

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- This is an examination of understanding and appreciation of literary composition and expression, so responses should focus on how authors' choices of language and literary methods shape meaning.
- Answers which are restricted to knowledge of the content of texts are not successful.
- Specific references and quotations are needed to support points in essays. This should be particularly remembered for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question. Line references to passages are not a substitute for quotations.
- Successful essays develop a line of argument in response to the question, developing points to a conclusion.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in considerable detail.

General comments

A number of the texts and questions stimulated some detailed and subtle responses which showed a mature appreciation of literary methods and the ways in which writers shape a reader's or an audience's responses. The most successful answers to (a) questions were able to use detailed knowledge of the texts, including secure references and pertinent quotations, to establish and develop a clear argument in response to the question. Strong (b) question responses considered the writing of the selected passage or poem in great detail, drawing out nuances and possible interpretations. In the case of prose, many placed the extract within the context of the text in order to inform the discussion of the passage. Among weaker responses, there was a return to a large number of candidates relying on narrative summary and paraphrase, indicating their understanding of the content of texts and passages, but needing to say more about how that content was communicated.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** Candidates chose a number of different poems in responses to this question, the most popular being 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', 'An Unstamped Letter' and 'An Encounter'. Most essays offered some suggestions about Frost's interest in the natural world. Weaker responses often used biographical context in place of examining the chosen poems closely. Many candidates needed to examine the idea of 'wildness' in the question more directly. The three poems cited above were the most successful; candidates choosing 'Mowing' or 'Gathering Leaves' found it more difficult to fully address the question.
- (b)** A substantial number of the essays on 'Birches' gave general broad summaries of the poem and suggested interpretations that would have been more convincing had they been supported with closer examination of the poem's development, language and structure. Successful answers considered the presentation of the trees at the poem's opening, distinguished from the 'darker trees' and full of movement. They looked at the ways Frost's writing creates a visual and auditory impression of the trees loaded with ice which is then melted by the sun, as he builds a view of the birches as resilient but showing the signs of their endurance. Some considered the playful image of the girl drying her hair before the suggestion of a playful boy having fun by 'riding' the trees 'over

and over again'. Suggestions of a sexual interpretation needed to be taken to some conclusion. It is a central image of the poem to suggest a human urge 'Toward heaven', while accepting that 'the ground' and 'Earth' is 'the right place' for humanity. Interpretations of poems need to be drawn from close observation and argument; many less successful responses were so because they were asserted without sustained examination of the text.

Question 2 Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were very few answers on 'The Diamond Cutter', but some candidates recognised that in her description of meticulous and careful artistry, Jennings constructs a metaphor for all art, including the crafting of her own poetry. With such a short poem, very close attention to the writing should have been easily accomplished. Despite this, some essays remained very general. More focused answers considered the cumulative effect of diction such as 'shapes', 'concentration', 'paring down' and 'polished' to show the care and attention of the artist and most commented well on the metaphor of the climber in stanza 2. The exclusivity of the focus was also commented on in good answers – the 'single stone', 'cleaving to/One object' and 'One single comet', with that care distinguishing the 'brilliance' of the final diamond from the 'countless, untouched galaxies.' Candidates alert to structure suggested that the pared down stanza structure, six unrhymed couplets, each developing a different facet of the subject matter, mirrors the work of the diamond cutter and the poem becomes the diamond.

Question 3 Songs of Ourselves Volume 2

- (a) This was a popular question, though problematic for those candidates who wrote about the issue of identity itself with only brief references to poetry that illustrated their point. It must be remembered that it is the ways in which writers present and explore their concerns that is the focus of a literature examination. Stronger answers drew the concern out of the poems chosen, with for example, 'The Forsaken Wife' leading to vigorous discussion of the assertion of independent woman's identity, and 'The White House' to consideration of racial identity in the face of discrimination. These discussions worked well when the language and tone of voice in the poems were carefully discussed and analysed. Another poem used successfully was 'These are the Times We Live In', particularly when candidates looked at identity shrunk to a passport, the suspicion surrounding a name and Dharker's sarcastic humour depicting her imagined changes of visual identity while on the flight. Some commented that she points out in the poem that identity is finally in 'your heart', and this was a poem that repaid careful and detailed discussion. Other poems used included 'The Migrant' and 'The Border Builder', though these were often less successfully addressed to the question.
- (b) While knowledge of the wider context of Milton's *Paradise Lost* was not necessary for a successful answer to this question, it was nevertheless surprising how many candidates had no knowledge at all of where the extract is taken from, despite the indication in the anthology title. Strong responses tended to focus initially on the presentation of evening in the first twelve lines, noting the restfulness of the lack of colour, the sibilance used in the establishing of silence, the precious jewel imagery of the stars and the royal suggestions of 'majesty', 'queen' and 'silver mantle', accompanied by the 'amorous descant' of the nightingale's song. They then moved on to discuss how Adam's speech augments these ideas, articulating God's ordination of evening and night time as a time of rest after the day of the 'dignity' of 'pleasant labour'. Again, the effects of the language and imagery repaid careful discussion, as did the subtle variations of the iambic pentameter. Less successful answers often stumbled on misunderstandings and confusions, which hampered the accuracy of those essays relying on summary.

Question 4 E.M. Forster: *Howards End*

- (a) Several responses to this question were hampered by uncertainty about which house Wickham Place was, some arguing that it was in the countryside, but more were limited in their scope, merely listing various events which take place at the house. Stronger answers showed the significance of some of these events, including Leonard's visits, which highlight his cultural aspirations, and Mrs Wilcox's visit, which highlights her separation from the world of the Schlegels,

despite her connection with Margaret. The most successful essays were able to draw on details from the text, specifically Margaret's view of Wickham Place as 'a female house' and 'irrevocably feminine', in contrast with the Wilcox house on Ducie Street, and reflecting the characteristics of its inhabitants. It is depicted also as a place of art, culture and progressive political thought, further challenges to the Wilcox view of the world. Curiously, few answers showed a full awareness of the Schlegel's impending loss of the house, and their ensuing instability being a key part of the novel. On the other hand, some recognised that the fate of the house, being replaced by flats, is another sign of progress, property and commerce in the novel, lamented by its narrative.

- (b) Most responses to the passage were relevant and made some appropriate observations; less successful answers were dominated by summary and paraphrase. More detailed essays noted the irony of the initial setting, with its sunshine and birdsong, and a few noted the reference to the graves in the churchyard too. Some recognised that the motorcar with its 'Imperial' driver is an early sight of Charles Wilcox, which creates some foreshadowing, as well as Forster's contrast of this figure with the 'yeoman', with the clear statement that 'He is a destroyer.' There was greater focus on the second half of the passage and Forster's portrayal of Leonard's state of mind, conscious of 'private sin' but ambiguously balanced between 'terrified' and 'happy' before his death at the hands of Charles. While a number of candidates noted the irony of his death under a 'shower' of books, fewer noted the sequence of short sentences with 'The man' and 'A stick' as subjects, indicating Leonard's lack of recognition of what is happening to him.

