

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 2010/12 Poetry and Prose 12</p>
--

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- focus explicitly on the question
- use relevant supporting textual references
- explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- introduce irrelevant material
- make unsupported or speculative assertions
- log or simply describe writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than responses to the specific question.

General comments

There was much evidence of outstanding work this session, where candidates showed both sensitive engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poetry and prose texts they had studied. The majority of candidates divided their time well across their two answers for the paper. There were, however, instances of some candidates using solely the extract when answering general essay questions on the Prose texts; this approach was self-penalising as there was insufficient material for candidates to draw upon for their answers.

Textual knowledge

The strongest answers showed an extensive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations and/or indirect textual references to support their ideas. Many candidates took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the printed poems and prose extracts to explore the detail of texts. Some candidates were able to recall and use with dexterity much direct quotation, a testament to their hard work and close study of texts. The absence of textual support inevitably led to overly assertive, explanatory and, at times, speculative responses.

Focus on the question

The more successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question from start to finish; these answers addressed directly those words designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'powerful', 'memorable', 'sad', 'movingly', 'vividly'. There were, however, many responses that made only a cursory reference, and sometimes no reference, to such words. Instead candidates responded with a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes with little reference to the question. It was common to see paragraphs begin with 'Another theme is...', regardless of the focus of the question.

Writers' effects

The most convincing and perceptive responses sustained a critical engagement with the effects achieved by writers' use of form, structure and language. Less successful responses sometimes commented discretely on effects without relating them to the content and meaning. In general, less confident responses were characterised by a tendency to explain and assert rather than analyse. Some responses made unproductive assertions about writers' use of structure.

Personal response

There was in the strongest answers much evidence of informed and sensitive personal responses to texts which focused directly on the key words of questions and explored the detail of texts in essays, showing insight and individuality. These essays were testimony to the hard work of candidates and teachers. There were fewer examples of answers that simply regurgitated ideas found in study guides, an approach that is seldom successful given that it does not provide focus on the question and does not allow for a candidate's own personal response. Less confident answers sometimes asserted that characters and situations were 'relatable', which demonstrated 'empathy' at a very basic level rather than a probing analysis.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Candidates understood that the poem was about grief, though only the strongest responses explored the nature and cause of this. In these responses, there was also some effective exploration of Tennyson's use of imagery and of contrasting connotations: for example, in 'happy Autumn-fields' or 'dark summer dawns'. The opening words ('Tears, idle tears') presented some difficulties, with candidates not recognising that 'idle' was used in the sense of 'purposeless' rather than 'lazy'. Some responses picked out powerful words and images, though without linking them to the ways in which Tennyson conveys specific meanings. The least successful responses mentioned tears and sadness without analysing precise ways in which Tennyson achieves his effects.

Question 2

This question was answered well by many. Stronger answers described the grandfather as reserved and taciturn, with appropriate textual support. Most candidates grasped that the grandfather was physically strong, hard-working in youth, and unafraid of death in old age; the strongest answers focused on imagery such as 'the burning-glass of his mind' and 'the tongues of water spoke' in exploring the old man's closeness to nature. A majority of candidates stated that the title of the poem suggested a certain distance between the persona and his grandfather; a few noted that the title 'My Father's Father' also paid tribute to the grandfather's stature within the family hierarchy. The least successful responses simply paraphrased the poem.

Question 3

Comments that the speaker is 'depressed' or that he 'only feels happy in Spring' did not explore far enough the detail of the poem. Sophisticated responses proposed a convincing idea of reconciliation between the speaker's childish and adult self, prompted by the first signs of spring. Most candidates were able to explore at least to some extent the effects of the imagery, with the strongest responses focusing on 'the serene/Foreheads of houses' and 'Astonishing the brickwork'.

