

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/11

Paper 11

Key messages

The following are key areas that are necessary for success in set texts papers:

1. *Relevance to the question.* Candidates benefit from being trained to analyse questions, looking for key phrases on which to base their answer. A good answer will keep the question firmly in mind throughout and will not digress into narrative, speculation, general assertion or personal opinion unrelated to the text. A few minutes spent planning an answer will help candidates to stay on course. Successful candidates know the importance of the key phrases in the question as they write their answer. Phrases such as 'Another way in which the relationship is memorable...' or 'This scene is particularly exciting because...' at the start of paragraphs not only help the candidate keep on track and focused, but help the reader see how the answer develops.
2. *A well structured argument.* Classroom discussion is clearly central to acquisition of the skill of constructing a developed argument, an essential ingredient for achieving the highest grades in the paper.
3. *Well selected supporting detail and quotation.* Along with a well structured argument goes the ability to use quotation and close reference to support that argument, not merely as a prop, but as the basis for comment and analysis. Less successful candidates may often demonstrate knowledge by inserting quotation but they do not go on to comment on it; their answers become a series of assertions or narrative. There is also sometimes a mismatch between the quotation and the point being made. Candidates should be encouraged to use quotation effectively, to select appropriately and economically, and to comment on the selection they make.
4. *Analysis of the writer's technique.* Another essential for success is the ability to engage with the writer's choice of language (Assessment Objective 3). While passage-based and poetry questions may seem to have the most overt requirement in this connection, discursive answers are always enhanced by a consideration of the writer's technique. In order to encourage candidates to explore rather than explain the use of particular words, one useful exercise might be to encourage them to try and find synonyms or substitutes and then consider the ensuing effect.

General comments

In general, the quality of the responses to these papers showed that candidates had been stimulated by and had enjoyed the texts that they had studied.

There were very few examples of misunderstanding or of the wrong character or incident being chosen where one was specified. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were clear indications of enjoyment of and engagement with the texts. There were a significant number of excellent scripts where candidates responded to texts very well and were able to analyse language in depth. Well prepared candidates delivered perceptive, intelligent answers which addressed the point of questions, revealed detailed engagement with text, and integrated textual reference and quotation within answers.

In the majority of papers time had been used sensibly with answers of approximately equal length. (Where this was not the case, it was invariably the third answer that was shorter and sometimes rather rushed.) Some candidates wrote long introductory paragraphs which, in some cases, were almost as long as the main body of their answers. This was almost always a waste of time, as although these paragraphs often supplied a detailed overview of the storyline, they were not aimed at the actual question and so could gain little if any credit.

There seemed to be fewer examples this session of candidates adopting the strategy of using 'one I prepared earlier' in response to a question, focusing instead on the terms of the questions. There were, however, a good few cases where key words in the question such as 'memorably', 'dramatic', 'ironically', 'strikingly', were neglected. These words are intended as prompts for consideration of the writers' methods and as an indication that narrative alone will not be sufficient to meet the demands of the task.

Some candidates included reference to biographical, social and/or historical context at the expense of focusing on the text itself. This was particularly true with the poems *The Voice* and *Full Moon and Little Frieda*, where biographical 'facts' got in the way of considering the power of the words. It was also true to some extent with the topic of the American Dream, which took over some answers to the Miller and the Fitzgerald and became a distraction from the task in hand.

There were some excellent responses to the passage-based questions, the best using details from the passage effectively and economically in support of a strong response to the question. However, some candidates surprisingly did not quote freely from the extract despite it being available to them.

Good answers to the drama questions acknowledged that drama is intended to be watched and is different from prose. In good answers candidates explored all the evidence available to them, especially stage directions, the way actors deliver lines and respond to each other. But a significant number of answers referred tellingly to the play as 'the novel' and the audience as 'readers'. It is recommended that teachers encourage candidates to try and visualise drama in performance i.e. as an audience.

Empathic response tasks were popular in some Centres. The best, through their creation of a convincing voice, showed a sophisticated understanding of the writer's method, and included, whether directly or indirectly, a great deal of detail. Less successful attempts relied on more generalised thoughts and feelings or on narrative without sufficient detailed support.

