

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/32 Poetry and Prose</p>

Key messages

The examination is designed to assess the understanding and appreciation of literary composition and expression, so candidate responses should focus on how authors' choices of language and literary methods shape meaning.

- Answers which focus primarily on the content of texts can only achieve marks in the lower bands of the Mark Scheme.
- Points in essays should be supported with specific references and quotations. This should be particularly remembered for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- 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 passage in considerable detail.

General comments

In its final appearance on the syllabus, the selected poems of Elizabeth Jennings attracted a limited number of answers, but all other texts had been studied widely and attracted a range of responses. The most successful answers to **(a)** questions used detailed knowledge of the texts to support their points, including secure references and apt quotations, to establish and develop a clear argument in response to the question. Successful responses to **(b)** questions looked in great detail at the writing of the selected passage or poem, considering the effects of the writers' choices of language, imagery and structure. Good answers often placed the extract within the context of the wider text in the cases of prose and drama, in order to inform the discussion of the passage. Candidates who relied on narrative summary and paraphrase indicated their knowledge of the content of texts and passages, but in order to achieve marks in the higher bands of the Mark Scheme they needed to demonstrate understating of the writers' methods.

Question specific comments 9695/32

Question 1

Robert Frost: Selected Poems

- (a)** While candidates often chose appropriate poems, such as 'The Sound of Trees', 'Mending Wall', 'Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening' and 'The Wood-Pile', they needed to pay attention to the question's focus on the presentation of landscape, rather than writing generally about the poems. Poem choices such as 'Home Burial' and 'The Ax-Helve', where landscape features fleetingly if at all, proved problematic in terms of producing a successful response to the question posed. Successful answers looked at Frost's presentation of hills, trees, undergrowth and the earth itself, and considered the response to those elements of landscape by the speaker of each poem.
- (b)** This proved to be a very popular question which prompted some very strong responses. The most successful answers moved from the physical experience of the camp to the spiritual with some confidence and some precise selection of detail. While some insisted that the speaker is Frost himself, many wrote well on his creation of the speaker, a thoughtful, educated wanderer, noting

his self-denigration in 'just a tramp'. Essays often showed some thoughtful focus on the language of the poem, including the presentation of the speaker's camp under the 'juniper' and its balance of comfort and discomfort. Many wrote well on the epiphany on seeing 'the largest firedrop' and his sense of superiority because he has seen it directly, not 'through a rusty screen'. There were a few comments on the epistolary form of the poem. Many responses would have been improved had they included discussion of the poem's structure. There was some thoughtful engagement with the way Frost characterises the speaker, with the occasional suggestion that both tramp and farmer are versions of Frost himself, the letter representing the poet's internal debate.

Question 2

Elizabeth Jennings: Selected Poems

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Many candidates found this an accessible poem, most demonstrating sound understanding of the central concern with the relationship. Some essays showed sensitive appreciation of the presentation of the distance between father and son through the father's voice. Thoughtful candidates commented on the neutral quality of the word 'house', the simile of 'strangers' and the presence of 'Silence'. The image of the 'prodigal' was well understood and there was some subtle discussion of the use of the subjunctive in 'I would forgive him'. Some candidates grasped the nuances of the characterisation of the father in the second half of the poem, including the poignancy of the 'empty hand' in the penultimate line. A few candidates were able to discuss structure thoughtfully, often interpreting Jennings' tight regular stanzas as a method of indicating controlled emotion.

Question 3

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, with those candidates opting for it choosing such poems as 'The Uncles', 'The Migrant', 'On My First Daughter', 'The Forsaken Wife' and 'Death'. Where descriptions of the particular characters made for responses at the weaker end, stronger responses focused on presentation and showed how the poem's language and structure characterised the speaker or subject.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper and nearly all candidates found something interesting to say about the poem. The poem is not, in fact, about boys going off to war, but this reading was taken by many candidates and can be supported by careful interpretation of some of the poem's language and imagery. However, in many cases, the reading was simply imposed without looking at the poem for support, which led to limited and rather skewed essays. Stronger and more sensitive accounts of the poem read it as a description of a moment where a parent recognises that children will leave the safety and security of the family to make their own way in the world, and that part of being a parent is to accept that inevitable sense of loss. This led to some interesting comments on the emphasis on departure created by the comma in the title, on the 'hedges' representing both confinement and protection, and on the limitless and possibly dangerous possibilities of adulthood in the 'empty air', 'torn clouds' and 'Haphazard world'. The inevitability of departure was seen in 'the steadiness/of their retreating footfalls' and 'their walk was one-dimensional, and final'. Some thoughtful candidates suggested a sense of hope, in that the 'clear and blond' heads, suggestive of youth and innocence, become 'sunlit points' and a 'certain focus' – although the sons will leave to make their own life, they will remain in the parent's eye.

Question 4

E.M. Forster: *Howards End*

- (a) Responses to this question often showed evidence of detailed knowledge of the novel, with stronger essays considering a range of women, including Ruth Wilcox and Jacky, who provide interesting contrasts in role with the Schlegels. In different ways, these two characters are shown to accept the status quo for women, especially with regard to their relationships with men. Answers focusing just on Margaret and Helen often still demonstrated useful understanding of how Forster creates comparisons and contrasts between the sisters. Candidates could have made more use of the cue quotation to shape the argument explicitly in response to the question.

- (b) There were many answers to the passage on Margaret's and Henry's marriage and they varied widely. On the one hand, some candidates wrote of the marriage as a perfect romantic union, missing the ironic tone of Forster's narrative; others railed against Margaret's abandonment of feminist principle in marrying Wilcox, again overlooking some of the subtleties of the extract. Many essays were thoughtful and focused on Forster's use of different perspectives in the extract. There were comments on the author's ironic presentation of 'our hero and heroine', while the presentation of the understated marriage ceremony was successfully explored by some candidates, focusing on its 'quiet' nature and as something Margaret had to 'go through'. The 'colourless refreshments', as well as the lack of music (which Margaret loved), were seen as lacklustre and the honeymoon, characterised by such language as 'reliable', 'failed' and 'disappointed', was also seen as uncharacteristic of this supposedly happy time. There were also thoughtful comments on Howard's End being used 'as a warehouse', showing a disconnection of values between Margaret and Henry. Some noted that the reasons for Helen's retreat become apparent later in the novel and those few candidates who focused on the details of the two paragraphs on Mr Wilcox at the end of the passage found much to discuss, often registering shock at the apparently subservient nature of Margaret, responding to his 'call' and 'ready to do what he wished'.