Question 5 **Andrea Levy: *Small Island***

- (a) There were far fewer responses to this question than the passage. Candidates who attempted it were able to show that two time periods were used in the novel. There was often less success with discussing the effects of the repeated changes in its narrative structure. Some argued that the 'Before' sections allow a fuller understanding of the characters, which is true, but they needed to also acknowledge the repeated time shifts, as specified in the question. A few essays interestingly noted the ways the chronologically-fragmented narrative creates puzzles and resolves them for the reader, for example by introducing Hortense's and Gilbert's curious marital relationship before the explanation of its circumstances; Gilbert's wartime experiences of England retrospectively explaining why he understands the country so well after the war; the absence of Arthur from Queenie's house lacking an explanation until a quarter of the way through; and Bernard's narrative in India being delayed until over half way through the novel. This was a question designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their understanding of narrative structure; those who used it as an opportunity for recall of plot itself were less successful.
- (b) The grocer's shop passage produced many responses, many of them detailed and appreciative of both the humour and subtleties of characterisation. Strong responses showed how Hortense's narrative reveals her own snobbery and pride, while showing Queenie's patronising assumptions about her, but that the narration creates unconscious comedy out of the situation. Both women are criticised, but both are also treated with sympathy. Candidates commented on the fact that the narration reveals that both women have racial preconceptions and some discussed Hortense's rhetorical questions indicating her amazement at both Queenie's unnecessary explanations and the shopkeeper's handling of the bread. They also noted her sophisticated vocabulary and phrasing in her 'Impeccable English, rounded and haughty', contrasting with the shopkeeper's and Queenie's assumptions about her. The most successful responses showed appreciation of these elements, supported by close attention to Levy's writing throughout.

Question 6 **Stories of Ourselves**

- (a) The most popular stories used in answers to this question were 'The Destroyers', 'The Door in the Wall' and 'The Taste of Watermelon', though some used stories like 'Sandpiper' and 'The Happy Prince' with less relevance and less success. Many weaker answers focussed on the plots of the chosen stories with some comment on the behaviour of the children; the strongest essays actively considered the authors' presentation of the children and their activities. There was some personal response, indicating which characters attracted reader sympathy, and some consideration of outcome, such as that the narrator in 'The Taste of Watermelon' learns and develops from his experience of destruction, whereas the boys in 'The Destroyers' do not, resulting in a more pessimistic story. There was, too, some discussion of the contribution of setting, particularly the

post-war London of Greene's story, and it would be good to encourage more candidates to go beyond character and plot in order to discuss how narratives are shaped for the reader.

- (b) The passage from 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' was an enormously popular question, though a number chose to write about the young woman and her story rather than the old woman and her powers, thus missing the direction of the question. There were also many responses which summarised the content of the passage rather than writing about the author's methods. In stronger essays, examiners saw many detailed and subtle readings of the passage, sometimes drawing relevantly on Gothic context or the Salem witch trials in their discussion of the characterisation of the old woman and the setting. Many were aware of the familiar tropes of the old hooded figure, augmented by such descriptions as 'withered hag' and 'gray locks', while others discussed the setting of the 'fallen tree', sometimes using knowledge of the wider story to include the circular pool amidst the three hills. The apparent gentleness of the old woman and her constant 'smiling' was contrasted with her commands to the young woman and the apparent relishing of her 'agony and fear.' The descriptions of the vision and the sounds of 'murmurings', 'Shrieks', 'wild roar of laughter' and 'ghastly confusion of terror' drew much close comment. Candidates who looked at the language of the passage found much to discuss and there were many strong answers.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/42 Drama</p>
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Key messages

- The quality and selection of textual support, including use of quotation and direct textual reference, are discriminating factors in the achievement of candidates against assessment criteria.
- Candidates are most successful when they engage with the specific terms of the question, through strategic planning and an awareness of development and direction in their analytical arguments.
- The texts on this paper are play scripts and require an understanding of genre, context and dramatic techniques to fulfil the mark scheme criteria effectively.

General comments

The most effective responses engaged in detail with the texts studied. They offered original approaches and applied a sense of personal interest to critical appreciation of themes, characters and effects. Knowledge and understanding were often impressive and always secure in these answers, with judicious application of supporting detail noted. In **(a)** responses, strong responses reflected a focused awareness of subtleties within each question and a strategic awareness of how to use their knowledge and understanding to answer the question with relevance and clarity. In **(b)** passage-based responses, candidates demonstrated a perceptive awareness of the context of the extract in the wider play and the significance of this to the question. They considered the passage as a dramatic construct and selected details with assured focus.

Responses working in the lower ranges of the mark scheme tended to focus on plot and character to convey their arguments. In **(b)** answers, there was some tendency to track through the extract; this led in a number of cases to relapses into commentary or paraphrase. It is important that candidates plan answers to these questions and take a strategic approach and overview rather than working through the extract chronologically. Supported arguments tend to result in positive achievement, while reliance on narrative recall and assertion detract from it.

The quality of **(a)** responses relies on the ability to use knowledge and understanding to plan and deliver a considered discussion with careful selection of support. It is important in terms of **(b)** responses to incorporate understanding of the effects of staging and action if these features are evident in the extract.

References to social, cultural, historical and literary context are effective when relevant to specific arguments and ideas. They are unhelpful when presented as unrelated add-ons or in a manner that represents material of tangential significance.

Comments on specific questions

1. *Sweet Bird of Youth*

- (a)** This was quite an open question that offered opportunities to develop personal arguments and to use knowledge of the play effectively. The best answers were able to explore the many different aspects of time in the play and to select support judiciously. For example: discussion of the microcosm of time shared by Chance and Princess in the hotel room; time in the sense of Chance's life and experiences; time in the context of social, historical culture; time in the sense of the play's tragic momentum towards its climax. Some candidates wrote effectively about the relationship between time and the passing of youth and beauty with some sensitive personal engagement. Solid and competent answers tended to stick to three or four concrete examples, writing securely about the nature of time in each case. Less successful answers struggled with the abstract nature of the question and relied heavily on unsupported assertion and paraphrase. Some

of these answers viewed the passage of time literally, leading to ineffective, narrative-based responses.

- (b) This question was more popular than **1(a)** and most candidates who attempted it were able to use the passage to write about Chance. The extract provided many prompts related to dramatic effects and staging, enabling focused character study. Some weaker candidates struggled to effectively deal with the aspect of 'sense of identity'. The best answers demonstrated Chance's ingrained insecurity beneath the façade of success and beauty. These tended to explore the performance aspects of Chance's monologue, set up by Princess, with the Plastic Theatre elements in place in this passage. These highlighted Chance's vanity and there was evidence of some focused personal engagement in answers that recognised the flaws in Chance's sense of himself. Solid responses were able to write about the disparity between appearance and reality presented in the extract and in the play as a whole. There was evidence of understanding that Chance uses the opportunity of an audition to present himself, relating this in various ways to the wider play. Less successful answers presented character studies of Chance and needed to consider more the terms of the question and, in some cases, make reference to the wider play.

2. *Twelfth Night*

- (a) The question worked well on this very popular text and provided higher ability candidates the opportunity to produce developed responses. Most candidates realised that Malvolio was deluding himself and that his real motivation was upward social mobility. The best answers demonstrated understanding that Malvolio's presentation by Shakespeare is both hilarious and cruel in direct proportion. These answers explained in impressive detail how Malvolio's part in the play is resolved as the drama reaches its climax. Some of these answers reflected the idea that Malvolio's actions are more about social class than love, several essays drawing interesting parallels between Malvolio and Orsino. Less successful answers dealt with the origins of the gulling with varying degrees of support and insight; some made the assertion that Malvolio really does love Olivia, then contradicted this by referring to his desire for power and enhanced position. Some candidates struggled to pin down the idea of 'love' and concentrated on retelling the story of the Box Tree Revenge. This led to overt concentration on plot at the expense of character and effects.
- (b) This question was more popular than **2(a)** and provided candidates with a range of opportunities to closely analyse and explore the extract. The best answers demonstrated sophisticated understanding and analysis of the dialogue, with some purposeful focus on wit and measured discussion about Viola's courting of Olivia for Orsino. Detailed links to the wider play shed light on relevant arguments. These answers tended to implement the idea that there are several levels of play-acting taking place driven by contrasts of intelligence and self-awareness, with Viola using her own ingenuity to win Olivia round. Some answers effectively demonstrated an appreciation of the significant changes in Olivia's behaviour e.g. speaking to Cesario alone and taking off her veil. The instance with the veil attracted largely effective discussion of its importance as both an effect and a symbol. Less successful answers struggled to consider the performance aspects of the scene, losing sight of dramatic effects. Some became too focused on preconceived ideas about status or wrote almost exclusively on the veil scene with a need for more development or breadth in their discussion. Achievement was also limited when candidates strayed too far from the question and extract into focus on Viola's desire for Orsino and tacked on context points about sexuality in Shakespeare's time.

