

TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) There were very few answers to this question. Most demonstrated knowledge of the play but were unable to see how Das and his art fit into the larger issues that the play raises. Answers tended to deal with the issue in general, rather than specific terms.
- (b) Again, the number of responses seen was restricted. Most showed understanding of Flora's character and background, but little was made of her dramatic presentation at this point — the fact that she is herself writing the scene that unfolds before us — with Pike pruriently 'looking for the right grave' as a means of giving the perspective of the present — in order to present a particular view of herself and her experiences to her sister. The best candidates also pointed out that Emily Eden's memoir provides yet another context for Flora's experience and an audience's awareness of colonialism as it becomes problematic, rather than picturesque, as it was in the 19th century.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
Shakespeare and Drama 32

Key messages

- Contexts, when used, should be clearly relevant to the text as a work of literature, not merely background information about the text's composition or historical circumstances.
- Candidates must consider and attempt to evaluate others' opinions and interpretations in their responses.
- Both context and evaluation of others' opinions should be an integral part of a candidate's developing argument, not a bolt-on, simply there for the sake of it.

General comments

The vast majority of the candidates know their texts well and write with enthusiasm about them. With scripts at the lower end, there is often a lack of detail, or a lack of a developing, coherent structure to an essay. Occasionally it seems that candidates simply throw knowledge of the text at the question in the hope that some of it will be relevant to the question. At the other end, however, there is often original, perceptive, and fully argued work that suggests detailed and original engagement with all aspects of the texts. In the middle responses are clearly argued and relevant, with some ability to engage with a writer's methods and concerns.

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candidate may reasonably say: 'Tom, like Blanche Dubois in *Streetcar*, feels that he is an outsider ...'. That gives some hint that the candidate is aware of loners as a pattern in Williams's work, so it is a context that shows understanding. On the other hand, information about Williams's relationship with his sister and the influence of this relationship on his creativity is simply background knowledge. Many of the most useful contexts used by candidates show understanding of how certain techniques used by Williams — plastic theatre, the influence of Brecht, monologues etc. — are part of a general context of mid-Twentieth-century drama. Ideas about the divine right of kings, or the American dream can only be relevant when they are fully integrated into an argument, rather than thrown in simply to fulfil the assessment objective. Candidates need to be cautious, too, about claiming that — for example — 'at this time women were seen as ...' or 'At this time everyone believed ...'. Plainly, if *everyone* in Shakespeare's time believed that women were inferior, then Shakespeare would not have written many of his plays as he would not have been able to overcome the strength of his beliefs to create feisty women.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) The best responses saw that there is much more than a simple, binary 'older' and 'younger' aspect to the issue, that the characters within each generation are very different and at least as different as the parents and children. They were also able to see that there are moments of comedy in the tragedy and vice versa. There was much discussion of changes of mood through reference to the time shift and breaking of the classical unities. However, even some of the strongest answers didn't tackle the final scene, with its clear reconciliation of the generations, the resolution of 'dying' and 'newborn.' Less good responses saw the issue as binary — one generation contrasted to another — but did not oversimplify it, going into detail about the effects of disguise and the nature of 'royal' character by contrasting the two kings. Responses at the lower end of the mark scheme were usually able to draw some comparison between the errors of the older generation and the innocence of the younger generation. A number of responses simply dealt with the first half of the play, often focusing almost solely on Leontes or his relationship with Mamillius, an approach which was self-limiting.
- (b) The fact that Autolycus enters 'singing' in this episode shows that the play has moved away from seriousness and its tone has now changed. The best responses understood this and were able to illustrate Autolycus's role as providing comic relief, warning the country folk that there are 'cozeners' abroad whilst himself being one. Few responses were really able to tackle the detail of the passage or relate Autolycus's ballad (and talk of ballads) to the play's bigger ideas of 'a sad

tale.' Less good responses did not really get beyond assertion that Autolycus makes an audience laugh. At all levels, it was noticeable that very few candidates wanted to engage with the contrast of milieu here, the use of prose to demonstrate that, deep in the innocent countryside and in another country, we are now far from the formalities, plotting, duplicity and rigidity of the Sicilian courtly world. And yet, importantly, it sets the tone for the reappearance of themes and concerns of earlier that are about to reappear with the clashes between Perdita and Polixenes, Florizel and his father. In short, many candidates were not fully able to consider the passage's dramatic significance 'to the play as a whole' as requested in the question or make strategic use of the detail of the passage.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) Although tackled by few of the candidates, responses to this question tended to register at the top end of the mark scheme. There were useful contextual discussions (often alluding to Montaigne) about natural man, 'unaccommodated' as he is here. Many responses dealt interestingly and fully with the idea of the storm within being dramatized through the storm without. There was often interesting discussion of the other characters that are with Lear on the heath and the various ways in which they contribute to his increasing understanding of humanity when stripped of the trappings of power. Less good responses tended to give an account of the action in Act 3, without really engaging in either detail or the larger patterns of what is going on here.
- (b) The best candidates' responses had a very precise understanding of the ways in which Lear is coming to consciousness here and could chart their way through its detail with intelligence and sensitivity. They could, for example, make clear distinctions in and give supportive references for 'You do me wrong ...'; see the point of the 'pin prick' the slow recognition of Cordelia and Lear's remorse at the dawning recollections of the daughters. There was a confident sense of Cordelia's powerful cocktail of emotions in 'Had you not been ...,' and at the whole role reversed performance of the Royal protocols. Less good responses tended to focus more on Cordelia than Lear saying and demonstrating how nice she is compared with her sisters and how forgiving she is towards her father. Many quoted and explored Kent's approving 'kind and dear princess'. Some responses diverted themselves onto a character study of Cordelia, swiftly (and with consequences) shifting to a discussion of Cordelia's behaviour early in the play, rather than focusing on what is presented here. Responses at the lower end of the mark scheme sometimes struggled to locate the scene and its context: many thought it was the end of the play. Virtually all candidates recognised that this is the moment at which Lear's mental storm is over.

Question 3

ATHOL FUGARD: *Township Plays*

- (a) The slightly technical focus of this question enabled candidates to talk about how the characters reflect on themselves and their condition. Monologues also allow them to tell a back story. The best candidates, of course, understood this completely and provided answers that were both detailed and thoughtful about the various uses of this technique. Contexts about apartheid fitted in almost automatically, without a need to signal their presence.
- (b) The best candidates had a detailed understanding of South African apartheid and were able to draw on other plays in the collection to elaborate on Fugard's concerns about self-determinism and identity. Less good responses showed some understanding of apartheid but often confined themselves to a discussion of women's roles in South Africa at that time as well as labour policies rather than focusing on the staged, dramatic qualities of the extract. Responses at the lower end of the mark scheme often became distracted by punctuation (especially ellipses), without really being able to explain what they mean in terms of dramatic effect. There were a small number of responses that simply narrated the contents of the passage.