Question 5

Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

- (a) Most essays on this question showed a good knowledge of the novel and candidates were able to select suitable characters and episodes to illustrate the points made. Queenie was often seen as the key exception to general attitudes of the British towards immigrants, welcoming them into her lodgings and giving further welcome to Michael, though thoughtful responses pointed out that she still holds prejudiced views, noted in her early patronising of Hortense. Queenie was effectively contrasted with Bernard and Mr Todd, while other candidates referred to episodes with American soldiers and Gilbert's and Hortense's attempts to gain work, while many candidates noted the prevalence of racism is the reason for Queenie giving away her baby at the end of the novel.
- (b) More successful answers on the passage identified ways in which Levy creates a contrast in the first paragraph between before and after the bombing, specifically 'lulled drowsy' and 'kip in Armageddon'. Other candidates noted the use of dialogue to dramatise the effects of the bombing, picking out the warden's disorientation, and such metaphors as 'the displaced intestines of buildings', presenting the ravaged buildings as bodies. There were useful comments on the verbs used by Levy, such as 'Coughing', 'spewing', 'teetering', 'gushing', 'crunching', giving Queenie's narration its characteristic vigour. Some well-developed responses noted the passage's development, moving from the physically ruined city buildings to the lost and bereft people in the classroom, trying to negotiate their way through official bureaucracy while dispossessed of everything. Answers which relied on narrative summary or paraphrase showed knowledge of the content of the passage but missed the many opportunities to explore the details of Levy's writing in the excerpt.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) The most popular pairing of stories for this question was 'The Destroyers' with 'The Taste of Watermelon', though other stories used by candidates included 'How it Happened', 'The Rain Horse', 'The Hollow of Three Hills' and 'Elephant', though it has to be said that some of these latter choices lent themselves less successfully to fruitful discussion. 'The Destroyers' provided plenty of opportunity for candidates to explore the presentation of violent actions, which they achieved with care and meticulousness. This paired well with 'The Taste of Watermelon', as both stories explore the central characters' desire for acceptance within a peer group. Explicit descriptions of violent acts were closely discussed in some cases, with some essays analysing the boys' destruction of the watermelon as similar to the physical abuse of a human being with 'knife penetrated', meat muddled' and 'scattered seed'. The unconscious role of the lorry driver providing the *coup de grâce* after the boys' preparation in 'The Destroyers' was noted, while some candidates recalled the stages of the crashing vehicle in 'How it Happened' in impressive detail.
- (b) While Examiners saw a number of essays which presented a view that the father in 'The Fly in the Ointment' is a caring and sensitive parent, most focused clearly on his inconsistencies, with some

detailed examination of his 'two faces'. Strong answers looked carefully at the ways in which Pritchett presents these two different sides of the father, noting the contrast between 'soft warm and [...] innocent' and 'shrewd, scared and hard'. They also noted the son's response, as he 'leaned back' when his father 'leaned forward' and many saw a self-destructiveness in the father's work ethic, greed and self-deception. Candidates who were alert to detail picked up how his deceptive appearance is emphasised by his 'smiling' 'waistcoat', 'easy coat' and 'legs', the image confirmed with the deceptive 'winks of light on the shining shoes'. Much attention was paid to the dialogue, considering the imperatives in the father's speech, his claims for himself and his denigration of his son.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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

Key messages

- Personal response is evidenced in answers through the choice of particular moments to discuss and the quality of argument, rather than by giving an emotional reaction.
- If choosing **(b)** questions, candidates need to focus on the detail in the passage given, particularly with reference to its dramatic qualities.
- Candidates should use caution when introducing links between a text and an author's life.

General comments

The vast majority of candidate knew their texts well. At the lower levels there was some temptation to narrate the story of the plays, and this, of course, demonstrates knowledge of a very limited kind. Better responses were able to make links across the text and show that they understood how the various parts of a text make up the whole. On these papers, context is not required and there is a real danger that candidates will digress towards speculation about the writers or to generalisation about the conditions in which the text was produced. The central focus of any answer must be on the play as a work of art which creates its own energies and parameters.

Understanding of texts varied widely. The strongest responses made detailed reference to text, focusing on language, structure and form in order to demonstrate their awareness of how a literary work is constructed. At this level, there was always a clear understanding that plays are written to be performed, that they work dramatically, not simply as words on the page. It is worth emphasising that the whole examination is about the 'how' of a literary text, so a writer's techniques will always be the central focus of any top level response. Candidates who want to deal more generally in terms of theme without close reference do not reach the top levels of the mark scheme. The clue is often in the question with key words such as 'presentation' or 'dramatic presentation,' and candidates should heed these prompts in their response.

Literature means nothing if it does not evoke a personal response. This is at times misunderstood by candidates as a matter of emoting about a text or bringing in their own world view. In this paper, it is judged by the quality of what examiners discern to be the candidate's own insights into a text. This is often revealed by the strength of a view expressed – for instance, with strong textual support – or by the analysis of particular examples in a way that is original or well-expressed.

Candidates and teachers should heed that this exam is about more than just literary appreciation. It obliges candidates to gather together their insights and weave them into a relevant response to the question asked. It follows, therefore, that candidates who plan their responses and take a strategic, targeted view towards the selected question tend to achieve the highest results. The best answers are always closely argued, with points emerging in a structured way. With this in mind, candidates should always be wary about taking a line-by-line approach to **(b)** type questions, as this tends to lead to focus on the early parts of the passage, with less attention being paid to latter parts as candidates run out of time. The extracts chosen are often part of a dramatic arc, so there is a need to demonstrate how the details of the passage – however chosen – are contributing to the development of the scene as a whole. In particular, with weaker candidates there is a temptation towards narration, often at great length. With **(a)** type answers, candidates need to be careful to provide focus on a few specific moments in the play, rather than settling for generalities. Candidates should be encouraged to think hard about selectivity, and about saying things straightforwardly and concisely. The longest essays at times receive marks at the lower end of the mark scheme; to achieve higher marks, these responses need to demonstrate a level of complexity of understanding of the text.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Tennessee Williams: *Sweet Bird of Youth*

- (a) Candidates soon warmed to the similarities between the two figures, but also pointed out that the power relationship works in favour of Boss. Many responses also showed how Boss had shaped Tom's views and prejudices, with views about toxic masculinity often to the fore in discussions about the pair's relationship with Heavenly. Responses at the lower end of the mark scheme often drifted towards discussions of the Finlay family as a whole and at times allowed Heavenly a prominence that is not implied by the question.
- (b) Most responses focused on the presentation of Chance. There was, of course, much to say about other aspects of the scene, and candidates would have done well to give these aspects more attention. Chance's loudness, his incoherence, his lack of control through falling off his chair all provided comment. Some responses linked the passage to wider thematic matters in the play, often discussing either the presentation of failure or the power and influence of Boss over other people's lives. Wide-ranging answers often took in the unsettling role of the Heckler, or the complexities of Miss Lucy's responses. Less coherent responses often tracked the passage without really being able to see how Williams is manipulating an audience's response at this point.

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*

- (a) At the lower levels, responses often focused on treating the characters separately, rather than on the relationship between the two. A few responses showed little understanding of the social status of these characters, despite their titles. Candidates who took on the prompt 'dramatic presentation' were able to discuss various ways in which this pairing provides much humour for the play. Many candidates saw the relationship as mutually beneficial, which is a misreading that cannot be supported, as Sir Toby is clearly in charge throughout. Some candidates linked this exploitation of love to other areas of the play, often to good effect. There was often useful discussion of the way Sir Toby sets up the duels in the play to comic effect. Candidates who dismissed and forgave Sir Toby's vicious selfishness as merely good-hearted banter would have done well to consider the less admirable view of his character.
- (b) Most responses recognised this as a crucial moment in the action of the play and were able to identify some of the ways in which the confusion over Viola as Cesario contributes both dramatically and thematically. In less secure answers, the focus was often on speculation about Antonio's relationship with Sebastian, variously interpreted, and often in sexual terms. This takes away from the sincerity of positive and negative feelings of affection that Antonio expresses in the passage itself, married to his disappointment in Viola's seeming betrayal of him. The best responses saw that the whole thrust of the scene leads towards the last line – 'He nam'd Sebastian' – and its implications for the resolution of the plot. Candidates largely missed the opportunity to discuss the issue of the aborted, comic duel, despite its very visual presence early in the scene. Although there is no need to be comprehensive in an answer, candidates need to be conscious that excessive focus on just one aspect of a passage (in this case, Antonio's relationship with Sebastian) can distort a response.