Poetry answers seemed to suffer less this year from over-display of technical terms, though there was still a tendency for some answers to resort to displaying knowledge of (sometimes abstruse) terminology at the expense of analysis. In weaker answers, alliteration was often deemed responsible for every emotion in any poem, punctuation taking care of anything not covered by the other terms. Such answers often used technical terms as a substitute for any engaged commentary on language, making rather bland comments such as 'the use of enjambment makes the poem flow', 'the caesura shows the pain of his loss', 'alliteration proves how long she's been away'. Some answers seemed to be entirely constructed around the use of caesura, the actual meaning of the poem being lost. By contrast, though, there were many very assured and sophisticated responses, offering perceptive and original interpretations and clearly showing the way in which language and imagery were used by the poet.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Death of Salesman

Question 1

There were some excellent responses that ranged very widely, pointing out the ironies and the significances, the best answers exploring the timing of the scene and the ways in which it presents a contrast between past and present for all the characters. Most candidates seemed to find that the passage gave access to expressing their understanding of Willy as a parent, as a role model for his sons, as a failure in his work, as a liar or hopeless dreamer and as a character to be pitied. Some candidates, however, seemed to take Willy at face value and believe his stories. His attitude to the stolen football tells us a lot about Willy and Biff and has links with the play as a whole, but this was often not seen. The question asked what makes this so dramatic and revealing and many answers focused on one or the other rather than both. Those answers which went into details about political and social background often wasted time which might more usefully have been given to examination of the extract itself.

Question 2

Better answers were able to examine Linda's role and to see the irony that her protectiveness of him is one of the causes of Willy's tragedy. Some candidates seemed not to have been prepared to discuss Linda and so reverted to Willy and his shortcomings, thereby losing focus on the task.

Question 3

Central considerations here were how self-accusatory was Willy? How deluded was he? How far would he take responsibility? On the whole candidates enjoyed their impersonations of Willy and had a good grasp of character and events.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

There were some good examples of close reading of the text. Some answers were very thorough and explored fully the nuances of the dialogue between Doris and Margaret and all its tensions and undercurrents. Weaker answers were less precise and wandered away from the passage.

Question 5

This was a far less popular question. Successful answers showed good knowledge of the character; weaker ones looked to the passage for help. The key words 'vividly convey' were often not dealt with.

Question 6

Some struggled to find a voice for Margaret, especially as to how she really felt about not inheriting from her father. There was a range of responses from anger to bland acceptance.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 7

This was by far the most popular *Much Ado* question. Most candidates had been well prepared and were aware of where the passage fitted in the play and of Beatrice and Benedick's characters and previous relationship and the 'trick' being played on them. There was plenty to write about for most candidates and the contrast of 'moving' and 'dramatic' was obvious to most. Quite a few ventured into the area of the position of women in society as if it had to be included. Responses from some Centres (and their similarity suggested that these were taught responses) portrayed Beatrice as 'manipulative' and 'vindictive', 'using Benedict's declared love to blackmail him into killing his best friend' who was, after all, himself a 'victim and innocent'. Beatrice was 'testing Benedict', 'pushing the limits', and so on. One candidate wrote, 'this takes the character to a new, almost psychopathic level...she has next to no value in love...the audience should lose sympathy for Beatrice when she is put next to Benedict being loyal to Claudio...'. Many such answers ignored 'moving' and 'dramatic'.

Question 8

The candidates who attempted this question usually did consider both points of view and nearly always plumped for 'silly and conceited'. Some merely gave examples of 'silly' speech. Better answers considered Dogberry's role in the unfolding of the plot against Hero and in bringing the miscreants to justice.

Question 9

Borachio is a relatively minor character in terms of the amount that he says in the play though his role is very significant. There were some very effective recreations, some taking the line that he blamed himself for being a dupe to Don John and showing some remorse, others taking a more cynical view.

Richard III

Question 10

Again, the passage-based task was the most popular of the three questions. Most candidates found examples of irony, though the dark humour proved more difficult for some. The best answers showed enjoyment of the black humour and malevolence of the Dukes and the innocence of the child. Very few candidates started at the beginning of the extract and worked through to the end; the question allowed for a much more individual approach.