Question 4

A number of candidates did not understand the meaning of 'felled', interpreting this as a natural process of decay. However, many candidates produced strong personal responses and were able to explore a number of ideas about nature, such as its ability to regenerate after man has gone. Some discussed the significance of the word 'farewell' and its connotations of bidding goodbye to a friend. Some thoughtful answers explored the way in which the different elements of nature (trees, winds, river, birds) depend upon each other, so that an impact on one affected them all.

Question 5

Answers tended to be competent explanations rather than probing analysis in response to this question. Only a few candidates were able to explore the symbolism of the box and the significance of the line 'He made it out of winter nights'. Responses touched on the elements involved in creating a strong relationship (time, commitment, honesty) and how these elements are evoked in the poem.

Question 6

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Section B

Question 7

Most responses offered valid reasons for being entertained, identifying both Mrs Norris and Lady Bertram as fruitful sources of amusement. In the strongest answers, Mrs Norris's interruption followed by vexed silence and Lady Bertram's serene indifference were both explored convincingly. An awareness of Austen's portrayal of these characters in the wider novel enhanced candidates' appreciation of how she makes them 'entertaining' in the printed extract. The least successful responses re-told the narrative and ignored the command word 'Explore'.

Question 8

Those who had a detailed knowledge of the character and the ways in which Austen presents him were able to provide successful responses. Without a range of textual reference, some responses tended to provide character sketches; indeed, a discriminating factor was the level of textual reference provided to support arguments. Candidates who were able to explore details such as Edmund's interventions on Fanny's behalf (for example, supplying her with writing materials or insisting she had a horse) were therefore more successful. The question asked 'How far?' – and stronger responses were able to recognise not only his principled nature and kindness, but also his lack of judgement as far as Mary Crawford was concerned. It should be noted that all lines of argument are accepted so long as they have relevant substantiation.

Question 9

Although candidates showed some understanding of the significance of the prairie and of Jim's homecoming, only a few were able to explore images such as the 'little circle' of man's experience, or the symbolism of the meandering 'old road'. Less effective answers fell back on either narrative or general statements about the nature of Jim and Antonia's relationship. In less successful responses, there was little evidence of a close exploration of the vivid description in the first paragraph or of other ways in which Cather achieves her effects.

Question 10

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

Most responses were able to chart Deven's feelings of fear, anxiety, panic and self-doubt and, in so doing, address the question's focus on the character's 'state of mind', usually with pertinent support from the extract. Most were able to place the extract satisfactorily within the wider framework of the novel. Many candidates commented on the symbolism of the dead fly and the cumulative detail of Deven's reaction to it. The most successful responses engaged with the key thrust of the question: 'How does Desai vividly convey...?' The least successful responses offered either narrative or overly assertive approaches.

Question 12

This question was generally well answered. Candidates were able to contrast Deven's idealised image of the great poet with the prosaic reality and to provide solid textual evidence. They considered how he treats others as well as how others, particularly his wives, treat him. There was sometimes a temptation to drift onto the subject of Deven and his shortcomings, however, without exploring the way in which readers' view of Nur is coloured by Deven's imagination. The least effective responses offered character sketches rather than a close focus on 'the ways in which Desai creates a vivid portrait of Nur'.

Question 13

Many responses were able to discuss Harthouse's manipulative strategies, particularly in attracting Louisa's interest by mentioning Tom, using appropriate support from the extract. Fewer responses showed sympathy for Louisa's situation. Where it was in evidence, the ability to place this scene within the context of the wider novel enabled candidates to grasp the dynamic between the two characters. In less successful responses, references were sometimes made to the 'fact versus fancy' theme without either explicitly linking points to the question or supporting the points by means of precise reference to the text.

Question 14

A clear understanding of the text and of this particular character was evident in most responses, which lifted them above the level of narrative re-telling and character sketch. The strongest responses included the widest range of reference enabling a detailed exploration of Stephen's situation, key events in the novel concerning him and his representative quality as a loyal and hard-working 'hand'. These effective responses were thus able to give equal attention to the two key words of the question, 'memorable' and 'significant'.