Question 3 William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 2*

- (a) The best responses were able to use particular moments in the play – exchanges with Falstaff, with the dying king, or with the Lord Chief Justice, perhaps – in order to demonstrate how Shakespeare turns Hal from playboy to King during the course of the play. There was often discussion of how his language gradually becomes more controlled and more authoritative during the play. Less good responses tended to work in the area of character analysis, with a significant tendency towards narration. Some of the best answers were able to demonstrate how Hal's early misbehaviour demonstrates his common touch, something that his father does not have and which he can exploit as king.
- (b) Most responses acknowledged that this passage gives an insight into the rebels' point of view and into Northumberland's motivation. Less secure was an understanding of why Shakespeare places the argument against rebellion in Lady Percy's mouth and of the raw emotion felt by the women in the face of Northumberland's blind belief in family honour, whatever the consequences. A few responses dealt with the women's resentment ('do what you will') that private grief is the price of wilful public stupidity.

Question 4 Brian Friel: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) Virtually all responses showed understanding of Gar's different personas, and most were able to characterise Public's shy taciturnity and Private's exuberance. Better responses went further and drew attention to the fact that it is the connection between the two that gives the audience a complete impression of Gar. So Private Gar is not merely a sign of Gar's imaginative inner life; rather he is the voice of the unconscious mind too, as it explores the dilemma Gar faces in going to America. There is much bravado in Private Gar — the over-loud Americanisms, the over-ambitious scenarios about his future — which is, in turn compromised by an audience's certainty that the shy, diffident man they see as Public Gar will never turn himself into the extrovert of his imaginings. Many candidates brought this out through reference to Gar's flashbacks over Kate and her father, where he is seen as incapable of radical action. The best responses looked closely at the detail of the text and were able to characterise both Gars in terms of language and action.
- (b) Aunt Lizzy's desire for Gar to be the son she never had was made clear in most responses. Less secure was the need to recognise that this scene is another of Gar's flashbacks, meaning that it may not be an exact, impartial account of what actually happened. What is clear is that Lizzy dominates the relationship – Gar hardly speaks during the exchange – and that her sentimental attachment to him, visualised through a blur of alcohol, is something that perhaps gives Gar pause for thought on the night before his departure. Some answers demonstrated an awareness of how Gar's silence and Private's non-appearance in the scene is telling, as it might suggest an unwillingness to commit himself to living with Aunt Lizzy, or awe at witnessing other kinds of relationships – and successful ones, at that – which he could be a part of. Many responses suggested that to go from living with the introverted S.B to the more extroverted Aunt Lizzy would prove a real challenge for Gar. Some responses provided focus on Lizzy's relationship with her much harangued husband to support this point. A small number of weaker responses conflated Lizzy and Madge.

Question 5 Wole Soyinka: *Death and the King's Horseman*

- (a) Most responses focused on the way that dishonour is presented in relation to Elesin. Candidates were often able to contrast Elesin's selfishness with the nobility of his son, Olunde, who behaves honourably despite it not being his duty to do so. The best responses showed an ability to widen out the discussion to see that issues of honour and saving face are also relevant to the British colonialists. There were some very good answers that linked matters of dishonour to feelings of shame as a personal tragedy. The role of Iyaloja as the voice of conscience, both personal and tribal, was often usefully discussed. Responses that focused on particular moments in the text where the issue is most vividly presented did best. Lower level responses often produced a character study of Elesin, with tangential reference to the particulars of the question.
- (b) Responses showed clear understanding of the context of this scene within the wider play. Lower end answers gave an account of what is going on and commented on some of the ways in which tensions within the British ruling class are presented here. Better responses showed more awareness of the tone of the scene, of the Resident's patronising of Jane, of his barbed hectoring remarks to Pilkings ('nose to the ground Pilkings, nose to the ground,' and 'It mustn't Pilkings. It mustn't'), and his use of 'we' to make his point about how the image of Empire must be sustained at all times. The best responses were also sensitive to Pilkings's sarcasm ('Sleeping peacefully at home') and to the Resident's complete imperviousness to cultural/religious beliefs ('What has pork to do with it?'). There were many interesting comments on the way in which Amusa is present but mute throughout, a telling feature of the scene in itself.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52
Shakespeare and other pre-20th
Century Texts

Key messages

Candidates should give a brief context when answering a passage option **(b)** question.

Candidates who choose to answer passage option **(b)** questions on one of the poetry selections should include some reference to the rest of the selection.

Candidates writing about poetry should refer to poetic form as well as language and imagery.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing a sound knowledge of the set texts. There was however an increase in the number of rubric errors compared to last year, with some candidates selecting two **(a)** options, discursive essays. Candidates should ensure that they are aware of the requirements of the rubric. Most candidates expressed their answers appropriately, though some weaker answers used an informal style, which can limit precision.

There were three specific issues to be addressed in this session:

- (a)** Candidates should give a brief context when answering a passage option **(b)** question. It is important that candidates summarise briefly the textual context to any given passage before they begin their in-depth critical analysis. This approach will enable them to consider the passage as part of the wider text and also to explain the significance of the passage in terms of the development of the key concerns in the text. This also will enable the candidate to link the individual points made in the close analysis of the detail of the passage to such ideas as the development of the plot, the methods of characterisation and any recurring themes or symbols. It is also a good way of revealing knowledge and understanding of the wider text.
- (b)** Candidates who choose to answer passage option **(b)** questions on one of the poetry selections should include some reference to the rest of the selection. If the given passage is an extract from a longer poem, the candidate should also refer briefly to the rest of that poem. Candidates should select poems which are related to the given poem, perhaps by style, content or theme. This is important as it helps the candidate show their knowledge of the whole text. It also enables learners to develop their analysis into a fuller appreciation of the poet's methods and concerns and to show more developed understanding.
- (c)** Candidates writing about poetry should refer to poetic form as well as language and imagery. Many answers on poetry show candidates are able to discuss details of a poet's language choices and to unpick the effects of use of imagery. To improve, some candidates also need to discuss the effects of the poet's choices, such as verse form, rhythm and rhyme. It is worth stressing that it is the effects of these elements that should be the focus of such comments. When candidates point out there is a particular rhyme scheme for example, they should also consider what the effect of that poetic choice might be on the reader.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 William Shakespeare: *Richard II*

- (a) Nearly every answer revealed relevant knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to overlook the given quotation and to narrate the history of the rebellion, with better answers at this level able to explore some of the characters involved, though many focused exclusively on Bolingbroke. More successful answers considered the quotation and explored some of the ambiguities of Bolingbroke's statement. Moreover, better answers widened the view to consider other ambiguous characters, such as the Duke of York and Aumerle. Good answers tended to move beyond the characters and see the rebellion in more abstract terms, such as comparing Richard II's reliance on divine right to the Machiavellian way of ruling. Others developed this comparison of Richard and Henry and explored how Shakespeare presented the various political views through the contrasting characterisation. Such arguments, when supported by an awareness of different interpretations and apposite reference to the text, often did very well.
- (b) Most answers were able to give an appropriate context, though weaker responses were often confused as to whether Richard had yet been deposed or not. Less successful answers tended to summarise the passage, with some awareness of the underlying symbolic significance of the garden imagery. Better answers considered the details of the writing, exploring how the gardener's instructions reflect the common people's (and thereby the audience's) view of Richard's lack of genuine leadership. Others wondered how the gardener could be so up to date with the latest politics and the Queen so ignorant, with better answers exploring the dramatic significance of the contrast. Very good answers were able to develop arguments with careful analysis of the dramatic and poetic methods here, supported by precise references to the wider text.

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) Nearly all responses to this question revealed a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often summarised what happened to Hermione, often showing detailed textual knowledge. Better answers explored her relationships with the other characters, often noting the diversity of those who admired her, from Paulina to Mamillius. Good answers used the given quotation to consider the character's dramatic role, in terms of structure, plot and the wider characterisation, usually of Leontes, but also of Paulina and Perdita. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to the text, understanding of Shakespeare's dramatic methods and awareness of other interpretations of the text.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper, with most candidates able to give an appropriate context. Weaker answers tended to either paraphrase the passage or to give a more general essay on Paulina. Better answers explored her role here in revealing Leontes's character and her representation as a woman. Some answers developed this by considering Shakespeare's use of the contrasting language and imagery of Paulina and Leontes, often noting how this might affect an audience's view of Hermione as well as Leontes. Good answers noted the dramatic intensity of the scene, the use of the baby for example, though others explored the near comedy of some of the exchanges. Very good answers developed such points with close analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic choices and apposite reference to the wider text.