Question 11

All candidates attempting this knew something about Clarence and Hastings, and so the task enabled discrimination according to knowledge and ability. There was a tendency for some answers to depend too much on narrative, however, and not to focus on 'dramatic power'. There was usually some sympathy for the men as victims of Richard.

Question 12

The empathic task expected a mature mixture of hate, anxiety, relief, grief and hope. There were many dead characters to mourn, as well as Richard's attempts on the young Elizabeth to reflect on. However, the task successfully enabled discrimination by knowledge of character and events. There were a few candidates who impersonated the wrong character.

Journey's End

Question 13

Good answers to this question gave sensitive insights into the reasons for Stanhope's aggressive and unreasonable behaviour in this scene. They saw its significance as being virtually the first scene where he really opens up and reveals the damage that the war has done to him. They understood his disappointment in himself as well as his despair of ever being 'normal' again and they found the closeness of the relationship with Osborne profoundly moving. The best commented on the language and tone of the passage and saw the humour in the interchange with Osborne at the end of it. Some candidates seemed to find the extract difficult, however, and a surprising number did not comment on Stanhope's drunkenness or understand the uneasy blend of warfare, stress and masculine bonding.

Question 14

The relationship between Raleigh and Stanhope was well understood on the whole, though weaker answers tended not to see that Stanhope's irritation and anger at his arrival is partly to do with his sense of responsibility for Raleigh. There was some relevant material in the passage but answers also needed to consider other significant incidents, such as the dinner after Osborne's death and the final scene of Raleigh's death. Surprisingly, one or other of these scenes was often missed. A key word here was 'memorable', and successful answers showed a strong and sensitive personal response.

Question 15

There were some excellent Trotters. Many saw the humour, practical good-sense and his enjoyment of his creature comforts, but some candidates focused on the Stanhope-Raleigh situation and involved him in totally uncharacteristic amateur psychology. Some missed the dropped aitches and differences in speech between him and the Public School officers.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Question 16

This was the least popular of the poetry questions. Most responses to it explained meaning and indicated 'optimism and determination' without engaging with 'striking', but selecting appropriate textual details. Good answers, however, probed the text for relevant words and images.

Question 17

Most candidates were able to link the nature descriptions with Tennyson's thoughts and feelings. Responses tended to be chronological but at least they did show the candidates had understood the language and the question. They often commented on pathetic fallacy: the snow was going, Spring was coming and the birds were happy. Better answers engaged with language and image in a detailed and sensitive way.

Question 18

Most candidates understood the poem though some blamed Sir Lancelot for not returning the Lady's love. However, many did not engage with 'What does Tennyson make you feel' to any extent; there was a little curiosity and a lot of sympathy and that tended to be it. Even weaker answers referred to 'four grey walls' and Lancelot's colours; more successful ones responded sensitively to the language and sounds of the poem.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

Marrysong, a densely intricate elegy, proved difficult for some candidates. For example, 'without seasons' could be interpreted as bland and unchanging. Many candidates had been very well prepared and could present a knowledgeable paraphrase of the poem but the explanation of the central metaphor was more challenging and proved the discriminator. There was a fairly widespread misreading of the question as 'Explore the ways in which Scott portrays a beautiful relationship' which takes the emphasis off the examination of language and imagery and which therefore often led to simple paraphrase. The best answers, as ever, offered sensitive and often original interpretations.

Question 20

The Voice was easily the most commonly attempted of all the poems in this section. While there were some very strong responses, others by contrast often suffered from over-use – and sometimes ingenious or questionable use – of literary terminology at the expense of real analysis and personal engagement: e.g. 'Alliteration of 'w' in *wan wistfulness* shows his pain at her disappearance...', 'Assonance of 'e' in *wet mead to me hear (sic)* shows how overwhelmed Hardy was by the whole experience...', 'The pain has struck him with the use of the semi-colon...'. Many answers provided all sorts of background information, but some of it was unsupportable and was not relevant to the task of exploring how Hardy powerfully communicates the pain of loss. There were far fewer responses to *Sonnet 29*. Those who attempted it generally showed fair understanding of it, although weaker answers tended simply to paraphrase it.