Question 15

Most answers were able to chart Thornhill's thoughts and feelings as they appear in the course of the printed extract, sometimes commenting on the contrast between his growing prosperity at Thornhills' Point and his fear of the indigenous population. Many responses focused on his reaction to the impassiveness of the native women and his embarrassment at their nakedness. The most successful responses explored the effectiveness of Thornhill's internal monologue and of other ways in which Grenville achieves her effects in 'powerfully conveying' Thornhill's thoughts and feelings.

Question 16

Of the few responses seen, many showed knowledge of Sal as a character but tended to slip into narrative re-telling and character sketches, which demonstrated knowledge rather than a clear understanding of pertinent issues. For example, some narrated much about Sal's earlier life in London without clearly focusing on the main thrust of the question: 'Sal's growing unhappiness in the course of the novel'. Those with a sufficiently wide range of relevant reference were able to concentrate on Sal's changing relationship with Will, focusing on the key words 'How' and 'movingly'. In responses where this focus was absent, Sal and Will were treated as real-life people rather than fictional constructs.

Question 17

Most responses showed an awareness of the context, that Leper has been unhinged by his experience in and dishonourable discharge from the army, with severe implications for the rest of his life. There was generally a clear understanding that Leper sees through Gene to the 'savage underneath'. The strongest responses were characterised by a willingness to probe critically the effects of Knowles's writing: for example, the emotional and violent nature of Leper's dialogue and the marked contrast of Leper here with his earlier persona. Less successful responses offered narrative and paraphrase, with some candidates unable to distinguish between the two characters and their respective dialogue and actions.

Question 18

Most answers argued that Finny was an admirable character, generally light-hearted and high-spirited in contrast with Gene, able to charm candidates and teachers alike, as well as being a natural leader. Many answers commented on the significance of the tree incident. Sometimes an insufficiently wide grasp of textual detail led to general and overly assertive responses: for example, many appreciated that the reader sees Finny through Gene's eyes but were unable to explore in detail how this affects the reader's judgement.

Question 19

The strongest responses identified key points, such as corruption, bribery, unsafe or unsanitary accommodation, with some exploration of the frequent use of unanswered questions and numbers to indicate the scale of the problem and the implication that such conversations are repeated many times over. They commented on the absence of a final answer. Some commented that the dialogue here pointed to the bigger picture of a wider crisis in the South Africa of the time. Less successful responses focused mainly or even exclusively on the wider context without addressing the key words of the question or the details of

Paton's writing in the printed passage. There was also evidence of confusion about who is asking the questions in the extract.

Question 20

Most responses had a working knowledge of Gertrude and what happens to her in Johannesburg and also of Stephen's caring nature and Christian forgiveness towards Gertrude and her son. Many candidates were able to situate the relationship within the wider context of the migration of people from Ndotsheni to Johannesburg with its attendant social problems. Some were sympathetic to Gertrude's plight, though others took a more censorious line. The least successful responses adopted a narrative approach, though understanding of Gertrude's story was sometimes not secure with some candidates maintaining that she returned home with her brother.

Question 21

Most candidates were able to point to sad aspects of the extract and noted the wider context: the death of the mother and the insecurities and loneliness of the father. Many commented on the sadness that the son was closer to his uncle than father. Few candidates noted that the female applicants so contemptuously dismissed as 'wrecks and battleaxes' might have a claim on the reader's sympathy. The most successful responses explored in detail the ways in which McGahern achieves his effects. Less successful responses attempted to incorporate material candidates had learned, such as the symbolism of the stoat and rabbit, without making it explicitly relevant to the question.

Question 22

Most candidates knew the story in general terms reasonably well and commented on its vision of an apocalyptic and technologically driven future. The lack of a range of relevant textual reference, however, led to some overly assertive responses. The enthusiasm for discussing how nature would beat men in the end was often at the expense of an analytical consideration of the detail of the story. The fire, which was often taken as representing nature, was in the story actually caused by cleaning fluid spilled onto the stove. There was, in less successful responses, a tendency to catalogue themes rather than directly address the question: 'In what ways does Bradbury make *There Will Come Soft Rains* such a striking vision of the future?'