Question 4

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

- (a) The past — either real or imagined — dominates and shapes all the characters in the play. Less good responses were able to give an account of how the Wingfield family are paralysed by the

past, unable to escape its thralls. Better responses were able to link action and staging, to see that the legends, the dim lighting, the music, the gauze curtains, all present the past as uncertain and shifting, but something that cannot be forgotten or overcome. Many responses focused this through ideas about Tom's guilt towards Laura. The best responses considered the possibility that Tom's presentation of the past may not be accurate, that it might be designed and shaped to present his behaviour in the best possible light. At the lower end there was often contextual work on the economic crash in the 1930s or the American dream, but this was often simply there as filler.

- (b) The best responses to this question were able to use the extract to range widely across the play's themes and techniques by taking examples from this last scene as typical of the play's action as a whole. There were responses based on character that drew attention to Amanda's constant, nagging and overbearing presence, or Tom's role as both narrator and participant. A small number of candidates offered a more refined view of Amanda's plight by noting the stage direction about her 'dignity and tragic beauty.' There were some interesting discussions of Tom's monologues, both here and elsewhere. Other responses were able to deal with technical matters — the light fading, the scene dissolving, the final action being presented 'as though viewed through soundproof glass,' the blowing out of the candles. Less good responses often simply tracked the extract, commenting along the way on aspects of characterisation or staging.

Question 5

TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) Responses to this question were able to illustrate the time differences and were clearly aware of Stoppard's use of the structure of the play as a means of creating meaning. The best candidates understood that the structural device allows Stoppard to create a commentary on Flora and her life in India in the light of post-colonial understandings of British involvement.
- (b) Only the very best answers were attuned to the light humour of the passage, of the interplay between Flora and Das as they joke about the hybrid language of colonial India and the various ways in which Das's sensibility has been shaped by awareness of English Literature. These responses were able to relate the detail of the scene to the bigger issues and themes that are at work in the play. Less detailed responses saw something of the growing intimacy between Flora and Das. Some noted the change of tone at line 38 where Flora's question about nationalism suddenly strays into a no-go area. Very few responses made anything of Durance's appearance and Das's distant 'But we have never met' which demonstrates how far Flora's behaviour has strayed from what would normally be right for a memsahib.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/33 Shakespeare and Drama 33

Key messages

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General comments

Readers of this report need to be aware that this component is taken by a very small number of candidates. It follows, therefore, that responses at all levels of the mark scheme are not necessarily seen on each question.

The vast majority of the candidates know their texts well and write with enthusiasm about them. With scripts at the lower end, there is often a lack of detail, or a lack of a developing, coherent structure to an essay. Occasionally it seems that candidates simply throw knowledge of the text at the question in the hope that some of it will be relevant to the question. At the other end, however, there is often original, perceptive, and fully argued work that suggests detailed and original engagement with all aspects of the texts. In the middle responses are clearly argued and relevant, with some ability to engage with a writer's methods and concerns.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) The best answers kept both Polixenes and Leontes in view throughout. Both, described as 'twinn'd lambs,' show an inflexibility of mind when seen in relation to their children. Less good responses concentrated on the relationship between the two in the first two acts of the play, thus giving clear accounts of the action, without really seeing how Shakespeare uses Polixenes to mirror Leontes in the later acts of the play.
- (b) Most answers focused on Hermione's presentation at the beginning of the play, with only a few candidates remembering her forgiving dignity in Act 5, which is so clearly prepared for in the passage given. Weaker answers saw Hermione as wronged and gave an account of her character. Better responses were able to characterise her nobility, loyalty and dignity from the passage by adducing her repeated references to her husband as 'sir,' the complexity of her vocabulary and syntax, and her clear, forensic account of the falsehoods that Leontes has put forward.

Question 2

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) Virtually all candidates were able to make remarks about how the Fool provides a sort of mad wisdom for King Lear in his role as a jocularly fearless teller of the truth. Some responses contrasted his relationship with that between Lear and Cordelia to good effect. Most responses were able to comment on the context of Fools as tellers of truth to power. The best responses focused on particular moments in order to substantiate their arguments about the Fool as one of the means by which Lear finds his true self and re-discovers his humanity.
- (b) Some of the responses were rather unbalanced, with much focus given to Edmund's monologue, little to the rest of the extract. Better answers balanced — and commented upon — the staged contrast between private thought and public appearance. There was much discussion of how Edmund might feel justified in his resentment. There was often discussion of ungrateful children, and the naivety of elderly parents that broadened out the range of the answers to deal with the play more widely. There was much discussion of the rights (or wrongs) of primogeniture as a means of presenting a context for the passage.

Question 3

ATHOL FUGARD: *Township Plays*

- (a) There was a restricted number of responses to this question. Candidates were able to range across the plays (even including *Antigone* at times) and talk about the various ways in which Fugard presents a series of feisty, long-suffering women, both in relation to the other sex and in relation to apartheid. The best responses were able to analyse technical matters, such as the use of dialogue and staging to support their points. Contexts of apartheid were clearly present in all essays; some candidates had obviously read critics and were able to develop their own views in relation to 'received' opinion.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Responses at the lower end often gave a narrative account of the scene and made loose connections between the oppressive government of South Africa and Thebes. Better answers were able to use the Sophocles (treated as a play) to act as a context and parallel. The best responses were able to make links with the other plays in the selection, often by talking about the arbitrary nature of the law ('Who is the state?') and its enforcers who, in the case of *Antigone*, claim divine authority as a justification for their inhumanity. The lawmakers in South Africa, of course, have no such excuse for their barbarity. Contexts emerged naturally in most responses because of the nature of the task.

Question 4

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

- (a) Weaker responses were able to give an account of Laura's collection of animals and see that they have a metaphorical significance for her. Most could also see that they represent her plight. Many answers focused on Jim and the loss of Laura's unicorn. Better responses were able to widen the discussion to recognise that the glass animals — besides being important for the dramatic action — focus an audience's attention on the plight of the whole family in terms of the fragility of their relationships. With the best responses, discussion of the animals led to wider thoughts about reflected light, illusions, mirrors, Tom's deliberate breaking of a glass at the end of the play, the final view of Amanda and Laura being seen 'as though viewed through soundproof glass'. The context of the 'American dream' was used with varying success by many candidates.
- (b) Most answers were able to make something of the fact that the printed passage is the moment where the dramatic conventions of the play are being established. The best responses were able to deal with both what is said and how the scene is presented through stage directions, with some sense of how — and why — the 'fourth wall' is being broken. There were often useful discussions of how Tom explains his own role as a participant and narrator. Many candidates noted that both Williams and Tom share a 'weakness for symbols,' a trait that runs throughout the play. There was often useful reference to the socio-economic context that Tom provides in his monologue. Some very good answers linked the stage directions to Tom's statement that 'the play is memory' in order to suggest that the play's action is a retrospective self-justification on Tom's part and that he is an

unreliable narrator. Less satisfactory answers simply focused on providing a character analysis of Tom, often simply ignoring the stage directions.