3. *Henry IV, Part 2*

- (a) There were very few answers to this question. The question required candidates to write about the 'low-life' scenes in the play. The best answers understood the different purposes of these scenes, considering them as comedy, the truth of how the ordinary people live and what they think, and as enabling Hal to become a rounded and mature figure. Less successful answers needed to demonstrate more secure knowledge and understanding of the 'low-life' scenes and tended to present assertive responses that needed to be backed up with relevant support.
- (b) This question was more popular than **3(a)** and it was helpful to understand the context of the play and use the detail of the passage to form relevant and developed arguments. The best answers demonstrated the extreme contrasts in terms of imagery, character and outlook in the extract and how these create dramatic effects. They understood the insecurity of the king and contrasted this with Hal's confidence and intelligence. Some eruditely conveyed the realisation that the king's

perception of his son is incorrect. There was evidence of good awareness that the scene typifies the relationship between father and son as seen or referred to in the wider play. Less successful responses, while noting the hurt evident on both sides, applied variable levels of analysis of the emotional language that conveyed these aspects, some slipping into paraphrase.

4. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) This proved a popular question and candidates were largely confident with the text and task. The best answers demonstrated the contrast between Gar's true friends, Madge and Katie Doogan, and the young men who are supposedly his friends. These answers explored their crude and loutish behaviour with well-selected supporting detail and development of personal arguments. They demonstrated insight into the macho culture at the centre of the bravado that served the purpose of concealing Gar's anxiety. Those able to select support judiciously fared particularly well, as they produced more subtle and nuanced discussion. Some competent and secure answers demonstrated the realisation that Gar's friends are different to him and that they do not live up to their own promotion of themselves. They cast doubt on the reasons behind the boys coming to say their farewells to Gar and argued that part of the reason Gar wants to leave is because he does not want to become like them. There was some recognition that the gifts and clumsy goodbyes show some level of affection. Less successful responses tended to be those that did not evidence thorough knowledge of the play, and in particular the characters. These tended to lapse into more narrative explorations about Gar, needing to go into deeper consideration of his friends.
- (b) This was also a popular question. The scene worked well and enabled candidates working at all levels to demonstrate their knowledge and analytical skill. The best answers demonstrated understanding that the scene is a mixture of comedy and sadness. These answers presented sustained and productive analysis of many details within the scene and ranged through the whole passage. Personal engagement could be seen in candidates' enjoyment of the idea that Gar is reminiscing when he should be praying. In these answers, there was a clear sense that the contrast between Public and Private is used by Friel to highlight the power of memories such as the blue boat and the shallow monotony of the prayers. Some candidates reflected on Gar's love for his father and showed an awareness of the filial relationship and that what father and son say and feel are not the same. In less successful responses, coverage of the extract was quite limited and wider knowledge of the play used in its place. Some candidates referred in blunt terms to the relationship between SB and his son, polarising the relationship into a father who does not listen and a son who simply wants to be loved. This led to some assertive and forced arguments that needed more relevant support.

5. *Death and the King's Horseman*

- (a) This question was quite popular and proved accessible to candidates working at all levels of ability. The focus on Jane Pilkings enabled discussion of cultural aspects and relationships, as well as the role of women in the play. The question required candidates to have a whole text knowledge and understanding. The best answers looked at Jane in a number of ways, often comparing her lack of power to Iyalaja's respected position and authority. Effective responses demonstrated the ability to explore the character of Jane as representative of British colonialism as well as roles of western women compared to Yoruban women such as those in the marketplace. Better answers were able to judge Jane in social, cultural and historical contexts, incorporating views in perceptive and critical personal arguments. In less successful answers, while most were able to convey the view that Jane is patronising and superior in attitude, they were less effective in reflecting on her essential powerlessness and inefficacy in the situation. The quality and range of supporting detail was a defining factor in the success of responses.
- (b) This was less popular than **5(a)**, but proved to be a good question for candidates who had closely studied the play. The best answers demonstrated a perceptive and assured awareness of the nature of Elesin's relationship with the Praise-Singer. These answers considered both cultural duties and personal friendship with good support from the emotive and intricate use of language and other effects in the extract. Some answers showed distinctive insight into the detail of how the Praise-Singer is also a structural device, interpreting events for the audience when Elesin is not speaking. Less successful answers needed to demonstrate clearer understanding of the nature of the scene and tended to track through the lines of the extract, commenting in more general terms on some aspects of language and dramatisation.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/52 Shakespeare and other pre-Twentieth Century Texts</p>
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Key messages

- (1) At the start of the examination, candidates should carefully plan how much time is to be spent on each essay.
- (2) Candidates should ensure their essays include discussion of varying opinions of the set texts.

General comments

The general standard was once again satisfactory, with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and there were very few candidates who were limited by expression. Some weaker candidates adopt an informal style and register, which can limit precision and the development of arguments.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at all levels of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – Richard II in section A and Wuthering Heights in section B – with others remaining minority choices, such as Marvell and Shelley. The responses seen on these less popular texts suggest that they are still very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

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

- (a) Candidates should apportion their time carefully across the two essays to be written, with sufficient time allocated for planning and writing each essay. In this session there were a number of candidates whose second essay was incomplete and often appeared unplanned. Careful note of timings and adhering to them would improve the overall mark and result for such candidates.
- (b) Candidates should be able to appreciate and discuss varying opinions of the set texts, as set out in Assessment Objective 5 for this syllabus. This can be evidenced in the candidate's essays in many different ways, of which some of the most common ones are:
 - (i) by appropriate use of critical or academic opinions
 - (ii) by discussing how a specific type of reader or audience might respond, such as a Marxist reader
 - (iii) by comparing possible responses from the writer's actual audience to those of, say, a modern audience
 - (iv) by critical analysis of different possible meanings to specific words or phrases.

There are other ways of meeting this assessment objective; in any case it is important that the candidates build into their essay plans some evidence of the ability to discuss varying opinions in order to meet the requirements of the syllabus in full.

Comments on specific questions

Richard II

This was a popular text on the paper this session, with the majority opting for the **(b)** passage question.

- (a) Most responses were able to select relevant material to address the task, with nearly every answer exploring the topic through characters. Weaker answers often summarised different characters and the ways in which they were traitors or not, sometimes in great detail. More successful answers

explored how Shakespeare's characterisation of, for example, Bolingbroke and Mowbray at the start served to show contrasting aspects of treason and betrayal. Some good answers developed this approach into exploring Shakespeare's methods of characterisation in his 'presentation of treason and betrayal and the dramatic and poetic effects thereby created. Others considered that 'treachery, even by Richard to himself, is so common, it is the main driving force of the plot,' as one suggested. Where this was developed into considering how different audiences might respond differently to the various types of treachery and betrayal in front of them, these answers did very well.