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/22
Drama 22

Key messages

- The most successful responses focused on the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Responses to passage-based questions which understood the context of the passage in the play but also explored the passage itself, in some detail, were the most successful.
- Many responses would have been improved by avoiding a retelling of the whole plot and then only attempting to link this information to the question in the conclusion.
- Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and gave a precise, wide range of references.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage were features of the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates knew and understood their set drama texts well. Explicit focus on the question is fundamental to a relevant answer. Only the strongest responses deconstructed the question, focusing on the key terms, for example, 'memorable' or 'disturbing', to choose their material judiciously. They demonstrated their ability to quote from texts to support their comments and developed the argument effectively. Less successful responses often relied on lengthy, narrative accounts of the text with little textual detail or direct link to the question. Where there was some reference to the text this was frequently inaccurate, or the text quoted not explored.

Successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as drama, referring to the 'audience', rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', as well as exploring the author's methods to convey the texts' main concerns. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms that do not relate to the question or help to develop a point or argument constructively.

There was some evidence that less successful candidates do not have detailed knowledge of the set texts to answer the questions in enough depth. This was particularly obvious in the passage-based questions where some candidates did not know the context of the passage or were unable to recognise the events referred to in the passage, relying on writing all they knew about the text with scant reference to the actual question.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

Knowledge of the text and character was not always secure in response to this question. To answer the question fully candidates needed to focus on how the writing portrays Walter's 'thoughts and feelings' rather than to simply work through the passage. Walter's feelings are accessible through his behaviour and the language used. Successful responses knew how Walter had been feeling before this moment and that he would lose the money mama had entrusted him with. They were able to show understanding of his hopes and dreams and the over-optimistic way he expressed himself towards Travis, comparing this with Walter's previous misery before he gets his hands on the money. His increasing excitement and exaggerated flights of fancy were also dealt with, as well as his obsession with money and status. The strongest responses managed to explore the stage directions and what they reveal of Walter at this moment.

Less successful responses worked through the passage, paraphrasing or explaining his behaviour, with little focus on the question or understanding of how unrealistic his hopes and dreams were. These responses took the passage at face value and thought Walter was going to be successful in achieving his dreams.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to make some comment on why Karl Lindner was unpleasant though many found it difficult to recall specific details of his visits to the Youngers. Most only focused on his first visit and understood his prejudices make him unpleasant. Only a few stronger responses recognised the irony of his role as Chairman of the Clybourne Park 'Welcoming Committee' and commented on his second visit where Walter rises to the challenge and has the chance to triumph over Lindner. The weakest responses showed little understanding of who Lindner was and a few confused him with the character, Willy.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Few responses provided or alluded to the relevant context to the passage. The dramatic irony that Eddie has informed the Immigration Bureau about Marco and Rodolpho and that he is unable to speak to Catherine following his kissing of Catherine and Rodolpho was missed in many cases, meaning that candidates did not always understand Eddie's actions described in the stage directions. The focus was on Eddie's relationship with Beatrice. This motivated many candidates to adopt a narrative approach to their relationship in the past, with the frequent inclusion of the quotation, '*when am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?*' and this detracted from a focus on the extract. Many candidates referred to the '*shootin' gallery*', and, the '*guy ain't right*', but the latter gave rise to some misinterpretations of how Eddie viewed Rodolpho. Beatrice's role in the play, in terms of her being the peace-maker, attempting to persuade Eddie to attend Catherine's wedding, was noted by some candidates: only the strongest candidates commented on Catherine's appearance at the end and Eddie's dramatic words, '*I can not talk to her*', and how this contributed to make this such a 'memorable moment'. Many responses mentioned Eddie's restlessness and agitation, but few explored the possible reason for this or the rising tension in the scene.