Question 5

TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) There were only a few responses to this question. Most were able to discuss differences between British and Indian cultures in general terms, but few really engage with — for example — the lengthy discussions about art or *rasa* in the play. The best responses often took their insight from Eleanor Swan's observation about the reciprocal relationship between the two cultures: 'In India we had pictures of coaching inns and foxhunting, and now I've landed up in Shepperton I've got elephants and prayer wheels cluttering up the window ledges ...'.
- (b) There were only a few responses to this question. Most were able to identify Pike's relentless, self-serving obsession with Flora and his complete inability to look beyond trivial detail to the 'real' Flora. Many captured this by reference to Flora's 'Oh, Shut up!' at the end of the extract. The best responses widened out to discuss Pike's niggling discussions with Mrs Swan elsewhere in the play.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure that they remain consistently focused on the question and set text. They should avoid general discussion and arguments that are not relevant or are of tangential significance.
- Contexts should be relevant and accurate when used to support and develop responses. Background information about the writers' lives and historical context must be linked to exploration of the question and the nature of the text itself rather than simply biographical information.
- Evaluation of varying opinions and interpretations is a key assessment objective on this paper and must be addressed via reference to critical views or awareness that other readings exist. This should be an integral part of the argument rather than an add-on to the essay.
- Rubric infringements remain a concern for too many candidates. The text combinations should be checked carefully prior to teaching to ensure that marks are not needlessly lost.

General comments

It is pleasing to see most candidates engaging with the texts enthusiastically and with knowledge and understanding. Some very impressive work was seen, reflecting scholarly and perceptive insights with original approaches and well-argued and supported discussions. These essays were very interesting to read and reflected a capable and insightful fulfilment of the mark scheme. Less successful answers at the lower end of the range tended to rely on narration or offered general answers that lacked development and supporting detail. Answers in the middle of the mark range tended to offer secure and competent arguments with relevant development and support. Most candidates were able to write two answers of reasonable length in the time allocated.

Unfortunately, rubric infringements were a regular occurrence again this series, particularly in the case of candidates answering on Chaucer who then went on to answer on another poet in the **Post-1900** section of the paper. This was also reported as a problem in the prose with some candidates writing on Dickens or Hardy and then going on to write on Atwood in **Section B**. This resulted in a significant loss of marks for too many candidates. Candidates must answer on one prose text and one poetry text. One of these must be pre-1900 and one, post-1900. It is important to teach candidates the fundamental concepts of genre which are relevant aspects of literary context worthy of discussion and exploration.

Candidates choosing the **(b)** questions based on an extract or given poem were most successful when the focus was clearly on the given text. Although a wider view is required, the details in the text should be the central focus of the answer with wider knowledge linked to these points. The best answers take a strategic view rather than working through line by line. In some instances, this methodical working led to candidates being unable to deal with the closing lines of the poem or extract as they had spent too much time on the opening lines. Selection is the best way to ensure that a planned and relevant approach is taken.

Personal response was a strength for many candidates who demonstrated genuine interest in the texts and their meaning. Successful answers linked these insights to relevant knowledge and demonstrated an ability to select quotation and other textual reference judiciously. This enabled them to construct substantial arguments with progression of ideas through complex discussions related to literary or thematic ideas. Less successful answers tended to limit personal response to superficial or repeated points; this resulted in a lack of depth and relevance. Many candidates linked their personal responses to exploration of the opinions of others and this was often a successful strategy. There was evidence of confident ability to integrate and use the opinions of others in many answers. Examples included short references to particular critics which were evaluated by selecting an apt textual quotation and analysing in the context of the critic's remark or disagreeing with a particular critic's view. References to philosophies or critical approaches varied in terms of achievement. Some candidates considered Feminist or Marxist readings thoughtfully and with knowledge

while others used the terms haphazardly, not linking them to tangible features of the text or question. Some candidates referred to the views of classmates or teachers with varying levels of success. At the lower end of the range there was often no mention of other views at all. Candidates must be reminded that 'O', is a specific Assessment Objective and that some attempt must be made to address it in answers on this paper. Even the use of 'may' and 'could' in analytical terms can meet the requirements, albeit in a simple way.

Use of contextual material varied considerably between answers and it was clear that much research and study had taken place, some of which was used very effectively. When details shed light on relevant textual aspects, these references were supportive and focused. When these points were focused on the writer's life, this was less successful and tended to stray from relevance. This was noted particularly in answers on Dickinson where some answers devoted too much time to the writer's life and general biographical descriptions. All contextual information must serve the question and arguments rather than forcing arguments to fit a biographical view. There were however some very strong uses of context where candidates used exciting and intellectual explorations of faith, gender politics and society to develop complex and interesting discussions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 1

JANE AUSTEN: *Persuasion*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Austen's presentation of relationships between parents and children in the novel. A small number of answers were seen to this question. Most responses dealt with Sir Walter and Elizabeth and their relationships with other members of the family. Less successful answers tended to write in general terms about the characters with little evidence of detailed knowledge. Better responses included a contrast with the Musgroves and their attitudes to the matches of Henrietta and Louisa lacking the Elliot ambition for wealth and status as well as Mrs Musgrove's reaction and care of Louisa, contrasted with Mary's willingness to go to dinner rather than look after her own son.
- (b) The extract is from Volume 2, Chapter 7 of the novel. This was a more popular question than 1(a) but numbers of answers remained small. Few were able to precisely locate the passage in the order of events. Most candidates were able to differentiate between Anne's contrasting reactions to Mr Elliot and Captain Wentworth. Better responses analysed the psychology of the three characters and the changing point of view, analysing the nuances of language of politeness and using judicious selection of supporting detail. The most successful responses evaluated the impact of these encounters in the context of the wider novel. One or two answers commented on the use of narrative voice and the switch to Anne's interior monologue at the end. Less successful answers considered the three characters in general terms, and some made little reference to varying opinions or aspects of context.

Question 2

GOEFFREY CHAUCER: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) The question required candidates to respond to the statement: 'Chaucer presents the uncertainties of human life in *The Knight's Tale*', focusing on the extent to which they would agree with the view. Several responses were seen with Level 2 and 3 work focusing largely on a narrative approach or one that concentrated on the power of the Gods to the exclusion of any other ideas. Better versions of these answers tried to fit details of their account to the terms of the question. Some concentrated on Emily having to marry against her will. More successful responses dealt with the statement strategically, considering the distinctions between fate, destiny and individual autonomy. One particularly strong answer opted for a well thought out philosophical response, citing a range of good examples. It is important that candidates are aware that Chaucer is classified as a poetry text to avoid rubric infringements.

- (b) The question required candidates to consider Chaucer's poetic methods in an extract from *The Knight's Tale*. Discussions tended to focus on love, fate and chivalry. Some candidates focused overtly on narrative at the expense of analytical details. The least successful answers lacked understanding of poetic methods, relying on plot and paraphrase. The question was reasonably well done by candidates who understood the relationship between Theseus, Arcite and Emily. Most candidates neglected the role of Theseus. The best answers focused on the chivalric code and picked out relevant features of language such as 'dutee and honour' and 'chivalrie flour'. A few candidates looked at the descriptions of Palamon and his faithful service.