- (b) This was the second most popular question on the paper. Nearly every answer gave an appropriate context to this passage – Richard's return from Ireland – and showed some knowledge and understanding of his character. Weaker responses lapsed into paraphrase or moved away from the detail of the passage into summarising the preceding or succeeding events. More successful approaches often discussed the importance of this passage to the audience's perceptions of Richard as king and as a man, seeing his contrasting moods and emotions. Good answers saw 'the weak person Richard is turning into,' as one answer put it. Others explored the dramatic situation, for example: 'Richard posing and lamenting, whilst Bolingbroke gathers strength.' Very good answers considered the detail of Richard's language and imagery, identifying the effects created and its wider significance, with appropriate support from both passage and wider text.

The Winter's Tale

This was the most popular text on the paper this session, with the vast majority opting for the (b) passage question.

- (a) There were relatively few responses to this question. Nearly all of them revealed a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often summarised what happened in each of the two main locations, Sicilia and Bohemia, some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast, as a way of suggesting an argument. Better answers were able to develop this by considering the characters in their specific locations, such as Hermione in the courtroom and Perdita in the shepherd's cottage, with some showing awareness of Shakespeare's methods of characterisation. More successful answers also saw how courts and countryside were contrasted, comparing for example the atmosphere at the sheep shearing festival with that at Hermione's trial. Some very good answers saw the topic in more abstract terms, exploring how Shakespeare presents his concerns, such as loyalty, parenting, relationships and love, through exposing how 'places change the way people behave and show us the different ways that people love and live together,' as one essay suggested. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to text and understanding of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper, with most candidates able to give an appropriate context. Basic answers tended to discuss the character of Leontes, often with some paraphrasing and summary, of the rest of the play, with at times some understanding of the situation and its significance. Better answers noted, for example, 'How Shakespeare makes the audience focus on Leontes and his reactions, as though he is watching the play with us,' as one put it. Good answers explored how there might be different audience responses according to their view of Leontes, even at this early stage of the play. Very good answers explored the language and tone in detail, for example, considering the effects on an audience of Leontes's changing tone, his aside and his words to Mamillius, for example. Those answers which saw the significance of this passage to the development of plot as well as Leontes's characterisation, and were able to find support from the wider text, often did very well.

Northanger Abbey

This was a popular **Section B** text, with a fairly even take up across the two options.

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened to relevant family groups, such as the Morlands, the Tilneys and the Thorpes. Better responses developed this into considering the various contrasts between the different families, with some able to explore Austen's concerns about morality, marriage and parents, for example. Good answers often explored the contrasts Austen presents within families as well as across families, so that, 'though General Tilney seems to be very different from his son

and daughter, he does seem to share a lot of the Thorpe family characteristics,' as one suggested. Very good answers supported such arguments with apposite quotation and some consideration of Austen's style, especially the language and tone, and often did very well.

- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the general context to this passage and was to some extent able to consider what is revealed about Catherine here. Weaker answers often lapsed into a summary of the events leading to her visit to the Abbey or offered more general comments on Catherine and what happens to her in the novel, rather than exploring the detail of the given passage. Better answers considered Austen's concerns in detail, and the 'mock gothic atmosphere,' as one put it, as well as what is revealed about Catherine's youthful naivety at this stage in the novel. Very good answers focussed on the detail of the passage, analysing the narrative techniques, such as narrative voice and Catherine's internal dialogue, as well as language and tone. Answers which developed such points into considering the effects on the reader, including comic ones, often did very well.

Wuthering Heights

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the **option (b)** passage.

- (a) This was a popular question and nearly every essay revealed some relevant knowledge of the text, with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise the two characters and their relationship, with some confusion evident between the two Catherines. More successful answers considered the contrasting relationships in the novel, most often Cathy and Heathcliff, often pointing out the 'healing, almost cathartic effect, this positive relationship has on the reader,' as one suggested. Better answers addressed the 'meaning and effects' element of the question, exploring such concerns as love, revenge and change, as revealed by Catherine and Hareton. Essays which developed such arguments by considering style, especially language and tone, often did well, especially when the points made were supported by apposite quotation.
- (b) This was the most popular question in **Section B**, with nearly every answer able to give at least a generally relevant context – the return of Heathcliff, after the marriage of Cathy and Linton. Some weaker responses revealed some confusion as to the precise point this took place in the novel. Basic answers often paraphrased the passage or made general points about Cathy and her role, here and elsewhere in the text. More successful responses focussed on Brontë's development of the relationships here, such as Nellie and Cathy, as well as what is revealed about Cathy's relationships with Edgar and Heathcliff. Good answers considered the effects of Brontë's writing in detail, for example the narrative techniques as well as Brontë's use of language and dialogue. Some noted how Cathy's language reveals her self-absorption, as well as Nellie's undermining and critical tone. Answers developing such points with apposite, brief references to the wider text often did very well.

The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

This was not a popular text on the paper, with most candidates choosing the passage question, **option (b)**.

- (a) This was very much a minority choice. Weaker answers were mostly able find relevant material to address the task, often giving a summary of Aurelius and what happened to him. Better answers considered how Chaucer's presentation of the squire both undermines and supports the given quotation, contrasting his, for some, immoral wooing of a married woman with his generosity in freeing her from her promise, despite expecting to be ruined by his debts. Good answers also explored his role in terms of the contrasts with the knight, Arveragus, and how he represents 'one kind of attitude to love in the medieval world, one very different from that of the knight and his lady,' as one suggested. Very good answers developed such ideas with appropriate reference to the detail of the text and some analysis of the poetic effects created.
- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to see this as a climax in the plot of the poem, especially for Dorigen. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write generally about the text as a whole. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage. Many responses saw this as the point at which Dorigen develops, with different interpretations offered on how a reader might respond. For some, she simply got the rewards of her playful 'flirting' with Aurelius, whereas for others 'her genuine morality is revealed by her horror of the situation she is now in,' as one suggested. Good answers discussed the change in tone at this point in the poem, as Dorigen considers suicide to escape her plight. With some detailed analysis of the style,

especially the use of language and imagery, to support such arguments, these answers often did very well.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

This was the first session for this novel and it proved to be reasonably popular, with an even split between the two questions.

- (a) Nearly every answer had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss this topic relevantly. Weaker answers tended to approach it through what the characters said and did, especially Tess, Angel and Alec. More successful answers saw the contrasts Hardy creates between characters, for example between Angel and his brothers over the dancing in Marlott. Better answers saw how Hardy develops characterisation through the different attitudes to morality, with good answers seeing how this might lead to contrasting, even contradictory, responses in the audience. Very good answers saw this in the context of Hardy's wider concerns, such as social injustice and gender inequalities. Where this was supported by an exploration of the narrative techniques and methods, with appropriate reference to the text, the answers often did very well.
- (b) Almost every answer recognised the context for this passage, though some weaker answers demonstrated some confusion as to the precise point this occurs. All but a very few answers had a secure knowledge of the Alec and Tess relationship. Weaker responses spent too long discussing the previous and subsequent events, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage. Better answers explored the structural and narrative effects of this return home by Tess and what is revealed about her by her reactions to Alec, 'her instinctive understanding of her morally ambiguous situation,' as one suggested. Good answers explored the ways Hardy interweaves dialogue and narrative, especially in Tess's flashes of emotion and Alec's recognition of having done wrong and his willingness to try and put it right. Very good answers explored the language and narrative techniques in detail, showing how the various effects are created. Such answers did very well when the points were developed with apposite, precise references to the passage and the wider text.