Less successful candidates paraphrased the passage and discussed Eddie's possessive behaviour towards Catherine both here and earlier in the play. Some candidates mistakenly stated that Eddie goes out for a walk at the end of the passage in order to make the call to the Immigration Bureau.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to present a personal viewpoint about the rapid development of the relationship with some comment on Catherine's age and naivety. Eddie's objections to the relationship were discussed and stronger responses considered how his death might affect the couple's future happiness once they were freed from his opposition. Many candidates felt hopeful that the relationship would succeed as it was based on an intense attraction: Catherine had moved out with Rodolpho and the marriage had been arranged. A few candidates agreed with Eddie that Rodolpho was only '*bowin' to his passport*' and saw no hope for their future happiness. Many candidates found it difficult to support their ideas with close reference to the text and were narrative in approach. Less successful responses became speculative, losing sight of the question, and ideas were not always rooted in the text.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Responses to the passage needed to focus on what made the scene 'tense' rather than just describing what happened in it. The tension built by the immediate context of the passage - Ronnie's expulsion from Osborne is unknown to Arthur Winslow and Catherine had forgotten they had a guest for lunch - was often not noted. This led to missed opportunities to talk about the tension on stage with appreciation of the dramatic irony with Ronnie hidden upstairs. More successful answers were aware of the conversation between Catherine and John and appreciated the awkwardness and embarrassment here rather than a more intense and melodramatic encounter. Most understood Desmond: his pained reticence, interspersed with his pointed remarks, for example, '*Am I? Am I, indeed?*'. Stronger answers examined the language, the stilted dialogue and the pauses. The politeness in talking about the weather was noted in strong responses and the moment John and Catherine speak at the same time to try to bridge the silence. However, few commented on how the others arriving, Arthur especially, change the mood. Desmond's former cricket prowess and present

signs of ageing, causing considerable change to John's behaviour towards Desmond, were only recognised in a few responses.

Less successful answers wrote more generally about the 'love triangle', ignoring the fact that Desmond's love for Catherine is unrequited, 'a *family joke*'. Some tended to exaggerate, commenting on the 'hatred' between John and Desmond and viewing Catherine's treatment of Desmond as a 'betrayal'. Less successful responses relied on paraphrasing the passage with little understanding or focus on the tension.

Question 6

Many adopted a narrative approach or wrote a character profile of Arthur and Grace Winslow with little focus on what makes their relationship a 'fascinating part of the play'. Greater analysis of their interaction would have been useful here. More successful candidates had a grasp of the conventional nature of the relationship at the beginning of the play and how it then changed. Many did not support points with quotations or closer reference to the text. Stronger responses focused on how Grace supported the court case despite reservations, noting the changing dynamics in the relationship when she finally confronts Arthur about the sacrifices the family has made for the case and the strains it has placed upon their relationship. A few contrasted Grace with Catherine to good effect. There was little response to the caring nature of Grace, worrying about how Arthur's health has deteriorated, or the humour and loyalty that exists between them.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

Successful responses often briefly contextualised the passage, commenting on the echo of the witches' words when Macbeth refers to the fair and foul day. These showed understanding of the dramatic irony and knew that Macbeth had already become Thane of Cawdor commenting on the 'disturbing' prospects created if the prophecy of Macbeth becoming King were to come true. There was much to explore in the passage which was 'disturbing' to both the audience and characters themselves: the coincidence of the witches 'waiting' for Macbeth, the description of their appearance, the confusing prophecies made to Macbeth and Banquo and their sudden disappearance, were all raised. Stronger answers explored the implications of the prophecies and how this foreshadows the murder of both Duncan and Banquo, as well as how this meeting impacts on Macbeth's ambition. Such responses were able to quote extensively and analyse the language, with some effective detail concerning the description of the witches, the three '*Hails*' and '*insane root*'. Less successful candidates often retold the plot up to this point before paraphrasing the passage, then continued to narrate how Macbeth goes on to kill Duncan & Banquo. Candidates need to maintain focus on the question, keeping the key word, 'disturbing' in mind and linking it closely to points made. There is little to reward in answers which narrate the plot or passage, attempting to link their answer to the question in the concluding paragraph with a general comment, for example, '*This shows that the passage is disturbing*'.