Question 3

CHARLES DICKENS: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) This question required candidates to consider the presentation of family life in the novel. There were very few answers to this question. Some effective responses focused on the concept of or 'creating a family' including references to Brownlow, Fagin's gang and Nancy as a maternal figure. One successful and interesting answer reflected on Sikes as an anti-heroic father figure in Oliver's life. Some interesting details of context were seen relating to the treatment of orphans in Victorian times. Less successful answers struggled to find a focus for their answer, resulting in lack of depth and detail. Most of these focused on Fagin as a father figure to the boys.
- (b) This question required candidates to consider Dickens's presentation of Oliver in an extract from Chapter 28. This question was more popular than the (a) option. Effective responses analysed language and setting, and the passage content yielded opportunities for candidates to analyse and engage with descriptive details. Some interesting comments were made relating to the weather and cruelty of nature. Successful answers related these details to Oliver's overall plight and there were some strong personal responses seen. Good answers focused on Oliver's vulnerability and isolation, linking arguments and examples to wider points including the circumstances of his birth and his role in the robbery. Less successful answers tracked the extract, relying at times on paraphrase of the extract. Some found it difficult to consider wider details from the text.

Question 4

EMILY DICKINSON: Selected Poems

- (a) The question required candidates to respond to a statement about life and death being both 'humorous and disturbing' in three poems. This was a relatively popular question and was largely well done. Some very good answers were seen with equal attention given to the disturbing and humorous aspects of Dickinson's presentation of death. Candidates had a good deal of material to use and found little difficulty in selecting three poems to use for their answers. The challenges posed by this question were met well by the most able candidates. Most answers seen by examiners were towards the top end of the range. One or two less successful answers struggled to find balance between the two aspects and lost focus on the question.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse *The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants*. This question was less popular than the (a) option on this text with very few answers seen. Candidates who answered on this question tended to achieve within the Level 2 and 3 range and wrote about aspects of Dickinson's focus on nature in her work.

Question 5

THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Hardy's presentation of different attitudes to love in the novel. There were very few answers to this question. Those seen tended to focus on the love between Angel and Tess with one successful response commenting on the development of their love in relation to the play's unfolding tragedy. The most successful answers offered reflective evaluations with one even considering Alec in the light of different attitudes to love.

- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the narrative methods in an extract from Chapter 32, showing what it adds to Hardy's presentation of Tess and Angel. There were insufficient answers to this question for examiners to usefully comment.

Question 6

JOHN MILTON: *Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Milton's presentation of the different settings or locations in *Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X. Very few answers were seen. Some successful answers used the examples of Heaven and Hell as locations and used carefully chosen quotations to draw a contrast. Links were made to the Garden of Eden and wider links made to other books beyond IX and X. One very good answer attempted to evaluate the ways in which Milton describes Heaven and Hell, linking this to an interesting personal view related to Milton's possible intentions and sympathies.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the extract from *Book IX*, showing what it adds to Milton's concerns in *Paradise Lost*. Very few answers were seen to this question. Candidates working at Levels 2 and 3 tended to comment on context but made little analysis of the detail of the extract.

Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 7

MARGARET ATWOOD: *The Handmaid's Tale*

- (a) The question required candidates to discuss the role and characterisation of Moira in the novel. This question attracted several answers. Some good responses were seen, offering thoughtful insights into the impact Moira has on Offred throughout the novel. One very effective response demonstrated how Moira's final compliance shifts Offred into a subtly subversive form of resistance. Less successful responses explored Moira in terms of a character study approach with little attempt made to address her role.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects in a passage from Chapter 46. This was a more popular question than the (a) option on this text. Most answers seen were sound, offering steady analysis and with relevant supporting quotation and reference applied. One candidate commented on Atwood's use of first-person narrative to enable the reader to empathise with the character and the psychological effects of confinement. Most candidates had clearly prepared material on how Offred was compliant. Some readings were superficial, focusing on Offred's thoughts and feelings. Very few candidates made use of the context – Serena Joy's discovery of the visit to Jezebel's – to offer a full appreciation of Offred's situation at this point in the novel. A few were able to discuss narrative methods. The best answers considered how sentence structure reflects Offred's thought patterns and how Offred uses language to hold on to her own sanity and identity. One candidate looked at Offred's meditation on the difference in meaning between 'What are you waiting for?' and 'For what...' A few answers commented on the use of natural description and significance of the colour red; also, the violence of the diction and link between the snow angel and vision of her predecessor 'made into an angel'. A couple of answers also referred usefully to the Commander.

Question 8

JACKIE KAY: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) This question required candidates to explore how Kay uses different voices in three poems. There were insufficient answers to this question for examiners to usefully comment on performance.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of the poem *The Right Season*. There were insufficient answers to this question for examiners to usefully comment on performance.

Question 9

BARBARA KINGSOLVER: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Kingsolver's presentation of Orleanna in the novel. A few responses were seen to this question. Successful answers discussed and evaluated the character effectively, some linking to a Feminist perspective to meet the requirements of the 'O' objective, considering the varying opinions of others. Some sound answers tracked the effect of Orleanna's character and her impact on the wider family. There were some useful analogies between her role and the political climate in Nigeria. Less successful responses tended to offer straightforward character studies or narrative accounts of Orleanna's actions in the novel.
- (b) The question required candidates to discuss the effects of the writing in a passage from Book 6, focusing on ways in which it is characteristic of Kingsolver's narrative methods and concerns. There were insufficient answers to this question for candidates to usefully comment on performance.

Question 10

STEPHEN SPENDER: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to respond to a statement, 'There is always a strong sense of physical reality in Spender's poetry'. There were insufficient answers to this question for candidates to usefully comment on performance.
- (b) This question required candidates to consider how the poem, XXX, is characteristic of Spender's poetic methods and concerns. There were insufficient answers to this question for candidates to usefully comment on performance.

Question 11

DEREK WALCOTT: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways in which Walcott presents battles with despair in his poems. There were few responses to this question. More successful answers demonstrated good contextual understanding of colonialism and offered cogent and well-supported analysis and evaluation.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse Walcott's methods in *The Bright Field*. This question attracted more answers than the (a) option. Answers tended to reflect achievement in the Level 3 and 4 range, although there were some strong personal responses from more effective answers that sensed the anger in Walcott's writing. Many answers chose not to comment on the last stanza. Some candidates did not understand the setting in London and comparison with the West Indies. The least successful answers lacked the background knowledge and analytical skills to deal fully with the poem and its wider meaning. Cross-reference to other poems was not widely seen or helpful, but some links were made to *Ruins of the Great House* and *Veranda*. Some answers appeared to treat the poem as an unseen text.

Question 12

VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss the role and characterisation of Peter Walsh in the light of a statement: 'Woolf presents Peter Walsh as a man haunted by the past.' There were insufficient answers to this question for candidates to usefully comment on performance.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of Woolf's writing in an extract from the novel with a focus on her presentation of the relationship between Septimus and Rezia. Overall, responses were pleasing and identified how fragile the relationship is because of Septimus's PTSD. The extract was considered to bring some light relief to an otherwise strained relationship. Better responses used the context of the later suicide of Septimus to evaluate aspects of the relationship and to comment on the structure of the novel. A few candidates expressed that this was the only loving and true relationship in the book and that there would have been hope for their

marriage if the right treatment had been given to Septimus. Some candidates compared this relationship to the formal marriage of Clarissa.