Andrew Marvell

This was a minority choice in this session, with few essays on either option.

- (a) The few responses to this question usually had sufficient knowledge of the text to address the task, with reference most often made to 'To his Coy Mistress', the Mower poems, 'Eyes and Tears' and 'The Picture of little TC'. Weaker answers offered a summary of the poems or a more detailed paraphrase. Better answers considered the different ways women are presented, with some able to explore Marvell's contrasting attitudes to them. Those responses which were able to consider how Marvell presents his ideas through his poetic choices, with appropriate support from the text, often did well.
- (b) This was also a minority choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, with some needing to link it to the rest of the poem or the wider selection. Better answers explored how Marvell presents the garden symbolically, using language and imagery. Others explored the use of natural imagery in detail, with some linking ideas to other poems, such as 'The Mower's Song', for example. Very good responses explored the detail of the poem, noting, for example, the complex symbolism and the development of the ideas and moods. Others explored the poetic structure and rhyme scheme, linking them to Marvell's concerns. Answers which developed such ideas with apt reference to the rest of the selection often did very well.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

There were almost no responses to **option (a)** and very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) There were too few answers to this question to be able to make any general comments.
- (b) Better answers to this question were able to discuss the extract in its context; some answers gave too much attention to contextual details and consequently needed to pay more attention to the detail of the poem. Good answers considered what this extract reveals about Shelley's attitudes to nature and poetry, often linking it to the rest of the poem. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the poetic methods – such as language and verse form – and their effects, the answers

often did well. Some weaker answers appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, consequently demonstrating a need for a more thorough understanding of the extract and its context.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Candidates should acquire a detailed knowledge of the texts, including quotations and close reference.
- They should be able to demonstrate how a writer shapes the meaning of the text by his/her use of language, structure, dramatic features and form. Beyond spotting features such as alliteration or anaphora, it is important to identify the effects such features create.
- While detailed reference to the text is essential, narrative summary does not constitute successful response.
- The candidate must keep the question in mind to select relevant details and ideas to address the question, rather than writing everything he/she knows about a text.
- Making a short plan before writing the answer is often a good idea; these should be kept concise so that a candidate can make good use of the time they have for writing their response.
- Personal response is a requirement; this considered, candidates should beware of drifting off the discussion of the text into general personal reflection.

General comments

The questions elicited many thoughtful, informed and engaged responses from candidates who shared their enjoyment of the texts studied. They wrote coherently and fluently, sometimes showing a freshly original personal response.

Most candidates were able to complete two essays of moderate length within the given time. Some second answers were incomplete, and this was often where a candidate had spent much time in their first essay on side issues such as biographical and contextual details, or they embarked on a general overview of a text before beginning on the details of a passage question. Introductory comments are a good idea, especially if placing a passage within its context; such introductions should be brief, allowing sufficient time for detailed consideration and analysis of the passage.

It is important to move an essay along from one point to the next in a logical sequence. Many candidates do this well; others spend a large portion of their writing focussing on the same idea, often supporting the same point with many examples, where they would do better to move on.

A feature of weak responses is repetition. Some responses came across like political speeches, with points being driven home by means of repetition, particularly when giving a personal response or opinion. While it is acceptable and often satisfying to end an essay with a paragraph summarising the points made in the argument, there is no need to keep repeating points throughout the answer. Ideas will be credited if expressed clearly once.

Candidates should understand the virtue of concision. Writing at great length often involves repetition and the time constraints can prevent the candidate from writing legibly.

There were occasional rubric infringements where candidates did not attempt a second question or they wrote both answers on the same text. The instructions on the question paper clearly state that candidates need to attempt two questions, each on a different text.

It is noticeable that candidates are in general using critical opinions to better advantage, helping to move the argument onto a new point or in partial support of the opinion they are expressing. Critical opinions should not be used alone as a substitute for textual support. For example, if a candidate quotes a critic who believes that Amanda is a tragic figure, there needs to be a quotation or close reference to the text to support this opinion.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Americanah*

Most candidates demonstrated knowledge of the main concerns of this text and able candidates could move around the text, selecting pertinent details to support responses. Less successful responses referred more generally to these concerns, especially in the passage question, or focused on plot and character. The **(b)** passage question was far more popular than the **(a)** essay question.

- (a)** The few candidates who attempted this question tended to write narrative summary – sometimes of the whole history of the relationship between Ifemelu and Obinze – rather than focussing on how Adichie shapes the reader’s response. There was some strong personal response to Obinze’s infidelity and consequent desertion of Kosi, mostly quite judgemental and needing support from the text. Some argued that Obinze was betraying his culture as well as his wife with his ‘white-people behaviour’. Weaker answers lacked sufficient detail and were often assertive, general condemnation of Obinze’s perceived immorality. Better answers compared Adichie’s presentation of Kosi with that of Ifemelu, showing how Obinze clearly prefers strong women, sometimes connecting to Ifemelu’s relationship with Obinze’s mother, while Kosi is presented as a more traditional wife. They also discussed whether they found the inconclusive ending satisfactory.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to locate the passage contextually, linking the episode to Ifemelu’s gradual acclimatisation to life in America, her progress in establishing a career for herself and her continuing search for identity. The contrast between Ifemelu’s blogs and the way she presents herself in her public talks was a fruitful approach to the question, most candidates picking up on the contrast between making great progress and not getting a cookie for reducing racism. Links were made to the wider text about the topic of hair in noting ‘the elegant twists’ worn by the hired Haitian American. Ifemelu’s development in maturity and economic status was evidenced by her ability to buy her own condominium. The theme of racism, especially in male/female relationships was discussed, relating the blog to the wider text. The flippant reference to the ‘Hot White Ex’ was identified as typical of the way Ifemelu deals with emotionally charged or painful topics in her blog and was contrasted with her deep anxiety over the reception of her posts. The hiring of an assistant to delete inappropriate comments almost as soon as they were posted was viewed by some as indicative of Ifemelu imposing a kind of censorship. The fact that she has now ‘become her blog’ was interpreted as the marker of another stage in the bildungsroman and some saw the abandonment of her blog writing later as the reassertion of Ifemelu’s own identity.

Question 2

Eleanor Catton: *The Rehearsal*

The post-modern nature of this text makes it easier for candidates to view characters and plot as a construct, enabling them to separate the author from her work. Though it remains less popular than the other novels, candidates were able to answer with some engagement on both options.

- (a)** Surprisingly few candidates opted for this straightforward question. They tended to agree with the given quotation, sympathising with Stanley’s efforts to construct an identity based on ‘performative’ qualities and stereotypes. There was some recognition of the narrative perspective in the Drama School episodes being mainly focused on Stanley. His relationships with his father and Isolde were explored and references were made to the Theatre of Cruelty experiment where Stanley is presented at first as humane and concerned about the victim but then tries to use the incident as an opportunity to perform the role of the boy’s protector. The fact that Isolde and her parents form part of the audience to Stanley’s re-enactment of the Victoria/Saladin affair was viewed as improbable but well suited to the artificial, staged nature of events in this novel. Stanley was identified as forming part of the mirrored pattern of the plot, having a relationship which is

considered, at least by the saxophone teacher, as inappropriate. Answers tended to sympathise with Stanley as a 'loser' and to empathise with his desire for 'something terrible happening, just so I can see what it's like'. His desire to be watched is in keeping with the central concerns of the novel, 'Because if somebody's watching, you know you're worth something.' There was some detailed comment on how the performative language used demonstrates the lack of authenticity in many of Stanley's actions.