Question 21

Those who answered on *The Flower-fed Buffaloes* usually understood what the poem was about as they could follow the 'story'; rhythm and repetition could be addressed and double meanings considered. The Hughes poem caused more problems. Some of the best poetry answers seen in this Paper were on this poem, written by candidates who engaged with the language and offered some really perceptive ideas but a significant number found it difficult to respond to as they had no idea what was or could be going on. Many candidates adopted a particular learnt interpretation that the poem is a metaphor about the birth of Little Frieda, where the 'dark river of blood' is menstruation, the 'unspilled milk' a reference to breasts and mother's milk, the moon is the father. Alternatively, the boulders and 'dark river' are the obstacles Frieda will struggle against in life and there is a 'sinister reference to death'. She is 'the brimming pail', innocent and just starting life, and will grow to maturity. Even when candidates were writing about the flash of perception as the child links language to an object, 'moon!' they were also tying this into the 'birth' scenario. *Sonnet 43* proved more straightforward, but candidates generally found less to say about it.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question 22

This was the most popular question on this text. Candidates could usually find drama in the passage, but it was less common to find a focus on the idea of it being Isabella's narration and what that could mean. Relatively few candidates mentioned anything else about the novel other than what was in this extract.

Question 23

Many who attempted this question treated Nelly as a real person with little sense of her as a construct. Weaker responses seemed to find it amazing that she made certain decisions or said certain things and very rarely mentioned Bronte. As ever in the case of questions such as this, answers that went beyond prepared character sketch and began to consider the role and function of the character – and who focused on the terms of the question ('memorable' being the key word here) fared much better.

Question 24

Heathcliff empathic responses tended to involve much inclusion of details of the plot yet to unfold. However, Gothic cursing was clearly attractive and the task seems to have been enjoyed by candidates.

Games at Twilight

Question 25

There was some good close reading of the passage in evidence, with focus upon feelings as demonstrated through the actions of the children. Good answers explored the vivid descriptions and were aware of the writer's technique to explore. Less successful answers simply 'went through' the passage and said a few words about feelings at the end.

Question 26

There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 27

This task was only attempted by a few candidates, but there were some pleasing and convincing recreations of Pat.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 28

There was plenty of atmosphere for candidates to respond to in the extract: general material for the less skilled in analysis, and rich detail with many literary devices and descriptions for the more accomplished.

Question 29

Chief Matenge is a vivid character who obviously impressed many. Many found it difficult to go beyond a record of actions and events but some were able to do so and to focus correctly on how he is made 'horrible', a word that demands a strong personal response.

Question 30

Candidates displayed excellent knowledge of the text in this empathic task, and were usually very successful in impersonating Dinorego's dignity and wonderment at the changes in the village.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

Candidates enjoyed exploring what the extract said about American society, the rich, Gatsby, conspicuous consumption, exploitation, etc. but the idea of 'striking' was not often engaged with. Only the best answers selected certain impressions and explored them, rather than just wandering through the whole passage. Those that spotted the 'moth' imagery often went on to explore other imagery to good effect. Those who started by listing luxury items often got no further and the implications in this extract, especially about the people who attended, were often missed. Some candidates sensed shallowness and something 'fake' and 'desperate' about the scene and some went as far as insisting on Fitzgerald feeling 'disgust' for the 'conspicuous consumption' he describes. The strongest answers made clear the moral vacuum at the heart of this society.

Question 32

This question went to the heart of the novel and many candidates quoted the famous lines about the ways in which Tom Buchanan destroyed people and then retreated into his money. This showed how well assimilated the ideas of the novel had been, and this question allowed candidates to display their understanding. Candidates tended to use quotation very well in answering this question.

Question 33

The empathy question proved successful in so far as all candidates caught Daisy's mixture of sentimentalism, superficiality and materialism. Answers did tend to be rather brief, though, perhaps because we do not often share Daisy's thoughts in the novel. Daisy fared the worst in this category. Her thrilling conspiratorial whispers, sometimes shockingly shot through with bitterness, did not really come through. Candidates did not seem really sure what Daisy feels at this point in the novel and fell back on descriptions of Gatsby's mansion, and cynical remarks about Tom.