Question 3 Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey*

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened in the different locations, such as the Abbey or Bath. Better answers linked this into Austen's methods of developing the reader's response to Catherine and those around her. Good answers further developed this by exploring how Austen used these characterisation methods to also develop the concerns and themes of the text, such as friendship, marriage and attitudes to wealth. Other answers considered how the settings compared and

contrasted. Very good answers supported such arguments with apposite quotation and some consideration of Austen's style, especially the language and tone.

- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the general context to this passage and to some extent considered what is revealed about Catherine and Isabella here. Weaker answers offered a summary of the relationships between Catherine and James and Isabella, often with little attention to the detail of the passage. Better answers considered Austen's methods of characterisation in detail, exploring the use of dialogue and the contrasting attitudes to wealth, for example. Answers which looked closely at language often did well, noticing for example the beginnings of maturity in Catherine and how Isabella reveals her true self in her disappointment. Good answers also noted how Isabella's reaction to money issues is a foreshadowing of the General's later in the novel. Where such points were developed with precise reference to the wider text and considered other possible interpretations, the answers did very well.

Question 4 **Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights***

- (a) Nearly every essay revealed relevant, often detailed, knowledge of the text, with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise characters, which were representative of love or hate, with many focusing on Heathcliff and his relationships with Hindley and Linton, contrasted to his love for Cathy. Better answers saw how Brontë used contrasting settings. There were many good, detailed explorations of how love and hate were intertwined by Brontë, with many citing Hareton and young Cathy as positive examples, contrasted with, for example, Heathcliff and Isabella. Many candidates revealed very good knowledge of and engagement with the text, the best of which explored the text as a construct, considering Brontë's use of language, setting and characterisation, as revealed in her presentation of love and hate in the text.
- (b) This was a popular question in Section B, with nearly every answer able to give a relevant context, the death of Heathcliff, though some weaker responses were confused as to the precise point this took place in the novel. Weaker answers often paraphrased the passage or made general points about Heathcliff and sometimes Nellie, here and elsewhere in the text. More successful responses focused on Brontë's development of the reader's response to Heathcliff, even at the end of his life. Good answers focused on Brontë's choices of language and imagery, often noting Nellie's role as participant and narrator, and how Brontë uses Joseph to manipulate the reader's response to Heathcliff's death. Where such points were supported by precise reference to the wider text and by an understanding of other interpretations, the answers often did very well.

Question 5 **Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale***

- (a) Weaker answers were mostly able to find relevant material to address the task, often summarising the loyalty shown by different characters in the text. Better answers considered how Chaucer's presentation of the different kinds of loyalty through contrasting characters. Good answers also saw loyalty as one of a number of interrelated and at times opposing concerns, including honesty, chastity and chivalry. Some good answers also considered the layered narration, seeing Chaucer's concerns as perhaps separate from those of the narrator in the tale. Very good answers developed such ideas with appropriate reference to language and imagery and an awareness of the poetic effects created.
- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to see this as a key moment in the poem, when Aurelius is first introduced. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write too generally about Aurelius and what he did in the text as a whole. Better answers focused on the detail of the passage. Many responses explored Chaucer's methods of introducing Aurelius, with some seeing the description as humorous. Some good answers explored the narrator. Essays did well when comments were supported by precise reference to the wider text and with some detailed analysis of the style, especially the use of language and imagery.

Question 6 **Thomas Hardy: *Tess Of The D'Urbervilles***

- (a) Nearly every answer had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss this topic relevantly. Weaker answers concentrated on Tess, Angel and Alec, often summarising what each character did. Better answers explored their contrasting behaviour, as well as the selfishness of Alec. Good responses often referred to the influence of families, contrasting Tess's and Alec's mothers for example. Very good answers analysed some of the methods Hardy uses to present these contrasting attitudes, especially language and imagery, often supporting these points with appropriate reference to the text and a recognition of other interpretations. Few answers though were comfortable with discussing narrative methods, such as voice or structure, and this was a limiting factor in some responses.
- (b) Almost every answer recognised this context for this passage, though some weaker answers were confused as to the precise point this occurs. Nearly all answers demonstrated a secure knowledge of the events leading up to Tess's return home, though few referenced her pregnancy. Better answers saw the contrasting attitudes of mother and daughter, with many either surprised or horrified by Joan's lack of understanding and her manipulation of her daughter. Good answers explored the language and in particular Hardy's use of dialect. Very good answers also analysed the narrative techniques in detail, showing how the various effects are created through the dialogue, the structure and the narrative voice. Such answers did very well when the points were developed with apposite, precise references to the passage and the wider text.

Question 7 **Andrew Marvell: *Selected Poems***

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, with some unable to link it to the rest of the poem or the wider selection. Better answers explored how Marvell presents the tears and the eyes as contrasting through his use of language. Others explored the use of imagery in detail, particularly images drawn from nature, with some developing ideas by reference to other poems, such as 'On a Drop of Dew' and 'The Fair Singer'. Good responses explored the detail of the poem, noting for example, the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas and moods. Answers which explored the poetic structure and rhyme scheme in detail with apt reference to the rest of the selection, often did very well.

Question 8 **Percy Bysshe Shelley: *Selected Poems***

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Some weaker answers approached the question as though responding as to an unseen poem, with a consequent lack of understanding or context. Better answers showed understanding of the meaning of the poem and were able to relate it to other poems such as 'The Mask of Anarchy'. Good answers considered what this poem reveals about Shelley's attitudes to rulers and to time. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the poetic methods, such as language, sonnet form and rhyme, and their effects, the answers often did well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Candidates should bear in mind that while knowledge of the plot or subject matter is essential, questions at this level require understanding and analysis of the ways writers shape meaning. This involves consideration of form, structure, language and dramatic effects.
- Candidates should read the question carefully and ideally make a brief plan before attempting an answer. They should avoid reiterating answers to questions they have practised, as they are unlikely to address the given question directly. Addressing the question from the outset is more effective than writing an introduction that summarises the text and its themes.
- Candidates need to demonstrate good knowledge of characters, their relationship to others and their chief role in each text.
- Once a point has been made and supported with comment and analysis it is important to move on. The best answers are well developed with a range of different points.
- In answers to passage questions, candidates need to bear in mind two requirements: to analyse the ways the writer has shaped meaning within the passage, paying close attention to features of language, form and structure; to consider how characteristic the writing is of the whole text or selection of poems/plays.
- Responses to the passage questions should contain short quotations to enable detailed analysis of the effects of language choice and structure. Candidates should avoid copying out large quotations.
- For shorter references to a text, clearer reading is facilitated by quoting an individual line or part of it than by referring to a line number or by giving the first and last word of the quotation e.g. 'I...sister'.

General comments

Most candidates expressed ideas clearly and were able to structure essays coherently with appropriate division into paragraphs. Some answers were very well expressed, showing evidence of detailed knowledge and good engagement with texts, contexts and critical opinions. Except for in a few examples, communication was mostly clear.

There were hardly any rubric infringements, with almost all candidates attempting two questions. They nearly always appeared to have allocated sufficient time to each question. The few who did not complete their answers had either written long introductions, spent much time on biographical details or had laboured some points in their answer, repeating the same idea in slightly different ways where it would have been more effective to move on to a new point.