- (b) This question was usually answered well. Candidates were able to place the passage in context and identify the performative nature of Julia's account. They contrasted Julia's account with Isolde's version of events in their relationship. The extravagant language used by Julia was sometimes closely analysed – 'beautiful unknowing', 'trap time and space', 'snatching tearing hunger of loss'. The mirroring of the encounter between Julia and Isolde with that of Victoria and Saladin, even in the same setting, was judged as evidence of its inauthenticity and of Julia's intention to provoke the saxophone teacher into a disclosure of her own experiences with Patsy or to make her feel jealous. There was some exploration of character development here. The demeanour of the saxophone teacher in this passage was contrasted with her usual appearance of being in control and watching the activities of others voyeuristically rather than betraying any feelings of her own, but here the power has shifted to Julia as the teacher sinks back weakly. The shifting power dynamic was viewed as one of the central concerns of the novel and other examples from the text were noted. Some weaker candidates restricted their response to a narrative account of the passage, with some interpretation and little reference to the wider text.

Question 3

T.S. Eliot: *Four Quartets*

A pleasing number of centres selected this text, undeterred by its challenging nature. Texts of this density offer opportunities to all but the weakest candidates to write coherent and often original responses, producing good results. Many answers showed evidence of intelligent understanding of the text and of the various ways Eliot creates meaning. Candidates also showed engagement with some of the central philosophical and religious ideas of the poems.

- (a) This question invited candidates to consider Eliot's many references within the poems to the difficulties of expressing ideas appropriately. Good responses expressed complex ideas, often in a sophisticated way, and were able to use embedded quotations to illustrate their arguments. The difficulty experienced by Eliot was attributed by some to the shifting nature of language, 'For last year's words belong to last year's language,' and his attempt to drive home his 'message' by finding different ways of expressing himself. Eliot's 'raid on the inarticulate' was seen to symbolise the spiritual struggle and the journey undertaken in the poems, from a state of dissatisfaction, bewilderment or even despair where all are going 'into the dark' 'and cold the sense and lost the motive of action' to a more confident statement of faith at the end of the journey. The negative diction earlier in the Quartets, such as 'inarticulate', 'deteriorating', 'imprecision' and 'undisciplined', was contrasted with the more confident, affirmative language at the end of *Little Gidding*, where 'every phrase and sentence is right', indicating the end of the spiritual journey undertaken in *Four Quartets*. The tentative questioning of earlier sections – 'Where is an end of it?' – is replaced by the certainty that 'All shall be well'.
- (b) Some candidates performed well on this question, linking *The Dry Salvages* to other Quartets and contrasting the ways different elements – air, earth, fire and, in this case, water – predominate. Most could refer to the idea of the river as 'a strong brown god' in the opening of this Quartet linking with the many gods and many voices of the sea in this passage. The predominance of sounds in this section was explored, from the howl, yelp and whine to the tolling bell, which some associated with a death knell or the Day of Judgment. Some noted the emphasis on the bell at the end of the passage with the arrangement of the words on separate lines and the unusual syntax. The use of paradox in 'future futureless' and the list of negatives – 'unweave, unwind, unravel' – was interpreted by some candidates to refer to the fates. The central concern with time was linked to the wider text. There was some inappropriate use of contextual knowledge by some who thought the passage referred to the Second World War, with the wailing warning interpreted as an air raid siren and the poet on fire watch, 'the morning watch'. This was an example of wilful determination to make the text fit the context.

Question 4

Athol Fugard: *Townships Plays*

Candidates demonstrated pleasing engagement with these plays and some appropriate knowledge of context, particularly of life under the apartheid regime in South Africa. It should be noted, though, that *The Coat* is not on the list of set texts. Some candidates included material based on this play in their answers and while it could be considered as related wider reference and they were not penalised, they were likely to waste time if they focused too much on this play at the expense of the other plays on the syllabus.

- (a) Very few candidates selected this question and those who did focused mainly on plot summary and characters. They could have chosen to discuss the way a subtle political message is imparted through the device of the play within the play in *The Island*. Here, the characters Winston and John and the playwright himself are able to voice their political opposition to the oppressive apartheid regime, wearing the mask of Greek drama and with specific reference to the applicability of Antigone's speeches to the contemporary situation in South Africa. ('You are only a man, Creon. Even as there are laws made by men, so too there are others that come from God.') Other plays such as *No Good Friday* and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* address the ways the disadvantaged are left with little choice but to be dishonest or to be exposed to crime and violence because they have so few human rights and are oppressed by such laws as the Pass Book system. Candidates should be aware of the need to consider the ways in which Fugard shapes meaning.
- (b) Those who tackled this question found the passage accessible and could usually relate it to the rest of *Nongogo*. Good answers often took a feminist approach to Queeny's situation and the dual morality applied by Johnny, whose past has been equally sordid. There was some analysis of the worm in the apple image and the contextual reference to 'the stinking bloody world out there'. More able candidates were able to connect the passage with earlier, more optimistic scenes in the play and to other plays in the selection where the hopes and dreams of characters are dashed. Weaker responses tended to give a narrative account of the scene with some paraphrase.

Question 5

Kuzuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

This proved to be the most popular novel and gave rise to some very pleasing responses. Candidates were able to engage with the text and its very controversial ideas. Many appeared to have done some background research into the history of cloning, starting with the creation of Dolly the sheep. They had also read interviews given by Ishiguro, to which they were able to refer relevantly in the course of their answers. Some candidates, in describing Kathy as an unreliable narrator, seemed to imply that there could somehow be a reliable, accurate account of the events described; such candidates would have done better to treat the novel and its characters as constructs of the author. Unusually, more candidates attempted the (a) essay question rather than the (b) passage option.

- (a) There were some very good responses to this question, with excellent use of detail from the text about the treatment of the clones, their characterisation and relationships with each other, the euphemistic language such as 'donations' and 'complete', the ways the clones appear to be brain-washed into acceptance of their fate and make no attempt to rebel or escape, the perpetuation through rumours of fear of what lies outside Hailsham, the lack of surnames, the use of symbols such as the tape (a mass-produced item), the boat and the donating of Art work to the gallery. There was good use of critical opinions, including some of Ishiguro's own ideas, comparison of the 'othering' of the clones to colonialism, racism and slavery, while some took a Marxist approach. The certainty of death, the way the children 'are told and not told' and the necessity of accepting the inevitable were recognised by very able candidates as components of an analogy of our own human lives, with one candidate skilfully turning the argument on its head to suggest that we humans are poor creatures. Less good responses were often well engaged with the question, but gave insufficient detail from the text to support arguments and allowed themselves to drift away from the text into general essays on repression or human rights. More able candidates paid attention to Ishiguro's methods and their effects.
- (b) There were some very good answers on this passage, connecting to the wider concerns of rumour, fear and speculation which permeate much of the text. There was some controlled personal response to the pitiful clutching at straws with the very modest hope of an additional three years based on the very unlikely condition of being able to 'prove' you were in love. The respect shown

by other veterans for Hailsham was noted with some sound comment on the significance of the name as a pun representing its façade of caring for the children's health and the sham it actually was as a kind of prison/organ farm. The best answers explored the dynamics of relationships in this passage, connecting the assertiveness of Ruth to other examples in the novel, her tendency to lie and the way she makes herself the focus of attention. Kathy supports her friend in the same way she colludes with Ruth's other lies (the pencil case) to save Ruth's face. Candidates noted Ruth's cruel dismissal of Tommy, despite the fact that they are a couple, when he characteristically tells the truth. Many commented on the clones' conformity to the oppressive system when they seem to have some autonomy, as in this expedition to Norfolk. Weaker answers remained within the passage with some comments on characters. Some tended to drift into expressions of anger or pity for the clones, needing to be more strongly linked to the text.