Ethan Frome

Question 34

The extract offered much material for analysis and there were some extremely sensitive responses, showing a good understanding of the poignancy of the latter parts of the novel and showing real engagement. The best did 'explore how Wharton conveys the tension'; weaker answers simply retold what happened.

Question 35

Candidates were well prepared for this task which went to the centre of the novel, and generally wrote persuasively. Some used material from the extract but geared it to the question and, of course, limited themselves if they did not go beyond that. There were many balanced answers, with candidates being aware of the possible bias in the narrative.

Question 36

Candidates enjoyed writing as Mattie. Some effective empathic work was seen here, although responses were occasionally rather 'modern' and gushing.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 37

The extract from *The Third and Final Continent* proved less than straightforward for some. Although candidates could see that this was the moment when the couple begin to fall in love, they often neglected Mrs Croft entirely or failed to see her as the catalyst for the narrator's feelings for his wife.

Question 38

Mr Wills in *The Taste of Watermelon* was the most popular choice. Surprisingly, a lot of the answers concentrated more on the early part of the story where sympathy is in shorter supply than on the final section. Candidates could identify reasons for sympathy but it was only the stronger ones who realised how the reader's view was directed and manipulated by the narrative viewpoint. There were some very perceptive answers on *The Yellow Wall Paper*. The impact of the diary form was assessed with some perception. Not many tackled *The Signalman*, but those who did were engaged by his character and situation.

Question 39

Relatively few attempted the empathic task on *The Lemon Orchard*, but there were some convincingly harsh voices here, making good use of the detail of the story and providing believable accounts of 'what happened next.'

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 2010/12

Paper 12

Key messages

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There were very few examples of misunderstanding or of the wrong character or incident being chosen where one was specified. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were clear indications of enjoyment of and engagement with the texts. There were a significant number of excellent scripts where candidates responded to texts very well and were able to analyse language in depth. Well prepared candidates delivered perceptive, intelligent answers which addressed the point of questions, revealed detailed engagement with text, and integrated textual reference and quotation within answers.

In the majority of papers time had been used sensibly with answers of approximately equal length. (Where this was not the case, it was invariably the third answer that was shorter and sometimes rather rushed.) Some candidates wrote long introductory paragraphs which, in some cases, were almost as long as the main body of their answers. This was almost always a waste of time, as although these paragraphs often supplied a detailed overview of the storyline, they were not aimed at the actual question and so could gain little if any credit.

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Some candidates included reference to biographical, social and/or historical context at the expense of focusing on the text itself. This was particularly true with the poem *Full Moon and Little Frieda* in Question 19, where biographical 'facts' got in the way of considering the power of the words. It was also true to some extent with the topic of the American Dream, which took over some answers to *Death of A Salesman* and *The Great Gatsby* and became a distraction from the task in hand.

There were some excellent responses to the passage-based questions, the best using details from the passage effectively and economically in support of a strong response to the question. However, some candidates surprisingly did not quote freely from the extract despite it being available to them.

Good answers to the drama questions acknowledged that drama is intended to be watched and is different from prose. In good answers candidates explored all the evidence available to them, especially stage directions, the way actors deliver lines and respond to each other. But a significant number of answers referred tellingly to the play as 'the novel' and the audience as 'readers'. It is recommended that teachers encourage candidates to try and visualise drama in performance i.e. as an audience.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

The candidates who produced the most convincing responses were those who showed a sense of audience and responded to 'dramatic', demonstrating a sound understanding of the tensions in the passage and using the stage directions as well as quotations to support their ideas. 'Revealing' invited candidates to place the passage within the context of the whole play and even weaker answers seemed to have a general knowledge and understanding of the characters and situations. Some saw Willy's realisation in terms of a flawed version of the American dream. Some did not see any of the deeper issues: that Willy does not seem to realise that it was because of Biff's discovery of his affair that Biff dropped out of college, and that when it is pointed out to him in the extract, he refuses to accept it; or that previously, Bernard is ridiculed by Willy, but here, he's asking his advice.