It would be to the advantage of some candidates to consider appropriate expression for literature essays. Use of colloquial language strikes a jarring note, and the Mark Scheme states that at Level 3 expression is expected to be 'appropriate' and at the very highest level expression should also be 'accomplished'.

Most candidates who quoted critical opinions made use of them as part of the argument in a convincing way, and used criticism that was relevant. Candidates who write on Eliot and Williams could generally improve their answers by making more use of this – there is much accessible and available literary criticism on these works. The highest achieving candidates also employed critical approaches such as Marxism, Feminism or Post-Colonialism, which are useful tools in considering many texts.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE: *Americanah*

High attaining candidates moved nimbly around the text, using short, appropriate quotations and demonstrating an overview of themes and concerns. Lower achieving candidates tended to show less command of detailed reference while still showing some general knowledge of concerns.

- (a) The key words in this question were 'ways', 'effects' and 'role'. Most successful answers addressed all three of these aspects. They saw Kosi as a foil to Ifemelu and some viewed her as an example of the kind of Nigerian woman mentioned in the novel who marries a man who can afford to keep her in a lavish lifestyle. Some made comparisons between her and Uju. The light colour of her skin was identified as significant in the context of the theme of colour. Kosi was also identified as a plot device, obstructing the reunion of Obinze and Ifemelu and increasing the tension in the final chapters of the novel. Weaker answers provided character sketches, often with only general illustration or assertion, treating Kosi as a real person, rather than as a construct and with little consideration of the ways Adichie shapes the reader's response to her. Well-constructed answers showed a balance of condemnation of the materialistic aspects of Kosi and sympathy for her predicament, with appropriate support. Some candidates were carried away by moral disapproval – either of Kosi's shallowness or of Obinze's 'white man behaviour' and while some consideration of these aspects was appropriate, it was not beneficial to candidates who moved away from the text and spent too much time on them.
- (b) This passage was attempted with widely varying success. Nearly all candidates identified the theme of racism which clearly dominates the passage. High achieving candidates made detailed connections to the wider text. The concern with hair and body image was reflected in the description of the 'large-hipped' Haitian lady with the Afro hairstyle. Ifemelu's outspoken behaviour in this scene was seen as more typical of her blogs than her usual social behaviour. She was also identified as a mouthpiece for Adichie. Her reference to mixed race relationships was linked to her affair with Curt and the comments made by strangers, such as the waitress in the restaurant or the man in the shop who mentioned 'jungle' in relation to Ifemelu. The dramatic effect of the repetition of 'that's a lie', the use of rhetorical questions, profane language, the ironic reference to 'nice liberal friends' and the contemptuously dismissive tone of 'blah blah blah', all linked to Ifemelu's intoxicated state, were noted and helped candidates to achieve higher marks. Other responses suggested that Ifemelu's message about the tendency to keep quiet and deny the existence of racism seemed borne out by the reaction of her fellow guests and the fact that she felt the need to send an apology later. Ifemelu's claim that colour was not an issue in Nigeria was disputed by some candidates who remembered the advice given to Obinze to find a white manager to ensure success of a company in Nigeria. Some made the minor error of thinking Obama had just been elected President, rather than being selected as the Democratic Party's candidate, but more serious evidence of lack of detailed knowledge was the confusion between Blaine and Curt, some believing Blaine to be white. Weaker answers were simply narrative accounts of the passage, often paraphrased, or general personal reflection condemning racial prejudice with little direct reference to the passage.

Question 2

ELEANOR CATTON: *The Rehearsal*

Candidates dealt well in treating this text as a construct, and use the phrase 'Catton shows/presents' to good effect. This could be because the structure of the text allows them as readers to be distanced from the characters. Many candidates viewed the theme of adolescence and the problem of finding and establishing one's individuality as one with which they could identify.

- (a) Candidates took the opportunity offered by the question to write about the narrative perspective of Stanley, the struggle to find a persona, his naivety at the Theatre of Cruelty and his impersonation of his father. The Drama school teachers with their heartless and cynical attitudes, their attempts to 'break down' the students and the demand that they should share their most intimate moments provided a contrast with the saxophone teacher who elicits intimate information from her students and manipulates them in a more subtle way. Many candidates revealed a need for a firmer grasp of

the details of this text by confusing the Drama school with Abbey Grange. While comparisons were valid and the central scandal of Victoria and Mr Saladin is appropriated by the Drama school, involving much speculation in their rehearsal for the play, the two establishments needed to be seen as distinct from each other. The most successful answers paid attention to the key words 'ways' and 'effects'.

- (b) Candidates responding to this passage question took the opportunity to discuss roles, performance and identity. The narrative perspective was correctly identified by some with some wider reference, showing how the narrative perspective shifts at different points in the novel. The use of words relating to performance and role playing were linked to the central concerns of the text. There was some exploration of the significance of descriptive details such as Isolde's chain. The attraction of her proximity to the scandal was discussed and comparisons were made between her victimhood and that of Bridget. Candidates generally needed to make more connections to the wider text, such as Bridget later being 'written out' like a superfluous character in a soap opera. There was some analysis of the striking comparison of the girl playing Bridget to a 'rind of raw bacon shrinking away from the heat of the pan' and the adjectives 'virginal' and 'sullied' as well as the 'self-loathing' of Julia. Higher attaining candidates referenced the observational skills of the saxophone teacher as an extension of her habit of 'watching', looking out 'over the rooftops and the clouds', but also commented on her own assumption of a role as she 'smoothes her trouser leg' and prepares for the next candidate. Her 'black leaf' tea was seen as evidence of her sinister characterisation.

Question 3

T.S ELIOT: *Four Quartets*

Responses to this question demonstrated candidates' skills of analysis and the ability to shape a coherent reading, with some displays of originality of interpretation. Candidates showed engagement with some of the religious and philosophical ideas expressed in the poems, but were less inclined to comment on the ways Eliot shapes meaning.

- (a) Most candidates who answered this question demonstrated some detailed knowledge of *Four Quartets*. They identified a variety of symbols including the religious symbols such as fire, water and the dove as well as less obvious ones such as the bird in *Burnt Norton*, symbolising various entities like freedom or the soul. The 'dark' in the third section of *East Coker* was interpreted in several ways, including death, purgatory or just a state of godless despair or ignorance. An overview of the four poems suggested a journey representing the journey of the soul. There was a great deal to choose from here with the proviso that the candidate could justify the choice of symbol with some extended reference and explanation rather than simply asserting that one thing represented another. Thus, the garden in *Burnt Norton* is referred to as 'our first world', enabling it to be interpreted as the garden of Eden or a place of childhood innocence and so a representation of childhood itself. High attaining candidates made connections between various parts of the poems such as the rose featuring at the beginning of *Burnt Norton* and at the end of *Little Gidding*. Some less convincing answers claimed to find symbols relating to the First or Second World Wars.
- (b) Candidates who attempted this passage question were usually able to identify its concern with time past and the ways in which we interpret the past and its significance. This was linked by some to the general meditation on time running through all the poems. In stronger responses, candidates selected phrases like 'superficial notions of evolution' in relation to the 'pattern of the past' and 'development'. They made links between 'not the experience of one life only but of many generations' and the 'earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth' of those 'long since under the earth' in *East Coker*. They observed that the writer is carefully thinking out and trying to explain complicated ideas conveyed by tentative phrases such as 'it seems', the repetition of 'meaning' the use of additional phrases in brackets to supplement his statements and his reiteration of ideas already mentioned, 'I have said before'. They explored the impact of adding to 'the backward look' with 'the backward half-look' and some associated 'the agony of others, nearly experienced' with injuries sustained in air raids during the Second World War. The 'sudden illumination' was appropriately linked to other areas of the quartets such as 'knowing the place for the first time' and the whole passage seen as part of the meditation on the nature of time past resolved in *Little Gidding* with the conclusion that 'history is a pattern of timeless moments'. Less successful answers explained or paraphrased the passage without commenting on the ways Eliot shapes the meaning or on its connection to other areas of the poem.