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achievement. Some candidates considered Feminist or Marxist readings thoughtfully and with knowledge while others used the terms haphazardly, not linking them to tangible features of the text or question. Some candidates referred to the views of classmates or teachers with varying levels of success. At the lower end of the range there was often no mention of other views at all. Candidates must be reminded that 'O', is a specific Assessment Objective and that some attempt must be made to address it in answers on this paper. Even the use of 'may' and 'could' in analytical terms can meet the requirements, albeit in a simple way.

Use of contextual material varied considerably between answers and it was clear that much research and study had taken place, some of which was used very effectively. When details shed light on relevant textual aspects, these references were supportive and focused. When these points were focused on the writer's life, this was less successful and tended to stray from relevance. This was noted particularly in answers on Dickinson where some answers devoted too much time to her life and general descriptions of her biography. All contextual information must serve the question and arguments rather than shoehorning arguments into a biographical view. There were however some very strong uses of context where candidates used exciting and intellectual explorations of faith, gender politics and society to develop complex and interesting discussions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 1

JANE AUSTEN: *Persuasion*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Austen shapes a reader's response to Captain Wentworth through his relationships with women. This question was less popular than the (b) option on this text. Responses ranged in achievement across the ability range and tended to look methodically at what was revealed about Wentworth through his relationships. Better answers were aware of the arc of the novel with some references to detail of Anne's 'faded, spinsterish demeanour' and his dismissive 'I wouldn't have known her'; counterbalanced by his liveliness and popularity. Good answers saw how Austen focuses on the view of Anne almost exclusively and there were purposeful points made on narrative voice. Less successful answers tended to paraphrase the story and occasionally juxtaposed Anne, Louisa and Elizabeth. These answers tended to be compromised by a lack of quotation or reference to textual detail.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the language, tone and narrative methods of a passage from Volume 2, Chapter 10, showing what it adds to Austen's presentation of the Elliot family. This proved to be a relatively popular question. Most candidates established that Anne is different from her father and sister with the better answers contrasting the snobbery of Elizabeth and Sir Walter with the genuine feelings of Anne towards Lady Russell and the visit of Mary. Some candidates engaged personally with the ironies of the scene. Successful answers were able to reference the behaviour of the Elliot family elsewhere in the novel. Austen's language was dealt with effectively by the best answers. Less successful answers took a more general approach to the passage and question, tending to omit references to other opinions and interpretations.

Question 2

GOEFFREY CHAUCER: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Chaucer's presentation of friendship in the text. Very few responses were seen with the least successful answers taking a narrative approach to the question. These answers tended to lack evidence of knowledge and offered a basic outline of events. Some struggled to generate relevant discussion with brief mentions of the initial situation of two friends falling in love with the same woman but lacking detailed knowledge to use for support and illustration. Some made brief reference to the fact that it was a mutual friend that persuaded Theseus to release Arcite. Some reasonable accounts of Palamon and Arcite's friendship were seen with discussion of how this friendship was tested to its limits by love of Emily, before triumphing in the end with Arcite's good-willed blessing. Useful contextual reflections on chivalry and other aspects of male medieval brotherhood supported answers from some candidates.

- (b) This question required candidates to analyse Chaucer's methods in the extract provided, showing its significance to *The Knight's Tale*. There were insufficient answers to this question to usefully comment on performance.

Question 3

CHARLES DICKENS: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) This question required candidates to respond to the statement 'Fagin, not Sikes, is the real villain of the novel.' This proved a popular text with equal numbers for each option. Candidates seemed to really enjoy this question, and many concluded that Sikes, while violent and brutal, was outdone by Fagin's manipulation and exploitation of children. Virtually all answers seen demonstrated at least solid knowledge of the novel and most had some understanding of relevant concerns with some judicious evaluation of the relative gravity the offences of Sikes and Fagin. While most considered Sikes to be more violent and dangerous, some considered that he too is a victim of Fagin's manipulation. Candidates compared the characters in terms of their treatment of both Oliver and Nancy. Some candidates made robust arguments for Monks as the 'real' villain as well. Some strong answers were able to analyse methods used by Dickens to caricature the Victorian views of both Fagin, 'the scheming Jew' and Sikes, 'the violent, drunken criminal'. Supporting evidence included the detail of Sikes's dog and Fagin's red hair. Less successful responses constituted narrative-based accounts, considering the actions of Fagin and Sikes. While there was little in the way of language-based analysis, opportunities to fulfil evaluation of varying opinions and interpretations were taken by many candidates.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss Dickens's presentation of the Dodger in the passage from Chapter 43. This was similar in popularity to the (a) question on this text. Most candidates were confident writing about the Dodger and there were some sound comments on the character based on social context and the unfairness of the justice system. Many focused on the Dodger's inappropriate behaviour in the court room and his irreverence in the face of both process and officials. Some answers appreciated the comedy of the passage but there were few that dealt with reference to the wider text in meaningful detail. Basic answers indicated that the Dodger is in court and that he is presented as a 'bit of a lad' without offering any detailed support or explanation. Better responses used the passage to build insightful arguments into the Dodger's defiance, isolation and humour. Some very good answers reflected on the Dodger as a representation of the effects of child poverty and deprivation. Strong responses commented on the irony of his arrest given his name and reputation and drew examples of satire from the passage, particularly the absurdity of his final speech. Several candidates picked out the malapropisms and others spoke in more general terms about use of colloquialism.

Question 4

EMILY DICKINSON: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Dickinson's use of symbols and symbolism in three poems from the selection. This text was very popular but there were fewer answers to this question than the (b) option. Very good answers drew on richly textured knowledge and understanding of Dickinson's work and were able to make comparisons and connections, building the case for a framework of symbolism at the core of Dickinson's poetry. Less successful answers struggled to discriminate between symbols and imagery with some becoming confused in their arguments or struggling to develop a cohesive thesis. Naturalistic symbols were used most commonly, with largely effective exploration and analysis of examples.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss Dickinson's presentation of the speaker's relationship with nature in *A Murmur in the Trees* and in other poems in the selection. This was a very popular question and all levels of achievement were seen. The best answers offered a detailed commentary drawing out the intimacy of the relationship and how Dickinson generates a sense of mystery. The best responses seen did this with a disciplined and insightful focus on language and imagery. Modest responses were able to make useful comments on how the poem reveals Dickinson's open relationship with nature. Popular wider text references included *I heard a Fly buzz, What mystery pervades a well!* and *A narrow Fellow in the grass*. Less successful answers tended to paraphrase, summarise and speculate about meaning and some candidates struggled with the concepts of the feet and nightgowns. Few candidates considered verse form or rhythm.

There was a good deal of discussion concerning the use of dashes and punctuation with varying levels of success and relevance.