Question 2

Many candidates rose to the challenge of this question, showing the complexity of Linda's statement, which not only refers to her current anxieties about Willy's state of mind, but also relates to the wider issue of The American Dream and Willy's role as an Everyman figure having significance for us all. Answers which concentrated only on Willy's mental turmoil and his potential danger to others (his car etc.) missed some of the depths of the question. Some took refuge in offloading 'prepared' answers, for example about Willy as a tragic hero.

Question 3

Candidates who tackled this empathic task clearly understood the narrative of the drama and some of Happy's thoughts at this moment. There were some very convincing assumptions of Happy's voice which showed a clear understanding that he was Willy's son in more than name and captured some of the boastfulness as well as the insecurities of coming second to Biff.

My Mother Said I Never Should

Question 4

Good answers explored all aspects of the passage, focusing on the visual and symbolic aspect of the tension between the women, i.e. the tugging of the sheet, and the ambiguity of Doris's remarks about the weather. They picked up the provocative statements of each of the women and many were able to see that Margaret is challenging Doris's system of values.

Question 5

Most candidates tackling this question felt sympathy for Margaret and were able to identify moments in the drama which illustrated this. There were some very good answers demonstrating knowledge of the chosen character but a great many responses described each character in turn before adding a short 'answer' in the final paragraph.

Question 6

Most candidates captured Doris reasonably well, showing her initial disapproval but her coming round to supporting her family and even to look forward to a new Great-grandchild. But some of her more quotable statements such as 'You make me so angry', 'Resentment is a terrible thing' were missing. Weaker answers provided narrative details and speculations from Doris but little sense of her voice.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question 7

Almost all candidates responded to 'satisfying' in terms of the plot, and were able to say what had gone before and how this rights the wrongs and prepares for what is to come. Many stopped at the end of the first page, ignoring the part of the extract with Dogberry. Better answers picked out 'Choose your revenge yourself' from Claudio to show just how contrite he is; and Borachio's 'she knew not what she did', saving Margaret's reputation by pointing out she was not in on the plot. Only the best answers saw that Leonato has not entirely forgiven Claudio and is going to subject him to public humiliation. In less successful answers there was a lack of direct quotation and of commentary on the language. Good answers described the audience's reactions to this scene.

Question 8

There were some well informed and interesting discussions of Don Pedro. Most thought Don Pedro was 'well-intentioned and honourable', but also 'scheming', which was considered not a bad thing. Very few thought he was 'untrustworthy', and very few considered his scolding and snubbing of Leonato, the sexual jokes he shares with Claudio and his taunts of Benedick. Candidates were generally able to give textual examples in support of their views and there were some usefully learnt quotations deployed.

Question 9

Hero was given a lot to think about by candidates who also considered the context of the 'first' wedding. Many picked up on 'My heart is exceeding heavy', and based their approach on it, which made Hero unexpectedly percipient. In weaker answers Hero did not reflect on anything much apart from that it was her wedding day and was not it lovely and she was so nervous and her dress was lovely and her husband-to-be was lovely too. Success in empathic tasks does require some detail from the text and there was much to be said about her meeting with Claudio, the wooing of Don Pedro and her relationship with Beatrice.

Richard III

Question 10

Many could see how this scene was powerfully dramatic. The best answers provided a sense of how Richard's character permeated the play even in his absence. Weaker answers attempted to retell the whole of the narrative of the drama.

Question 11

To answer this question well candidates needed to focus on two words – 'lively' and 'humorous' – and to illustrate these characteristics with moments from the drama. There are some really good moments to use so it was surprising to read answers from so many who selected only one characteristic or addressed one as an afterthought in a throw-away sentence. Some candidates appeared to believe that the most hysterically amusing moment of the drama was Richard's death scene, missing the point that the full title of the play includes the word 'tragedy'.

Question 12

This was handled well on the whole. Candidates were able to develop a voice for Hastings in which his shock and bewilderment began to emerge. Perhaps in some responses he might have been more angry, but generally the feelings expressed were believable and there was supporting detail.

Journey's End

Question 13

There were some good answers here which drew a contrast with Act One and managed to describe relationships and how these contributed to tone and atmosphere. Candidates mentioned the 'normality' of the scene with the sunlight, the food and the cheerful banter. Better answers explored some of the humour. Inevitably the focus was on Trotter and Osborne, but some noted the contribution that Mason makes. Rarely did anyone mention that Raleigh is there too. Really good answers also noted lighting effects and were clear that this is drama.