Question 4

ATHOL FUGARD: *Township Plays*

Most candidates demonstrated ways in which these plays are still relevant to today's world despite being set during the apartheid era in South Africa. Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the context of these plays and usually deployed their knowledge appropriately in both the essay and the passage question. A small number of candidates referred to *The Coat* in their answers though this play is not included in the set texts for the syllabus. While it is perfectly acceptable to use the play as wider reference, it should not be selected as one of the two texts under discussion in **Question (a)**.

- (a) Most candidates paid attention to the key idea of 'dignity' and demonstrated sound understanding of its implications. Those who chose to answer on only two plays tended to answer in more depth and detail than those who chose to use all four plays. A good compromise was to base the answer mainly on a detailed consideration of two plays while making some passing reference to the other two. Characters striving to maintain dignity were appropriately selected, with the use of supporting details and quotations. Feminist interpretations viewed Rebecca's decision to leave Willie as a justified decision to maintain or reassert her dignity. Similarly, feminist interpretation was applied to *Nongogo* and Queenie's predicament, particularly the inability of Johnny to accept Queenie's past when his own is equally shameful. Willie's attempt to educate himself was seen as a failure by some as he appears to gain nothing but disillusionment, reflected in his use of language, 'Bloody Ass! That's what I think of a B.A.' though most viewed his actions at the end of the play as heroic. Minor characters such as Pinkie and Blackie were relevantly incorporated, though some candidates thought Shark and his gang were white. The only white character in *No-Good Friday* is Father Higgins. *The Island* proved a particularly apt choice for this question as Winston initially views the role of Antigone, a woman, as a loss of his dignity. More successful responses considered effects of language and dramatic effects such as the use of the coconut shells for Antigone's costume and the laughter they provoke, humiliating Winston. They noted the effect of the change in register from 'take your Antigone and shove it up your arse' to 'I go now to my living death because I honoured those things to which honour belongs'. Less successful responses usually identified examples of characters maintaining dignity, but were confined to narrative accounts of plot.
- (b) Strong candidates demonstrated detailed, relevant contextual knowledge here, especially in relation to the pass-book system and Ciskeian Independence. They were able to link the role play of Buntu to the play within the play in *The Island* and the theme of identity was linked to the photography sessions. Most explored the central issue of the passage, Sizwe's change of identity to that of the dead man Robert Zwelinzima, though some thought Sizwe was the dead man. Some interestingly connected the theft of Robert's identity with the theft of identity implied by the pass-book system. Better answers dealt with the religious significance of the opening, seeing it as symbolic of Sizwe receiving his new identity in a form of christening. 'We welcome you into the flock of Jesus'. The abrupt change from the role of priest to policeman highlights the lack of humanity of those in authority, as enacted by Buntu as he exchanges his benevolent words of blessing for very short commands. Attention to stage directions enabled candidates to consider the dramatic effects of the rough behaviour of the policeman in contrast with Sizwe's subservient demeanour as he stands quietly looking at his feet. There was consideration of Sizwe's reluctance to lose his identity, the emphasis on the importance of family and the need to sacrifice all to keep them alive. Buntu's suggestion that the black population are complicit in their own humiliation exemplified by 'Ja Baas' and the significance of the story of Buntu's father's hat, a symbol of his dignity, were discussed in the best responses.

Question 5

KAZUO ISHIGURO: *Never Let Me Go*

This text elicited engaged responses from candidates, who showed an awareness of the topicality of cloning in the 1990s and of its moral implications. As well as responding to the plight of the clones, candidates extended the idea of 'otherness' to include those they perceived as less privileged or to the human condition in general. The most successful answers linked arguments and opinions to the text and the question, rather than writing general, impassioned personal condemnations of the ill-treatment or lack of humanity implied by a system of alienation.

- (a) Most candidates selected relevant material to discuss the importance of art and creativity in the novel. They extended their consideration beyond drawing, painting, poetry and music to Ruth's fantasies and sometimes unconvincingly to areas such as sexual activity at the Cottages. Some

interesting points were made about the ways creativity can act as an outlet for frustrated feelings, explaining the reason for Tommy's tantrums as he is unable to express himself through art. The importance of the gallery, the uncertainty and rumour that surrounds it and the failure of Tommy to produce acceptable works of art at Hailsham were discussed. Some candidates saw Tommy's failure as a refusal to conform to the system and the bullying he experiences as indicative of the way the vast majority try to force the rest into conformity, the laughter at his elephant indicating that he is more creative than his fellow clones who conform to rigid conventions rather than having original ideas. The collecting of the works of art for submission to the gallery was identified as practice for the clones in giving away items that were precious to them and in some way part of their identity in preparation for the donation of their organs. The Judy Bridgewater tape was relevantly considered as a poignant reminder of the infertility of the clones. Good answers took into account the way Ishiguro sets up false hope for the reader as well as for the clones in their hope of obtaining referrals through evidence of their sincerity of feeling demonstrated in works of art. Tommy's final outburst after the revelation that works of art were only to prove they had souls at all was viewed as his final exasperation with the system.

- (b) Most candidates were able to place the passage in context, explaining the significance of the pencil case and the cause of Kathy's distress. The effects of the first person narrative were discussed by many and linked to other areas of the text. The best answers focussed on the way the writer presents the dynamics of relationships within the enclosed atmosphere of Hailsham. Kathy colludes with Ruth's lies in the same way she does years later in the discussion about deferrals. Ruth's demeanour in this passage was contrasted with her usual assertiveness while the willingness of the other candidates to accept Kathy's statement by nodding in agreement was seen as symptomatic of the passive acceptance of the clones and their conformity to an oppressive system especially when being told of 'a mystery'. Weaker responses tended to re-tell the passage or drift into expressions of pity for the clones or anger about the process of farming their organs, and would have been improved if they had related ideas more clearly to the passage. Some noted the element of suspense introduced at the end of the passage with the mention of the missing tape, some speculating that Ruth might have been to blame for its disappearance.

Question 6

DEREK WALCOTT: Selected Poems

Though the context of the colonial history of the Caribbean is essential for understanding much of Walcott's work, candidates should take care not to assume that the enslavement of many islanders during the colonial period is the central topic of every poem.

- (a) The presentation of death in Walcott's poetry offers a wide range of poems from which to select. *Oddjob*, *a Bull Terrier* was a popular choice. Candidates who achieved high marks recognised the extension of the theme of death from that of a friend's pet dog to the concept of death in general and its accompanying silence. They paid attention to the key words 'how' and 'to what effect' in discussing such features as the poet's characteristic use of description of weather and scenery to evoke mood and the structure of the poem with its short, end-stopped lines. *Sea Canes* is another obvious choice, where the poet laments the death of so many friends but again the landscape with sea canes 'the seraph lances of my faith' brings him comfort and reassurance, leading him to conclude that 'out of what is lost grows something stronger'. References to Walcott's religious faith and Methodist background were useful contextually. *The Walk* and *Lampfall* were relevantly selected, demonstrating the persona's temporary consideration of suicide. Other candidates selected less obvious forms of death, such as the death of poetic inspiration, also featuring in *The Walk*, the end of a love affair in *A Careful Passion* or the end of colonisation in *Ruins of a Great House*. The best responses always focussed on the way Walcott achieves effects rather than merely summarising the subject matter of the poems.
- (b) Candidates who answered this question usually offered a coherent reading. As links to the wider selection of poems were rare, many needed to explore more fully how characteristic this poem is of Walcott's presentation of the sea. The characterisation of Shabine was identified as a central feature of the poem through the use of West Indian dialect and the love of his homeland evoked in the descriptive language and exclamatory phrases such as 'I bless every town'. The veiled face of Shabine's deserted mistress, Maria Concepcion, was relevantly interpreted as a ghostly vision or a reference to the Virgin Mary. Connections could have been made with other poems describing the islands of the Caribbean, and 'the almond's shadow does not injure the sand' provided opportunities for links to other poems dealing with the history of colonisation and slavery in these

islands. Some candidates did not get as far as the end of the poem to discuss the significance of the 'road in white moonlight taking me home'. This could signify issues both with time management and with the line-by-line approach.