Question 5

THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

- (a) The question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Hardy's presentation of farming and farmworkers in the novel. This was not a popular question, but a few answers were seen. Less successful answers tended to retell relevant parts of the narrative, focusing on Talbothays Farm. More effective answers attempted a contrast with Flintcombe Ash. Tess and Angel were the characters most usually discussed with some rather inexplicable references to Alec made in a couple of answers. Better responses considered the presentation of dairyman Crick and there were some that mentioned Tess's father with relevant argument and use of supporting reference. Via Angel, there was some awareness of the contrast between a life of farming with that of ministry. Contextual detail varied in terms of usefulness with some relevant references to rural poverty and mechanisation.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss a passage from Chapter 39 of the novel. It was a little more popular than the (a) question on this text. There were some very good responses to this extract. These explored Angel's unease and placed the passage contextually in his relationship with Tess. Successful responses were able to demonstrate how Angel's relationship with his family and his relationship with Tess are incompatible. Good responses also reflected on how the passage reveals the self-deluding social snobbery, hypocrisy and class prejudice of both Angel and his parents. There were some insightful comments on the irony and social pretensions of Mrs Clare. Some discussions were compromised by candidates not knowing that the wedding night confessions had already taken place. There was evidence of close reading of the second paragraph with candidates confidently exploring language and tone to support arguments about class consciousness. References to chastity and Victorian attitudes to women and wives made for well-integrated contextual support in several answers.

Question 6

JOHN MILTON: *Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Milton's presentation of conflict in these books. Several answers were seen but this question was less popular than the (b) option. Some effective responses focused proficiently on God, Satan, Adam and Eve. Modest responses tended to polarise the nature of conflict as two sets of antagonisms between God versus Satan and Adam versus Eve. Better approaches investigated how all four characters are pitted against each other interactively at various stages. Some focused on the concept of Free Will with less successful answers lacking acknowledgement of poetic techniques and effects.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss Milton's poetic methods in an extract from *Book X*. There were more answers to this question than the (a) question. The answers were largely successful with most candidates explaining the context and expanding this into a discussion of the Fall and its consequences. Analysis was strong in many answers seen with some personal and insightful interpretations. The references to olfactory images at the end of the passage were particularly well handled. Context was handled well and supported the development of relevant discussion. Some candidates considered the characterisation of Sin and Death and their view of Satan as a hero.

Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 7

MARGARET ATWOOD: *The Handmaid's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to explore their views of Offred's relationship with the Commander and what this reveals about Offred. This was a very popular question featuring the full range of achievement across the levels. Modest answers offered largely narrative accounts that nevertheless tracked the developing relationship between Offred and the Commander. Better responses appreciated the danger and tension evident in Atwood's presentation of the relationship.

The most successful responses also explored how Offred uses the relationship as a means not only to survive, but to register a form of private resistance to Gileadean authority. A few candidates suggested that Offred falls in love with the Commander as there is a 'fine line between love and hate'. Knowledge of the text tended to be strong across the range of achievement.

- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of the writing in a passage from Chapter 6. It attracted many responses which were mixed in terms of achievement. Most answers could show some understanding of the context of the passage in the wider novel. Better responses analysed the language and imagery, the best making incisive connections between the symbolism within the passage and novel as a whole. These answers integrated detailed discussions with close reading of the passage. The least successful answers struggled to find relevant comments beyond reflecting on how bad the Gileadean regime is. Others commented on the detail with which Offred remembers this scent (some commenting on her as an unreliable narrator). Others suggested that she is almost blasé about the horrors she sees or how her mind takes refuge in an interior world where she can survive. Some successful answers focused on narrative voice and reflected on aspects including feminism, oppression and violence to form their views of Atwood's dystopian vision. Some relevant use of critics and context was evident in many answers although some answers tended to stray from focused discussion.

Question 8

JACKIE KAY: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Kay's exploration of the experience of loss in three of her poems. There were very few answers to this question. There were insufficient answers to this question for candidates to usefully comment on performance.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of *Even the trees*. This was considerably more popular than the (a) question on this poet's work. Answers were seen across the range. Some candidates confidently contextualised the poem in the light of Kay's interest in Black history and the Blues. Most used this information constructively with brief references to other relevant poems such as *The Right Season* and *The Same Note*. Some candidates over-applied information about slavery with references to Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday's rendering of *Strange Fruit*. Most explored the irony of the trees having a 'sixth sense of mercy' in contrast to the inhumane actions of people and focused on the brutality of the Black experience through different levels of analysis. Some selected two or three phrases to discuss Kay's choice of language, often focusing on her visual and aural imagery. Many tried to link form and meaning with varying degrees of success, the best approaches focusing on the rhythm generated by sentence structure, enjambment and caesura. The best responses explored the treatment of memory as a way of exploring the movement between images in the poem and the effects of language here and in the wider collection.

Question 9

BARBARA KINGSOLVER: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Kingsolver makes Ruth May's death significant in the novel. There were very few answers to this question. Answers seen often lacked sufficient knowledge of the text to address the question fully. Candidates acknowledged that this death is a pivotal moment when Orleanna decides to leave, and Nathan spends his time at the funeral trying to christen children in the rain. Some linked Orleanna's departure to the Liberation of the Congo and discussed the link between Ruth May and the snake.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of the writing in a passage from Book 2, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Kingsolver's presentation of Rachel in the novel. There were very few answers to this question. The least successful answers treated the passage as an unseen piece, leading to sketchy discussion. Better answers demonstrated good knowledge of Rachel here and in the wider text, noting her humour and supporting with good reference to language and context.

Question 10

STEPHEN SPENDER: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question required candidates to consider in what ways and with what effects Spender portrays family relationships in three poems. There were very few answers to this question. Most responses tended to be insecure with candidates struggling to sustain focus across the selection and there was little detailed treatment of language. Broad thematic commentary on sadness and loss in the family constituted the main content of these responses. Poems featuring parents and children were used including *A Father in Time of War* and *Missing My Daughter* as well as *Nocturne*.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the poem, *Air Raid*. This option was more popular than the (a) option on this poem. Less successful responses told the story of the poem, though often noting the change of mood. Better answers explored how Spender creates atmosphere in both halves of the poem, linking to other war poems such as *A Father in Time of War*. These answers tended to show secure understanding of themes. Few looked at poetic methods in detail although there was some mention of verse form. Some answers were seen that reflected full discussions of ways in which Spender creates the sense of peace and security to set up the reversal at the end. The most successful answers adopted a form of commentary that enabled discussion of unfolding ideas as well as the effects of different phrases and images.

Question 11

DEREK WALCOTT: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Walcott's presentation of what it means to him to be a poet in three poems. There were insufficient answers to this question to usefully comment on performance.
- (b) This question required candidates to write a critical appreciation of the poem, *Sea Canes*, considering how far it is characteristic of Walcott's treatment of loss. There were many responses to this question. Good answers examined the journey the poem takes from despair to acceptance and even hope. The best responses analysed this journey with reflections and insight into the symbolism and imagery of the poem for support. Some confidently examined the significance of the sea canes and the structure and use of repetition. There was reference to the impact of the simplicity of language and the implications of the imagery in stanzas 5 and 6. Brief, though helpful links were made to other poems, including *Landfall*. More straightforward answers worked through with some paraphrasing to extract meaning. A few candidates approached the poem as an unseen and confined their answers to the given poem.