Question 14

While there were a lot of character sketches offered, the most successful answers explored the dramatic purpose of Osborne. There were some moving and erudite responses to the question. It is clear that many candidates had really taken Osborne and the text itself to their hearts and they wrote with real engagement.

Question 15

There were some very successful responses to this task which managed to reflect on Stanhope's disillusionment with the war, his exhaustion and his anger at and contempt of the Colonel. Weaker answers had difficulty in placing the exact point in the play and so the Colonel was barely mentioned. The voice proved accessible to most candidates.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Question 16

Most candidates explored the language fairly effectively and even weaker candidates were able to comment on the language in this poem. To demonstrate the gloomy, depressing atmosphere, they selected repetitive rhyme patterns, the repeated last four lines, Mariana's crying whatever time of day, the gloomy depressing garden and house setting, the darkness and marshes, the night-time. Stronger answers considered the effect of, for example, the superlative 'blackest' (line 1), 'rusted' (line 3), 'broken' (line 5), all signs of something worn and broken 'like Mariana's love'. Some pointed out that even pleasant things were scorned, for example 'the sweet heaven' was not looked at. Some picked out the sounds in stanza three, which were all bleak and depressing. Some got quite irritated by Mariana, and thought 'she should get up and do something, and stop moping around', which showed some personal response. There were some, however, who described technical terms without comment on the contribution usage of these terms made to the poem. Rhyme schemes were an example of this, often identified and then left unexplained.

Question 17

Good answers focused on the words and the evident mental turmoil of the narrator. One or two candidates felt that the poem was about being buried alive - literally, not as a metaphor (which might be an interesting and legitimate interpretation but would require sustained discussion and that was missing from these answers). There was also evident confusion amongst some candidates about the narrative of the poem as some clearly believed that the poem was about Tennyson's relationship with Hallam and they let this interpretation get in the way of a more objective assessment.

Question 18

Very few candidates tackled this question. Those who did tended to write only sketchily about the reflective/questioning nature of this extract.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 19

Candidates who answered this well, focusing on the words, did get the point about the joy of the moment and answers were often refreshingly clear. By contrast, some answers elected to focus on the poet's relationship with Sylvia Plath providing completely unnecessary background detail, often at length, which bore no relationship to the question.

Question 20

Successful candidates noted the elegiac nature of *Lament*, focusing on the repetitions and images and balanced their answers by spending an equal amount of time on *Report to Wordsworth*. *Lament* seemed to produce a greater feeling of engagement. While some resorted to formulaic comments such as 'this is an example of a metaphor...', better answers went much beyond this to consider the 'how' of the question.

Question 21

Not many candidates attempted this question, but it sometimes prompted more original responses than the other two *Songs* questions. *First Love* proved the most productive choice. Some selected one of the poems given in Question 20 but had difficulty in making it relevant to the task here.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question 22

Many candidates knew this text really well. Good answers focused on 'at this moment ...' allowing evidence from the text to support their thinking. Weaker answers rambled all over the novel providing rich but irrelevant detail for which there could be little reward; they did not allow the extract to work for them by using it for quotation. Considering that the Lintons are seen to be quarrelling, screaming, howling, and complaining and that Cathy is then attacked by a monstrous dog, it seemed surprising to find some answers claiming that Thrushcross Grange, at this moment, was a civilised place.

Question 23

The best answers maintained a sense of balance, using the text selectively in support. However, a few candidates chose the wrong Catherine and some chose both.

Question 24

This empathic task was generally very well handled. There were some good accounts of appropriate narrative detail and something of the voice of Nellie emerged, though many candidates omitted to mention the encounter with young Linton just before they are tricked into entering *Wuthering Heights* in which Nellie offers some very sharp comments which might usefully have been integrated. In the best answers her down-to-earth voice and her more 'correct' form of speech were well blended.

Games at Twilight

Question 25

Quite a few summarised the whole story. Those who did focus on the passage were strangely reluctant to develop a personal response to the writing. There were very few really good answers to this question.