Question 6

Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems*

This text is still a minority choice, though there is an increase in the numbers selecting it. Stronger candidates demonstrated at least sound knowledge and understanding of Walcott's poetic concerns and the ways he shapes meaning. There is still a tendency to assume that every poem must refer to the West Indian history of oppression by colonial rule and slavery.

- (a) Very few candidates selected this option, though it offered ample opportunity for candidates who could refer in detail to three poems. Many of the poems in the selection are at least partly concerned with feelings about home and a sense of belonging. Candidates chose to write about *Mass Man* and *Ruins of a Great House*, which afforded an opportunity to write about being of mixed race and the post-colonial heritage. Those who chose to include the (b) option poem could refer in some detail to the scenery and especially to the sea, often used symbolically, while comment on Island life is found in poems such as '*Parades, Parades*' '*Homecoming: Anse La Raye*' and '*Sabbaths WI*'. The poet's feelings about aspects of modern politics, commercialism and tourism are discussed in these poems, with Walcott's characteristic ambivalence along with his feeling of being estranged from his own community when he returns to it.
- (b) *A Careful Passion* was selected by most of those who had studied Walcott, though some candidates showed little understanding of the way the poem describes the end of an affair. The better candidates observed how description of the scenery is intertwined with the action of the two humans in the poem, sometimes contrasting with the mood of the speaker as the local band incongruously play a gay tune and the gulls seem happy in their element, but sometimes chiming with the end of the affair as the 'old Greek freighter' quits port and the coupling flies are brushed away. Images of death are evoked by the 'sun-puffed carcass' and repetition of 'die' and 'died' in the third stanza. The 'wet hair' and the 'grape red mouth' were noted as characteristically sensual phrases suggesting the physical passion of the illicit affair. Similarly, the pun on 'lies' was noted as a typical linguistic device of Walcott. Candidates could have improved their responses by giving examples from other poems of features they recognised as characteristic. Again, some tried unconvincingly to connect the poem to the post-colonial context.

Question 7

Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

This has replaced *Death of a Salesman* as the most popular text on the Paper. Candidates found the language and ideas of the play accessible and were able to empathise with the characters as well as showing understanding of the social and economic context. There was some reference to the genre, plastic theatre, though at times understanding of this term needed to be more clearly demonstrated. Candidates were able to refer appropriately to critical opinions and made connections between the text and biographical details of Williams's life. Candidates should be careful not to over-use biographical material; such responses tended to include assertive comments that needed textual support. Weaker answers tended to refer to characters as if they were real people. There was a great contrast in the performance of those who really knew the text well and those who seemed to have a very superficial knowledge, based perhaps on the film.

- (a) Some candidates who selected this question were fixated on the idea of escape rather than on being prisoners of the past and, although there is some overlap in these topics, their responses were not always clearly focused on the question. They tended to write about Tom's trips to the

movies or alcohol as a means of escape, or Laura's obsession with her menagerie, while clear focus on the question would have laid more emphasis on the past. Laura's fondness for the Victrola is a sign of her missing her absent father and perhaps wishing to return to the past, as is her cherishing of her school year book. Amanda's entrapment in the past was clearly identified in her frequent reminiscences about the seventeen gentleman callers and her tendency to wear out-of-date clothes unsuited to her age, as when Jim calls. More able candidates argued that the whole memory play is evidence of Tom's entrapment in the past and connected his remorse over abandoning his sister with Williams and his own guilt over his sister Rose. Some saw Jim as a prisoner of the past too, living off the memory of his schoolboy success. The use of plastic theatre, such as the lighting up of Mr Wingfield's photograph and the setting connoting imprisonment were also discussed.

- (b) Although some weak candidates wrote narrative description of the passage with some comment on the characters, most candidates were able to produce sound, intelligent or very good responses with some close analysis of the scene and consideration of its relationship to the rest of the play. Where weaker answers tended to limit their response to consideration of the dialogue, stronger candidates analysed the lengthy description of Tom's arrival, the symbolism of light and darkness and the significance of Tom shaking the noisemaker as a weak gesture of defiance against the Almighty, with links to other religious references in the play. The dropping of the key was viewed by some as loss of opportunity, or Tom's secret desire not to go home. The account of Tom's evening entertainment was seen by some as an elaborate lie to conceal the fact that he has been experimenting in the gay demi-monde, the only support offered being the rainbow scarf, viewed as a symbol of Tom's homosexuality. Most candidates saw the coffin trick as a metaphor of Tom's situation and his desire to escape without removing the nails, i.e. without hurting his family. The lighting up of the photograph of Mr Wingfield was interpreted as a reminder of the way the father has escaped his responsibilities. Some candidates missed the opportunity to mention the end of the scene, with its acceleration of time showing how Tom is soon entrapped in his everyday world of routine. His refusal to 'shine' was seen as foreshadowing his eventual desertion of his family.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/72 Comment and Appreciation</p>

Key messages

- good answers show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poem or passages as a whole before starting to write;
- good answers focus on the form, structure and language of the poem or passage and on how these shape meaning, rather than relying on narrative or paraphrase;
- good answers identify some of the literary devices and techniques in the poem or passage, and discuss how these are used;
- good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, beyond to what is said;
- good answers maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout their response, without discussing other writers, other texts or other ideas.

General comments

This was in most ways a good session; all examiners reported that they saw some good and often very good work, and it was clear that the great majority of candidates were confident in addressing two previously unseen pieces of prose, drama or poetry, and wrote about them with some degree of thoughtful insight, often showing quite personal perception. To do this in a very limited time is not easy, a factor that all examiners are fully aware of, and while a small number of responses were clearly unfinished or hurried at the end these were relatively rare; the majority showed an ability to see their chosen texts as wholes, ensuring that the final lines were explored with the same closeness as the opening ones. Few responses relied upon simple narrative or paraphrase, though where this was the case the marks awarded were inevitably low. Weaker responses occurred where candidates introduced comparison with other writers or texts, an approach which is less helpful or relevant in this paper compared to others; others relied heavily upon personal responses to the contexts (real or imagined) within which texts were written, and would have done better to respond instead to the ways in which they were written. The best responses, and indeed the majority of the less confident ones, focused firmly upon what was written, and made sure that their critical discussions stayed clearly and consistently upon this.

Handwriting was once more a concern for all examiners; it is essential that Centres make it clear to all candidates that if an examiner has difficulty reading a response then assessment will be problematic, and it may indeed be that some points being made are simply not legible. Most scripts were perfectly sound in this respect, but there were enough to suggest that not all candidates are aware of what is printed on the front of the examination question paper: *'You are reminded of the need for good English **and clear presentation** in your answers'*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Garden of Evening Mists

There were plenty of responses to this passage. In stronger responses, there were some very perceptive and thoughtful responses to how Tan Twan Eng writes. Several weaker responses needed to focus more consistently upon what is written in the passage. There is of course some emphasis in the passage upon the need expressed by Aritomo to clear one's mind of all extraneous and trivial matter in order to achieve the goal of becoming a successful archer; while it may well be true that this is the case in all walks of life, some candidates took this to suggest that this is the central message of the text, whereas in fact it is simply an account by the narrator of his fictional experiences while learning the craft of kyudo (Japanese archery). This is made clear in the opening lines of the first paragraph. Responses which considered wider contexts,

however relevant they may have seemed, inevitably lost some marks because they missed some other more central points.