Question 7

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

Candidates performed across the whole range, some demonstrating a very impressive, detailed knowledge of the text and of critical opinions together with a very good understanding of Williams's dramatic methods, while others showed a general knowledge of plot and some response to characterisation. There was a tendency for some candidates to spend much time on biographical details such as the connection between Laura and Williams's sister, Rose. To improve responses, candidates need to show evidence of reading criticism, of which there is much now available. Additionally, they could take the opportunity to examine the text from a feminist or Marxist viewpoint. Some candidates made relevant contextual comment about the effects of the economic problems of the time or the American Dream, especially in relation to Jim.

- (a) The best answers focussed on 'the ways Williams presents' rather than on the causes of family tension. Some essays looked more like sociological studies of family problems than literary essays. Other candidates focussed too closely on the theme of escape, perhaps reflecting questions they had practised. While some of these ideas could have been usefully incorporated, they needed to be made relevant to the question. Candidates considered in detail the tensions existing between Amanda and each of her children with some relevant personal response, usually either blaming Amanda for over-zealous attempts to control her children's lives or sympathising with her predicament as a single mother. Those who focussed on 'ways of presenting' understood the necessity for quoting some of the language used by characters, such as 'you babbling old witch' or 'what is to become of us?', but also recognised the need to consider the claustrophobic atmosphere evoked by the stage setting with the 'dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield apartment', the dominating presence of Mr Wingfield's blown-up photograph and the use of the fire escape. The plastic theatre elements such as the legend on the screen 'Ave Maria', the red smoke which is in evidence during the quarrel between Tom and his mother, the knocking over of the glass ornaments and the scream emitted by Laura were all cited by candidates as examples of 'ways of presenting'.
- (b) Most candidates managed to place this scene contextually and showed some understanding of its significance, mainly in terms of its effect on Laura which was interpreted in various ways. The weakest answers were restricted to retelling of the scene with some commentary on the significance of 'Blue Roses' or the appearance of 'a souvenir' on the screen. More ambitious responses considered dramatic features such as the music, the stage directions such as Jim backing away from Laura after the kiss, and made connections between this scene and the wider text, such as the way both Tom (in earlier scenes) and Jim resort to cigarettes as a form of escape. The peal of laughter heard from Amanda was interpreted by some to indicate that she is eavesdropping, while others more convincingly saw it as an ironic indication of the gap between her expectations from the visit of this gentleman caller and the reality of the scene unfolding before the audience. Good responses focussed on the key words and the shaping of audience response, especially to Jim, and the apparent contradiction between his wish that Laura were his sister and the urge to kiss her on the lips. Some saw the 'sister' references as an implied criticism of Tom's careless treatment of Laura. Many viewed the end of the scene with Laura gazing at her broken glass ornament as symbolic of her broken-hearted condition. Others interpreted the end of the scene as an indication that the change of the ornament from a unicorn to an ordinary horse means that Laura has been made into an ordinary, normal person through her encounter with Jim. Those focussing on the key idea of audience response felt that Williams had shaped the response so that hopefulness and expectation of a happy outcome for Laura had shifted to disapproval of Jim for kissing her under false pretences and a pessimistic view of Laura's future.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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

Key messages

- Good answers show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write;
- Good answers focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and upon how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase;
- Good answers discuss how literary devices and techniques are used by the writers;
- Good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poems or passage are written, not simply to what is said;
- Good answers maintain a tight focus on the poems or passage throughout their response, and do not discuss other writers, other texts or other ideas.

General comments

'This was an enjoyable Paper to mark. Most candidates reacted positively to their choices of passage or poem, and it appeared that they were trying hard to respond to the various skills of the writers, rather than just to the story, pictures or scenes in front of them. There was also a greater awareness of genre than has often been the case in the past.' These words from one experienced examiner seem a good way to open a report on what was in many respects a very pleasing session, particularly the points about the writers' skills and genres; reliance upon narrative or paraphrase was much less prevalent than has sometimes been the case. To quote another examiner's words: *'The most successful answers showed evidence of close reading: they supported their views with judicious use of quotations and at the same time displayed an impressive amount of detailed, critical analysis, with appropriate use of technical vocabulary and sensitive appreciation of the effects of the writing. In these ways they were able to create sophisticated, personal, coherently argued responses which often showed how much they understood and relished the complexities of the writers' concerns and craft.'*

What these two examiners saw, and what their comments show, is that more candidates were determined to explore not just *what* each writer says, but *how* she or he says it, with clear focus on defined and well supported reference to particular literary techniques and skills. This was perhaps most noticeably the case in responses to the two poems and the piece of drama, the latter of which was often addressed with clear awareness that the extract was written to be seen and heard, as well as just written – it is a piece of theatre.

Many responses opened with a high emphasis upon which techniques were going to be focused on, and combined with closing paragraphs which simply echoed the introduction there was often less time for close critical exploration than might ideally have been the case. Nonetheless, the emphasis on technique was right, and encouraging to read.

A few candidates appeared to rely rather heavily upon some often relatively unusual literary terms; where such terms are used, the candidate must demonstrate confident understanding of what they mean, and more importantly they must properly illustrate not just when the terms are used, but also consider the impact that they have upon the reader or audience. It is worth at this point noting a few of the most frequent instances of this: many candidates used an expression such as 'the author also uses the literary device of diction', when of course all writers use words; many referred to 'literal devices' instead of 'literary devices'; and rather unusually, there was a frequent misuse of the word 'satire' instead of the much simpler and more correct

'criticism'. There was also evidence of confusion between the terms 'images' and 'imagery', between which there is a big and important difference.

There were no significant rubric infringements; just a very small number of candidates addressed only one question, and a handful of responses were clearly cut short by the pressure of time, but this almost never seriously weakened a response. Handwriting was again a concern, and in a few cases a serious concern; it is vital that candidates are aware that it is impossible to give reward to points made if they are not legible. All candidates should be reminded of the instruction on the front of the examination paper: '*You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers*'.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *The Unbelonging*

This passage was by far the most popular, and there were some very thoughtful and perceptive responses. A few appeared uncertain about the situation being described, sometimes seemingly unaware of exactly what Hyacinth is dreaming about, and indeed why she is doing so; but the great majority were clear that the first part of the passage shows Hyacinth's deep love for her old life in Jamaica, with repeated reference to the warmth, both literal and metaphorical, that she felt in her home island, contrasted vividly and painfully with the cold, again literal and metaphorical, of where she is now. A number of responses felt that Aunt Joyce and the yellow-skinned woman were the same person, and argued some quite convincing reasons for this, but most seemed confident that they were two entirely different people, the latter perhaps being Hyacinth's father's new wife or possibly housekeeper. Many referred to her as being the stereotypical evil stepmother, whose anger at the girl's bed-wetting is inhumane and cruel, and her final threat to 'Wait till your father gets home!' is unimaginably cruel, especially if, as many candidates suggested, the three people mentioned at the start of the passage were Hyacinth and her parents. The ominous closing sentence of the passage was frequently commented upon, with its frightening and almost military image suggesting an utterly different and humiliated Hyacinth.