Question 8

The most successful responses were aware that the terms of the question, 'To what extent', encouraged both a personal and balanced view of Lady Macbeth and whether the audience felt pity for her or not. Most candidates found reasons for both sides of the argument and tried to balance earlier impressions of Lady Macbeth with her later suffering. Some confident responses took the view that it was all her own making and she deserved all she got. The main areas covered were her manipulation and encouragement of Macbeth to kill Duncan with '*unsex me here*' frequently quoted and her sleep walking, guilt and suicide at the end. Most sympathised with her deteriorating mental condition. However, there were frequent misinterpretations with some candidates commenting that she had killed Duncan due to her intense desire to be queen and even that she met the witches, supported by her being considered 'the fourth witch' but without further commentary. Only the strongest answers were supported by well-selected references to the text and relevant quotations fully analysed.

Less successful answers wrote character sketches of Lady Macbeth and lost sight of the question, except to mention it at the end. When used, references to the text supported a narrative approach and lacked the detail concerning the effect and implications of the language quoted. Some retold the plot or Lady Macbeth's part in the play with limited focus or understanding of the requirements of the question. It was clear that some candidates referred to film versions of the play, particularly when referencing Lady Macbeth's suicide which takes place offstage.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

Many candidates found it difficult to comment on what makes this a 'dramatic' moment in the play due to difficulties in placing the passage in context and insecure understanding of the causes of Juliet's 'death' with many thinking she had indeed died. Stronger responses showed understanding of the dramatic irony and that Juliet's death was 'fake' whilst also acknowledging Friar's Lawrence's role in the plan, examining the irony of a wedding where the bride is found 'dead'. These showed clear understanding of the audience's complicity with the Friar's plan. They were aware that the Nurse was closer to Juliet than her mother and commented on her exclamations and the humour in her comments to Juliet. The best answers explored the Nurse's mood and language as it changes from her cheerful, bawdy chatter to her genuine grief. Many candidates felt that both Lord and Lady Capulet were only lamenting the loss of a financially beneficial marriage citing their behaviour in forcing Juliet into marrying Paris. Very few responses referred fully to the language of the passage and the dramatic impact for the rest of the play.

Less successful responses thought Juliet was dead and placed the passage at the end of the play with some mistakenly thinking that the Nurse is involved in the plot with Friar Lawrence. Weaker responses narrated the plot and what follows this scene with little focus on the question or the passage.

Question 10

To answer this question well candidates had to explore how Tybalt's character and behaviour make him 'memorable' in driving the plot. His infrequent appearances caused problems for some candidates who did not have a detailed knowledge of the character or text, resulting in many narrative and repetitive responses. Stronger candidates were able to see Tybalt's function with his volatile, aggressive nature, his constant fighting as a reminder of the feud between the Capulets and Montagues and this being a cause of the tragedy. The most successful answers engaged with Tybalt's words to Lord Capulet and his defiant attitude. They could see the killing of Mercutio and Tybalt's death as catalysts, shifting the play totally into tragedy. Successful answers explored the impact of his death on the Capulets, with Lady Capulet's cry for revenge. This was considered 'memorable' as he must have been loved by his family to the extent that Lord Capulet brings forward Juliet's wedding to Paris to 'cheer her up'.

Less successful responses gave a character study with little or no reference to the question. Some lapsed into generalisation and narrative usually limiting textual detail to his propensity for fighting. Some were speculative in approach, interpreting Juliet's tears for her cousin to indicate a much closer relationship than that seen in the play. The least successful responses confused Tybalt with Mercutio or Benvolio, commenting on when he appears in the play but without linking this to why he was a 'memorable' character.