Many responses began by pointing to the fact that the passage opens *in media res*, there is no introduction except what Aritomo says, and as many pointed out the writer makes his opening sentences nicely emphatic and balanced by the alliteration of the soft letter 'm' in lines 4–6. In the second paragraph, the narrator tells of how difficult it was for him to clear his mind of every possible distraction, using in the next paragraph Aritomo's use of the slightly uncomfortable but very apt simile comparing his mind to a strip of wallpaper: flies are an irritant, and need to be completely eradicated, 'purged', from his thoughts.

The next paragraph, beginning in line 14, begins to explain in more detail the effect of mind-clearing and regulated breathing. A significant point is made in line 19, where *kyudo* 'was showing me how to live'; it was perhaps this clause which led some candidates towards thinking that the passage is actually about more than just the narrator's experience. While such philosophical thinking may well be valid, it cannot form part of a literary critical appreciation of the writer's creation of a purely fictional character and his thinking.

As the passage develops, despite the narrator beginning to feel as if he and Aritomo were like the bronze archers on the desk, he still cannot relinquish his natural and realistic sense that arrows cannot possibly have any minds of their own; the two blunt sentences in line 29 are written to show this as realistically and forcefully as possible, and it is then that lines 30–34 return to the calm and almost hypnotic state that was created earlier in what Aritomo says, culminating in the almost unbelievable and telepathic concept in lines 35–38. This is another moment where some candidates wanted the passage to be about extra-sensory communication generally, whereas they would have done better to focus on it as what the narrator seems to feel at this specific fictional moment. Candidates needed to concentrate on what the writer makes the narrator think, rather than stating the implausibility of the moment in which Aritomo hits the centre of the target with his eyes closed.

There were plenty of strong responses, which did exactly what they should. Two aspects of weaker responses prevented them from achieving more highly: a tendency to wander off focus, and treatment of the two characters (especially Aritomo) as if they were real people, criticising the writer because of their supposed unreality. The word 'fictional' has been used in these comments and it is important to keep firmly in mind that unless it is made clear in the rubric that a passage is factual the passages set will always be fictional and must be treated as such.

Question 2 – *Hymn to the Sea*

This was a little less popular than the other two passages; despite this, there were plenty of interesting and thoughtful responses, often showing some quite sensitive critical perception of the poet's images and how they reflected his love and admiration for the sea. Examiners did not expect close reading of every line in the poem given its length, but were all very pleased with how much detail was explored, and how confidently most responses tackled some of the poet's feelings.

A word first about the poem's structure: mention was made in the **General comments** above that there was often as much consideration of the closing lines of a passage as of the opening ones, and this of course was particularly evident and important here, where the final line is a further repetition of the second line of the poem, and of the refrain which ends each stanza. Some candidates said that the poem was written in free verse; in fact, each stanza is firmly controlled and the poem is constructed with much regularity: each stanza has eight lines, all of approximately the same length and number of syllables. So, while in some respects this poem is a little looser than others, we cannot say that it is 'free'. Some thoughtful comments were made about this regularity: the speaker's feelings do not change, the sea's movements and tides are regular and unchanging, and while there are some apparently conflicting reactions to the sea the overall warmth and admiration expressed does not change.

Most candidates noted how while the sea is not exactly personified the poet does regard it as female, sometimes as a kind of lover and more often as a mother from whom all life originated, and who can also be a destroyer – lines 35–36 perfectly sum up these contrasts. Female images are frequent, not just the frequent use of the word 'her' (five times in stanza one, three in stanza two and so on), but also more specific female characteristics ('kisses' in line 7, 'lullaby', 'singing', 'moaning' in line 13, 'her embracing womb' in line 23). Some took the word 'moaning' in a sexual sense, linking this with the 'completion' at the end of stanza three, an idea that is arguably developed in stanza four, with life originating in the sea. Though this is never made explicit by the poet, some candidates' arguments were very convincing.

The sea is, however, not just ‘a symbol of fruitfulness’ (line 33) but also a ‘symbol of barrenness’; the paradox is important in suggesting how, to the poet from a small island, the sea is not just water but a creator and a destroyer – it has a huge and inescapable influence upon life. The closing lines of the poem move away from some almost cosmic, mythological thoughts to some very exact and precise picturing of the poet’s own island home, where the colour red and the colour blue – primary and bright colours of life – join in a kind of natural harmony, which is why he finally repeats that he must ‘always be remembering the sea’. A few candidates commented aptly on the slightly unusual syntax in this refrain, pointing to the fact that the significant words come early in the sentence – ‘always’ and ‘remembering’, with ‘the sea’ as the poem’s culmination.

Question 3 – *Morning Sacrifice*

The main aspect of weaker responses to this passage was a tendency to read and treat it as a piece of conventional prose rather than as a piece of drama, intended to be seen and heard in a theatre. Even when referring to the quite frequent stage directions, many treated these again as they might respond to such writing in a novel or short story, rather than suggesting ways in which they might indicate physical action and significant dramatic impact. For an immediate example, the opening direction has Miss Kingsbury sitting beside Sheila; on the face of it, this might appear quite insignificant, but in conjunction with her opening words, ‘my dear’ and ‘our little talk’, and in view of what she goes on to say to Sheila, candidates would have done well to discuss how this physical positioning by the playwright indicates not a genuine warmth and intimacy as some suggested, but a way of making Sheila feel uncomfortable and uncertain about what is about to be said. A more formal positioning, across a table or desk, for example, might have been expected, so this direction is immediately unsettling. Combined with how Mrs MacNeil looks uncomfortable, and how Miss Kingsbury ‘smiles enchantingly’, the playwright is very forcefully using stage directions to create a visual reflection of how the Deputy Head sees and creates her power over Sheila.

Here are plenty of similar moments, partly in what is said – Sheila’s speeches, for example, are all brief and hesitant – but also in what is seen by an audience. Miss Kingsbury’s pause in line 35 is unnerving for Sheila and for the audience, who do not know what the ‘bulky letter’ contains. Her difficulty in line 47 in controlling her anger will be seen by a theatre audience, as will her very self-conscious ‘looking at her beautifully manicured hands’ in line 60, the latter small physical action carrying a lot of weight in suggesting Miss Kingsbury’s self-centredness and self-control. This, however, is given a visible blow in line 75, where an audience will see her temporarily thrown off balance and going to her desk ‘with an expression of contempt and anger’, a moment where her falsely adopted air of care and kindness towards Sheila is shattered, and she needs to regain her role of formality and authority.

There is, then, a great deal to be said about what is seen as well as heard, and those responses which even mention stagecraft or theatrical impact did inevitably show a greater critical confidence than those who focused purely upon what the characters say. There is of course plenty to consider in what they say, and a lot of the extract’s dramatic power lies in an audience, or a reader, being unaware of exactly what has happened to Sheila; has she had some kind of unethical relationship with Mary Grey, or is she simply trying her very best as a younger teacher to sympathise with whatever problem Mary is having? We are not told, and this is a large part of what makes the extract so fascinating; this, together with the obvious but partly hidden clash of personality between Miss Kingsbury and Mrs MacNeil, offer a great deal that could be considered, and which was indeed considered by many candidates. There was some speculation, perhaps inevitably, about what lies behind the personality clashes: Miss Kingsbury, although Sheila had clearly been one of her favourite students, is angry about the way the newspapers published and made a fuss about Sheila’s great academic success; and it may be that she is also jealous that Sheila is engaged to be married, and that Mrs MacNeill is married, while she remains Miss Kingsbury. Again, though these are all possible, speculative responses such as these would not merit so much credit as those that stuck to the text itself. A very rich dramatic extract, and there were some fascinating and often very personal explorations.