Question 12

VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about Woolf's presentation of the relationship between Septimus and Rezia Warren Smith. This was less popular than the (b) option on this text. Several outstanding responses were seen with wide-ranging reading and context. Stream of consciousness featured in a significant number of answers with variable levels of confidence and relevance. Some responses mentioned the place of women in society and attitudes to mental illness. Less knowledgeable answers did not know about the beginning of the relationship and thought that the couple had been together before Septimus was damaged by his experiences of war. The best responses were sensitive, well supported and revealed insights into contextual issues. Some personal insights into the hopeless loss and sadness inherent in the relationship were particularly effective.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of writing in a given passage from the novel, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Woolf's presentation of Clarissa. This was a popular question. This question was largely well done, and most candidates were able to offer ideas on Clarissa and her struggles with mental health. Some less successful responses lingered on aspects of Woolf's biography with variable relevance. Knowledge and understanding were often strong and better answers referred to Woolf's use of free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness and interior monologue. There was less focus on use of language and symbolism and very little on sentence structure and expression. Few candidates were able to successfully link

points to the wider text with confidence. Less successful answers lacked understanding of Clarissa's role in the novel as a whole.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Key messages

- Candidates should ensure that they remain consistently focused on the question and set text. They should avoid general discussion and arguments that are not relevant or are of tangential significance.
- Contexts should be relevant and accurate when used to support and develop responses. Background information about the writers' lives and historical context must be linked to exploration of the question and the nature of the text itself rather than simply biographical information.
- Evaluation of varying opinions and interpretations is a key assessment objective on this paper and must be addressed via reference to critical views or awareness that other readings exist. This should be an integral part of the argument rather than an add-on to the essay.
- Rubric infringements remain a concern for too many candidates. The text combinations should be checked carefully prior to teaching to ensure that marks are not needlessly lost.

General comments

It is pleasing to see most candidates engaging with the texts enthusiastically and with knowledge and understanding. Some very impressive work was seen, reflecting scholarly and perceptive insights with original approaches and well-argued and supported discussions. These essays were very interesting to read and reflected a capable and insightful fulfilment of the mark scheme. Less successful answers at the lower end of the range tended to rely on narration or offered general answers that lacked development and supporting detail. Answers in the middle of the mark range tended to offer secure and competent arguments with relevant development and support. Most candidates were able to write two answers of reasonable length in the time allocated.

Unfortunately, rubric infringements were a regular occurrence again this series, particularly in the case of candidates answering on Chaucer who then went on to answer on another poet in the **Post-1900** section of the paper. This was also reported as a problem in the prose with some candidates writing on Dickens or Hardy and then going on to write on Atwood in **Section B**. This resulted in a significant loss of marks for too many candidates. Candidates must answer on one prose text and one poetry text. One of these must be pre-1900 and one, post-1900. It is important to teach candidates the fundamental concepts of genre which are relevant aspects of literary context worthy of discussion and exploration.

Candidates choosing the **(b)** questions based on an extract or given poem were most successful when the focus was clearly on the given text. Although a wider view is required, the details in the text should be the central focus of the answer with wider knowledge linked to these points. The best answers take a strategic view rather than working through line by line. In some instances, this methodical working led to candidates being unable to deal with the closing lines of the poem or extract as they had spent too much time on the opening lines. Selection is the best way to ensure that a planned and relevant approach is taken.

Personal response was a strength for many candidates who demonstrated genuine interest in the texts and their meaning. Successful answers linked these insights to relevant knowledge and demonstrated an ability to select quotation and other textual reference judiciously. This enabled them to construct substantial arguments with progression of ideas through complex discussions related to literary or thematic ideas. Less successful answers tended to limit personal response to superficial or repeated points; this resulted in a lack of depth and relevance. Many candidates linked their personal responses to exploration of the opinions of others and this was often a successful strategy. There was evidence of confident ability to integrate and use the opinions of others in many answers. Examples included short references to particular critics which were evaluated by selecting an apt textual quotation and analysing in the context of the critic's remark or

disagreeing with a particular critic's view. References to philosophies or critical approaches varied in terms of achievement. Some candidates considered Feminist or Marxist readings thoughtfully and with knowledge while others used the terms haphazardly, not linking them to tangible features of the text or question. Some candidates referred to the views of classmates or teachers with varying levels of success. At the lower end of the range there was often no mention of other views at all. Candidates must be reminded that 'O', is a specific Assessment Objective and that some attempt must be made to address it in answers on this paper. Even the use of 'may' and 'could' in analytical terms can meet the requirements, albeit in a simple way.

Use of contextual material varied considerably between answers and it was clear that much research and study had taken place, some of which was used very effectively. When details shed light on relevant textual aspects, these references were supportive and focused. When these points were focused on the writer's life, this was less successful and tended to stray from relevance. This was noted particularly in answers on Dickinson where some answers devoted too much time to the writer's life and general biographical descriptions. All contextual information must serve the question and arguments rather than forcing arguments to fit a biographical view. There were however some very strong uses of context where candidates used exciting and intellectual explorations of faith, gender politics and society to develop complex and interesting discussions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 1

JANE AUSTEN: *Persuasion*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss the significance of Austen's use of different settings in the novel. There were insufficient answers to this question to usefully comment on performance.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss a passage from Volume 1 Chapter 12, focusing on Austen's language, tone and narrative methods. There were a few answers to this question. Most responses seen reflected Level 5 performance or above. Candidates tended to demonstrate useful awareness of the character of Louisa in the wider text and there were some effective comparisons between the level headedness of Anne and the hysteria of Mary alongside the panic of Wentworth. Some acknowledged that this is a pivotal moment in the relationships of Wentworth, Louisa and Anne. Useful links to the wider text focused on examples of gallantry and kindness of Wentworth and Anne's feelings about his interest in Louisa. Less attention was paid to the way Austen uses language to create the horror of the incident and Wentworth's reaction.

Question 2

GOEFFREY CHAUCER: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) The question required candidates to discuss Chaucer's presentation of Emily in the light of a comment she makes about herself. There were a few answers to this question. Some revealed knowledge of Emily and how she is trapped in a world which completely ignores her own desires and wishes. There was some sympathetic treatment, although responses did not go much further than narrative accounts of how the action of the poem unfolds around her while she is passive. These responses struggled a little with the idea of Emily's actual presentation as an independent character in the text.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss an extract from *The Knight's Tale*. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.

Question 3

CHARLES DICKENS: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Dickens presents characters who take on the role of parents. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of a passage from Chapter 15. Answers were seen across the ability range with the best examples demonstrating knowledge of the context and the significance of the incident. Candidates considered Oliver's presentation as essentially good based on his feelings for Dick and his helplessness. Some responses commented on the impact of the physical violence and the effect of withholding the identity of Sikes until the dramatic revelation with the mention of the dog. There was some examination of language and use of setting in the penultimate paragraph. Few commented on the role of Nancy here and elsewhere in the novel. Some less successful answers wrote general essays on Dickens's preoccupation with poverty and the social acceptance of cruelty to children.