Many candidates drew interesting attention to some possible foreshadowings and contrasts in the Jamaican dream: Hyacinth felt the warm air 'wrap her in well-being', whereas in London 'coldness enveloped her'; because of the heat, Hyacinth's back and under-arms had 'wet patches of sweat', whereas in reality she had wet herself and her bed; she was dreaming about the Independence parade, whereas in London she had lost all independence; Aunt Joyce had 'the usual smile on her face', totally unlike the cruel and animal-like appearance of the woman in London. Most candidates spent valuable time comparing the slow and lazy Jamaican descriptions, contrasting painfully with the harsh, colourless and bitter London ones. A number noted the irony of Hyacinth's name: she is in this respect neatly linked with the flower images in the Jamaican paragraphs, so brutally out of place in London. There is much to discuss, and most candidates found plenty.

A few – and this was also the case in responses to the poems – felt that the writer was actually discussing something, or some things, very far from what is written; at least one actually used the expression 'hidden meanings' as though the passage or poems are some kind of code that the writers want readers to decipher. The passage is probably not about slavery, nor about colonialism, though these ideas were at time sensibly mentioned and argued to good effect. One ingenious response saw the passage as an updating of a Greek myth, but while this was argued with some conviction it seemed unnecessarily complicated, in response to what is in fact quite a straightforward situation and narrative. Most candidates understood the situation being depicted, made brief but productive use of the title of the novel, and explored the contrast between the description of life in Jamaica in Hyacinth's dream and the harsh reality of her experience in London.

Question 2 *After the Winter and In time of silver rain*

The most significant and pleasing aspect of responses to the two poems was the fact that almost without exception candidates sustained a constant and often very thoughtful comparison between the two; a few did write about them separately, with a comparative summing-up, which is of course perfectly fine, but most moved with some fluency and ease between the two throughout the whole of their responses. This showed candidates' ability to see some *overall* similarities and differences, rather than just a sequence of discrete points of comparison or contrast. There were no responses which simply outlined what each poet says.

Having said this, there were some rather curious misreadings, especially of the first poem, which a surprising number seemed to feel was a very depressing poem about the hardships of winter, whereas surely the poet spends at least half the first stanza and the whole of the second thinking fondly about how life will become

warmer and happier once spring and summer arrive; the speaker and – presumably – his wife or lover will move southwards to an idyllic countryside and build a perfect cottage for a possibly mythical but certainly paradisiacal life, with bluebells and ferns that never fade – life there will be utterly flawless and content. Many noted the firmly consisted iambic rhythm of the two stanzas, with a steady and constant rhyme pattern, reflective perhaps of the poet's certainty about the future life that he will lead.

The second poem is strikingly different in structure and style, with no regular rhythm or rhyme, and with three uneven stanzas, the second being especially strange but powerful. The difference in its contents, noted by almost every response, lies in the fact that the whole poem is set in the present, and the present is spring; winter is implied in its opening, as 'the earth puts forth new life again', but the emphasis throughout is on what is happening now, and the impact that the silver rain has on nature and on humans. The word 'silver' was ignored by many, but several suggested that it refers to the richness that rain can bring, or even simply to its light colour – it is gentle rain, not stormy.

There are some unusual and even surreal images – butterflies have 'silken wings' in order to 'catch a rainbow cry', trees 'put forth new leaves to sing' – and some candidates found these quite hard to grasp or explain. The simplest ones suggested, probably rightly, that the poet deliberately mixes a number of senses to illustrate how rain and spring can affect everything, in ways that are not easily put into words. One or two made the interesting suggestion that there is a kind of musical quality about the final stanza, which affects our feelings and emotions but not easily our rational minds; the poem has indeed been set to music by more than one composer, though candidates were of course not expected to be aware of this. Much was often made of the repeated phrase in the middle of the poem, and especially the fact that 'Life' twice has an upper case 'L', while the third is lower case; it may be that the first two are deliberately suggestive of an almost unearthly, perhaps religious, sense, but the third, anticlimactically but actually very powerfully, says that rain affects everyday natural and human life too.

As noted in comments on **Question 1** there were some candidates who wanted the poems to be about something other than what they actually say: the 'hidden meaning' idea. The fact that one was published in 1919 and one in 1947 (published, note, not necessarily written) does not automatically mean that the poems are about society rebuilding at the end of a world war; there is nothing at all in either poem to support this idea. And probably less still is there support for arguing that in different ways the poems are both about human sexuality. Candidates would be much wiser to assume that poems and passages are actually and simply about what they say.

Question 3 Fail/Safe

This was the second most popular question, and two things are immediately worth saying: firstly there was a frequently clear awareness that this is a piece of drama, and that the actions shown in the stage directions are intended to suggest what an audience in the theatre will see and hear; almost all candidates noted this, sometimes implicitly but often with a clear understanding of the significance of movement. Secondly, it was very pleasing to see how few candidates spent time worrying about the title of the play; comments have often been made in past Reports about this, and about the fact that when an extract is set it may not have any obvious connection with the title of the whole text, and this is very much a case in point; candidates who tried to explain the title rarely spent this time valuably.

There were plenty of interesting thoughts about the relationship between the two characters, and about how this seems to change as the extract develops: there are moments when Jo is presented as a very unappealing and discourteous daughter (several assumed that Jo is male, but this did not in any way influence assessment), and Gwen as a weak and downtrodden mother, but by the end it is clear that neither view is wholly correct. Those few who thought that the final stage direction shows either that Jo is aiming to kill Gwen, or that Gwen is trying to kill Jo, were surely wrong in their views of the two.

The opening (*'in media res'* as many put it) is initially, and on the face of things, a quiet domestic picture: Gwen is preparing breakfast for her daughter, who has just returned from work. What this work is we are not told, but the idea given by some candidates that Jo, and indeed Gwen too, are prostitutes is nowhere even hinted at, so surely unhelpful. Jo is late, and Gwen has understandably been worried; Jo's responses to Gwen are certainly brusque, and the way she 'shoo's her off' in line 10 is arguably unnecessarily rude, but on the other hand she is 42 years old and Gwen could treat her as an adult rather than still as a child. But Jo's quite entertaining actions – pretending to be a strange person, and pretending to be typing – can either reinforce our dislike of her character, or show her trying to lessen the growing tension between her and Gwen. These actions were frequently seen by candidates as evidence of the extract's theatrical qualities, to be seen, shared, and perhaps laughed about.

There are moments of genuine sentiment in lines 27 and 29, and it may be that Jo coughs because she is truly moved by Gwen's loneliness, but her response (*'pushes her away'*) and her surely sarcastic uses of the word 'Mummy' in lines 33-34 again switch an audience's feelings; the playwright is very skilfully manipulating our feelings towards the characters. So it continues, with some genuine warmth between the two: Jo's suggestion about a lover, and Gwen's light-hearted response that she already has two upstairs, are clearly evidence of a real fondness between the two. Those few candidates who assumed that Gwen actually does have two lovers (in a cupboard?), or who saw this as clear proof that the two women are prostitutes, did not manage to grasp the humour here.

The passing of the bus in lines 57–60 was ignored by most candidates, but several made some interesting and quite thoughtful comments about this. The two women are trapped in a relationship with each other – neither seems to have any other friends or relatives, apart from the weekly and unwelcome trip to Aunt Ella – but life continues outside the house. Although the bus passes by without any direct impact on the characters, the light that it shines upon the two women can be 'maddening or comforting', which is indeed the ambiguity of the relationship that is presented by the playwright.

There was much to like and enjoy in responses to the extract, and even when candidates proposed some unlikely suggestions these were often well argued and supported. There were few responses that relied entirely upon simple paraphrase, and most were clear that this was a piece of theatre.