Question 26

The most popular approach was to inveigh against the selfishness of old people with reference to *A Devoted Son*. This was often done with understanding of the writing; but one might wish that more had seen that there was another side. Many candidates did not see the ruthlessness and arrogance of Rakesh.

Question 27

Many answers happily plundered the story successfully for this empathic task, and produced recognisable Mr Boses.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question 28

Candidates were able to contrast Matenge and Sekoto very well, with details from the whole text, though only the best answers saw that perhaps they are not so different but that Sekoto is better at concealing his nastiness. They were less secure on using the writing from this passage to show how Head conveys their differences. They did not seem to understand the jealousy of Chief Sekoto in line 13. They wanted simplicity, one good character, one bad character; and jealousy is a bad characteristic, so often it was Matenge who was jealous of Sekoto.

Question 29

This was not a popular question but those who answered it frequently rose to the challenge of giving a sincere personal response. The most popular choice was the scene at the end of the novel, when the villagers gather in front of Matenge's house to support Paulina. In some answers 'incident' was interpreted fairly freely, sometimes the whole of the drought being selected. This was a valid approach as long as it did not merely rely on narrative and the qualities of the people were identified.

Question 30

There were some reasonable thoughts on Makhaya but many attempts at this empathic task on Mma-Millipede were more a character study of Makhaya, rather than Mma-Millipede's impressions. A sprinkling of religious language and biblical expression ensured that most candidates at least used suitable features of expression.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

Most candidates experienced little difficulty in identifying the feelings of Gatsby and Daisy, though they tended to find more to say about Gatsby. The 'strikingly' of the question was often ignored. There were some good responses, bringing in his past with Daisy, and pointing out the significance of this moment for him, referring to the fact that he was so awe-struck by her presence that he nearly fell down a flight of stairs. There was less understanding of Daisy here; weaker answers almost completely ignored the brushing of her hair with a gold brush, and the crying into the shirts, stronger ones commented on the ambiguity of her responses. Was she rediscovering her lost love, feeling trapped with Tom or merely responding to Gatsby's fantastic wealth?

Question 32

Many candidates seemed to think that the only reason for Gatsby's attraction was her wealth, or rather that she came from a wealthy 'old' family. Better answers commented on her unattainability, on the fact that she was liked and desired by most young men, and on her physical charms (her soft voice, for one).

Question 33

Most candidates knew the moment, though some took the moment into the actual meeting. They understood Jordan's curiosity, but there was a disappointing lack of reference to her golf background, her attitude to the party, to the money or activities going on, or to other characters in the novel, particularly Nick. Most Jordans were really rather sympathetic characters, though they often missed her jaunty optimism.

Ethan Frome

Question 34

This was the most popular by far of the three questions on *Ethan Frome* and most candidates clearly found it an accessible task. In order to show their shock/surprise some candidates spent too long in establishing context at the beginning of the essay; the best responses managed to integrate such knowledge in the body of the essay at the relevant point. Weaker answers predictably gave a paraphrase of the extract but the majority of answers were good, with candidates finding it relatively easy to choose suitable textual support.

Question 35

Choice of episode was the discriminator and there was a lot of variety with no common choices. There was occasional misreading of the question where candidates explored two episodes where *they* were disappointed with Ethan Frome's life.

Question 36

There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 37

Clear understanding of the passage was demonstrated, although much response to language was implicit rather than explicit even though it was there on the page. Good answers focused on the word 'fascination' and used details in the text to support this; some wrote on affection rather than fascination. The most successful answers looked really closely at details and linguistic choices, going well beyond the obvious.

Question 38

There was some good comment on the construction and language of both *How it Happened* and *There Will Come Soft Rains* although some candidates took refuge in narrative. Good answers explored the way in which the writer crafted the story and engaged readers.

Question 39

This was generally the best handled of the empathic questions in the Prose section. There was a range of 'splendid' Mrs Crofts. Most got the point about Mrs Croft's admiration for Mala and something of the developing relationship between Mala and her husband. The best responses showed understanding of more than the moment specified as it was described in the text and conveyed Mrs Croft's directness and her often acerbic tone.