Question 4

EMILY DICKINSON: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the effects created by Dickinson's presentation of fear in three poems. There were some responses to this question, but it was not as popular as the (b) option on Dickinson's poetry. Very good answers revealed excellent knowledge and understanding with thematic and critical connections made between poems. Some candidates displayed genuine engagement with some appreciation of language and Dickinson's ability to surprise the reader. *Because I could not stop for Death* was a popular choice, as was *One need not be a Chamber*. Less successful answers tended to list aspects of fear such as 'I dreaded that first Robin' but did not develop their points into discussion or analysis.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the poem, *The World is not Conclusion*. This question was very popular. Many answers seen were well done with sophisticated and well-balanced discussions. Most candidates grasped the ambiguity and mystery of the poem. Level 5 and 6 answers made selective use of context and the wider collection to inform a detailed appreciation of the poem provided. The best answers considered the implications of word play in the first line pursuing ideas of 'Conclusion' as an end and a resolution. In discussing the conflict between rationality and faith, the tone in the personification of Faith was explored. Candidates demonstrated their enjoyment of Dickinson's poetry through personal engagement, and this was also reflected in their analysis of poetic features. They looked at the use of dashes to suggest the rhythm and pace of thought. The final lines of the poem prompted some candidates to discuss Dickinson's ability to use surprising images and a lightness of tone with reference to other poems. Less successful responses tended to focus rather more on context, referring to Dickinson's relationship with religion. Some straightforward answers offered adequate summaries of the poem with little appreciation of meaning.

Question 5

THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

- (a) This question required candidates to respond to a comment: 'Angel is a hypocrite who is unworthy of the love of a woman like Tess'. This was a popular question. Virtually all answers agreed with the comment. Less successful answers retold the story of Tess and Angel's love and the rejection of Tess by him. Few considered their later reconciliation. Some of these answers relied heavily on contextual material without relating it to argument. Most answers reflected at least solid knowledge of the novel and some understanding of the concerns, hypocrisy and role of religion. Attitudes to women were considered with some interesting explorations of varying opinions and interpretations. Victorian attitudes were considered by many in terms of purity and the concept of the 'fallen woman'. Most adopted a feminist stance on the injustice of the double standards and agreed that despite his humanistic pretensions, Angel was the product of his class and religious backgrounds. The best answers reflected on Angel's idolisation of Tess and how this contributed to the force and drama of his rejection of her. These answers also considered the fact that Angel is capable of growth, accepted his failings and felt remorse.

- (b) This question required candidates to discuss a passage from Chapter 4 in terms of Hardy's language, tone and narrative methods. This was a popular question with most responses grasping the significance of this passage in terms of structure and development of plot and character. The best answers examined the language and imagery of the extract, making apt connections to detail from the wider novel. Candidates saw this moment as the beginning of Tess's downfall predetermined by fate. Some made interesting and well-supported connections between the bloodshed here and later when Tess kills Alec. A couple of answers linked the shaft of the mail cart entering Prince to the later rape of Tess. Many candidates reflected on how Tess's condemnation of herself leads to her seeking help from the 'relations'. Most commented on Tess's awareness of the shift in her feelings and Abraham's certainty of their living on a 'blighted star'. The best answers considered how Hardy structures the incident to maximise the drama and the use of descriptive detail.

Question 6

JOHN MILTON: *Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X

- (a) This question required candidates to write about ways in which Milton presents freedom and the desire to be free in *Paradise Lost*, Books IX and X. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss Milton's poetic methods in an extract from *Book X*. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.

Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Question 7

MARGARET ATWOOD: *The Handmaid's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Atwood shapes a reader's response to the Commander in the novel. Some responses were seen but this question was not as popular as the (b) option on this text. Most answers understood the reader's response to the Commander as negative and critical but less successful responses had little awareness of Atwood's methods in shaping the response. These answers relied on knowledge of narrative making relevant, but undeveloped references to aspects such as the Scrabble game and the visit to the Brothel. Better answers used impressive levels of detail, referring to examples of humanity in the Commander's portrayal as a contrast to the consequences of his role and behaviour. These explored the irony of his wanting Offred to kiss him as though she wanted to and to 'enjoy' the opportunity for sex at Jezebel's with a few bringing in a feminist perspective on power and referencing his defensive comments to Offred that 'Better doesn't mean better for everyone'. Most answers reflected on the Commander's hypocrisy in breaking the rules with Offred.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of Atwood's writing in a passage from Chapter 30. This was more popular than the (a) option on this text. Most candidates handled the question and passage effectively, examining the nature and desperation of Offred's plight. More successful candidates discussed Offred's desire for freedom and how this might manifest itself in suicidal thoughts and how seriously this could be taken by the reader. The best responses investigated the role of women generally in Gilead and how this passage shows the complicity of women in the patriarchy. These good answers enjoyed the irony of praying for emptiness and the effect of the juxtapositions of grace, love, self-denial, semen and babies. Those who identified the parody of the Lord's Prayer enjoyed deconstructing it and used it to focus on a range of issues like identity and not having real names; the temptation of knowledge; the different ways Offred communicates her despair and desperation. Some candidates commented on the structure in the light of remarks made in the Historical Notes about the material being found on tapes. Most commented on the regimentation in the first section, selecting details such as the cattle prod and role of Aunt Lydia. Weaker answers dealt with only one half of the passage and made little attempt to select and use detail of the wider text.

Question 8

JACKIE KAY: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Kay creates and uses different personas in three poems. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the poem *Keeping Orchids*. There were several answers to this question. Most answers understood the toxic dynamic presented in the mother/daughter relationship. The best responses analysed language, imagery and structure with clarity and judicious selection. One effective answer looked at the poem from the point of view of memory which generated interesting discussion. Less successful responses relied on biographical material and details of adoption with a generalised or partial summary of the poem.

Question 9

BARBARA KINGSOLVER: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) This question required candidates to consider Kingsolver's presentation of the crashing together of 'two opposite worlds' in the novel. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the effects of the writing in a passage from Adah, Book 3. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.

Question 10

STEPHEN SPENDER: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to consider in what ways and with what effects Spender's poetry expresses attitudes to modern life. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the poem, *Missing My Daughter*, considering how far it is characteristic of Spender's poetic methods and concerns. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.

Question 11

DEREK WALCOTT: Selected Poems

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Walcott's poetry explores his feelings about his cultural heritage in three poems. This was quite popular question with a variety of levels of achievement seen. Some answers struggled to navigate the themes of heritage and cultural and national identity, revolving around one point of colonial oppression. Better candidates grasped the multi-layered nature of Walcott's responses to cultural heritage and how poetry acts as a cathartic outlet for the dislocation and isolation, and in some cases, pride that Walcott feels. The most successful answers made use of relevant contextual information to throw light on Walcott's issues with colonialism and the history of slavery, his experience of the present in London or the West Indies and his identity as a poet. Poems used to answer included *Ruins of a Great House*, *The Almond Trees*, *Homecoming* and *Parades, Parades*.
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse the poem, *Oddjob, a Bull Terrier*, considering how far it is characteristic of Walcott's poetic methods and feelings about death. This question was more popular than the (a) option on this poet. The least successful answers tended to approach the poem from a narrative perspective, and this led to some thin paraphrase. Better answers linked the poem's use of the idea of readiness to with the sense of loss in *Sea Canes* and the praise of a friend's acceptance of death in *Landfall*. Some commented thoughtfully on the simplicity of language and there were some articulate and sensitive personal responses. There was consideration of the use of rhythm and repetition to create effects.

Question 12

VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about how Woolf presents the relationship between Clarissa and Richard Dalloway. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of Woolf's writing in a given passage. There were insufficient answers to this question to provide a meaningful report to centres.